

The Awakening Study Guide

CHAPTER I Vocabulary

chamomile – a plant

gaunt – thin, bony

lugger – a small boat with a sail

quadroon – a person who has one African-American grandparent

1. Explain how the parrot and the mockingbird are used to introduce this chapter.

They provide disruptive sound images. The parrot is saying, "Go away! Go away! For Heaven's sake!" The mockingbird whistles with "maddening persistence."

2. Describe Léonce Pontellier.

He appears to be a successful New Orleans businessman. He is neat and orderly in appearance and has an impatient manner. He and his wife, Edna, and their two children are vacationing at Grand Isle for the summer.

3. What does the following quotation tell you about Léonce's attitude toward his wife? He looked "at his wife as one looks at a valuable piece of personal property which has suffered some damage."

He considers her as property, not as a person; he also considers the appearance of his possessions as very important.

4. Who is Robert Lebrun?

He is the son of Madame Lebrun, the woman who owns the main house and the cottages that make up the summer resort at Grand Isle.

5. Discuss the use of the following sounds in Chapter I: the other birds, the piano, Madame Lebrun, the children, Edna, and Robert.

- *The birds are "chattering and whistling."*
- *The young girls are playing the piano.*
- *Madame Lebrun's "bustling in and out, giving orders in a high key."*
- *The Pontellier children are playing.*
- *Edna and Robert return from the beach, laughing and talking.*

6. How do these sounds indicate something about the setting of the novel?

They suggest a warm, pleasant, carefree, summer day.

7. What indications are there that the Pontellier marriage is strained?

Léonce takes Edna for granted, seeing her as a part of his neat, orderly world. He seems unconcerned about the shared familiarity between Edna and Robert. Léonce and his wife speak only in passing; he leaves for Klein's and perhaps a game of billiards rather than spend time with her.

CHAPTER II

Vocabulary

countenance – the look on a person’s face
incessantly – never stopping

infusion – the act of putting or mixing one thing into another

languor – listlessness, a lack of vitality

1. Describe Edna Pontellier.

She is attractive, handsome rather than beautiful. Her eyes are “quick and bright; they were a yellowish-brown, about the color of her hair.

2. What kind of person is Robert Lebrun?

He is a clerk in a mercantile house who has hopes of finding his fortune in Mexico. This has not happened yet, but he has plans to meet someone in Mexico who may help him in this goal.

3. What shift in point of view is evident in Chapter Two?

The shift is from Mr. Pontellier’s to the author’s third-person point-of-view. Chopin comments here on the conversation between Edna and Robert.

4. What do you learn about Robert and Edna from their conversation at the end of this chapter?

Left alone when Léonce does not return early, Edna and Robert talk in a leisurely, unhurried manner. He is concerned about his future; she talks about her childhood homes, her sisters, and her dead mother.

CHAPTER III

Vocabulary

composure – the state of being calm

dispelling – causing to vanish

foregoing – that which came before

habitual – much seen or done, usual

impaired – damaged

imploring – begging

indiscriminately – done haphazardly

lamenting – regretting, feeling deep sorrow

luscious – delicious, sweet

monotonous – tiresome; unvarying

mournful – sad

oppression – burden, a feeling of being weighed down

toothsome – pleasing to the taste

upbraiding – scolding

1. How does Léonce’s behavior when he returns from the Klein Hotel reveal his attitude toward his wife?

He returns at 11:00 in a good mood. He is inconsiderate and disturbs Edna by talking to her, even though she has been sleeping. He seems wrapped up in his own concerns and ignorant of his wife’s needs. He refers to her as “the sole object of his existence,” but she is treated only as an object, not a person. He scolds her for not taking care of the children, which he feels is her job, even though he has forgotten to bring them the promised treats.

2. What shows the reader more signs of the marital conflict between the Pontelliers?

Edna is upset by her husband’s criticism. After checking on the children, she goes outside and cries for some time while her husband sleeps. She cannot explain to herself exactly why she is crying.

3. Discuss how sounds are used as a backdrop to the scene of disagreement between Léonce and Edna. How is the sea used as a symbol?

There is the hooting of an owl and the “everlasting voice of the sea” that seems like “a mournful lullaby upon the night.” The sea is a symbol for Edna’s awakening from her present life to a different existence. The sea is a little louder than it has ever been before.

4. How does the gift Edna receives from her husband symbolize her marriage and most marriages of this time?

The gifts look good and taste good, but they are trivial and quickly gone. Most marriages at this time, like the Pontelliers’, look good on the outside but do not necessarily have much depth or substance.

CHAPTER IV

Vocabulary

amicable – friendly

ample – more than enough

anticipating – expecting

atonement – to right a wrong, to make amends

bodice – a vest

Creole – a person descended from the original French settlers of Louisiana

droll – oddly amusing

efface – to make unimportant, to wipe out

embodiment – the perfect example

esteemed – to have great regard for

impervious – incapable of being hurt

insidious – more dangerous

iota – a very small amount

subsequent – that which follows

1. Describe the unusual nature of the relationship between Edna and her children.

There is no outward display of affection. She “was not a mother/woman.” The children take care of themselves with some help from a nurse.

2. What satiric comment does the narrator make concerning “mother-woman”? Cite specific words that reveal the satiric nature of these comments.

“They were women who idolized their children, worshiped their husbands, and esteemed it a holy privilege to efface themselves as individuals and grow wings as ministering angels.” Chopin also uses words such as fluttering, protecting, and precious brood.

3. Who is Adèle Ratignolle, and how is she the embodiment of the “mother-woman”?

She is an acquaintance of Edna’s; they spend time together sewing and visiting. She is the antithesis of Edna: she is openly affectionate with her children, lavishing both her children and her husband with total love. She has three children and is planning for a fourth.

4. How does the fact that Edna is not a Creole affect her relationship with others on Grand Isle?

She feels set apart from the “one large family” of Creoles on Grand Isle that summer. She feels uncomfortable when they openly discuss and tell stories about what she has always considered “inappropriate” topics.

5. Support the following statement as a possible theme in the novel: there is danger in novels that can confuse susceptible women.

Edna is given a somewhat shocking, scandalous novel to read. The others read it openly and discuss it. She “read the book in secret and solitude.” Books of this kind may stimulate the romantic thoughts of a vulnerable person such as Edna Pontellier.

