

Literary analysis of "the necklace" by guy de maupassant essay

[Literature](#), [Russian Literature](#)



There are several characters in the story that the author, Maupassant, uses to build up ideas and contribute to the meaningful flow of the story. The life of the protagonist in the story, Mathilde, is used by the author, Maupassant, to contribute significantly to the overall meaning of the story.

Her character, ambitions in life and her general point of view about various issues in life are used to bring out different themes and also help in the development of the story (Maupassant, pg. 16). Mathilde is also used to help build up suspense in the story.

In this literary analysis, this main character Mathilde will be discussed and her contribution to the overall meaning of the short story ' the necklace'.

At the beginning of the story, Maupassant introduces the protagonist Mathilde as a young and beautiful lady who comes from a not so well up family and there seems to be very little change that is going to take place in her life in terms of moving to a higher social class (pg 1).

This is because she is married by a clerk who can not adequately cater for the expensive things she desires to live a satisfying life. Mathilde is introduced as a character that has a great desire for a life that she and her husband Loisel can not afford. This contributes significantly to the development of the plot because it is her behavior that eventually leads to their downfall.

She is not content with the current state of things in her life. The author tells us that the state of their house torments her. The walls, the old chairs and the curtains which are not so beautiful all cause her to be mentally troubled.

She strongly believes that she ought to be living a better and more expensive life. She yearns for things that would make her to be admired by many people.

She is so obsessed with the thoughts of a better and more expensive lifestyle that she wastes a lot of time and energy thinking about this. She thinks of how her house would be with expensive furniture and of herself with many clothes and jewelry. We learn that she is very uncomfortable visiting her rich friend, Madame Forestier, because every time she does that, her life is filled with moments of suffering and intense pain (Bloom pg59).

This is because she compares her poor life with that of her rich friend and she is filled with envy and jealousy because she can not afford to live like her friend and yet that is the kind of life she dreams of. Mathilde is completely out of touch with reality and lives a life full of fantasy. This kind of thoughts as expressed by this young lady help in the building up of the plot of the story because eventually, she learns how futile it is to covet what one can not afford.

It is very ironical that Mathilde loves what she does not have (Maupassant, pg. 23). She says that she loves jewels and clothes but she does not actually have any of them. The motive for her yearning to have these things so badly is an evil one. She says that she would love to have these things so that she can be envied by many people. The fact that Mathilde and her husband belong to the middle class shows that they are not very poor and that they are able to get the very basic necessities in life.

Her desire and obsession with more wealth just shows how materialistic she is and her insatiable desire for more wealth which she can not get. The author shows us that they are even to be envied by other people like her servant who is belongs to a lower social class than her but Mathilde is only interested in attaining her selfish ambition in life. Her desire to have more and especially what she can not afford brings problems even to her innocent husband.

Trouble starts the evening when her husband comes home with news that she has been invited to accompany him to a rare occasion organized by the ministry of education. Her reaction to the news is one that her husband did not expect. She is very sad because she does not have a new and expensive dress to wear to the occasion.

Efforts by the husband to persuade her to wear an old but nice dress that she has bear no fruit. He ends up sacrificing the money he had saved to buy a gun to meet his wife's demand for a new dress. The husband is portrayed as a person who blindly follows the wife's demands without looking at the long term implications of such decisions.

He fails to act as a guide to the wife who is already too blinded by her strong desire to acquire more than she can afford. The emotional response of the wife when she is told to wear the dress she normally wears to the theatre shows how obsessed she is with living a high class life. The husband is persuaded to give up something very important to please his wife who seems impossible to satisfy because thereafter she still asks for a necklace.

Mathilde cares very little about her husband. She is very selfish and is concerned about her own interests being fulfilled even at the expense of her husband's little savings. She is not very careful not hurt others as she pursues her desire for more wealth. Instead of being grateful to her husband about what he has already provided to her, she complains about what the husband is unable to do to make her happy.

She therefore lives a very unhappy life full of struggles which can be avoided if only she is content with her current status and works towards improving her life. Moreover, she only says that she deserves to have all the things she spends a lot of time dreaming of but ironically, she does nothing to get them.

After the husband offers to buy her the dress she demands for in order to attend the ball, she again complains that she does not have a necklace and threatens not to accompany her husband if she does not get one. Because the husband cannot afford to buy her a necklace at that moment, he suggests that she borrows it from her rich friend which she agrees. Given a variety to choose from, she settles for one that looks like diamond which she is later to discover that it was not genuine diamond.

She is very happy that she is going to impress people during the ball because she has both the dress and the necklace which are the most important things in her life. Although she ends up achieving what she has always longed for that night, what she loses is of greater magnitude than that short lived achievement.

