Objectives

1. Engage students in the plot, characters, themes, setting, and language of Kate Chopin’s *The Story of an Hour* so that they are prepared to discuss and write about the excerpt.

2. Practice and reinforce the following Grade 9-10 ELA Common Core Standards for reading literature, writing, and speaking/listening:

   **READING: LITERATURE — RL.9-10.1-5, 10**
   **WRITING — W.9-10.1-2, 4-10**
   **SPEAKING/LISTENING — SL.9-10.1-3**

Time

165 minutes (with up to an additional 105 minutes of extension possibilities)

Materials

SyncTV Premium Lesson of Kate Chopin’s “The Story of an Hour”

Overview

Kate Chopin (1850-1904) wrote stories and novels about women with wants and needs beyond just marriage and child-rearing, which cast her as one of the boldest and most controversial authors of her time. Her works, never widely read or critically lauded during her lifetime, have since been reappraised and canonized as precursors of 20th-century feminist literature and ideology. *The Story of an Hour*, tells the tale of a woman who finds liberation when she receives the news of her husband’s unexpected death. Close examination of this text will prepare students to develop thoughtful responses to higher-level literary texts, and to write thoughtful, informed, and textually-rooted responses, consistent with the ELA Common Core Standards for the high school grades.
Background (15 minutes)

1. **Watch the Preview (SL.9-10.1-2).** As a group, watch the video preview of the premium lesson. Use the following questions to spur discussion following the preview:
   
   a. Kate Chopin’s portrayals of women are now recognized as ahead of their time. Think about the discussion of the story’s plot in the preview, especially the “other unexpected emotions [Louise experiences].” Why do you think this story might have been controversial?

   b. Discuss the images shown in the preview. What do they tell you about what this story will be about? In what time period do you think this story takes place?

   c. The preview states that “surprising news remains to be delivered.” What does this suggest about the structure of the story? What do you think this surprising news might be?

Engaging the Text (150 minutes)

2. **Read the Text (45 minutes)**
   
   a. **Read.** Have students read *The Story of an Hour*. Don’t have them worry about annotating or writing responses while they’re reading—simply have them read it once to enjoy the story.

   b. **Re-read and Annotate (RL.9-10.1–5).** Now have students re-read the text and annotate using the annotation tool. Have them pick five sentences that, in their opinion, are especially important to what this story is about, and have them write brief explanations as to why they chose each. Finally, have each student write a one-sentence summary of the story, doing their best to encapsulate what this story is truly “about” on a deeper thematic level—not just a plot summary. These comments and annotations are visible to the teacher after the students submit their writing assignments or beforehand if using the “Mimic” function to access the students’ accounts.

   c. **Think Critically (RL.9-10.1–5; SL.9-10.1–2).** What is this story about? As a class, have students share and discuss their one-sentence summaries. Encourage summaries that attempt to analyze the story’s deeper purpose or meaning. Ask students to question the many ambiguities within the two-page story: Is Louise Mallard a sympathetic character? Was hers a loveless, unhappy marriage? Why does she react the way she does to her husband’s surprise return?

Extension (additional 30 minutes)

   d. **Listen and Discuss (SL.9-10.1–2).** As a class, listen to the audio reading of the text. How is reading the text silently different from hearing it read aloud? What words does the author use to develop the characters and setting?

   e. **Comprehend (RL.9-10.1–4).** Have students complete the multiple-choice questions. Collect papers or discuss answers as a class.

3. **Watch SyncTV (45 minutes)**
   
   a. **Watch.** Either watch the SyncTV discussion associated with “The Story of an Hour” as a class or ask students to watch it on their individual computers.
b. **Focus (RL.9-10.4; SL.9-10.1, 3)** From 1:10-1:30 the students discuss their various interpretation of the story’s final line: “When the doctors came they said she had died of heart disease—of the joy that kills.” Have students listen to the SyncTV students’ interpretation of this line and then offer their own opinions.

c. **Focus (RL.9-10.5; SL.9-10.1, 3)** In the portion of the episode from 1:35-2:30, the SyncTV students discuss the point of view employed in this story, and how it changes over the course of the narrative. What is the story’s point of view? Ask students to describe how Chopin constructs meaning with the story’s shifting point of view.