CHAPTER V

Vocabulary

aptitude – talent

congenial – agreeable; sharing common tastes and interests

contemptuous – scornful

detain – keep from leaving

earnest – genuine

entreaty – request

imperative – powerful; important

inconsolable – unable to be calmed

naivete – extreme innocence, foolish simplicity

prostrating – kneeling

remonstrate – to make objections

sensuous – that which stimulates the senses

sonorous – full, deep, rich sound

vouchsafe – bestow, give, grant

1. During the Middle Ages, courtly love was embodied in the behavior of a knight toward the fine lady he loved. He would prostrate himself before her, idealize her, carry her favor into battle, but never demonstrate physical love for her. How does Robert's behavior toward Edna fit this pattern?

Robert has exhibited such behavior toward women in the past; one summer he was hopelessly "in love" with Adèle Ratignolle. When he devotes himself to Edna by waiting on her and "exchanging occasional words, glances or smiles," there appears to be an "advanced stage of intimacy" developing.

2. What is the difference between Robert's present attentions to Edna and his past attentions to Adèle Ratignolle?

Adèle, and the other Creole women on Grand Isle, knew "the game," and did not take Robert seriously. Edna, however, feels uncomfortable when Robert leans his head on her arm, not once but twice. She does take his actions seriously.

3. What is the significance of Edna's sketching in this chapter?

Edna sketches as a hobby; other women do not indulge in such creative pastimes. Their efforts are devoted to their children. Her sketching is a casual diversion from which she derives some personal satisfaction.

CHAPTER VI

Vocabulary

abysses – immeasurably deep spaces

ponderous – difficult to handle

1. What question does Robert pose to Edna after Madame Ratignolle leaves? Why does this question pose a problem for Edna?

He asks her if she is going to bathe (swim). At first she declines; then she walks with him to the beach. She is confused by this contradiction. She is "beginning to realize her position in the universe as a human being, and to recognize her relations as an individual to the world within and about her."

2. How is the sea used symbolically in this chapter?

The sea is "whispering, clamoring, murmuring, inviting the soul to wander for a spell in abysses of solitude; to lose itself in mazes of inward contemplation." The sea is a symbol of Edna's awakening. "The voice of the sea speaks to the soul," and Edna is beginning to respond to this voice inside her.

Chapter VII

Vocabulary

acme – the highest point

candor – frankness, honesty

decrees – events that seem foreordained

effusive – expressing great emotion

enamored – feeling love for

hitherto – until now

induce – persuade

intoxicated – excited

manifestation – an expression of

propensity – an inclination

relinquish – to give up

1. How are Edna Pontellier and Adèle Ratignolle contrasted in this chapter?

Edna is reserved and solitary while Adèle is open, candid, and very friendly. Edna seems unsure of her life now while Adèle is perfectly happy with her children and her husband.

2. How is the road to the beach used symbolically in this chapter?

The road to the beach is “a long, sandy path” bordered by “sporadic and tangled growth,” much like Edna’s difficult path to awakening. The path that leads to the sea, is a symbol of Edna’s awakening.

3. How are the lady in black and the two lovers used symbolically in this chapter?

These three characters recur throughout the novel. The two lovers symbolize how lovers are intent upon only themselves to the exclusion of others. The lady in black could be death, or she could be a moral conscience that follows and watches the lovers.

4. How is the flashback to Edna’s childhood used to show the reader how Edna has been repressed and lonely all her life?

She has formed no close friendships within or outside her family. Since childhood, she has been repressed by strict religious influences.

5. What do you learn about Edna as a person, given the reasons for her marriage to Léonce?

She has had romantic fantasies of men and love but has always been disappointed in some way. She enters into marriage with no illusions about love and with a practical understanding of the marriage. She marries Léonce partly because her family objects. Edna does have a rebellious streak, but her marriage to Léonce Pontellier is a practical decision that will put an end to foolish, romantic dreams and fantasies. She must walk this path forever “idly, aimlessly, unthinking and unguided.”

6. “She grew fond of her husband, realizing with some unaccountable satisfaction that no trace of passion or excessive and fictitious warmth colored her affection, thereby threatening its dissolution.” How does this omniscience of Chopin reveal Edna’s feelings about marriage and intimate relationships?

Affection is more lasting than passion; passion can destroy affection. Edna marries someone who will not confuse her emotionally. This summer on Grand Isle, Edna feels dangerous emotions beginning to surface; the fact that she is married does not seem to be an obstacle to her exploring these emotions.

7. How does Edna feel toward her children? What does she realize about herself and her role as a mother?

She is erratic, sometimes embracing them, at other times ignoring them. She realizes that it is her fate to be a mother, even though she is not particularly good at it.

8. How is the theme of “awakening” revealed in this chapter?

Edna talks openly and freely to Adèle, something she has never done before. To her it is like “a first breath of freedom.” She feels “flushed” and “intoxicated with the sound of her own voice.”

9. How is the symbolism of the unknown “lovers” used in this chapter?

They symbolize passionate love, totally involved with only each other. They are seen now only in the background, representing Edna’s hidden desires contrasted to her stagnant marriage.

CHAPTER VIII

Vocabulary

desultory – random

discernment – the ability to perceive

imperiling – putting at risk

propensity – habit

resounding – echoing loudly

solicitation – request

vehemently – with force and passion

1. Why does Adèle tell Robert to leave Edna alone? Why is he annoyed by this?

Adèle says, “She is not one of us; she is not like us. She might make the unfortunate blunder of taking you seriously.” He is offended by this suggestion, reassuring her that Edna should take him seriously; he goes on to tell several scandalous stories about men such as Alcée Arobin, who are heartless womanizers and who make him appear innocent by comparison.

2. How is the sound of the sewing machine (different from previous sounds) used in this chapter to reflect mood?

The “clatter, clatter, clatter, bang” of the sewing machine is a background to the conversation of Robert and his mother. This harsh, discordant sound differs from the soothing sounds of birds and introduces tension. Robert is upset by his brother ignoring him and by his mother not telling him immediately about the letter from Montel indicating that Montel will be in Vera Cruz next month and expects Robert to meet him there.

CHAPTER IX

Vocabulary

capricious – whimsical

demure – modest, reserved

effulgence – a radiance

imperious – overbearing

impetuous – done without forethought or preparation

keen – deeply penetrating

mystic – inspiring a sense of mystery and wonder

plaintive – sad

prevailed – persuaded

tempered – modified

weazened – shriveled

1. How is the sound of the parrot used in this chapter? Can you see any significance to the words the parrot says, particularly in relationship to the turmoil developing in Edna Pontellier?

It says, “Go Away! For Heaven’s sake!” It is a voice calling Edna to leave her present life and follow her dreams, or it is a warning that she should go away from Grand Isle before it is too late and something terrible happens.

