

Comparing short stories



Comparing Short Stories “ The Jewels of M. Lantin” and “ The Bet” tell separate stories that display the misconception of the importance and happiness of money and wealth during the literary realism era in France. The shared general background of both short stories is that both major male characters set out doing something to make them happy. Monsieur Lantin got married and lived a happy, worthwhile life, while the banker placed stakes on money at the expense of another for his own amusement.

However, after everything had been said and done, neither man was really pleased with their final position in life. Through the use of plot, tone, and irony, the authors were able to convey that during the realism era of France people were separated by the concepts of wealth and destitution, eventually succumbing to the fact that money never equated to happiness.

Though the plots of both stories do differ from each other in the events that lead to their conclusions, they still share the same general idea: each male protagonist starts off with a comfortable life, perhaps not entirely rich, but with money enough to make them pleased with their lives. Due to circumstances, they each find themselves in a position that compromises this wealth and comfort. This is where the similarity ends. Monsieur Lantin sells off his late wife’s jewelry, making him incredibly rich. He dwells in this feeling, though eventually marries another woman who is angry and appalling. Rich he may be, but Lantin had lost his comfort of life. The banker, convinced that the young man would not see out his part of the bet, lives happily, spending money and losing it frivolously. When it becomes apparent that the banker will have to pay the young man, he realizes that he no longer has the money, and the only solution he can come upon is to kill the young man before the time is up. When he goes to perform this horrific

deed, he comes upon a note from the young man stating that he despises what money does to people and says that he will not follow through with his part of the debt. The banker is relieved, though upset that he would even consider committing such a crime for money. These plot ideas show that, despite what these men were able to do with their money, they still ended up being morose.

The tone of “ The Jewels of M. Lantin”, at the beginning of the story, was cheerful and exuberant, as Monsieur Lantin proposed and lived happily married to one of the prettier girls of the town. As the story went on, the tone changed to exasperation, then despair as his wife died. As he came to realize the worth of her supposedly fake jewels, the tone was that of confusion and fear. After he got a large amount of money for the jewels, the tone retreated back to being cheerful. By time the end of the story arrives, Lantin is rich, but incredibly unhappy with his new wife, making the tone dejected. The tone of “ The Bet” had been solemn, yet vaguely excited as the men from the bank considered the bet that was about to take place. The mood remained solemn as the young man spent his time in solitary confinement, only increasing in tension as the banker realized that he did not have the money to pay back his debt. Once he discovers that the young man no longer wants his money, the tone is of relief, though it quickly turns to remorse as the banker realizes what he was about to do. The tone in both stories were constantly rising and falling between various feelings of happiness and despair, once again showing that the situations the men were in had started off as good plans, but did not end as such.

The two short stories share their irony with each other, perhaps one of the few similarities between them. The irony seen in these stories is that the two

men expected their lives to be easier and more fulfilling with money. They were each facing situations that would make them completely destitute, but they did not expect further actions to put them even in a more uncomfortable situation. Lantin had his money, but become stuck in a marriage with a woman who could hardly stand; the banker was able to keep what little money he had, but could not get over his guilt at even thinking about killing another person - which, also ironically, goes against the argument over the death sentence and a life sentence in prison at the beginning of the story. The irony of these stories really plays into the concept that money does not ensure happiness.

Plot, tone, and especially irony helped the authors to show the misconceptions of money on happiness. Whether or not someone has money or is facing poverty, there are still other factors in their lives that will determine if they will live happily or miserably. The realism aspects of these two short stories really play into the concept that money does not buy happiness, and nor does it promote it, as this concept can be related in real life. Indeed, it seems that too many people depend on the existence of money to make them believe that life is worthwhile. According to these two stories, there is no place for money in pure happiness.

Prewriting Notes

Settings - France - both in small towns

Characters - Lantin (Chief Clerk, Department of Interior), Banker (worked at a bank)

Plot - Each male protagonist starts off with a comfortable life, perhaps not entirely rich, but with money enough to make them pleased with their lives. Due to circumstances, they each find themselves in a position that

<https://assignbuster.com/comparing-short-stories/>

compromises this wealth and comfort.

Themes - Money does not buy happiness

Irony - Relates to theme, each man finds themselves where they want to be but are completely unhappy about it

Tone - Constantly changes through each story, starting with happiness and gradually falling, then returning to happiness, just to settle at sadness or despair