d. **Focus (RL.9-10.2; SL.9-10.1, 3)** The SyncTV students’ interpretations of the story are divided into two distinct camps: at 0:10-0:50 we are introduced to both sides of the argument. Have students consider both viewpoints and think about their own personal responses to Chopin’s ambiguous narrative.

e. **Discuss (RL.9-10.1-5; SL.9-10.1–2).** After watching the model discussion, have a conversation with the class about the ideas discussed in the SyncTV episode that stood out the most. What new thoughts do they have after hearing the students’ discussion? Next, divide students into small groups (3-4 students). Move around the room monitoring the groups as students follow the SyncTV episode as a model to discuss some of the following questions:

   i. “The Story of an Hour” is ambiguous: Is it, as the girls attest, a proto-feminist text about a woman yearning for freedom, or is it, as Troy argues, the chronicle of an emotionally disturbed female protagonist? Does Chopin leave her intentions uncertain? What does this ambiguity add to the story?

   ii. The story is narrated from a close-third-person perspective, but that close-third-person shifts in focus among the story’s characters. What is close-third-person perspective? How does it shift? How does Chopin use this formal shift to create meaning?

   iii. What does the room symbolize? The view out the window? How does Chopin use external setting as a metaphor for Louise Mallard’s inner state?

   iv. Is Louise Mallard a protagonist? Is she sympathetic, or is she cold? What constitutes a protagonist in a story? Must all protagonists be of heroic moral fiber, or are they allowed to have thoughts and desires that are objectionable or uncouth? Do these thoughts make her an antagonist?

   v. What do you make of the story’s final line? Is Chopin being ironic, or insincere? What is her tone in this final piece of narration?

   vi. Is Chopin's story about the individual, or society? Is this simply a story of an hour, or are her characters vessels for larger social issues and concerns? What might these issues and concerns be?

**Extension (additional 45 minutes)**

f. **Write (W.9-10.1, 4–5).** Think about the SyncTV students’ overarching argument in the episode. In a persuasive essay response, argue whether this is a story about a cold, emotionally disturbed woman, or a paean to the secret, repressed desires of women for individuality and freedom. Provide at least two supporting examples, using quotes and passages from the text.
4. **Think (10 minutes)**
   
a. **Respond** (*W.9-10.1, 4, 9*). Ask students to read the “Think” questions, watch the corresponding video clips, and respond to the questions, either in class or for homework.

5. **Write (50 minutes)**
   
a. **Discuss** (*SL.9-10.1*). Read the prompt you have chosen for students, and then solicit questions regarding the prompt or the assignment expectations. Whichever prompt you have chosen, make sure you are clear about the assignment expectations and the rubric by which you and the other students will be evaluating them.

b. **Organize** (*RL.9-10.1-5, 10; W.9-10.1-2, 5*). Ask students to go back and annotate the text with the prompt in mind. They should be organizing their thoughts and the points they’ll address in their writing as they make annotations. If you’ve worked on outlining or other organizational tools for writing, this is a good place to apply them.

c. **Write** (*W.9-10.1–2, 4–6, 9–10*). Have students go through the writing process of planning, revising, editing, and publishing their writing responses.

d. **Review** (*W.9-10.4–6*). Use the StudySync “Review” feature to have students complete one to two evaluations of their peers’ work based on your chosen review rubric. Have the students look at and reflect upon the peer evaluations of their own writing. What might you do differently in a revision? How might you strengthen the writing and the ideas?

**Extension (additional 45 minutes)**

e. **Write** (*W.9-10.1–2, 4–6, 9–10*). For homework, have students write an essay using one of the prompts you did not choose to do in class. Students should publish their responses online.

f. **Write** (*W.9-10.1, 4–6 and RL.9-10.1–5*). In a short essay response, agree or disagree with the following statement by scholar Emily Toth in *Unveiling Kate Chopin*:

   In *The Story of an Hour*, Chopin’s heroine had to die in order for the story to be published.
SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