2. Who is Mademoiselle Reisz? How is she a contrast to Edna Pontellier?

Mademoiselle Reisz is a disagreeable old woman who is not married and does not like children, is quarrelsome, and has horrible taste in clothes. She has followed her own wishes in spite of the conventions of society; Edna has followed the conventions of society in spite of her wishes. Mademoiselle Reisz is an accomplished artist (musician); Edna only dabbles in sketching as a hobby.

3. In the past, what image has been evoked in Edna's mind by a certain musical passage? How is this a contrast to Edna's life up to this point?

Edna has always been able to see physical images in her mind of a naked man, totally free, standing on a rock. The image is of a wildness and freedom that is a contrast to Edna's existence.

4. What is Edna's response to the music of Mademoiselle Reisz? How is this related to the "awakening" theme in the novel?

She cries. She is feeling the passions evoked by the music rather than seeing just the physical image. "She saw no pictures of solitude, of hope, of longing, or of despair. But the very passions themselves were aroused within her soul."

CHAPTER X

Vocabulary

exalted – held in high esteem and worthy of great praise

flippancy – lack of seriousness

listlessly – without life

malicious – with the intent of doing harm

pathos – sadness

supercilious – proud

ungovernable – uncontrollable

voluptuous – full of pleasure

1. What realization does Edna come to as she walks to the water with her husband by her side?

She realizes how much she misses Robert when he is not with her. She is awakening to the fact that he is an important emotional part of her world which she feels is "just as one misses the sun on a cloudy day without having thought much about the sun when it was shining."

2. How are images of sound and smell used as a backdrop to this scene?

"There were strange, rare odors abroad—a tangle of the sea smell... mingled with the heavy perfume of a field of white blossoms." The sea at this time is quiet and "swelled lazily in broad billows." There is an atmosphere of the exotic and mysterious to heighten Edna's mood of discovery.

3. How does Edna respond to swimming successfully for the first time? What happens that can be considered symbolism or foreshadowing?

All summer, Edna has attempted, unsuccessfully, to swim. She has had several teachers, but no success. This night she swims and is filled with joy, freedom, and power. She swims far out, and then fears the possibility of death for a short time before returning to shore. This could symbolize the danger in straying too far from the conventions of the time, or it could foreshadow future events in the novel.

4. What is the significance of "the spirits of the twenty-eighth of August"?

Edna is twenty-eight years old, and it is the twenty-eighth of August. She has been taken by the spirit looking for the "mortal worthy to hold him company." When Edna and Robert return to the cottages, they sit quietly, almost as if suspended in time. Edna feels born again, aware of the "first-felt throbbings of desire."

CHAPTER XI

Vocabulary

exalted – lifted up

exuberance – lively enthusiasm

1. How is the theme of rebellion against marriage shown in Edna's behavior when her husband returns? How does this rebellion end?

Léonce first asks and then orders her to come into the cottage. She refuses, realizing that many times before, she has simply submitted to whatever her husband expects of her. Her attempt at rebellion ends after her husband joins her outside, smoking a cigar and drinking wine. She becomes tired and goes inside while he remains outside. Somehow he has managed to outlast her and has won the "battle."

CHAPTER XII

Vocabulary

deprecatory – disapproving

intangible – having no physical substance and therefore incapable of being grasped

piquant – agreeably stimulating

reproach – to show disapproval

sullenly – gloomily

1. Edna goes to the Chênière for mass. How are the "lovers" used here?

The lovers, who see nothing and hear nothing, go to Chênière also, but "had laid their plans the night before." They remain in the background with the shadowy black figure. Edna is following her impulses, doing whatever she feels like doing, without planning ahead of time.

2. What does Edna do that she has never done before? What phrases are repeated?

She sends for Robert to go with her. This is a bold move on her part: "she had never sent for him before. She had never asked for him. She had never seemed to want him before."

3. What is Robert's reaction? In what position does this put Edna as far as her relationship with Robert is concerned?

He is obviously pleased because "his face was suffused with a quiet glow when he met her." Edna has taken charge for the first time, and Robert seems willing to follow her.

4. How does Edna feel as she and Robert sail to the Chênière Caminada?

She feels as if she is being released from some weight that has been holding her back, as if she has been "borne away." The mystic spirit of the night before is still there, and she feels free to do whatever she wants to.

5. Who are the people aboard the ship in addition to Robert and Edna? Briefly explain the significance of these people.

The lovers and the lady in black are mysterious figures always in the background as a reminder of passionate love. Monsieur Farival is the father of the musical twins and a wise old man. Mariequita is a Spanish girl who knows Robert and was possibly romantically involved with him in the past. She asks about his relationship with Edna. Beaufort is the sailor in charge of the boat.

6. What is the significance of the plans Robert says he has for the future? What is Edna's response?

He suggests they go to Grand Terre and perhaps out in a pirogue (canoe) to an island. Their banter is talk between possible future lovers; Robert, wanting to spend more time with Edna, indirectly proposes a relationship.

CHAPTER XIII

Vocabulary

lulling – deadening

procured – acquired

stealthy – sneaky; attempting to avoid notice

1. How does Edna respond to the actual church service?

She feels stifled and oppressed. Her head aches, and she gets up to leave. Robert follows. At this time, Edna cannot stand anything that restricts or has rules, such as religion.

2. Who is Madame Antoine?

She is a friend of Robert's, who lets Edna into her house to rest.

3. What does Edna do at Madame Antoine's house? How is this related to the "awakening" theme in the novel?

She removes most of her clothing and bathes her face, neck, and arms in a basin of cool water. She falls into an utterly relaxed, deep sleep. When she wakes up, she is hungry and eats voraciously. She is allowing herself to feel physical, sensual pleasures—awakening to a different world.

4. What role does Robert play during this time?

He is her guardian; he has watched over and protected her while she slept. They speak lightly, like lovers in a fairy tale. The entire day has had a magic quality to it.

5. What thoughts has Edna had about her husband and her children?

She asks once if Léonce will worry about her, but Robert assures her that Léonce knows she is safe with him. She never once thinks of her children.

CHAPTER XIV

Vocabulary

dissuaded – persuaded not to

pacified – made calm

pretentious – making claims of some importance or distinction

1. What is Léonce's reaction when Edna does not return with the others? What does this show you about their marriage?

He is worried at first; but when assured of her safety by Adèle Ratignolle, he leaves for Klein's to discuss business. He is indifferent to his wife's absence and unconcerned about what she is doing.

2. How does Edna clarify for herself and for Robert how special their relationship has become?

She remarks that they have spent the entire day together, from morning to evening. She realizes that their relationship is very special and that she is somehow a different person now.

