

Questions for the analysis of *The Necklace* by Guy de Maupassant (first reading)

1. Who are the characters? Brief description

The first character we are introduced to in the reading is Mathilde Loisel. She is the protagonist of the story. Throughout the story you see a beautiful but discontented woman who feels as though she was born for a life of luxury and elegance. The second character is Monsieur Loisel which is Mathilde's husband. He is a clerk at the Ministry of Education. He is simple, kind, and is content with his modest life. The last character is Madame Forestier who was a wealthy friend from school. She plays a big part in the reading since she is generous enough to lend Mathilde her jewelry for the ball.

2. Is the title symbolic/literal or both?

The title is both literal and symbolic. On the literal level, the story centers on a necklace that Mathilde borrows, loses, and replaces. This object drives the entire plot and ultimately causes the downfall of the Loisels. On the symbolic level, the necklace represents vanity and desire. It reflects Mathilde's longing for wealth, beauty, and social status, things that appear dazzling but lack true worth. Her discontent blinds her to the modest happiness she already had. The necklace also symbolizes the theme of illusion versus reality. Mathilde sacrifices ten years of her life for something that turns out to be worthless imitation. In this way, the title captures both the surface story and the deeper irony of her fate.

3. When and where does the story take place?

The story *The Necklace* takes place in Paris, France, during the late nineteenth century. The details in the text, such as the Ministry of Education, the use of carriages, and the customs of formal balls, reflect French society of that time. Most of the action happens in two contrasting settings. One is the modest apartment of the Loisels, which shows their lower middle class life. The other is the glamorous ball at the Ministry, which represents the wealth and luxury that Mathilde longs for. The sharp contrast between these places highlights the gap between her reality and her desires.

4. How much time passes from the beginning to the end of the story?

At the start, Mathilde is a young, beautiful woman dreaming of wealth and elegance. After she loses the necklace and she and her husband replace it with a costly one, they spend the next ten years working in poverty to pay off the crushing debt. By the end of the story, Mathilde has aged, her beauty is gone, and her life has been completely transformed by hardship.

So, the story spans roughly a **decade**, moving from her brief moment of glamour at the ball to the long years of sacrifice that follow.

5. What is the mood that prevails in the story?

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At the beginning, the mood is restless and dissatisfied. Mathilde feels trapped in her modest life and longs for wealth and beauty. During the ball, the mood shifts to excitement and joy. For one night, Mathilde experiences the glamour she always dreamed of. After the loss of the necklace, the mood turns anxious and fearful as the couple searches desperately. Through the ten years of repayment, the mood becomes heavy, bleak, and filled with hardship. **At the end**, the mood is tragic and ironic. The shocking revelation that the necklace was worthless leaves the reader with a sense of futility and cruel fate.

So, while the story moves through different emotional tones, the overall mood that dominates is tragic irony, showing how dreams, pride, and appearances can lead to needless suffering.

6. What is the conflict of the story?

External Conflict (Character vs. Society / Circumstances):

Mathilde and her husband face the harsh realities of social class and economic hardship. When the necklace is lost, they are forced into ten years of exhausting labor to repay a debt for something that turns out to be worthless.

7. Describe Mathilde's conflict and feelings.

Internal Conflict (Character vs. Self):

Mathilde struggles with her own pride, vanity, and dissatisfaction. She feels trapped in her modest life and constantly longs for wealth and beauty. After losing the necklace, her feelings change to fear, guilt, and despair, and ten years of hard labor leave her hardened and regretful. Her inability to accept her reality drives her decisions and ultimately leads to her downfall.

8. What clues, if any, anticipate how the story will end?

Some clues foreshadow the ending of the story. Mathilde's obsession with wealth and appearances suggests that her downfall will come from chasing illusions. Her rejection of simple solutions, like wearing flowers, hints that her pride will cost her dearly. Finally, the necklace itself is described with such intensity that it signals its importance and prepares the reader for the ironic twist at the end.

9. How does the story end?

The story ends with a cruel twist of irony. After Mathilde and her husband spend ten long years living in poverty to repay the enormous debt for the necklace they believed was made of real diamonds, Mathilde encounters her friend Madame Forestier. When Mathilde explains the sacrifice they made, Madame Forestier reveals that the original necklace was only imitation jewelry, worth almost nothing. This shocking revelation makes all of Mathilde's suffering and loss of beauty tragically unnecessary, leaving the reader with a sense of futility and bitter irony.

10. Explain the theme of the story.

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The theme of *The Necklace* is the danger of vanity and the deceptiveness of appearances. Mathilde longs for wealth, beauty, and social status, but her desire blinds her to the modest happiness she already has. She sacrifices ten years of her life for a necklace that turns out to be worthless, which shows how chasing illusions can lead to needless suffering. The story also explores fate and irony, since one small event changes the course of her entire life and leaves her with regret.