

The price of discontentment and materialism

Literature



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12 September The Price of Discontentment, Pride, and Materialism In “ The Necklace,” de Maupassant uses irony, imagery, and symbolism to narrate the negative consequences of not knowing one’s place in society. Mathilde is a charming woman, but unfortunately, she is born into “ a family of employees” (de Maupassant). She feels supremely unhappy with her social status; because she thinks that she is “ born for every delicacy and every luxury.” This essay shows that Mathilde paid a heavy literal and figurative price for her discontentment, pride, and materialism.

de Maupassant uses imagery to depict Mathilde’s vibrant imagination of what should be hers, an imagination that feeds her discontentment in life. She hates her world of “ poverty” and its “ worn walls” and yearns for “ large parlors, decked with old silk...coquettish little rooms, perfumed...” These are opposing images that describe the life that Mathilde has and the life she would have rather wanted for herself. Because of what she thinks she is born for, she has become a discontented woman. Furthermore, the necklace is a social status symbol. It stands for the social class that Mathilde wanted to climb, but failed to do so.

Mathilde has too much pride; she believes herself to be superior to her social class. Her thoughts are devoted to the notion that she should be “ envied,” “ seductive” and “ sought after.” de Maupassant employs dramatic irony to foreshadow the inevitability of Mathilde’s great loss, when Mme. Forester easily lends her a supposedly-expensive necklace. Somehow, this already points out that the necklace might not be that expensive after all. Still, Mathilde has chosen that necklace precisely because it fits the self-importance she has attached herself to.

Mathilde paid a heavy literal and figurative price for her materialism. She is <https://assignbuster.com/the-price-of-discontentment-and-materialism/>

immersed in dreams of grandeur and a better life, a life of parties and luxurious material possessions. When she gets invited to a grand party, she wants a new dress, even if they can hardly afford it, and even borrows a diamond necklace, without thinking of the risks involved. When she loses the necklace, she almost loses her mind. She and her husband bought a new one to replace the lost necklace. From here, Mathilde learns “rough work of the household, the odious labors of the kitchen.” Situational irony is shown here, because Mathilde only wanted to be beautiful and sought after for one night, but she paid for this night with ten years of hard work that reduced her physical beauty. Hence, she paid a literal and figurative cost for her materialism.

de Maupassant uses a remarkable twist, where the ending must have destroyed Mathilde. It will not be surprising if she fainted or died afterwards from shock and disappointment. “The Necklace” reminds people that discontentment, pride, and materialism are senseless attitudes in life. Anyone who would fill their lives with discontentment, pride, and materialism are sure to suffer a fate exactly, or even worse, than Mathilde’s. Finally, the main lesson is that there is a thin line between an illusion and a dream.

Work Cited

de Maupassant, Guy. *The Necklace*. 1907. *Literature for Composition: Essays, Fiction, Poetry, and Drama*. Sylvan Barnet, William E. Cain and William Burto. 9th ed. Boston : Longman, 2011. Print.