3. How is the song she hums after parting from Robert related to the theme of awakening?

The repeated line is "Oh, if you only knew...." That is what is happening to her: she is beginning to know herself.

Chapter XV

Vocabulary

commodious – large

dainty – small

incipiently – in an early stage of development

obnoxious – disagreeable

poignancy – emotional impact

sardonically – sarcastically

unscrupulous – dishonest

1. Why do you think Robert decides to leave Grand Isle for Mexico?

He says it is his only opportunity to meet a man in Vera Cruz on some business matter. He protests that he has been saying for a long time that he planned to go to Mexico. Later, when Edna talks about her plans for them to be together, even perhaps seeing him in New Orleans during the winter, he says, "Perhaps that's the—." This inability to express himself suggests that he wants to remove himself from a potentially difficult situation with the Pontelliers.

2. What is Edna's reaction to the news that he is leaving?

She is crushed by the news and by Robert's attitude toward her. He seems distant and evasive. She remembers the painful infatuations from her past. But the only thing she really knows is that she has lost something she wanted very much. Her present pain is all she knows. She feels "she had been denied that which her impassioned, newly awakened being demanded."

CHAPTER XVI

Vocabulary

aversion – a dislike

donned – put on

unessential – unnecessary

1. How does Edna spend much of her time after Robert leaves?

She spends a great deal of time swimming. It is the only diversion that brings any pleasure. The water is cooler now, more invigorating.

2. What does she say or do that shows the depth of her feelings for Robert and her awareness of a change within herself?

She talks about Robert. She visits Madame Lebrun's room and is disappointed when she learns that he has written to his mother, not to her, and has sent no special message to her. The feelings awakened in her by this summer have not left with Robert's departure.

3. How are Mademoiselle Reisz and Adèle Ratignolle foils to Edna?

Mademoiselle Reisz is talented, unmarried, and dependent on no man for her own happiness. Adèle Ratignolle is the perfect "mother-woman" devoted to her children and her husband. Edna cannot be like either of these women. She is unhappily married, only dabbles in art, and has not reached an understanding of herself or independence from men. She seldom thinks of either her husband or her children.

4. What does she learn from Mademoiselle Reisz about Robert and Victor Lebrun?

Victor is his mother's favorite; Robert has worked to support his mother and brother; and Robert has "thrashed" Victor in the past over Mariequita (the girl from the pirogue). Edna is depressed and unhappy after learning of a romantic rivalry between the brothers.

5. How is the following quotation an example of foreshadowing? Edna says, "I would give up the unessential; I would give my money, I would give my life for my children; but I wouldn't give myself."
Edna may break away from her present life and her children to be with Robert, or she could mean that there is a difference between her life and herself.

CHAPTER XVII

Vocabulary

din – noise

picturesque – visually pleasing

1. What is the setting for Chapter Seventeen? How is this a contrast to the previous setting?

The Pontelliers return to their home in New Orleans. It is luxurious and completely conventional, befitting Léonce's position in the community. This setting places restraints on Edna that Grand Isle did not.

2. How is Léonce Pontellier's attitude toward his home similar to his attitude toward his wife?

He sees the home and all of its valuable furnishings as his possessions, not because of their monetary value, but because they are his. His attitude toward Edna is the same: she is his possession.

3. What is the purpose of Edna's Tuesday "at home"? How does this change after she returns from Grand Isle, and how does this fit into the theme of rebellion?

The Tuesday "at home" is a social convention, a time to receive visitors of social and business importance. Edna has followed this custom for six years. A few weeks after her return from Grand Isle she stops receiving people with no explanation, other than "I simply felt like going out, and I went out." Edna is rebelling against the demands of society and doing only what she wants.

4. How does her husband react to this and other things that happen in the household, such as his complaints about the cook?

He becomes angry and complains about the dinner and the cook. He goes through the calling cards left that day and lectures Edna about her responsibilities. Then he leaves to eat dinner at his club.

5. What does Edna do after Léonce leaves?

She finishes her dinner and goes to her room. There are no soothing voices from the darkness. She becomes frustrated, tearing a handkerchief to shreds, throwing her wedding ring, and finally smashing a vase.

6. What is the significance of Edna taking off her wedding ring and then putting it back on?

When the maid returns the ring to her, she puts it back on her finger; this action indicates that she is not ready to abandon her marriage yet.

CHAPTER XVIII

Vocabulary

alacrity – cheerful eagerness

animation – liveliness

antagonistic – hostile

commiseration – sympathy

complacency – self-satisfaction

ennui – boredom

extraneous – extra, unnecessary, unconnected

inutility – of no use

1. Edna visits the home of Adèle Ratignolle in New Orleans. How is the Ratignolle marriage a contrast to the Pontellier marriage?

The Ratignolles are completely happy and contented in their marriage: two people fused into one. The wife is interested in everything the husband says and listens intently. In contrast, Edna and Léonce talk at each other, but neither really listens to the other.

2. How does Edna feel about a marriage such as Adèle's?

Edna thinks such a marriage would be stifling and awful. She considers it a "colorless existence which never uplifted its possessor beyond the region of blind contentment." Edna wants more from life.

CHAPTER XIX

Vocabulary

atelier – studio

expedients – acts meant to bring about desired effects

insolent – boldly disrespectful

tacit – unspoken but understood

1. How does Edna spend most of her time in this section of the book?

She works on her sketches in an upstairs studio and pays no attention to her household duties. She refuses to entertain guests and does not reply to those who leave their calling cards.

2. What is Léonce's reaction?

He is angry and confused; in the past, she has been submissive to his wishes. He cannot understand why she spends her time foolishly painting and ignoring her family responsibilities. She does not back down, and "when Mr. Pontellier became rude, Edna grew insolent. She had resolved never to take another step backward." He thinks she may be losing her mind.

3. How does Edna feel about her painting?

She does not defend her work. She enjoys it, but it never reaches her own standards or expectations. The act, not the result, of painting satisfies her.

4. Although she is haunted by memories of Grand Isle, how does she manage to "enjoy" her life?

There are days when she is very happy, feeling as one with nature and wandering the streets of the city alone. She often sings, "Ah! si tu savais! [If only you knew...]." She is beginning to know herself and to do as she wishes.

Chapter XX

Vocabulary

bantered – exchanged amusing remarks

emphatic – forceful

glibly – smoothly

1. Why does Edna go to the Lebrun home in New Orleans?

She is looking for Mademoiselle Reisz and remembers that Madam Lebrun would probably have her address.

