

The Necklace by Guy de Maupassant

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Introduction

In this essay, we will discuss the short story “The Necklace” by Guy de Maupassant. This is an ancient story, and it was written in 1884 by a French writer. The story has a lesson at the end of it for the readers. The author has written this story in a very interesting way about the life of an ordinary girl and gave us a powerful message behind the main story. We will discuss the story, the theme that has been used for narrating this story, and the lessons that the story teaches us about life. There is a twist in the ending of the story, which is a hallmark of the French writer Maupassant, who used the ironic ending style or a twist at the end of the story. The first publication of this story was in the French newspaper *Le Gaulois*, which was published on the 17th of February, 1884. The story “The Necklace” has been used in making short films and television plays several times.

Discussion

Overview of the story

Mathilde Loisel is an extraordinarily beautiful girl with a charming and elegant personality. But she was born in a clerk-house, and she often feels that she was born in a house where the economic condition is not suitable for someone like her. She is exceptional, and she wanted an extraordinary family for her with a strong economic background. But accepting the reality, she lives her life the way it was. , despite the wish to marry someone who is better in the financial situation than her own family, she married a clerk who was working in the Ministry of Education and who was able to keep her happy with a simple life but not a lavish and luxurious life she wished for.

In her everyday routine, while working at home, she feels about the poverty they are in and the miseries of poverty. She often thinks about the people who are living happy and lavish lives because they have money to buy things and decorate their houses beautifully, while she was unable to dress beautifully for her wedding because of the financial crisis. Her father could not afford to give her dowry as well. She gets upset while watching the simple furniture or an untidy old curtain. On the other hand, her husband feels the joy of having a simple bowl of soup made by her. He admires the taste of soup made by her over any other dish, but Mathilde was imagining about the delicious cuisine and different types of dishes that are often served to wealthy families for lunches and dinners.

She has no jewellery, nor does she have fancy clothing, but she dreams about the people who enjoy their food in restaurants and clubs with their wealthy friends. These are the things she relates to

happiness, and she lives imagining the glory of these things. She has no friends, and she avoids visiting her only friend, Madame Forestier, who is financially in a better condition than Mathilde. She, under the complex she faced while visiting her friend, started avoiding her (Shmoop.com, 2018).

One day, her husband comes back home from the office and, in excitement, tells the lady that they are invited to a formal event that has been hosted by the Ministry of Education. Her husband thought that Mathilde would be happy to know about the invitation, but her reaction left him with a surprise. Mathilde, after watching the envelope of invitation, starts crying and shouts at her husband that she cannot go. Upon asking, Mathilde tells her husband that she does not have any suitable dress for such an event so he should give the invitation to some other colleague whose wife can have a beautiful dress. Her husband asks her about the price of a dressing gown that she could wear to the party. She tells him that she may need 400 francs to get a gown that could be used in such an event. After thinking about the cost, her husband agrees to give her the money for the dress she wishes to make for the party.

After the preparation of the dress, there comes another problem. Mathilde starts behaving weirdly, and upon asking, she tells her husband that she does not have any jewels to wear at the party, where everyone comes with beautiful jewels. Her husband asks her to wear the fresh flowers as jewellery, but she refuses by saying she does not want to go to the party without the jewels. Her husband gives her a suggestion to visit her friend Madame Forestier and lend some jewels for the party. Mathilde visits her friend and chooses a diamond necklace to wear to the party. Her friend agrees to lend her the necklace without any problem.

She gets ready for the party wearing that necklace and the gown she made for the Ball, and they go to the party. At the party, everyone notices Mathilde as she looks beautiful, and everyone gets attracted to her and starts praising her. She feels self-satisfaction to know how beautiful she is, and she dances with joy through the party. At 4 a.m., she finds her husband, who has been napping in a separate room. To return home, her husband asks her to stay inside while he brings a cab to return home. As now she was cloaked with a wrap which was not beautiful or expensive, she felt ashamed of, and she followed her husband to get the cab.

They return to the home, and Mathilde, upon seeing the mirror finds out that she has lost her friend's diamond necklace. She feels so worried, and Monsieur Loisel has to go all the way back to the party to find the necklace for her wife. He could not find the necklace anywhere and asked her wife to talk to her friend and tell her that she had broken the clasp of the necklace and she would return it when they got it repaired. By buying some extra time, they again started finding the necklace where they could get it. After a week of struggle, Monsieur Loisel asks Mathilde if they will have to replace the necklace with buying a new one just like the one she has lost. They started searching for the necklace that looked like the diamond necklace of her friend. After some days, they found a jeweller who had the same necklace, but the price of that necklace was Forty Thousand Francs.

Monsieur Loisel asks for the concession as they were unable to pay such a massive amount at short

notice. The shopkeeper gave them some time to search for the lost necklace, and if they failed, he would give them the necklace at a discount price. The hopelessness of finding the necklace forced them to arrange the money and buy that necklace for 36000 Francs. Mathilde returns the necklace to her friend, who first gets annoyed about how long would it take to repair the necklace, and she does not open the case of the necklace to check it, which is a relief for Mathilde (Americanliterature.com, 2018).