Key Vocabulary

1. afflicted (adj.) - Suffering or experiencing pain as a result of something
2. elusive (adj.) - Difficult to find or capture
3. importunities (n.) - Repeated and/or bothersome requests or demands
4. veil (n.) - A piece of cloth worn by women over the face; (v.) To hide or cover up something
5. hasten (v.) - To act or move quickly, or to cause something to happen faster
6. implore (v.) - To beg or to make a serious request for something
7. elixir (n.) - A liquid with magical powers that can cure or extend life
8. fancy (n.) - imagination
9. exalted (adj.) - Highly praised or revered
10. cry (v.) (old-fashioned) - To demand or call attention to something

Reading Comprehension Questions

1. Mrs. Mallard learned of her husband’s death from ________________.
   a. her friend, Richards
   b. her sister, Josephine
   c. Brently Mallard
   d. a newspaper office

2. How does Mrs. Mallard react to the news at first?
   a. She’s relieved because she didn’t love him.
   b. She is unable to believe the news.
   c. She weeps uncontrollably as soon as she finds out.
   d. She’s enthralled by the sudden promise of freedom.

3. “The Story of an Hour” takes place in ________________.
   a. spring
   b. summer
   c. fall
   d. winter

4. “She was beginning to recognize this thing that was approaching to possess her, and she
   was striving to beat it back with her will...”
   The “thing” to which this passage refers is ________________.
   a. severe depression
   b. onset of a heart attack
   c. her love for her husband
   d. the thrill of freedom
5. Louise Mallard _________________.
   a. was probably in an abusive relationship
   b. never knew how much she longed to be independent
   c. was probably overjoyed to find her husband was still alive
   d. was really in love with her husband’s friend, Richards

6. “Her fancy was running riot along those days ahead of her.”
   This probably means that _________________.
   a. she was imagining all the good things to come
   b. she wanted to be a more fancy, sophisticated woman
   c. she was so upset over her husband’s death she wanted to riot
   d. she could not imagine how she was going to live the rest of her life

7. Chopin’s tone in the final passage of “The Story of an Hour” is best described as _________________.
   a. sincere
   b. scornful
   c. dramatic
   d. ironic

8. Why does Josephine implore Louise to open the door?
   a. She wants to deliver the good news that Mr. Mallard is still alive.
   b. She thinks Louise is being rude to their guests.
   c. She is worried that Louise is in despair and wants to console her.
   d. She doesn’t trust her sister.

9. Her husband’s friend, Richards, _________________.
   a. works for a newspaper
   b. cares deeply for Mrs. Mallard
   c. may have some romantic feelings for Mrs. Mallard
   d. all of the above

10. The line: “they said she had died of heart disease--of joy that kills” is an example of
    a. sentimentality
    b. comedy
    c. irony
    d. realism

**Answer Key**

1. B
2. C
3. A
4. D
5. B
6. A
7. D
8. C
9. D
10. C
Further Assignments

1. For a longer assignment, have students read the excerpt from *The Awakening* (see StudySync premium lesson) and complete the lesson assignments. (*RL.9-10.1–5; W.9-10.1, 4–6*)

2. Have students do some outside research on Kate Chopin’s life and writing. Ask them to describe, in an essay of at least 300 words, some events and experiences that may have had a thematic influence on her work. (*RL.9-10.1–2, 5; W.9-10.2, 4–5, 7–8*)

3. Ask students to agree or disagree with the following statement in a written essay response. (*W.9-10.1, 4–6*)

   *Chopin asserts that marriage is an outdated social institution that limits women’s rights and freedoms.*

4. Paraphrase the following passage from “The Story of an Hour”:

   “There would be no powerful will bending hers in that blind persistence with which men and women believe they have a right to impose a private will upon a fellow creature. A kind intention or a cruel intention made the act seem no less a crime as she looked upon it in that brief moment of illumination.” (*RL.9-10.2, 4–5*)

5. What is symbolism? Why do writers use symbolism in texts? Analyze Mrs. Mallard’s heart, her room, and the spring season outside her bedroom window as symbols in this text. (*RL.9-10.1–2, 4–5*)

6. Ask students to go back through this excerpt from the novel and identify the different target vocabulary words used throughout. Have them replace these words with synonyms or synonym phrases that they are familiar with. Make sure they underline or highlight any other words they are unfamiliar with. (*ELL*)