



MCAS Prep Grade 8 Reading Comprehension

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from “THE AWAKENING”

by *Kate Chopin*

I

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

2 “*Allez vous-en! Allez vous-en!* Sapristi! That’s all right!”

3 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.

4 Mr. Pontellier, unable to read his newspaper with any degree of comfort, arose with an expression and an exclamation of disgust.

5 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.

6 He stopped before the door of his own cottage, which was the fourth one from the main building and next to the last. Seating himself in a wicker rocker which was there, he once more applied himself to the task of reading the newspaper. The day was Sunday; the paper was a day old. The Sunday papers had not yet reached Grand Isle. He was already acquainted with the market reports, and he glanced restlessly over the editorials and bits of news which he had not had time to read before quitting New Orleans the day before.

7 Mr. Pontellier wore eye-glasses. He was a man of forty, of medium height and rather slender build; he stooped a little. His hair was brown and straight, parted on one side. His beard was neatly and closely trimmed.

8 Once in a while he withdrew his glance from the newspaper and looked about him. There was more noise than ever over at the house. The main building was called “the house,” to distinguish it from the cottages. The chattering and whistling birds were still at it. Two young girls, the Farival twins, were playing a duet from “Zampa” upon the piano. Madame Lebrun was bustling in and out, giving orders in a high key to a yard-boy whenever she got inside the house, and directions in an equally high voice to a dining-room servant whenever she got outside. She was a fresh, pretty woman, clad always in white with elbow sleeves. Her starched skirts crinkled as she came and went. Farther down, before one of the cottages, a lady in black was walking demurely up and down, telling her beads. A good many persons of the pension had gone over to the Cheniere Caminada in Beaufort’s lugger to hear mass. Some young people were out under the wateroaks playing croquet. Mr. Pontellier’s two children

were there sturdy little fellows of four and five. A quadron nurse followed them about with a faraway, meditative air.

- 9 Mr. Pontellier finally lit a cigar and began to smoke, letting the paper drag idly from his hand. He fixed his gaze upon a white sunshade that was advancing at snail's pace from the beach. He could see it plainly between the gaunt trunks of the water-oaks and across the stretch of yellow camomile. The gulf looked far away, melting hazily into the blue of the horizon. The sunshade continued to approach slowly. Beneath its pink-lined shelter were his wife, Mrs. Pontellier, and young Robert Lebrun. When they reached the cottage, the two seated themselves with some appearance of fatigue upon the upper step of the porch, facing each other, each leaning against a supporting post.
- 10 "What folly! to bathe at such an hour in such heat!" exclaimed Mr. Pontellier. He himself had taken a plunge at daylight. That was why the morning seemed long to him.
- 11 "You are burnt beyond recognition," he added, looking at his wife as one looks at a valuable piece of personal property which has suffered some damage. She held up her hands, strong, shapely hands, and surveyed them critically, drawing up her fawn sleeves above the wrists. Looking at them reminded her of her rings, which she had given to her husband before leaving for the beach. She silently reached out to him, and he, understanding, took the rings from his vest pocket and dropped them into her open palm. She slipped them upon her fingers; then clasping her knees, she looked across at Robert and began to laugh. The rings sparkled upon her fingers. He sent back an answering smile.
- 12 "What is it?" asked Pontellier, looking lazily and amused from one to the other. It was some utter nonsense; some adventure out there in the water, and they both tried to relate it at once. It did not seem half so amusing when told. They realized this, and so did Mr. Pontellier. He yawned and stretched himself. Then he got up, saying he had half a mind to go over to Klein's hotel and play a game of billiards.
- 13 "Come go along, Lebrun," he proposed to Robert. But Robert admitted quite frankly that he preferred to stay where he was and talk to Mrs. Pontellier.
- 14 "Well, send him about his business when he bores you, Edna," instructed her husband as he prepared to leave.
- 15 "Here, take the umbrella," she exclaimed, holding it out to him. He accepted the sunshade, and lifting it over his head descended the steps and walked away.
- 16 "Coming back to dinner?" his wife called after him. He halted a moment and shrugged his shoulders. He felt in his vest pocket; there was a ten-dollar bill there. He did not know; perhaps he would return for the early dinner and perhaps he would

- 1 What is the setting of the story?
 - A a Mexican beach in the summer
 - B a New Orleans hotel in the summer
 - C an island getaway in the summer
 - D the Pontellier home in the summer

- 2 Based on the excerpt, which of the following **best** describes Mr. Pontellier?
 - A cautious
 - B caring
 - C selfish
 - D honest

- 3 What is the meaning of the word ***dispelling*** in paragraph 40?
 - A supporting
 - B chasing away
 - C capturing
 - D running from

- 4 What is the purpose of the last sentence in paragraph 47?
 - A to show that Mrs. Pontellier is not happy with her husband
 - B to show that Mrs. Pontellier could not ask for a more loving husband
 - C to show that Mrs. Pontellier likes having a husband who is the envy of others
 - D to show that Mrs. Pontellier thinks that her husband is a wonderful father

FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT AND THE DANA-THOMAS HOUSE

