

A Respectable Woman


About Writer

Kate Chopin whose original name was an American novelist and short-story writer. Her first novel “**At Fault**” appeared in 1890 and her second novel “The Awakening” in 1899. She wrote more than 100 short stories and among them, ‘Desiree’s Baby’, ‘Madame Celestin’s Divorce’ and ‘A Respectable Woman’ are more anthologized than others. The language in her novels and short stories is full of sexual connotations and her novel ‘The Awakening’ was denounced (निन्दा गरियो) for its sexual frankness (स्पष्टता) and the publishers had refrained from publishing it. Later in 1950, the novel ‘The Awakening’ was reinterpreted and she was praised for depicting modern sensibility. The story ‘**A Respectable Woman**’ is taken out from her collection *The Awakening and Other Short Stories* (2005).

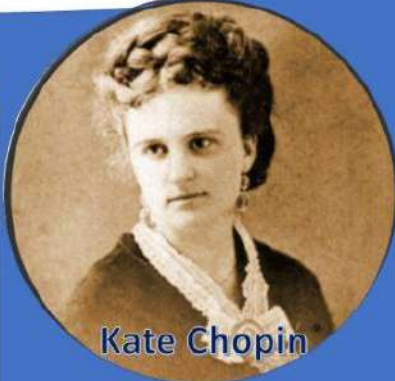
Main theme/moral of the story

The short story ‘A Respectable Woman’ is structured around the character of Mrs. Baroda and her inner conflict as she finds herself attracted to her husband’s friend. The conflict follows the pattern of classical fiction and moves from exposition to rising action and then to climax and resolution.

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Kate Chopin

Table of Contents

- Summary
- Moral of the Story
- Related Answer question
 - Understanding the text
 - Reference to the text
 - Beyond the text

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Character

- Mrs. Baroda
- Gouvernail
- Gaston

Summary

The story ‘**A Respectable Woman**’ was written by Kate Chopin. She was an American novelist and short-story writer. **The language in her novels and short stories is full of sexual connotations and her novel ‘*The Awakening*’** was denounced (निन्दा गरियो) for its sexual frankness (स्पष्टता) and the publishers had refrained from publishing it. Later in 1950, the novel ‘*The Awakening*’ was reinterpreted and she was praised for depicting modern sensibility. The story ‘**A Respectable Woman**’ is taken out from her collection *The Awakening and Other Short Stories* (2005).

At the beginning of the story, Mrs. Baroda annoys after listening to her husband is going to call his friend Gouvernail for a few weeks or days on the plantation. Because she wants some rest after working hard all winter. After listening to it, private conversation was held with her husband.

Mrs. Baroda had listened to Gouvernail many times but never met him due to some reason. She formed an image of him in her mind. She pictured him tall, slim, cynical; with eyeglasses and his hands in his pockets. so she didn’t like him.

But Gouvernail was far different from her image. He was slim enough, but he wasn’t very tall nor very cynical; neither did he wear eyeglasses nor carry his hands in his pockets. She liked him when she met him first. But don’t know why she is liking him. To this point, Gouvernail doesn’t show any traits or character.

He sat on the shade of the pillar and listen to Gaston’s experience with sugar plantations with smoking. She was puzzled about Gouvernail because of his abnormal behavior. Gouvernail feels complete satisfaction and relaxes after the air touches his body which is swept from the sugarcane field. He doesn’t show any eagerness to go to kill grosbeaks (a type of bird) and fish when Gaston proposed

doing so. He also doesn't show any action when a dog is coming to him to bite. Gouvernail was a person who is quiet, mute, unfriendly, secretive, and wants to live separately. He was opposed to her husband Gaston.

Gouvernail's personality puzzled Mrs. Baroda. Indeed, he was a lovable, inoffensive fellow. So she liked her. In this mood, he left her husband and Gouvernail and walks along the [batture](#) thinking that Gouvernail pays no attention which irritates her. She asks her husband when Gouvernail is going. Her husband was a little shocked. He asked her, Gouvernail not give you any trouble then why are you saying this? She told him, he is not like others, he always lives separately. He is not interesting. Her husband told me I called him on the plantation to take a rest from his busy overwork schedule. So, I don't want any commotion on him. After that Mrs. Baroda told her husband I am going to my Aunt Octavie's and called me only when Gouvernail go back.

On that night, she went and sat alone upon a bench that stood beneath a live oak tree at the edge of the gravel walk, thinking about Gouvernail. She thought that was why she was so confused, what is the intention with Gouvernail? She had no answer to it. After some time she listens to the footsteps of Gouvernail. Gouvernail came and sat beside her on the bench and gave her a white scarf that was given by her husband ' Gaston '.

