Although she enjoyed only modest success during her lifetime, Kate Chopin is now recognised as a unique voice in American literature. Her seminal novel, *The Awakening*, published in 1899, explored new and startling territory and stunned readers with its frank depiction of the limits of marriage and motherhood. Chopin’s aesthetic tastes and cultural influences were drawn from both the European and American traditions, and her manipulation of her ‘foreignness’ contributed to the composition of a complex voice that was strikingly different to that of her contemporaries. The essays in this Companion treat a wide range of Chopin’s stories and novels, drawing her relationship with other writers, genres and literary developments, and pay close attention to the transatlantic dimension of her work. The result is a collection that brings a fresh perspective to Chopin’s writing, one that will appeal to researchers and students of American, nineteenth-century and feminist literature.
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KATE CHOPIN CHRONOLOGY

1850  Born Catherine O’Flaherty, 8 February in St Louis, Missouri to Thomas O’Flaherty, an Irish immigrant, and Eliza Faris, a French-Creole. Their home is at Eighth Street.

1855  Kate enrols at the Academy of the Sacred Heart. Her father, Thomas O’Flaherty, dies in a railway accident.

1863  Her great-grandmother, Victorie Verdon Charleville, and her half-brother George, a Confederate soldier, both die.

1865  The family moves to 1118 St Ange Avenue. Kate attends the Academy of the Visitation but then re-enrols at the Sacred Heart Academy.

1868  Kate graduates from the Sacred Heart Academy. She enters into St Louis society as a debutante.

1869  She writes the short story ‘Emancipation: A Life Fable’ (unpublished).

1870  Kate marries Oscar Chopin, a cotton trader and the son of a plantation owner. The Chopins embark on a three-month honey-moon tour of Europe, spending time in Germany, Switzerland and France. They return and set up home in New Orleans.

1871–8  The Chopins have five sons: Jean Baptiste (1871), Oscar Charles (1873), George Francis (1874), Frederick (1876), Felix Andrew (1878).

1873  Kate’s brother Thomas dies in a buggy accident.

1879  Following the failure of Oscar’s cotton business, the family moves to Cloutierville, a rural area of Louisiana. Kate’s daughter, Lélia, is born.

1882  Oscar Chopin dies.
1883–4  Kate Chopin likely to have been in a relationship with Albert Sampite.

1884  Kate Chopin returns to live at St Ange Avenue, St Louis.

1885  Death of mother, Eliza O’Flaherty.

1889  She publishes her first literary work, a poem, ‘If It Might Be’. Her first short story, ‘A Point at Issue!’, is published in the St Louis Post-Dispatch. She begins work on her first novel, At Fault.

1890  Publication of At Fault, at Chopin’s own expense.

1894  Publication of Bayou Folk, a collection of short stories. Vogue publishes ‘Dream of an Hour’ (‘The Story of an Hour’).

1895  A collection of Guy de Maupassant translations by Chopin is rejected by the publisher Houghton, Mifflin.

1897  Publication of second collection of stories, A Night in Acadie. Kate’s grandmother, Athénaise Charleville Faris, dies.

1899  The Awakening is published to mixed reviews.

1900  The publisher Herbert S. Stone declines to publish the collection of stories, A Vocation and a Voice.

1902  Kate’s last published piece of work, a story, ‘Polly’, appears in Youth’s Companion.

1904  Kate Chopin dies in St Louis on 22 August.