- 1 Susan Lawrence Dana was born in 1862 in Springfield, Illinois. She was the only surviving child of Rheuna and Mary Agnes Maxcy Lawrence. Susan grew up in a refined atmosphere in Springfield. She became accustomed to social parties, club activities, charity fundraisers, and grand entertainment. In 1883, she married Edwin Dana. He was a young man who worked in a real estate office. Edwin Dana had some mining interests himself. He was supposed to take over Rheuna Lawrence's western mining properties in Oregon and Colorado. The marriage brought happiness and sadness. The young couple spent several years in St. Paul, Minnesota. Susan bore two children who died in infancy. By the 1890s, Susan and her husband had taken up permanent residency in Springfield. In 1900, she received word that Edwin had been killed while inspecting an Oregon mine. A few months later, in 1901, her father died.
- 2 Susan was named executor of her father's estate in 1902. Susan discussed with her mother the remodeling of the family residence at Fourth Street and Lawrence Avenue. Susan passed over local architects and acquaintances of her father. She chose a young Oak Park architect, Frank Lloyd Wright, to design the new house.
- 3 Frank Lloyd Wright (1867–1959) was 35 in 1902, the year he began work on the Dana House. He was already well-known for his innovative design. Wright was revolutionizing American domestic architecture in the Midwest. The Dana House commission was Wright's largest to date. It provided him the opportunity to experiment with new design ideas and techniques. Many of these were later incorporated into some of his most famous houses. They include the Avery Coonley House in Riverside, Illinois (1907–1908), and the Frederick Robie House in Chicago (1908–1909).
- 4 As an architect Wright was mostly self-taught. He worked briefly in Chicago for architect Joseph Lyman Silsbee. Then for six years, from 1887 to 1893, Wright worked for the Chicago firm of Adler and Sullivan. Wright was Sullivan's chief draftsman. There he assimilated the philosophies, ideas, and integrity of the renowned Louis Sullivan. Wright worked on many of the most outstanding public architectural projects of the period. These included Chicago's Auditorium Theater and Hotel and the Transportation Building for the Columbian Exposition. St. Louis' Wainwright Building is considered the first skyscraper.
- 5 After a series of disputes with Louis Sullivan over Wright's work outside the office, Wright established his own architectural office in 1893. Wright and other young designers began attracting clients who agreed with their principles of new domestic architecture. It was soon to be known as the "Prairie style." By 1898, Wright had added his studio to his Oak Park home. Within two years he had gathered a team of sensitive young architects to coordinate the designs for the first of the "Prairie" houses.

- 6 Unlike most houses designed by Wright, the Dana House project involved the complete restructuring of the 30-year-old Italianate brick house built by Susan's father, Rheuna Lawrence. He had been a wealthy businessman and the former mayor of Springfield. Wright was commissioned to incorporate the brick foundations and a portion of the original floor plan into the new house along with a Victorian sitting room and marble fireplace. Plans of the home, however, show that as construction progressed, the new "Prairie" house took precedence, with the old house playing only a minor role.
- 7 The residence was completed in 1904. The residence was dedicated by Susan and her mother with a series of Christmas parties. The first was for the families of all the laborers, artisans, and designers who had worked on the new house.
- 8 In March 1905, just months after the Dana House was completed, Susan's mother died. Then in 1913, just a year after marrying a young Danish baritone concert artist, Lawrence Joergen-Dahl, Susan witnessed his unexpected death. A third marriage was an unhappy one that ended in divorce.
- 9 Susan entertained regularly and with great social distinction. In addition to benefit concerns for charitable causes, she hosted governors, state politicians, members of local society, and guests from all over the world.
- 10 Throughout the 1920s, Susan increasingly opened her home to metaphysical and mystical religious groups, including her own group, the Lawrence Center for Constructive Thought. Elaborate society gatherings gave way to new emphasis on religious fulfillment. Finally, when a cousin who had lived with her for many years died, Susan was left alone in her Wright-designed house.
- 11 Susan Lawrence Dana lived in the house until about 1928. She then took a more modest home just west across the railroad tracks.
- 12 Declared incompetent by the courts in 1942, she was admitted to a local hospital, where she died in 1946. Her personal effects were inventoried in 1942 and auctioned at a public sale in July 1943. Her Frank Lloyd Wright house was sold the following year.
- 13 Mr. and Mrs. Charles C. Thomas purchased the building. For 37 years the Thomases used the house as executive offices for their publishing firm. Although minor changes were made and a few original features removed, the Thomases maintained its original floor plan and intricate detail. The house was sold to the state of Illinois in 1981. It has been totally restored and is under the jurisdiction of the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency.
- 14 Springfield's Dana-Thomas House is the best preserved and most complete of Frank Lloyd Wright's early "Prairie" houses. The structure has changed little since its construction in 1902–1904 for Springfield socialite and women's activist Susan Lawrence Dana. More than 100 pieces of original Wright-designed white oak

furniture are still in place. So are 250 art glass doors, windows, and light panels. Two hundred original light fixtures and skylights illuminate the interior. Original sculptures in terra cotta by Richard W. Bock ornament the vestibule and reception hall. The only George Niedecken mural in any Wright house graces the four dining room walls.

- 15 The Dana-Thomas House is typical of the “Prairie” style. This style is characterized on the exterior by low horizontal roofs, wide overhanging eaves, and rows of ribbon art glass windows. A raised main living level, open floor plan, and centralized fireplace and hearth are common features of the interior.
- 16 The Dana-Thomas House is one of the largest and most elaborate residences designed by Frank Lloyd Wright during his 70-year-long career.
- 1 In paragraph 6, what does the author mean by the house “took precedence”?
- A It stole control of the project.
 - B It came first.
 - C It became too time-consuming.
 - D It grew tiring.
- 2 Based on the selection, which of the following **best** describes how Susan **most likely** grew up?
- A poor
 - B uneducated
 - C used to hard work
 - D spoiled
- 3 According to the selection, what did Susan’s father and her husband have in common?
- A They were both involved in mining.
 - B They were both involved in real estate.
 - C They were both involved in politics.
 - D They were both involved in fundraisers.