2. How is this house described? In what way is this description related to Edna's desire for Robert?

The house looks like a prison from the outside. In a way, the house is a reminder that what Edna wants (Robert) is barred from her.

3. Edna meets Robert's brother, Victor. How is Victor a kind of exaggeration of Robert?

Victor is a nineteen year old, flirtatious young man. He seems to be an exaggeration of the reckless, impetuous, physical qualities that have drawn Edna to Robert.

4. What does Edna learn about Robert while she is there? Why does this depress her?

He has written letters, one from Vera Cruz and one from the City of Mexico. He talks of his business venture and sends his mother a check. There is a general greeting to all his friends but no special greeting to Edna. She is depressed by Robert's careless, indifferent attitude.

CHAPTER XXI

Vocabulary

gaiter – shoe

prunella – a strong textile

1. Describe the apartment of Mademoiselle Reisz. Her apartment is symbolic of another way of life, less stifling and confining.

Her apartment is on the top floor. There are many dingy windows that are always open. Light and air come into the room, and there is a wide view of the river and ships. There is a grand piano prominent in the front room, suggesting the importance of music in the life of Mademoiselle Reisz.

2. How does Mademoiselle Reisz react when Edna talks about her painting?

She thinks Edna is pretentious to consider herself an artist. She says that a true artist must have a courageous soul and be willing to defy convention. Edna has not yet reached that point.

3. What is the content of a letter Robert has written to Mademoiselle Reisz?

The letter is all about Edna. Though she refuses to give Edna the letter at first, Reisz finally yields to her persistence, giving her the letter and playing Frédéric Chopin's "Impromptu" while Edna reads it.

4. What is Edna's reaction?

She cries uncontrollably as she reads the letter, and the music becomes "turbulent, insistent, plaintive and soft with entreaty."

5. What is the attitude of Mademoiselle Reisz at this time?

She is aware of Edna's infatuation with Robert and does not discourage it. She tells Edna to return as often as she wants.

CHAPTER XXII

Vocabulary

laurels – past achievements

portly – stout

profusion – a large amount of

pseudo-intellectual – pretending to be but not intellectual

1. How do the actions and comments of Léonce and Doctor Mandelet illustrate the following theme: that men cannot understand women? Cite specific references to the text to support your answer.

Léonce complains that Edna has “some sort of notion in her head concerning the eternal rights of women.” He also reveals that he and Edna no longer sleep together. The doctor blames possible association with “pseudo-intellectual” women for Edna’s behavior. Both are patronizing and seeing women generally as strange creatures that are “moody and whimsical.” When the doctor suggests a possible genetic defect, Léonce reassures the doctor that he checked Edna’s lineage thoroughly before marrying her. Neither man appears to understand Edna or the depths of what she is experiencing.

2. What advice does Doctor Mandelet give Léonce?

Léonce should let Edna do as she pleases and hope the mood passes. The doctor will come to dinner one evening to observe Edna.

3. What does the doctor suspect but never say to Léonce?

He suspects that another man may be responsible for Edna’s behavior, but the doctor would never say such a thing aloud to a Creole husband.

CHAPTER XXIII

Vocabulary

coquetted – flirted

murky – gloomy

perambulations – walks

1. What do Edna and her father share as a common interest?

They have a common interest in music and attend Madame Ratignolle’s evening musicals. They also share an interest in horse racing and go often to the track.

2. How is her father’s dress and appearance characteristic of him as a person?

He is a somewhat imposing military figure, but his clothing is padded to give “a fictitious breadth and depth to his shoulders and chest.” He is not what he appears to be. He is not a loving father; he does not seem interested in his grandchildren; he expects Edna to be talented because she is his child. He does not understand her at all.

3. How does Adèle treat Edna’s father? What is Edna’s reaction?

Adèle flirts with Edna’s father. She does not understand Adèle’s behavior since Edna is not given to flirtatious, coy behavior.

4. What observations does Doctor Mandelet make when he comes to the Pontellier home to meet Edna’s father and to observe her?

He does not think she is melancholy or peculiar. He notices that she has changed a great deal, but he sees her as “some beautiful, sleek animal waking up in the sun.” The doctor is more sensitive to this than either her father or Léonce is.

5. Describe the stories told by the following people during the evening: Léonce, the Colonel, and Edna.

Léonce tells a story about plantation experiences, hunting and roaming the woods and fields. The Colonel tells a story from his past military adventures in which he plays an important part. Edna tells a story of lovers escaping society and never coming back; her story is full of rich, sensual images.

6. What is the doctor's reaction to the evening and to Edna's story? How is this an example of foreshadowing?
He is sorry he accepted the invitation to dinner; he does not want to be drawn into the problems in other people's lives. He thinks she is involved with another man but hopes it is not anyone like Alcée Arobin, a notorious womanizer. The reader knows that Edna will be in trouble if she meets and becomes friends with this man.

CHAPTER XXIV

Vocabulary

ardent – passionate
coercion – intimidation
filial – befitting a daughter

1. What is Edna's attitude toward her sister's wedding? How do her father and Léonce react to this?
She refuses to attend. This shocks her father and Léonce. Her father lectures her; Léonce follows Dr. Mandelet's advice, however, and lets her do as she pleases.

2. Compare Edna's father to Léonce.
Both are concerned about appearances and personal dignity and community standing; they believe a woman should be submissive to a man. The Colonel, however, believes in "coercion" and authority as ways to force obedience. Léonce seems more tolerant.

3. What is different about Edna's attitude toward Léonce both before and after he leaves for the wedding?
She is affectionate and crying. She acts like Adèle Ratignolle, fussing over the packing of his clothes. She cries when he leaves, "remembering his many acts of consideration and his repeated expressions of an ardent attachment."

4. Why does she act this way?
She is ambivalent in her feelings. She does not hate her husband, but she feels no passionate love for him, either.

5. Where are Edna's children?
The children are taken away by Léonce's mother; Edna is left completely alone with no family responsibilities. "A feeling that was unfamiliar but very delicious came over her."

6. How does she feel about being alone?
She is happy and relieved. She thinks about Léonce and the children, but she enjoys time spent wandering through the house and garden, dining alone, and reading in the library.

CHAPTER XXV

Vocabulary

apprised – made aware of
deplored – disliked
infidelity – a breach of loyalty
mellow – to calm
pretext – excuse
remittent – coming at intervals

1. Who is Alcée Arobin?
He is a man of fashion, who spends his time at the racetrack, the opera, or fashionable clubs. He is a scoundrel when it comes to women, possessing a smooth, appealing manner that he uses to his advantage.

