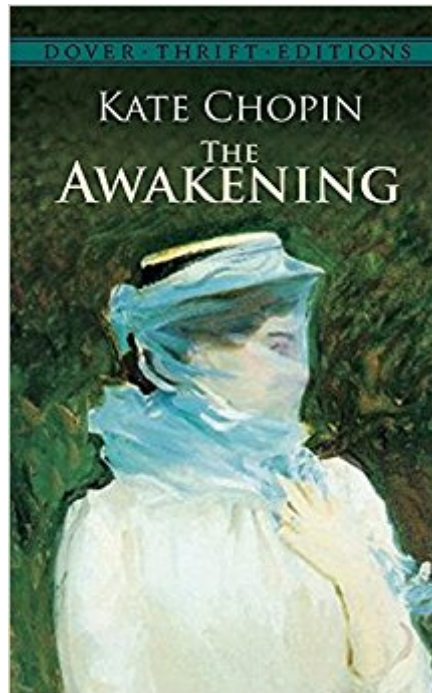




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The Awakening (Dover Thrift Editions)



Synopsis

When first published in 1899, *The Awakening* shocked readers with its honest treatment of female marital infidelity. Audiences accustomed to the pieties of late Victorian romantic fiction were taken aback by Chopin's daring portrayal of a woman trapped in a stifling marriage, who seeks and finds passionate physical love outside the straitened confines of her domestic situation. Aside from its unusually frank treatment of a then-controversial subject, the novel is widely admired today for its literary qualities. Edmund Wilson characterized it as a work "quite uninhibited and beautifully written, which anticipates D. H. Lawrence in its treatment of infidelity." Although the theme of marital infidelity no longer shocks, few novels have plumbed the psychology of a woman involved in an illicit relationship with the perception, artistry, and honesty that Kate Chopin brought to *The Awakening*. Now available in this inexpensive edition, it offers a powerful and provocative reading experience to modern readers.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I read this feminist classic (for the first time, amazingly) in a splendid Simon & Schuster hardbound edition from 1996, which is not listed here; I mention it only because it so strongly shaped my expectations. Beautifully printed, on generously-sized pages of thick paper, it was a joy to read and to hold. The tone was set from the start by the gallery of period photographs offered as a preface. Beginning with a dark and painterly photo of wind-blown pines on the barrier island of Grand Isle, where much of the novella is set, it moved on to views of the Bayou country, a New Orleans street,

women in drawing rooms taking tea or listening to music, dark interiors, a sun-bleached veranda, and a glorious sea-bathing scene like a French Impressionist painting. Together, they are a time machine, transporting us to a different place and era, Southern Louisiana at the very end of the 19th century. Kate Chopin's book was published in 1899. And you read it like a period piece at first too. It opens in Madame Lebrun's guest house on Grand Isle, where families from New Orleans would take one of the cottages connected by walkways to the main house, the wives and children staying for the entire summer, their husbands working in their New Orleans banks or brokerages and joining them for weekends. A relaxed routine of trips to the beach, meals in the big house, and informal gatherings in the evening devoted to music, recitations, or playing cards. The young Madame Edna Pontellier, the Kentucky bride of a Creole businessman, is there with her two young children and their quadroon nurse, with young Robert Lebrun, son of their hostess and half-a-dozen years her junior, dancing attendance, fetching fans or cooling drinks, and reading to her when requested to do so.

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