

Analyzing the necklace

Business



“ The Necklace” by Guy de Maupassant tells of a selfish wife, a problem-solving husband, and consequences. The wife, Mathilde Loisel, is not content with anything she has: her clothes, her jewelry, and not even her loyal husband. The story begins with M. Loisel opening a letter inviting him and his wife to a party.

Rather than celebrating, Mathilde freaks out about not having a dress, and her husband has to run out and buy her one. Immediately after that, Mathilde begins to panic because she has no jewelry to wear. Per her husband’s suggestion, she borrows a necklace from her friend, Mme. Forester. Only now is Mathilde content, and they go to the party. But when they return from the party, Mathilde goes to touch the necklace and discovers that it is gone! M.

Loisel searches all over the town, but the necklace has disappeared. In order to find a replacement, the husband has to spend his entire inheritance and borrow even more from the bank. This results in both the husband and wife working like slaves for ten years to pay off the debt. Now, 10 years later, Mathilde runs into the friend who owns the necklace. In talking to her, she finds out that the diamonds on the original necklace were fake, and it was not nearly as expensive as the replacement. Throughout Guy de Maupassant’s “ The Necklace,” symbolism through characters and situational irony reveal the true theme: an unquenchable desire for worldly things results in massive consequences.

De Maupassant utilizes characters to symbolize the two opposing ideas from his argument, which are selfishness and selflessness. These ideas are shown

in the form of Mathilde Loisel and her husband. The other characters of the story are used to bring about consequences for the two of them. The author directly characterizes the main protagonist, Mathilde, as someone who “suffered intensely, feeling herself born for every delicacy and every luxury” (1). She felt that she was entitled to the rich life.

“ She suffered from the poverty of her dwelling, the abraded chairs, the ugliness of the stuffs” (1). The issue with Mme. Loisel’s mentality was that she never did anything herself to become rich. She wasted her life moping because of her plight, and never did anything to change it. In her mind, this was everyone else’s job. “ All these things, which another woman of her caste would not even have noticed, tortured her and made her indignant” (1).

Mathilde’s family was never rich, and her only way of becoming rich was to marry a wealthy man. This was unlikely to happen, but she never tried to find out. Mathilde did not protest when her parents arranged for her to marry a low-ranking clerk who worked for the Department of Education. Even though their marriage was not fully their choice, the clerk treated Mathilde like his most prized possession. He loved her even though she did not show love back. In addition to being the ideal husband, M.

Loisel was a problem-solver. In times when Mathilde sat and stressed, he was out doing something to find a solution. When the necklace disappeared, he told Mathilde, ““ I’m going... back the whole distance we came on foot, to see if I cannot find it”” (4). It did not faze M. Loisel that it was long past

midnight, and he had work in the morning. He set aside his own desires for his wife's problem.

And the clerk didn't stop there. In the days following, " he went to police headquarters, to the newspapers to offer a reward, to to the cab company; he did everything, in fact, that a trace of hope could urge him to" (4). De Maupassant uses M. Loisel to show the right way to act. Unfortunately, he has to share in Mathilde's consequences. She drags them both down.

In a marriage relationship, two people become one, and if " right" marries " wrong," then the wrong fouls up everything that is right. Symbolic characters set the scene for de Maupassant's argument, and situational irony shows the problems they must cope with because of one character. " The Necklace" uses situational irony to demonstrate the consequences for worldly desires and to argue that problem-solvers are correct in their actions. Mathilde and her husband have two major predicaments throughout the story. Their first ironic issue comes about after the party. " She took off the wraps with which she had covered her shoulders, before the mirror, so as to see herself once more in her glory" (4).

Naturally, fate did not allow Mathilde much time to revel in her ego. " But suddenly she gave a cry. She no longer had the necklace around her throat!" (4). This goes to prove how temporary possessions are. At any point, possessions can be stolen or damaged.

Likewise, happiness that comes from possessions is only temporary, and can be stolen or damaged at any point. Brief happiness comes from the world, but lasting joy comes from above. The price that Mathilde pays after this

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problem is ten years of hard labor. She sold any chance she had at being middle class for one night of wealth. She was dishonest by failing to tell her friend Mme. Forester what happened to the necklace, which brought a new round of ironic consequences.

“ Mme. Forester, much moved, took her by both hands: ‘-Oh, my poor Mathilde. But [my diamonds] were false. At most they were worth five hundred francs” (6)! It is easy for sin to lead into more sin, and this final plot twist shows that it’s not worth it to take the initial step. Mathilde wasted ten years of her life on an avoidable problem. In case she had not yet learned her lesson, fate used the second example of situational irony to blatantly show Mathilde that she was wrong, and had no one to blame but herself.

The reader can only hope that through two major ironic situations, Mathilde and her husband discover what they might do next time. By putting symbolic characters through situational irony, de Maupassant proves that there are consequences for being dependent on earthly things for happiness. As an allegory, “ The Necklace” argues a point through heavy use of symbolism. De Maupassant crafted this story, not to rebuke one fictitious character, but to rebuke a very real attitude found in large quantities of people on Earth. People are drowning in this selfish mentality, and they may never change if there weren’t stories like “ The Necklace” to call them out.