From here starts the Loisel family's real poverty life; when they have to work extra hours and save money, they shift to an even smaller apartment. They have to dismiss the servants and save every sou by any means to return the loan they have taken to pay for the necklace. Monsieur Loisel starts working on three jobs, and Mathilde starts a heavy housework job to meet the financial debts. It took ten years to pay their debts, and now Mathilde's extraordinary beauty is all gone. She seems aged, and her beauty has vanished due to the tough life she has to live. One Sunday, on a walk, she sees her friend Madame Forestier who is still looking young and beautiful. She meets her with a heavy heart, and her friend does not recognize her. After telling them about herself, she leaves her friend in shock at how life was hard for her and her family because of her. She tells her about the lost necklace and the struggles they had to make for its recovery. She tells her about the replacement and the story of how they have covered the cost of the necklace. At the end of the story, Madame Forestier tells Mathilde that the necklace was just an artificial piece of jewellery worth not more than Five Hundred Francs.

Analysis of the story

Realism

The author of this story, Maupassant, believed that there should be some similarity between the fictional story and the reality. A story should convey the message from the real-life experience as accurately as possible. This author wrote many fiction close to reality, and his stories have some lessons for us; he merged that lesson in the story from the ironic twists his stories reflect. The author did not prefer to write his stories with romantic descriptions or explore the psychological aspects. Rather, he preferred objectivity in writing. According to the author, the concept of reality and the concept of fiction are not the same, but they believe that fictional stories should be as close to reality as possible. In the story "The Necklace", the author has written about the life of a fictional character that is purely an illusion, but the readers may find many grounds to relate the story through real-life events and situations.

He did not prefer to explore the character's longing for wealth and unhappiness for the economic condition, he simply told us about her desires and the reason for the unhappiness of Mathilde. He did not explain the reaction of the Mathilde after knowing the facts about the necklace from Madame Forestier. He simply ended the story with a twist and did not talk about the reaction of either of the ladies, leaving the events as they happened. The concept of Realism started in the storytelling in

France in the mid of the nineteenth century and replaced the typical romantic genre. The romantic or psychological description of the characters depicts the ideal picture of them, and it does not portray the realistic features of the characters. In realistic literature, the focus of the story or the character of the story is based on the middle to lower-class society. Cultural environment and social class differences are immensely discussed in the realistic literature. In this story, the class differences and their impact on the minds of the people who are from the lower class are discussed. This story portrays that social class differences can make complex for people from the lower class. They feel shy and ashamed of what they have while moving into a society where there is a social class difference.

The irony in the end

The reason for the fame and name of “The Necklace” is the “whip-crack” ending. Or the like the endings of the story “O. Henry” which was written in the late 1800s. It is also famous for the twist in the ending of the movie, and in this way, the stories that are cast by readers in their minds get turned. The twist that has been used in the story The Necklace turns all the above story and makes all the efforts of the characters wasted. Until this ending point, the story narrates everything about the struggles of Mathilde and her husband for ten years and the night when she lost the borrowed necklace carelessly. The end of the story smashes the illusion and reveals that all the struggles of these ten years and the misery that Mathilde and her family faced could have been avoided if she had stayed honest with her old friend Madame Forestier.

Just because she was not honest with her friends, they had to live in a miserable condition and poverty, which she regretted her whole life. It was not her fate to be blamed, as she used to do, but the honesty and truthfulness that she avoided and faced such a fate which is created by her self. This realization of the greater shock that the necklace was not of real diamonds could not be able to pay her debt back or the life she had lived in such misery. Also, it would not show any betterment in the future life of the lady. The irony is so horrible that it is based on the fact that Loisels had to spend ten years to pay off their debts for a necklace replacement that cost nothing more than five hundred Francs.

It took a major chunk of their life to struggle for the payment of such a mistake which could be avoided if Mathilde was honest with her friend about her necklace. Another ironic twist of the story was that the beauty of the lady, who was the only valuable asset she liked, vanished due to the struggles she had for helping her husband to pay the financial debts back. The most ironic fact is that the old life Mathilde was unhappy with, seems luxurious and prosperous life than the miserable life she was in at the end of the story. She wore better clothes and jewels to look beautiful and rich among other ladies, but the lost necklace made her lose the money she already had. She paid for that inexpensive necklace in both ways: the money she and her husband had and the beautiful personality she wanted to be admired (Eastoftheweb.com, 2018).

Characters

Character list overview

Mathilde Loisel – In the story *The Necklace*, Mathilde Loisel is the protagonist. Mathilde is a beautiful lady, and she has a charming personality, but the economic condition of her family is not good, and they do not have an affluent lifestyle which she wants for herself. To get ready for a ball party to which she was invited by the Education ministry, she borrows from her friend named Madame Forestier a diamond necklace which she lost at the party and could not find anywhere (Enotes.Com, 2018). To pay for the replacement, she and her husband worked and struggled for ten years. That one night of joy costs her and her husband all the possible joys of the future that she could have with him if she did not lose that necklace.

