

In "The story of an Hour" by Kate Chopin and "Harrison Bergeron" by Kurt Vonnegut, the authors are exploring the ideas of limitations and freedom with conflict in order to suggest that freedom is the better option of the two. Both in different ways, Kate Chopin believes that marriage is inherently oppressive, and that people can only be free without it while Kurt Vonnegut focuses on the physical limitation of ability and its restrictions on their freedom of self-expression.

"The Story of an Hour" expresses the oppression of marriage through the main character, Frances Conroy, with the death of her husband. The imagery of her surroundings is the complete opposite of what we expect in her situation, "There were patches of blue sky showing here and there through the clouds that had met and piled one above the other in the east facing her window." The patches of blue sky were the glances of freedom coming out of tragedy and the "east" signifies the rising of the sun, the starting of a new day and the beginning of a new life. She begins to see a new found freedom, "There was something coming to her and she was waiting for it, fearfully. What was it? She did not know; it was too subtle and elusive to name. But she felt it, creeping out of the sky, reaching toward her through the sounds, the scents, the color that filled the air." The feeling is creeping to her because it's a thought she tries to repress. Her feeling of freedom comes at the cost of someone else's life. He has also been a huge part of her adult life and she has been dependent on him. He dominated her way of life until then and she is finally discovering that things aren't going to be the same. She sees a life "she would live for herself." For her, the "possession of self-assertion" became the "strongest impulse of her being!" She began rejoicing in this realization, "Free! Body and soul free!" she kept whispering." When her husband returned and her short-lived dream was over, she gave up and died. The doctors said "she died of heart disease--of the joy that kills." We know that she died of a broken heart.

"Harrison Bergeron" depicts a world in which people are handicapped and in turn their self expression is severely limited. The handicaps punish them instead of making them equal. "Why don't you stretch out on the sofa, so's you can rest your handicap bag on the pillows, honeybunch... Two years in prison and two thousand dollars fine for every ball I took out," said George." He can't think through thoughts like "maybe dancers shouldn't be handicapped" but he can remember the punishment for breaking the rules. Since everyone is the same, nobody better than the other, there is no difference when it comes to the performance. George tries "to think a little about ballerinas. They weren't really very good-no better than anybody else would have been." Just when he starts to form a thought about the ballerinas, "another noise in his ear radio scattered his thoughts." Later, while George and Hazel are watching the ballerinas, a special announcement comes on about their son, Harrison Bergeron. The announcer and camera people can't even do their job adequately, and one of the ballerinas has to take over. She feels it necessary to make her voice "absolutely uncompetitive." When their son takes stage, his appearance is "Halloween and hardware." George realizes that it is his son but "the realization was blasted from his mind instantly by the sound of an automobile collision in his head." Harrison takes the stage crying "I am the Emperor!" He takes off his handicaps and picks himself an Empress. After he took the handicaps from the musicians, their performance became better and more expressive. The author describes that when "The music began. It was normal at first-cheap, silly, false. But Harrison snatched two musicians from their chairs, waved them like batons as he sang the music as he wanted it played." Finally able to express themselves, "Diana Moon Glampers, the Handicapper General, came into the studio with a double-barreled ten-gauge shotgun" and shot them both. After, she proceeded to threaten the musicians with it to their handicaps back on. The Bergerons' television tube burns out and they immediately forget what just happened.

The stories by Chopin and Vonnegut are both about limitations and freedoms but from unique circumstances and perspectives while saying things on a social level from an individual level. An "Story of an hour" is told more through the

tone and feeling of the imagery and conflict, while "Harrison Bergeron" is told more through the conflict and world. Similar themes can be found in a variety of media conveyed in many ways.