

*The Awakening* – Ch.1 Close-Reading Practice

Before author Kate Chopin introduces us to Edna Pontellier, she first introduces two other characters in this novel’s opening passage. Read and annotate the passage carefully, and then answer the questions.

A green and yellow parrot, which hung in a cage outside the door, kept repeating over and over:

*"Allez vous-en! Allez vous-en! Sapristi! That's all right!" \**

He could speak a little Spanish, and also a language which nobody understood, unless it was the mocking-bird that hung on the other side of the door, whistling his fluty notes out upon the breeze with maddening persistence.

Mr. Pontellier, unable to read his newspaper with any degree of comfort, arose with an expression and an exclamation of disgust. He walked down the gallery and across the narrow “bridges” which connected the Lebrun cottages one with the other. He had been seated before the door of the main house. The parrot and the mockingbird were the property of Madame Lebrun, and they had the right to make all the noise they wished. Mr. Pontellier had the privilege of quitting their society when they ceased to be entertaining.

\*Paragraph 2: *"Allez vous-en! Allez vous-en! Sapristi!"* – “Get out of here! Get out of here! Dammit!”

QUESTIONS

1) **Imagery** is the term for language that appeals to the readers’ senses and creates a “mental picture” for the reader. What specific image or images are created in this passage, and what effects does this imagery create?

2) **Diction** is the term for the key words an author uses and their important connotations or associations. Which key words seem to be particularly important in this passage, and what important connotations or associations do they contribute to the passage?

3) **Characterization** is the term for the process by which the author reveals the personality of a character; it is the main way we can discern an *author’s attitude* toward her or his characters. How does this passage characterize Mr. Pontellier? Moreover, how does the passage characterize the parrot? What might be implied by Chopin’s juxtaposition of these two characters?