

EDNA PONTELLIER AS THE ROLE OF WIFE

- **“ Looking at his wife as one looks at a valuable piece of personal property, which has suffered from damage.” - Chapter 1 Page 2**
 - This shows that at this time women were objectified and seen as belonging to their husbands.
 - Mr Pontellier looks down on Edna as if her appearance is no longer perfect.
 - Women were no longer wanted if they had suffered damage. We see this also in Tess of The D'Urbervilles where Tess is shunned in society for being 'impure' after being raped and bearing a child.
- **“Took the rings from his vest pocket and dropped them into her open palms.” Chapter 1 Page 2**
 - There is a lack of intimacy between Mr and Mrs Pontellier.
 - This shows that at this point Mrs Pontellier appears to be begging for her belongings but it also reflects that she is begging for her own freedom as Léonce is a controlling character in the novel.
 - This gives the impression that Mr Pontellier doesn't see the ring as important, therefore possibly reflecting that he doesn't see their marriage as important either.
- **“Her marriage to Léonce Pontellier was purely an accident.” - Chapter 7 Page 17**
 - This shows us that Edna's love for Léonce isn't true as her marriage is deemed an “accident”.
 - This could lead on to suggest that perhaps Edna feels like she is trapped in this marriage, has no way to escape, as possibly she was forced into this marriage in order to bring wealth to her family.
 - Additionally, this allows us to presume that Edna is not happy in this marriage, she does not love Léonce and wants to explore the world, but cannot due to her coupling with a man whom she feels no affection towards.
- **“Léonce go to bed ... don't speak to me like that again!” - Chapter 11 Page 30**
 - Here shows Edna standing up against Léonce for the first time, which during the late 1800s would be unheard of and very disrespectful.
 - This shows that Edna is tired of being someone's possession, and wants to be her own person. That includes not allowing people to walk over her and treat her verbally with disrespect.
 - Furthermore, this also shows a demanding characteristic behind Edna's newly found confidence, as Chopin uses exclamatory sentences to display Edna's anger and disgust with Léonce's behaviour.

- **“He greatly valued his possessions, chiefly because they were his.” - Chapter 17 Page 49**
 - Edna is seen as a possession to her husband which highlights the fact that women didn't have many rights during this time.
 - This could show a reason why Edna feels the need to rebel and be independent from her husband.
 - This could furthermore possibly show that Edna is rebelling simply due to the controlling behaviour of Mr Pontellier, similar to that of a teenage child rebelling when their parents command them orders.

- **“Taking off her wedding ring, flung it on the carpet ... her small boot heel did not make an indenture, not a mark.” - Chapter 17 Page 51**
 - This description of Edna's actions can be portrayed as a sign of disrespect towards Léonce as she feels that her ring, which symbolises her marriage, deserves to touch a surface of which dirt and overall uncleanliness has walked upon.
 - The use of the verb “flung” suggests that Edna doesn't care about the ring and therefore her marriage, and furthermore doesn't deem it to have significant importance when throwing it away.
 - By Chopin having described Edna as attempting to damage her ring, could furthermore suggest that Edna is ready to break free, and finally live her life the way in which she wants to and not under the control of Léonce.

- **“The Ratignolles understood each other perfectly.” - Chapter 18 Page 55.**
 - The Ratignolles relationship is contradictory to that of the Pontelliers as the Ratignolles have a loving and perfect relationship whereas the Pontelliers having a relationship based on false truth.
 - This could however show a sense of jealousy from Edna as the Ratignolles relationship is something that she aspires to have.
 - This could predict that Edna would leave her husband in the search for the “perfect” relationship of that portrayed by the Ratignolles.

- **“She promised as those women in society always do without meaning it. She will not come.” - Chapter 21 Page 61**
 - This could be interpreted as Edna starting to break free of the trapped way a woman became in a Creole marriage.
 - The use of the phrase “without meaning it” could suggest that many women themselves in Creole relationships often promised their husbands and their communities things which they would never actually do.
 - There is a juxtaposition between the word “promised” and phrase “without meaning it”. When you promise to do something, you would go out and do it, but Edna here is breaking this link by refusing to keep to her promise.

- **“Whatever was her own in the house, everything which she had acquired aside from her husband’s bounty.” - Chapter 29 Page 82**
 - This supports the idea that in the late 1800s, marriages weren’t equal. Men had all the power over women, so therefore they didn't have any possessions to their own.
 - The use of the term “husband’s bounty” shows that Edna accepts that it belongs to him and him only, and not to be half of her own possession.
 - This supports the idea that women were taught to see that marriages weren’t equal and that they weren’t to question the decisions made by their partners.

