

A comparison of dee and mathilde



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Mathilde Loisel of “ The Necklace” and Dee of “ Everyday Use” can easily be compared and contrasted, for they treat others very similarly, and the situations that they either put themselves in or, unfortunately, fall into are ironic. Although the stories take place in completely different settings, the similarities between the two are striking. The authors of “ The Necklace” and “ Everyday Use” use irony and characterization to illustrate the personalities and motivations of Mathilde and Dee.

The most significant aspect to observe about Mathilde is her huge attention to image. Throughout the entire story, her behaviors circle around her motive or desire to create a positive self-image for society. This can be seen most profoundly when she is preparing for the ball; she wants to make sure that she is properly dressed so that she can be seen as wealthy. The manner that Mathilde speaks to her husband gives the reader an impression that she is spoiled and very ungrateful. When told that they have received an invitation, Mathilde responds, with an exclamation of disgust, “ What do you wish me to do with that?” (Maupassant 2). She continues to act ungrateful, complaining she has nothing to wear as well as complaining that she had no fine jewels or stones to wear. Her husband is enabling her behavior when he gives her the money for a new dress and when he takes out the huge amount of loans that he did to pay off the replacement necklace. Of course, it is safe to infer that her husband possibly cared about image as much as she did because he goes to such lengths to help her. In the beginning of the story, she was obsessed with appearing rich, and she felt as if she deserved to be wealthy. After she and her husband replaced the necklace with a brand new one, going into debt in the process, Maupassant describes her imminent

descent into poverty. She had lived like she never had before and finally, once the debt was fully paid off, she told Madame Forestier what she had done and that she felt happy to have paid off the necklace. As the reader comes to find out, the original necklace was a fake. Guy de Maupassant used a bit of irony near the end of the story to further develop Mathilde's character. Mathilde is quite privileged in the beginning and, while she wasn't wealthy, she had luxuries and the money to live comfortably. She yearns to be wealthy and complains of how poor she is. In the end, she is poor and worse off than she had been in the beginning.

Dee, from "Everyday Use," is strongly concerned with separating herself from her family, or so it seems. Mama explains how she was as a child and as a teenager, and her motivation doesn't change much; she continues to drift further away from her family. This motivation is intentional and is proven so when the author writes, "[Dee]She wrote to me once that no matter where we 'choose' to live, she will manage to come see us. But she will never bring her friends" (Walker 493). The author's choice of the word, manage, instead of promise or another equivalent word gives the reader a feel that Dee feels obligated and only said this because she felt so.

According to the narrator, Dee has always been confident, and she wanted an education, rather than working the same way her mother did. The narrator explains that Dee read to her family often, but she read in a condescending manner. When Dee explains that she wanted to go by Wangero, she says, "I couldn't bear it any longer, being named after the people who oppress me...There I was not before 'Dicie' cropped up in our family, so why should I try to trace it that far back?" (Walker 494). She,

however, contradicts herself when she begins to act interested in the family heirlooms around the house. This becomes a problem when Dee wants to keep some quilts that Mama had saved for Maggie, Dee's younger sister. Dee goes on a rampage, explaining how Maggie would ruin the rugs and then closes the conversation by stating that Maggie needed to be prouder of her heritage. Alice Walker, the author, utilized irony as well when she includes this in the story because Dee adamantly distances herself from her family, but she wants to keep family heirlooms and tells her sister to be prouder of her heritage.

Although Mathilde and Dee are from vastly different backgrounds and time periods, comparing the both of them is easily accomplished because of the similarities in their personalities, backgrounds, and behaviors. It is important to note that Dee is from a poor, black family from the southern United States during the mid-1900's, and Mathilde is from a middle class family in France during the 1800's. Despite the difference in backgrounds, both women are described as beautiful and both women have it in their head that they deserve more than they have. Mathilde, however, is focused on her personal image; she is very concerned about what other's think about her. Dee is very actively trying to distance herself from her past and her family. Both women's behaviors revolve around their motives, and although different, their motives ultimately lead to their desire: to get what they want and get what they think they deserve: for Dee, this is a life better than her family offers, and for Mathilde, her desire is to become wealthy and attractive to people of the upper class. As for the type of character that each woman is, readers may infer that both Dee and Mathilde are static characters. Neither

of them change through the course of the story; it may seem as if Mathilde has changed but her personality remains the same. Even after losing the necklace, her primary focus is to preserve her image and pay off the necklace rather than confess her mishap to her friend. It is also worth noting that both authors used a bit of irony to tell the story of both women. Whether this irony signifies the hypocrisy of the women's character or emphasizes the character of the women, it is another element that stands out vividly to a reader.

Dee and Mathilde, two women from very different backgrounds, can easily be compared and contrasted because of the strong similarities between their personalities and desires. Mathilde's desire to be wealthy and appealing to the upper class contributes to her focus on self-image. Dee, with her strong desire for a better life than her family offers, has a too strong focus on distancing herself from her family and their ways. Both Mathilde and Dee share the sense that they deserve better than they have because they are beautiful. Both authors brilliantly worked in irony and characterization to create the round characters of Dee and Mathilde.

Works Cited

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Walker, Alice. "Everyday Use." *Literature: An Introduction to Fiction, Poetry, Drama, and Writing*. Ed. X. J. Kennedy and Dana Gioia. 12th ed. New York: Pearson, 2013. 490-497. Print.