2. How does he feel about his past encounters with Edna? What is different now?

He has met Edna before without any interest in her; now "he admired Edna extravagantly after meeting her at the races with her father." He uses Mrs. Highcamp to pursue Edna with some cover of respectability.

3. Describe Edna's reaction to the races.

Edna knows a great deal about horse racing; she becomes excited and feverish as she plays for high stakes and wins. Alcée is caught up with her excitement and is attracted to Edna.

4. Describe Edna's behavior after her evening with Alcée.

They have dinner with the Highcamps; then Alcée takes Edna home. He makes an excuse to come in but leaves as soon as she agrees to go to the races again. She is "restless and excited" and wants "something, anything" to happen.

5. How does the relationship between Edna and Alcée develop?

Alcée manipulates things so that he and Edna go to the races and dine alone. Arobin sets about to seduce Edna. His manner is "so genuine that it often deceived even himself." Edna is physically attracted to him but draws back, at this time, from any further involvement with him.

6. What thoughts does Edna have about Robert and about her husband?

She feels that she has been unfaithful to Robert or betrayed him because of the feeling aroused by Alcée. She does not even think about her husband.

7. Give examples of Chopin's use of sensual language in this chapter.

The language evokes feelings of desire: "fever," "flamed," "intoxicant," "restless," "narcotic," "excited," "sensuousness," "languorous."

8. How would readers in the time period of the novel react to this language.

Answers may vary; given the time period, the general public may have found the language shocking.

CHAPTER XXVI

Vocabulary

effulgence – radiance

1. As their meetings continue, in what way does Edna allow Alcée to speak to her? Cite a quotation.

She allows him to become increasingly intimate and seductive "in a way that pleased her at last, appealing to the animalism that stirred impatiently within her."

2. Why does Edna visit Mademoiselle Reisz?

When Edna is in turmoil, a visit to Mademoiselle Reisz "seemed to reach Edna's spirit and set it free."

3. What decision has Edna made? Why does she decide this?

Edna has decided to move out of Léonce's house on Esplanade Street. She will move into a small four-room house around the corner. She has some inheritance income from her mother, money she has won at the racetrack, and money from some of her paintings. She wants freedom and independence; she has not yet told Léonce of her plans.

4. What does Edna decide to do before leaving?

Edna plans a last grand dinner before she moves. It will be a time for her and her newfound friends to "sing and laugh and be merry for once."

5. From his letters (sent to Mademoiselle Reisz), what does Edna learn about Robert's plans?

Robert is returning to New Orleans. Edna is overjoyed; she says she "feel[s] glad and happy to be alive."

6. What comment does Mademoiselle Reisz make about Robert, and how does Edna react to her comment?

She suggests that Robert is "a man of ordinary caliber" and wonders why Edna would love such a man, not "a man with lofty aims and ability to reach them." Edna says she loves him just because she does. She says a woman cannot just choose a man and then try to love him.

7. What does Edna do for her children and for her husband?

She sends the children a big box of chocolates with a tender card; she sends Léonce a letter informing him of her decision to move and regretting that he will not be there to help plan the dinner.

8. What has Edna not taken into consideration?

She is totally self-involved. Her letter is cheerful and brilliant, but she never considers the devastating effect her decision will have on her husband and her children.

CHAPTER XXVII

Vocabulary

irrelevantly – without connection to the subject

1. What happens in the developing relationship between Edna and Alcée?

They become closer physically; he touches her. They talk in a rambling way; Edna wonders what "character of a woman" she is but decides not to think about it. When he kisses her, she responds; the kiss is "a flaming torch that kindled desire."

CHAPTER XXVIII

Vocabulary

assailed – overwhelmed

1. This is the shortest chapter in the book, less than one page. How does Chopin present the consummation of Edna and Alcée's relationship? After the passionate kiss with Alcée, what does Edna realize about herself?

Because Chopin writes in 1899, she is careful not to describe the physical details. The suggestion is that Alcée and Edna have a sexual relationship after the kiss. Edna cries when Alcée leaves because what she has done is not out of love (such as her feeling for Robert) or duty (in her relationship with her husband) but only out of physical desire.

CHAPTER XXIX

Vocabulary

bade – urged

tabouret – a stool

1. What does Edna do in order to carry out her plan to leave Léonce? How does this illustrate the theme of independence?

She is packing her personal possessions, those things belonging only to her, in preparation for the move. She is not taking property or possessions belonging to Léonce. She does not want to be dependent on Léonce for anything, even the furnishing of her small house. There is "a feverish anxiety" in everything she does.

2. When Alcée visits her that afternoon, how is Edna very much in command of the situation?

She orders Alcée around; she is in control of everything and allows him to believe their affair may continue but makes no actual commitment.

3. How does Edna appear as a different person now?

Alcée had expected to find her "languishing, reproachful, or indulging in sentimental tears" after the previous evening. Instead she is self-possessed, unapologetic, and in control.

CHAPTER XXX

Vocabulary

diminutive – small

garland – a wreath

inquisitive – desiring information, nosy

lorgnettes – eyeglasses with a handle

vivacious – full of life

volition – using free will

volubility – talkativeness

1. Who are the guests who attend the dinner?

The guests in addition to Edna are Alcée Arobin, Mademoiselle Reisz, Monsieur Ratignolle, Victor Lebrun, Mrs. Highcamp, Mr. and Mrs. Merriman (not introduced before), Miss Mayblunt, and a journalist friend, a strange assortment of people.

2. List the guests who do not appear and the reason they do not attend.

Adèle Ratignolle is pregnant and declines; Mrs. Lebrun sends regrets.

3. Describe the setting for the dinner, the table, the furnishings, and the overall atmosphere. What does this tell the reader about Edna's decision to leave?

"There was something extremely gorgeous" in the lavishness of the evening. The table is covered with a pale yellow satin lace cloth; large candles glow under yellow silk shades; soft, luxurious dining chairs replace the usual stiff ones; crystal, silver, and the gleam of gold everywhere. This elegance is what Edna will give up when she moves around the corner.

4. How is Edna dressed, and how does she look?

She is wearing a satin gown, and in her hair, diamonds (a gift from her husband); she is resplendent. As she is seated at the table, "there was something in her attitude...which suggested the regal woman, the one who rules, who looks on, who stands alone."

5. How does Edna feel during the evening?

She feels hopelessness overtake her; she loses interest in the evening; she is filled with longing for Robert.

6. How are sensory images of sound and smell used?

Hired musicians provide background music; a heavy odor of jasmine floats through the open windows; the soft splash of a fountain is heard. These details give a sensual atmosphere to the evening.

