

The necklace by guy de maupassant

Business



The story *The Necklace* by Guy de Maupassant is a biting criticism of vanity. It follows the life and hopes of Madame Loisel who dreams of being bedecked with jewels and fine dresses. Her pride causes her constant discomfort in life. Highlighting the disappointments in Madame Loisel's life, de Maupassant creates a bitter picture of a life wasted. The story makes full use of irony, in describing her situation in life, her empty fulfillment, and the consequences of vanity.

The story is setup with the statement “for women have no caste or class, their beauty, grace, and charm serving them for birth or family... and put the slum girl on a level with the highest lady of the land.” Madame Loisel dreams that she was born for every delicacy and luxury, but that she had married beneath herself. She dreams of being desired by many men and the center of attention. Madame Loisel's pride and vanity are very large to her stature. Despite her longings, she finds herself married to a clerk in the Ministry of Education. The implication is that Madame Loisel does not possess the characteristics of a woman of high social standing.

The irony here is that if Madame Loisel had possessed these characteristics, it is possible that she could have married up and enjoyed the life of luxury she desired. When Madame Loisel's husband receives an invitation to a ball thrown by the ministry, Madame Loisel is thrown into despair because she does not have the proper attire. Her husband gives her his savings for a dress. She then needs the perfect necklace, which she borrows from a wealthy friend. When she returns home from the ball, however, she finds the necklace is no longer around her neck.

All the pleasure she had that night, all her dreams fulfilled, ended up being empty and meaningless. Despite the fulfillment of her greatest dreams and the vanities of her pride, this is reduced to nothing as she and her husband must now struggle to find and buy diamonds to replace the lost necklace. The final irony occurs ten years later, after Madame Loisel and her husband have worked themselves to the bone to repay the debt incurred by the loss. She runs into her friend who lent her the diamond necklace for the party. Her friend refuses to speak with her, thinking she is a common woman, worn and rugged.

After telling her who she is, she blames her friend for her terrible appearance and slip into poverty, "... and all on your account." She tells her friend that she lost the necklace loaned to her that night for the ball and that the past ten years have been spent working to repay the money to replace the necklace. Her friend is astounded, but not nearly as astounded as Madame Loisel is about to be. Her friend replies " Oh, my poor Mathilde! But mine was imitation. It was worth at the very most five hundred francs!" This is the ultimate ironic twist and puts the entire story into perspective. Guy de Maupassant is taking a critical view of a woman's pride and vanity.

At many places in the story he shows the irony of Madame Loisel's situation. From the time of her marriage, through her blossoming years, Madame Loisel desires what she does not have and dreams that her life should be other than it is. It is only after ten years of hard labor and abject poverty that she realizes the mistake pride led her to make. At that point, the years cannot be regained.