Gouvernail talk to her in a murmured voice which was not unpleasant to hear. Mrs. Baroda knows that his periods of the reserve were not constitutional, but the result of moods. He talked of the old college days when he and Gaston had been a good deal to each other; of the days of keen and blind ambitions and large intentions. ***But Mrs. Baroda pays no attention to his voice.*** She wanted to touch him with the sensitive tips of her fingers upon the face or the lips in the dark night. She wanted to draw close to him and whisper against his cheek. Mrs. Baroda wanted all these. But social conviction pushed her to do it. She thought that she is a respectful woman. It is not good to betray Gaston, her husband. After that, she left Gouvernail alone on the bench and came home.

She wanted to tell all his folly(मूर्खता) to her husband but she can't do it being a respectful woman. This also shows that she is not only a respectful woman but also a very sensible one. Now, She knew that there are some battles in life that a human being must fight alone.

Mrs. Baroda took a morning train to the city before arising Gaston. She did not return till Gouvernail was gone from under her roof. She returns home when Gouvernail departs.

After some months, Gaston again wants to invite Gouvernail to his plantation but he doesn't do it because of his wife. He thinks that his wife will become angry. However, before the year ended, she herself proposed to her husband to invite Gouvernail to visit again. Her husband was surprised and delighted with the suggestion coming from her and said that I am glad to know that finally you can overcome your dislike and kiss her lips. In the replay, she said that I have overcome everything and This time I shall be very nice to him.

Understanding the text

Answer the following questions.

a. Why was Mrs. Baroda unhappy with the information about Gouvernail's visit to their farm?

Mrs. Baroda was unhappy with the information about Gouvernail's visit to their farm because she wanted to take some rest after working hard all day in winter.

b. How was Gouvernail different from Mrs. Baroda's expectation?

Mrs. Baroda expects Gouvernail should be tall, slim, and cynical; with eyeglasses and his hands in his pockets. But Gouvernail is far different from her expectation. He was slim enough, but he wasn't very tall nor very cynical; neither did he wear eyeglasses nor carry his hands in his pockets. She liked him when she met him first.

c. How does Mrs. Baroda compare Gouvernail with her husband?

Mrs. Baroda doesn't get those brilliant and promising traits which Gaston, her husband had often assured her that Gouvernail possessed. He doesn't show any eagerness to go to kill grosbeaks (a type of bird) and fish when Gaston proposed doing so. He also doesn't show any action when a dog is coming to him to bite. Gouvernail was a person who is quiet, mute, or less talkative and want to live separately. Gouvernail was just opposite her husband.

d. Why and how did Mrs. Baroda try to change Gouvernail's solitary habits?

Mrs. Baroda tries to change Gouvernail's solitary habits because she wants to make Gouvernail more talkative, interesting, and friendly.

She tries to change Gouvernail's solitary habits by drawing his attention to her but she does not get success in their goal.

e. How does Gaston disagree with his wife on Gouvernail's character?

Goston disagrees with his wife on Gouvernail's character as less talkative, unfriendly, and shy, wanting to live separately rather than being a remarkable, talkative, friendly, and sociable figure.

Why is Gaston surprised with his wife's expression towards the end of the story?

Gaston is surprised by his wife's expression towards the end of the story because she herself proposed to her husband to invite Gouvernail to visit again which Gaston never expect from her side.

Reference to the Context

What is the cause of conflict in Mrs. Baroda's mind? What role does Mrs. Baroda's 'being a respectable woman' play in the story?

The attraction towards Gouvernail is the main cause of conflict in Mrs. Baroda's mind. She wanted to touch him with the sensitive tips of her fingers upon the face or the lips in the dark night. She wanted to draw close to him and whisper against his cheek. Mrs. Baroda wanted all these. But She controls her urges due to the fear of social conviction.

Sketch the character of Gouvernail and contrast it with Gaston.

Gouvernail is a journalist who is busy with his job. He is also a heavy smoker. Gouvernail was a person who is quiet, mute, unfriendly, secretive and wants to live separately as a boring person. But Gaston was a talkative, friendly, frank, and sociable person

Why does Mrs. Baroda not disclose her feelings towards Gouvernail to her husband?

Mrs. Baroda does not disclose her feeling towards Gouvernail to her husband because she is a sensible woman along with a respectful woman. She has a fear of society's conviction. She has also a fear that this may ruin their marital relationship.

The last three sentences of the story bring a kind of twist. After reading these three sentences, how do you analyze Mrs. Baroda's attitude towards Gouvernail?

The last three sentences of the story bring a kind of twist due to the sudden change in the behavior and attitude of Mrs. Baroda towards Gouvernail. At last, she herself proposed to her husband to invite Gouvernail to visit again. She also said her husband that she had overcome everything. This shows that she had control of her emotion and feeling. She also said that 'This time she shall be very nice to him. It ensures that she welcomes him by removing all her previous negativity towards Gouvernail.