- **“His wife’s intention to abandon her home.” - Chapter 32 Page 91**
 - This could show that Edna is slowly removing herself from the old life she was trapped in and that she doesn't seem to feel any remorse towards abandoning her husband and children.
 - The noun “intention” could show that perhaps Mr Pontellier is thinking of stopping Edna’s conquest of independence.

EDNA PONTELLIERAS THE ROLE OF MOTHER

- **“Mr Pontellier returned to his wife with the information that Raoul had a high fever and needed looking after.” – Chapter 3 Page 5.**
 - This shows us that Mr Pontellier believed that it was the woman’s job to attend to the children and not the mans.
 - Edna was being treated with disrespect as not only was this Léonce’s view, but society’s view on a woman’s role.
 - Mr Pontellier had more interest in smoking cigars and going to Klein’s than looking after his children. This is also shown at the very start when the children want to follow him, but ‘he kissed them and promised to bring them back bon bons and peanuts’.
- **“She was fond of her children in an uneven and impulsive way... She would sometimes forget them ... She did not miss them.” - Chapter 7 Page 18**
 - This could possibly show that Edna did not want to become a mother, perhaps as she felt she doesn't have the motherly approach to children, and that she only started a family to please Léonce.
 - The fact that Chopin uses the adjectives “uneven and impulsive” to describe Edna’s feelings towards her children show that she is very bipolar in her relationship with them, meaning that one minute she would love them and cherish their presence and the momentarily later she would repulse the presence of them and would forget of their insistence.
 - This links to the contextual background of the novella as women of the 1800s were very much expected to just get married, start a family and produce children purely the male’s benefit and satisfaction.
- **“Edna took his in her arms, and seating herself in the rocker, began to cradle and caress him.” - Chapter 14 Page 38**
 - Here, Chopin has decided to focus on Edna’s positive motherly approach towards her children and the use of the verbs “cradle and caress” shows that Edna is currently in love with her child and is infatuated with them.
 - Edna’s rapid alteration in her behaviour and emotions towards her children could be down to how her husband, Léonce, treats her. For instance, when Léonce is rude and disrespectful towards Edna, she inflicts her anger and emotional pain onto her children as a form of coping with the matter.
 - By having Chopin describe Edna in a positive and happy environment which pleases her, it makes the reader feel content and delighted for Edna as she has eventually found something in her life which brings her happiness instead of pain.

- **“But the occupation soon lost its attractiveness when they discovered that it was not a game arranged especially for their entertainment.” - Chapter 19 Page 56**
 - This portrays Edna as a selfish mother as she is putting her wants and desires before those of her children.
 - The use of the verb “discovered” shows that the children are intelligent and are able to realise that what their mother is doing is not for their pleasure but for that of her own.
 - The way in which the noun “game” is used is negative as it shows us that Edna has deliberately lied to her own children in order to get what she wants.

- **“So you remembered me at last.” - Chapter 21 Page 61**
 - The way in which Mademoiselle Reisz addresses Edna for leaving alone for such a while could suggest that Mademoiselle Reisz sees Edna as a maternal figure for her, whilst also looking at her for guidance; the same way in which a daughter looks up to their mother.
 - The phrase “at last” suggests that Edna is happy to leave something she cares about for a long time without having a reminder on her conscious, this allowing her to go about life without feeling regret or remorse for leaving her loved ones behind.
 - It could be interpreted that perhaps the way in which Mademoiselle Reisz is feeling is the same to which Edna’s children are feeling too; due to her distant behaviour and tendency to often forget them.

- **“She did not want them to be wholly ‘children of the pavement’.” - Chapter 24 Page 70**
 - This shows the rare appearance of Edna’s caring and compassionate side to the emotion she feels for her children.
 - By Edna saying that “she does not want them to be” suggests that she does in fact have an element of maternal instinct to protect them from the harsh reality which the Earth beholds.
 - ‘Children of the pavement’ is referring to her children becoming homeless and living on the street. This could show the guilt Edna feels for abandoning her children.

- **“I will say goodbye and let you go.” - Chapter 29 Page 84**
 - Here shows Edna willingly dismissing Arobin without a ounce of care to her decision, just like her decision to dismiss her children when she left them with Léonce to move into the pigeon house.
 - This could show that Edna does not have that maternal instinct which doesn't allow her to part from her children for long without missing them.