7. How is Victor dressed, and how does he act during the dinner?

Mrs. Highcamp places a garland of roses on his head and a white silk across Victor's shoulders. He becomes "a graven image of desire" and drinks wine. When he sings "Ah! si tu savais!" Edna is disturbed and breaks a glass. After she puts her hand over Victor's mouth to quiet him, he kisses her palm, "a pleasing sting to her hand." The guests, except Alcée Arobin, leave shortly after this.

8. What does the following quotation indicate about the evening? "The voices of Edna's disbanding guests jarred like a discordant note upon the quiet harmony of the night."

The evening has not ended as Edna expected. There is something disturbing rather than satisfying about the celebration.

CHAPTER XXXI

Vocabulary

reiterated – repeated

1. What are Edna's dual feelings as she and Alcée clean up after everyone leaves?

She is depressed and does not feel like talking. She does what is necessary to close up the house and go to the small place where she will live. On the way, she is physically aware of Alcée's presence.

2. What is the pigeon house? In what way is it different from Léonce's house?

It is a simple four-room place. Edna has made it "habitable and homelike" with pleasant furnishings and pictures. However, it is far from the splendor and luxury of Léonce's house on Esplanade Street.

3. How does Edna feel when she enters the pigeon house with Alcée?

She is tired and feels miserable. She says, "I feel as if I had been wound up to a certain pitch-- too tight--and something inside me had snapped."

4. In what ways has Alcée invaded Edna's personal space?

Without her knowledge, he has sent flowers, which fill one room. He does not leave when she wants him to go. He uses his seductive charms to overcome Edna's reluctance to continue their affair that evening. "He did not say good night until she had become supple to his gentle, seductive entreaties."

CHAPTER XXXII

Vocabulary

sumptuous – costly, lavish

1. What incidents show Léonce's concern with appearances? What steps does he take to avoid scandal?

He is concerned that his business will be affected by Edna's move into the pigeon house. He writes her a letter of disapproval and then hires an architect for complete remodeling of the Esplanade Street house. Thus, no explanation is needed for where he, Edna, and the children must live.

2. How does Edna feel in her new home?

She is happy. She feels a sense of freedom because she no longer has social or family responsibilities and can form and express her own opinions.

3. How does Edna react to her visit with her children?

She is overjoyed to see them, dotes on them, and focuses all her attention and affection on them. She feels "a wrench and a pang" when she leaves them at the end of the week.

4. What is her feeling when she returns to the pigeon house?

She has lingering memories of the children, like a "delicious song," when she returns home. By the time she returns, however, "the song no longer echoed in her soul. She was again alone." She has removed herself from her children again.

CHAPTER XXXIII

Vocabulary

imprudent – lacking in caution or good judgment

irresolute – uncertain

repose – tranquility

1. What warning does Adèle give to Edna when she visits her at the pigeon house? What is Edna's attitude?

She warns her about living alone and about Alcée Arobin, who has a terrible reputation. She does not want Edna to become involved in a scandalous situation. Edna is unconcerned.

2. What request does Adèle make of Edna?

Adèle makes Edna promise that she will come and be with Adèle when the time comes for her to deliver her fourth child. Edna promises to do so.

3. Why is Edna upset when she sees Robert at Mademoiselle Reisz's apartment?

He has been home for two days and has made no effort to see her. If they had not met accidentally that day, she wonders if he would have ever tried to see her.

4. How does Robert act during this meeting?

He seems ill at ease. He looks the same as he did at Grand Isle but does not act the same toward Edna.

5. What excuse does he give for not writing to Edna during his absence? Why do you think he says this?

He says that he does not think anything he wrote would be of interest to her. Answers may vary, but the reader might infer that he does not want to become further involved in a very delicate situation.

6. Later, during dinner at the pigeon house, what does Edna learn is the reason for Robert's return? How does she feel?

Robert's venture in Mexico has not worked out; his business prospects seem better in New Orleans. That is why he has returned. Her hope is that he has returned to see her. She baits him by repeating his answer to the question. Her feelings are hurt because he does not seem to have missed her as much as she has missed him.

7. What is the feeling between them at the end of this chapter?

There is an uncomfortable silence as they wait for dinner.

CHAPTER XXXIV

Vocabulary

acquiesced – agreed

patois – a French dialect

1. How do Edna and Robert act during dinner?

They are restrained and tense. Edna is outspoken about her feelings, but Robert holds back. She is confused by his behavior.

2. How does Robert's tobacco pouch, add to the tension?

Edna finds out that the tobacco pouch has been made by a girl in Vera Cruz and given to Robert as a gift. Edna is jealous and questions him about the girl.

3. How does Alcée Arobin act when he drops by the cottage to give Edna a message from Mrs. Merriman?

He acts as if he belongs there; it is obvious that there is a familiarity between Alcée and Edna.

4. What is Robert's reaction?

Robert is disturbed by this; there is more tension in the air. Edna makes taunting comments to both men about their romantic adventures.

5. Why does Robert mention Mr. Pontellier before he leaves?

He wants to remind Edna and Alcée that she is a married woman.

6. How do Edna and Alcée act after he leaves?

She cleans and straightens the room; he reads the newspaper. She writes a note to Mrs. Merriman, declining an invitation to a card party, and asks him to mail the letter.

7. What verbal exchange takes place before Alcée leaves?

He tells Edna that he adores her; she cynically remarks that he must have said that same thing to many women. He replies, "But I don't think I ever came so near meaning it." His remark does not, however, say he means it to Edna, either.

8. After Alcée leaves, what are her thoughts about her reunion with Robert?

She is filled with jealousy and is disappointed that their reunion has fallen so short of her expectations. She feels "in some way he had seemed nearer to her off there in Mexico."

CHAPTER XXXV

Vocabulary

despondency – emotional depression

insurmountable – that which cannot be overcome

latent – present but hidden or under the surface

recapitulated – summarized

torpid – temporarily having lost the power of sensation

torrid – highly passionate

1. How does Edna feel the next morning?

She pushes aside her previous feelings of jealousy and depression. She convinces herself that Robert loves her and believes she will find a way to break through his reserve. She is hopeful.

2. How does Chopin use a clothing image here to represent Edna's feeling of freedom?

She eats breakfast half-dressed. When Edna removes or loosens her clothing, she feels a sense of freedom from restriction.

3. What three letters does Edna receive that morning?

She receives a letter from Raoul asking for bonbons and telling her of the discovery of baby pigs. She receives a letter from Léonce indicating he will return in March and prepare for their trip to Europe. Alcée Arobin writes pleasantries; she burns his letter.