The necklace ends up getting lost on their way back home despite efforts by the husband to try and recover it. When they realize that the necklace is lost forever, they settle for another option which is replacing the necklace with another that looks exactly like the one they lost.

They incur a lot of debts as they try to raise the amount required to purchase a genuine diamond necklace. The husband sacrifices so much for the sake of his selfish wife who seems to care very little about his interests. Mathilde's weak point of coveting more wealth is the greatest mistake she makes. The outcome of her actions and desires are disastrous not only to her but to the husband too. She ends up losing everything because of just a night of pleasure.

She wastes most of her youthful life and beauty toiling and laboring to repay the debts they incur when they decide to buy a new expensive necklace for Madame Forestier instead of just telling her that she lost the original necklace. Fusco (pg 28), notes that this incident helps to expose her proud nature. She finds it very hard to just confess and maybe apologize to the rich friend who would have probably heard her and would not have subjected her to the kind of hard labor she and her husband had to go through.

The wasted years that the couple has to go through are because of Mathilde's assumption that her rich friend could not have possibly bought a cheap necklace and so they have to replace the fake diamond necklace with an original one. She has all along erroneously believed that for anything to be valuable, it has to be expensive.

When Mathilde and Madame Forestier eventually meet after a long period of time, precisely ten years, Madame Forestier fails to recognize her old friend Mathilde. She has grown old and her initial beauty is no longer there. She has lost almost everything that made her beautiful due to ten years of labor. Madame Forestier is still elegant and youthful and pities her old friend Mathilde.

Maupassant uses the necklace that Mathilde is so much impressed by symbolically to show her totally wrong belief. She has all along thought that for anything to be of value, it has to be expensive. She sadly discovers that the necklace that she thought was very expensive and of great value is not worthy. In fact, if she had confronted her friend and explained her case, the couple could have reimbursed her for the necklace without much strain because they had enough money to pay Madame Forestier.

By using Mathilde as the protagonist in the story, Maupassant is able to create an ironic ending that the readers do not expect. Several moral lessons can also be learnt when one reads of the calamity that befalls Mathilde and the husband. The character of Mathilde has changed drastically at the end of the story compared with the first time the reader encounters her in the beginning of the story. She no longer complains about life and wanting more wealth as she did in the beginning.

She has learnt to live within her means despite the fact that she is even poorer than in the beginning when she was whining about everything in her life and yet she had enough to sustain her. The troubles she has gone

through seem to have taught her a very valuable lesson in life and she even appears to be stronger than she was before. She learns how easy it is to lose what one has because of greed and not being content.

At the end of the story, the question that arises is, ' who is to blame for the misery that this couple finds itself in?' the blame seems to be solely on Mathilde because of her irrationality in thought and action. If only she is keener about what she desires and takes time before acting on her wishes, maybe her life and that of the husband would have turned out to be better. She ruins her entire life and that of her husband because of just a single night of pleasure.

She feels good when everybody in the ball envies her and does not even care about her husband when they are at the occasion. The author tells us that the husband had been sitting with three other men for several hours since midnight because their wives had abandoned them and went away to enjoy themselves alone. In the long run, Mathilde's life becomes worse off than initially when they could afford to live a decent life.

After they borrow money to replace the necklace, they are no longer able to hire a house help, hence she has to do all the work alone. This hard labor is what robs her of her strength and beauty. Mathilde and her husband Loisel may not deserve the kind of life that they find themselves in were it not for her greed and envy.

The husband is also unable to foresee the danger that lies ahead before they resolve to take any action. We are told in the story that when he is borrowing

money for the necklace he puts his signature without even caring what he is signing. Although Mathilde is seen as the cause of all their misfortunes, the husband also contributes to it. This family is entirely to blame for the misery that befalls it.

Bloom, Harold. *Guy de Maupassant: Bloom's major short story writers*. New York: Infobase Publishing, 2004.

Fusco, Richard. *Maupassant and the American Short Story: the Influence of Form at the Turn of the Century*. Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1994.

Maupassant, Guy de. *The Necklace*. Washington: Dramatic Publishing, 1969.

Mathilde Loisel is the protagonist of the story. She is the central character whose perspective on life we see and whose journey we follow.

Guy de Maupassant wrote *The Necklace*, the short story about a poor young girl who wished for a wealthy life but never attained it.

The central theme is the connection between illusion and happiness. Striving for luxury life, the main heroine borrows the necklace, which looks expensive. She loses it and goes into debt to replace it. She ruined her life for years, trying to appear someone else, never learning the necklace was fake.

The characters in *The Necklace* are Mathilde Loisel, her husband Monsieur Loisel, and her wealthier friend Madame Forestier. She gives the main heroine the necklace, which becomes the root of all the problems.