Reference beyond the text

1. **The entry of an outsider into a family has been a recurring subject in both literature and films. Narrate a story real or imaginative where an outsider's arrival destroys the intimate relationship between the husband and the wife and causes break up in marital relationship without the direct fault of anyone. Anton's Chekhov's story 'About Love' is a story on this subject.**

I am discussing here one of the stories "About Love" written by Anton Chekhov in which an outsider's arrival destroys the intimate relationship between the husband and the wife and causes a breakup in the marital relationship without the direct fault of anyone. A condition shown in the story 'A respectable Woman' is similar to the story 'About Love'. In 'About Love', three types of love stories are shown; the First love story is a Sexual/physical lover story, the second is materialistic/money, and the third is a Spiritual love story. Especially the third love story is similar to the story 'A respectable Woman'. I only extract the third story here, read the first and second from the given link [Read the story 'About Love'](#).

Third Love Story

When we are in love, we don't know whether it is honorable or dishonorable, sensible or stupid, or if it's good things or not. Alyohin told that it is an obstacle in the way of achieving goals, a source of dissatisfaction, and irritation. **To prove his**

statement, he told another story to his friend. The third love Story is the central and main love story of this chapter.

Alyohin said that when he was studying his father had taken debt on mortgages and to pay these debts, he has been living in Sofyiono and farming. Before he came to Sofyino, he was elected as honorary justice of the peace. From time to time, he had to go to town to take part in the assizes of the peace. He also makes the friends in the town. Luganovich is one of them who is also the assistant president of the circuit court.

Once, he invited him to dinner at his home where Alyohin meets Anna Alexeyevna, the wife of Luganovich. Anna, a very young woman, not more than twenty-two, and her first baby had been born just six months before. Alyohin was so attracted to Anna. They make dinner and play the duet on the piano.

He came to Sogyino and spent all the spring. He has no time to visit Anna but her shadow was lying on his soul. In late Autumn, he goes to the town for work where he saw Anna. They both planned to go to the theater. The next day, they met at lunch. After that, he went to the town and visit Luganoviche's house to meet Anna but he never announced their love. Her husband has a positive attitude Therefore, he doesn't doubt their relationship. Anna and Luganoviche told to Alyohin that if he needs money at any moment to pay the debts, doesn't hesitate to ask for money. They will help him.

When he went home, he was unhappy and always thinking about Anna. When Alyohin visits her house, he saw from her eyes that she also loved him. She also told him that she had had a distinct feeling toward him. However, Alyohin doesn't confess his love thinking that it will break up the whole household ie. the life of her husband, and children, and also ruin their life and happiness. He was also afraid of society, and its morality. She also reasoned in the same way. She also thinks that she was not young enough to live with him.

Latterly Anna lives with her mother or her sister who took them away. Anna already has a nervous prostration. So, she doesn't care about her husband and children. Luganovich received an appointment in one of the western provinces and planned to check up on Anna in the western province so she sale his all property to be transferred to the western province with Anna.

Alyohin met them at the station. The train already started running, Alyohin ran into the compartment to place on the rack a basket that she had almost forgotten. After

that When their eyes met, their spiritual strength comes out. They conceal their love. He kissed her face and shoulder. Tears wet them but it's time to parted and said Good-Bye. The train was already running. He walked into the next compartment and came to Sofyino.

Conclusion: In this story, we notice similar types of emotion, feeling, and attitude that are shown in the given story 'A respectable Woman' as compared to 'About Love'. There is only one difference between these two stories that is the emotion and feeling was first growing from the side of the man in '**About Love**' but in '**A respectable Story**' the emotion and feeling first grew from the side of the man.

2. Mrs. Baroda makes an expectation about Gouvernail even before meeting him. Suppose you are a mature girl/boy and your family members are giving you pressure for getting married. Write in about 200 words describing what qualities you would like to get in your future husband/wife.

Marriage decision is one of the major decisions of our life. Married life looks far different than a single life; instead of being the sole owner of your universe, you have to share each and everything of your life. So, a person must be rational while taking decisions. In the case of taking a wrong decision, not only is your marriage life ruined but also your own life becomes full of darkness. So a person must select his/her life partner who is alike him/her. There must be a good understanding between them.

Some of the qualities I would like to get in my future husband/wife are:

- S/he must respect my belief and values
- S/he must trust me
- S/he must have a sense of humor
- S/he must take care and pay attention to each other
- S/he respects my mom and dad
- S/he loves me as my mom and dad
- S/he does not lie to me
- S/he remains faithful to me

- [For more click here](#)