

# Irony in the necklace and the lottery

Literature



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**Irony: A Comparison and Contrast of the Necklace and The Lottery** Irony is a literary technique where there is an absurd or unintentional link with truth that goes far beyond mere exoteric meanings. The Necklace by Guy de Maupassant and The Lottery by Shirley Jackson are two stories where irony occurs. The irony in these stories is similar in some ways but different in others. As we approach these stories from this standpoint, we attempt to tease out the more esoteric lessons they communicate.

In both The Necklace and The Lottery, there is situational irony. In The Necklace, there is situational irony when Madame Loisel thought that the event would be uplifting to her boring life and it ended in being a catastrophe. In The Lottery there is situational irony when the town's people display such a carnival atmosphere to such a horrid spectacle. In The Necklace, there is situational irony when Loisel fears so much to be shunned by the upper crust that she works herself to poverty to save face in their sight. In The Lottery there is situational irony as the drawing progressed things became more ritualistic yet the people remained sort of business as usual talking about taxes and such. It is ironic how humans often seem to act intelligently as individuals, but under the duress of tradition and social influence, we become less capable than herd animals. The underlying truth is that we are not in as much control of our lives as we may think. In both The Necklace and The Lottery, there is situational irony. Things are not always as they seem. The lessons go deeper as the ironic similarities diverge between these two short stories.

In The Necklace, tragic irony is more pronounced; whereas, in The Lottery, verbal irony is more pronounced. For example, in The Necklace there is tragic irony as the wife and husband attempt to rectify their mistake, they

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actually made matters worse, and in *The Lottery*, everything seemed as if *The Lottery* was good thing. For example, in *The Necklace*, it was tragically ironic when Madame Forestier revealed that her original necklace was imitation, and in *The Lottery*, even Tessie thought the lottery was all fun and games until she "won". The underlying truth is the Golden Rule - do to others as you would have them do to you. Had the couple in *The Necklace* come clean, their problems would not have been as difficult. In *The Necklace*, tragic irony is more pronounced; whereas, in *The Lottery*, verbal irony is more pronounced, especially as the lottery winner meets her demise. The scene of civility becomes horrifically graphic as she begs for her life and is struck down with the first rock to the head. Before being selected, she also thought the day's events were rather seemly. Perhaps, only then do participants of the lottery realize the importance of asking themselves a simple question. How would I feel if that happened to me

Having approached these stories from this standpoint of irony, we attempted to glean the more esoteric lessons that are meant. *The Necklace* by Guy de Maupassant and *The Lottery* by Shirley Jackson are two stories where irony occurs. The irony in these stories is similar in some ways but different in others. Nevertheless they exemplify irony as a literary technique where there is an absurd or unintentional link with truth that goes far beyond mere exoteric meanings.