1. What is the nature of Mrs. Mallard's "illness” that is mentioned at the start of the story? How might (by the end) we read this as symbolism? Explain.

2. The setting of the story is very limited; it is confined largely to a room, a staircase, and a front door. Why do you think Chopin chose to set the story in such a small space? What does that limitation have to do with the meaning of the story?

3. In what ways is this passage significant--what does it have to do with what we know about Mrs. Mallard?

"She could see in the open square before her house the tops of trees that were all aquiver with the new spring life. The delicious breath of rain was in the air. In the street below a peddler was crying his wares. The notes of a distant song which some one was singing reached her faintly, and countless sparrows were twittering in the eaves."

* What kinds of sensory images does this passage contain, and what senses does it address?
* What does the vision through the open window mean to her?

4. What kind of relationships do the Mallards have? Specifically, describe the marriage that the Mallards have. (For instance, are they a happy couple? What lines lead you to this? Refer to specifics from the story.)

5. Mrs. Mallard closes the door to her room so that her sister Josephine cannot get in, yet she leaves the window open. Why does Chopin make a point of telling the reader this? What might it symbolize?

6. Mrs. Mallard is described as descending the stairs "like a goddess of Victory." In what ways does she feel herself victorious?

7. The last line of the story is this: "When the doctors came they said she had died of heart disease-of joy that kills." In what ways is this an ironic statement? What is gained by having the doctors make such a statement rather than putting it in the mouths of Josephine or Richards?

8. If this is, in some sense, a story about a symbolic journey, where does Mrs. Mallard "travel"?