4. What happens in Edna's relationships with Robert and Alcée?

Robert avoids her. She waits but will not deliberately put herself in any place he might be. She continues to see Alcée.

5. What would have been the effect of the following comment in 1899 about Alcée: "he had detected the latent sensuality, which unfolded under his delicate sense of her nature's requirements like a torpid, torrid, sensitive blossom"?

Answers will vary. Example: A nineteenth-century reader may have been shocked at something that would be considered fairly graphic for that period; note Chopin's delicacy in commenting, "It was late when he left her."

CHAPTER XXXVI

Vocabulary

dissipation – indulgence in pleasure

subterfuges – activities marked by secrecy and deception

1. How is the garden in the suburbs used as a symbol in this chapter?

It is a symbol of an unspoiled, innocent place Edna can go to dream about Robert. Edna finds it during one of her walks; walking alone is something few women would do at this time, another act of independence by Edna.

2. During her encounter with Robert, what does Edna realize is true about his feelings for her? Why do you think this presents a problem for him?

Edna realizes that he does really love her. Answers may vary. Example: The reader could infer that because Edna is married, an open declaration of love for her would make him feel dishonorable.

3. In what way is the new Edna much more unconventional than Robert?

After they embrace, Robert admits his love and his reason for staying away. He has had impossible thoughts of marrying her if Léonce would set her free. Edna is astonished and makes it clear that she is not Léonce's possession to give away. She says, "I give myself where I choose." Edna wants to love Robert, not marry him.

4. What is ironic about Edna's insistence on leaving when she gets the message from Adèle?

Robert breaks down and begs her to stay, but she insists that she must go because she has given Adèle her promise.

5. How is her response an example of irony?

She has made promises in her marriage vows to Léonce but thinks little of breaking those promises.

CHAPTER XXXVII

Vocabulary

inconsolable – heartbroken

1. What are Edna's feelings while she watches Adèle prepare for the birth of her child?

Edna is uncomfortable in this setting, remembering her own similar experiences. This scene brings to Edna's mind all the responsibilities of motherhood, from which she has tried to free herself.

2. What kind of warning does Adèle try to give Edna?

Adèle apparently knows Edna may do something very reckless; she reminds Edna of her most important responsibility, her children.

3. What effect does witnessing this birth scene have on Edna?

Edna has only recently been "born" in coming to understand herself; she does not want to face the birth of a child. The whole incident upsets her. She does not want to be reminded of her children and her responsibility to them.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

Vocabulary

arbitrary – random

incoherency – something that makes no sense

1. What conversation do Edna and Dr. Mandeleit have when he walks her home?

He says that Edna should not have been there; he offers to help her in any way he can if she has a problem. She says, "I shouldn't want to trample upon the little lives...Good night. Don't blame me for anything."

2. What is Edna's frame of mind as she returns home after her conversation with Doctor Mandeleit?

She does not go inside right away. She sits on a step of the porch. She thinks about Robert and their passionate embraces before she leaves to go to Adèle's.

3. Who does Edna hope is waiting for her at the cottage?

She thinks about Robert waiting for her inside. At this moment, she feels there is "no greater bliss on earth than the possession of the beloved one."

4. What does she find instead? What do you think Robert means?

She finds a note from Robert: "I love you. Good-by—because I love you." Answers may vary, but it could be inferred that he cannot dishonor Edna by becoming involved in an affair with her because he loves her too much to do that.

5. How does Edna spend the rest of the evening?

She cannot speak, move, or sleep. She "grew faint" and sat on the sofa, "never uttering a sound." She does not want to go to bed, and she does not want to sleep.

CHAPTER XXXIX

Vocabulary

allurements – attractions

apparition – ghost

1. How is the setting for this last chapter appropriate?

The last chapter brings Edna back to Grand Isle, the setting of the first chapter. It is appropriate that Edna returns to the place of her "awakening."

2. What is the subject of conversation between Victor and Mariequita?

Victor is telling Mariequita an exaggerated version of Edna's dinner party. He has hinted that he and Edna have been lovers but quickly retracts that when he sees Mariequita is jealous.

3. What picture has Victor given of Edna? How is this ironic?

Victor pictures Edna as "this woman who gave the most sumptuous dinners in America, and who had all men in New Orleans at her feet." Actually, Mariequita thinks this is ironic because Edna is a solitary person interested in only one man, Robert.

4. How would you describe Edna's demeanor at this time?

She is distant and unresponsive. Her indifference is so apparent that Mariequita puts aside any thoughts that Edna is there for a clandestine meeting with Victor.

5. What does she give them as the reason for her visit?

She wants to rest. Because she does not want to make a fuss, any accommodations will be fine.

6. What does she say she intends to do before dinner? What is their response to this?

She intends to go swimming even though they both say the water is too cold. She explains that she "might go down and try-dip my toes in."

7. The reader learns what Edna thought during that last sleepless night following her return from Adèle's. What realization does she come to about herself, Léonce, her children, and Robert?

She realizes that in her future would be many lovers: Arobin and Robert, Robert and Arobin, but eventually she would become tired of even Robert. She is not concerned about Léonce, but she is concerned about her sons. She sees them as obstacles to her being free. They would force her to be a "mother-woman" and would "drag her into the soul's slavery for the rest of her days."

8. How is Edna's removal of her clothes as she walks down to the beach symbolic?

Edna's removal of her clothing symbolizes the casting off of society's restrictions to achieve freedom. She first removes her clothes and puts on a bathing suit. Before she enters the water, she removes the bathing suit and "felt like some new-born creature, opening its eyes in a familiar world it had never known." This disrobing begins Edna's final steps toward her soul's freedom.

9. Find the quotations that show the seductive nature of the ocean as described by Chopin.

"The voice of the sea is seductive, never ceasing, whispering, clamoring, murmuring, inviting the soul to wander in abysses of solitude." The water wraps her in a "soft, close embrace."

10. Edna swims out too far, experiences one moment of terror, and then relaxes into the ocean. What thoughts does Edna have now?

When she thinks of Léonce and her children, she knows that she will not give her newly awakened soul to them. Earlier, she says to Adèle that she would give her life for her children but not herself. Her father, her sister, and fleeting childhood memories are Edna's final thoughts.

11. What choice has Edna made?

Edna has made a deliberate choice to end her life. She knows that she cannot go back to the conventional life of wife and mother-woman; she chooses death instead. It is a choice only she can make; her final act of freedom and independence.

12. Does Edna have any other choice, given her nature and the conventions of society at this time?

Answers may vary. Example: Clearly, leading an unconventional and indulgent life would have been very difficult.