Monsieur Loisel – This character is used as the husband of the main character Mathilde Loisel. He is a very loving and caring husband. He stays happy with the small things they have and wants to keep Mathilde happy by fulfilling her wishes and answering her complaints. He is happy with Mathilde but cannot get the idea of the reasons for her unhappiness. He is a loving husband who loves her wife but cannot understand her wife's extreme unhappiness, which is caused by the lifestyle they have. Monsieur Loisel repaid the debt of the lost necklace by sacrificing his future and helping her wife by doing so much struggle. He struggled for the thing he never wanted for her wife in the first place, but because her wife wished for the jewels, he agreed to it.

Madame Forestier – This character serves as the friend of the main character Mathilde. Madame Forestier is a wealthy woman. She is a kind lady and treats Mathilde with love and affection. Unfortunately, Mathilde gets jealous of the wealth of Madame Forestier, and she has a complex that she has less than her friend. Just because For this reason, she avoids visiting and meeting her friends. Mathilde asks Madame Forestier to lend her a diamond necklace which she gives to her without any hesitation. Mathilde loses the necklace, and Madame Forestier does not inspect if the returned necklace is real or the replacement when Mathilde returns the necklace to her. After listening to the whole struggling story of her friend, Madame Forestier, who is still young and beautiful, reveals the shocking fact that the necklace was not of real diamonds, and it was worth nothing more than five hundred Francs.

Themes

Appearances' Deceptiveness

The deceptiveness in the appearance of the character can be observed in her efforts to look rich and beautiful and to represent a social class of which she desires to become a part. But in reality, she is not wealthy, and she belongs to a family with a middle-class lifestyle. She tries her best to look different from the way she is. She has an ideal life of illusion in her head, and she lives in that illusion

rather than living happily in the real life she has. She believes that she is beautiful and she is worthy of living in a better place than the place she is living in with her husband.

The party seems to her a dream life and a chance to match her ideal life with her real life. She tries to match her appearance in real life with the life she always thinks of. She makes the arrangements for it by making a new gown and borrowing a diamond necklace from her friend Madame Forestier, who was a wealthy woman. The false appearance of the character is highlighted by the necklace, which was deceptive as a diamond necklace, but in reality, it is just costume jewellery. In the jewelry box of her friend, Mathilde gets an illusion by watching the diamond necklace and relating it to the sign of richness and value.

Cost of being unhappy with fate

Mathilde perceives herself as a martyr who is bound to a fate which she does not deserve. But this thinking leads her to make some unwise decisions, which are only self-serving actions. She was living a normal life with a very caring and loving husband, but she was unhappy with that life and blamed her fate for it. She believes that she deserves a better life. By losing the necklace of her friend she faces a fate which she never thinks of. She sacrifices ten years of her life in a struggle to pay the replacement cost of the necklace that she lost. That replacement of the necklace costs her the only valuable asset she has, beauty. Now, she faces a fate with an even more miserable life, and her beauty is also gone. Mathilde sees herself as a martyr, but the actual martyr is her husband, Monsieur Loisel. He is the one who is happy in every situation, and he does what he can to make her beloved wife happy. He sacrifices his life and desires to pay for what his wife has lost.

Objects and their perceived power

The main character of the story believes that objects can make her life better, and she can live happily if she has certain objects she desires. These objects include better clothing, food, luxury households and furniture, and beautiful curtains, etc. Mathilde believes that she deserves happiness, and by getting these objects, her fate can be changed. But in the story *The Necklace*, the author has given us an idea of how we think about material objects and what harm they can do to our lives. At the party, Mathilde feels that she has all the things that she wants, but after losing that necklace, she faces a fate that is even worse than the life she had before. The power does not come with the material objects but inside the person himself (SparkNotes Editors).

Motifs

The short story *The Necklace* is based on the motif of coveting. Mathilde craves for everything that she does not have and the people belonging to the rich families. On the other hand, her husband, Monsieur Loisel, is happy with his life and wife, and he praises what he has got. He likes the taste of

soup which his wife makes for him. He is not a materialistic person and stays happy with what they have. Mathilde is so covetous that she avoids visiting her wealthy friend as she envies her.

Symbols

The Necklace, a beautiful but worthless object, is used in the story to represent the power of deception in perception and the difference between the actual and an ideal appearance. The necklace was thought to be a very expensive piece of jewellery and she wore it as a symbol of being rich and wealthy. She, in her ideal life, thinks of expensive jewels like diamonds or gold jewellery, so when she sees the necklace at first glance, she never doubts that this could be an artificial piece of jewel. She wants it, and she had it perceived like a diamond necklace. As she wanted to represent herself as a rich person for others, she borrowed it and felt rich when everyone praised her. But by losing the necklace, a lesson is given by the author that, one can get in trouble by denying the reality about the situation he or she is living with.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to discuss the main lesson that the author has given to us by writing his story, "The Necklace." The author suggested that the things that we idealize in our lives are not necessarily proven good for us. The reality in which we are living may seem unpleasant, but the things we idealize may cause more harm to our lives and happiness. In the end, I will suggest the moral of the story as "All that glitters is not Gold."

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