- **“Edna had neglected her much of late.” - Chapter 33 Page 93.**
 - This could be interpreted as Edna treating Madame Ratignolle as one of her children, as she often described herself as “ignoring” and sometimes “hating” her children.
 - The adjective “neglected” shows that Edna often acts in this manner and therefore doesn't seem to care what her associates think of her and the way she treats others.

EDNA PONTELLIER AS THE ROLE OF INDIVIDUAL

- **“Musical strains, well-rendered, had a way of evoking pictures in her mind.” – Chapter 9 Pages 24-25**
 - We see here that Edna has an awakening through music and it releases her from the troubles of daily life. We see it as a physical release when it says ‘a keen tremor down Mrs Pontellier’s spinal column.’
 - We know that Mrs Pontellier uses it as an escape because we see her continually having musical experiences throughout the novel.
 - It becomes clear that for a Victorian woman, the use of art as a form of self-exploration and self-articulation constitutes a rebellion.

- **“She wanted to swim far-out, where no woman had swum before.” – Chapter 10 Page 27**
 - The sea symbolises freedom and escape for Edna.
 - It is something that Edna can only brave when she is solitary and only after she has discovered her own strength. Here is the only place Edna is independent.
 - Water’s associations with cleansing and baptism make it a symbol of rebirth. So reminds us that Edna’s awakening is a rebirth.

- **“Sudden” “brief” “darkness” - Chapter 14 Page 43**
 - These words describe the atmosphere after Robert has left. It shows that Robert was the light in her life as he inspired her to paint and swim which were her freedoms. This shows that Robert made her feel independent and free unlike Mr Pontellier.
 - Robert’s presence causing Edna to be joyful enhances Edna’s depression around her husband.
 - Edna find she has found an obsessive love with Robert. She is ‘infatuated’ by him. She was also described as being under a ‘spell’ repetitively showing that Robert was like a force over her.

- **“Her present self was in someway different from the other self.” – Chapter 14 Page 39**
 - Edna is changed as an individual. Her change was started when she met Adele Ratignolle and is accelerated when she meets Robert Lebrun.
 - Robert would remind her of her youth and the activities such as swimming and music on grand isle would make Edna believe that she was too good for the life of a mother and wife.
 - Edna was a free soul and could not be hindered by society’s expectations. She returned to New Orleans a changed woman.

- **“Under the spell of her infatuation” Chapter 18 Page 53**
 - This shows us that Edna has been deprived of love for so long that her imagination has become obsessed with the idea of someone showing her affection, therefore having Edna portray a sense of obsession rather than love.
 - The fact that she is described as being “under a spell” suggests that she is under the control of something inhuman.
 - Perhaps suggesting that Robert acted inhuman in the way that he displayed a ridiculously obsessive affection towards Edna.

- **“She began to do what she liked and feel as she liked.” - Chapter 19 Page 55.**
 - This shows that Edna has started to break free from the control which she faced from the male figures in her life.
 - This could be a turning point for Edna’s awakening as she has eventually begun to realise that she is capable in surviving without a male figure.
 - Additionally, this shows a break in Edna’s personality as she has now become the strong, independent woman she has always strived to be.

- **“Be careful, the stairs and landings are dark; don't stumble.” - Chapter 21 Page 63**
 - This could show that Edna is going to face many struggles in her journey to independence and that it will be a journey of pain and anguish.
 - This is a metaphor for the journey which she is about to embark on and it how it isn't going to be an easy route.
 - By describing the stairs and landings as “dark” could show that Edna may come across characters whose “dark” personalities will try and stop her in her conquest to become independent.

- **“I am no longer one of Mr Pontellier’s possessions to dispose of or not. I give myself where I choose.” - Chapter 36 Page 106.**
 - This now clearly shows that Edna thinks of herself as an individual and has broken free of Mr Pontellier’s control.
 - The use of the noun possession refers back to the beginning of the novel where Mr Pontellier looks at Edna as “a piece of damaged personal property.”
 - Also, the verb dispose shows that Edna had a lot of pain inflicted onto her as she herself was neglected by the person who she thought loved her.

- **“A bird with a broken wing was beating the air above.” - Chapter 39 Page 112**
 - This shows us that Edna is now physically free from the possession and controlling behaviour of the men in her life, but that she will never be free of the mental control and entrapment that was inflicted upon her.
 - This is a returning motif in the novel as there is a passage in the first paragraph which describes a bird locked in a cage.
 - The bird locked in the cage could refer to Edna being locked in her marriage and society’s expectations of women of that time.