

# the necklace by guy de maupassant

## answer key

The Necklace by Guy de Maupassant: Answer Key

### Introduction

The Necklace by Guy de Maupassant is a compelling short story that explores themes of vanity, wealth, and the irony of fate. First published in 1884, this narrative revolves around Madame Mathilde Loisel, a woman who dreams of a luxurious life beyond her modest means. Maupassant's masterful storytelling and the poignant twist at the end make this story a staple in literary discussions. In this article, we will delve into the characters, plot, themes, and moral lessons from "The Necklace," and provide an answer key to common questions regarding the text.

## Plot Summary

The story begins with Mathilde Loisel, who is discontent with her middle-class life. She yearns for the finer things in life, believing that her beauty deserves more than her modest existence. Her husband, Monsieur Loisel, is a kind and supportive man who works as a clerk. He tries to make her happy, but Mathilde's dissatisfaction persists.

When Monsieur Loisel surprises Mathilde with an invitation to a prestigious ball, her initial excitement quickly turns to despair because she has nothing suitable to wear. To please her, Monsieur Loisel sacrifices his savings to buy her a beautiful dress. However, Mathilde is still unhappy because she lacks jewelry to complete her ensemble.

Monsieur Loisel suggests borrowing jewelry from her wealthy friend, Madame Forestier. Mathilde borrows a stunning diamond necklace, which transforms her appearance, and she attends the ball, where she is the center of attention. However, the celebration comes to a tragic turn when Mathilde realizes that she has lost the borrowed necklace.

In a panic, the Loisels search for the necklace but cannot find it. They decide to replace it, which leads them to take out loans and deplete their savings. The couple spends the next ten years in poverty to repay the debts incurred for the replacement necklace. Ultimately, Mathilde encounters Madame Forestier years later and learns that the original necklace was a fake, worth very little. The story ends with a powerful twist, highlighting the futility of her sacrifices.

# Character Analysis

## Madame Mathilde Loisel

- **Desire for Wealth:** Mathilde is characterized by her longing for a luxurious lifestyle, which drives the plot forward. Her obsession with material wealth blinds her to the joys of her current life.
- **Pride and Vanity:** Despite her modest background, Mathilde possesses a strong sense of pride and vanity, believing herself entitled to a more opulent existence.
- **Transformation:** Over the course of the story, Mathilde undergoes a significant transformation as she faces the consequences of her choices.

## Monsieur Loisel

- **Supportive Husband:** Monsieur Loisel is depicted as a loving and selfless husband who tries to fulfill Mathilde's desires, even at the cost of his own happiness.
- **Contrast to Mathilde:** His pragmatic nature serves as a foil to Mathilde's unrealistic aspirations, emphasizing her flaws and desires.

## Madame Forestier

- **Symbol of Wealth:** Madame Forestier represents the wealth and lifestyle that Mathilde covets. Her character serves as a catalyst for Mathilde's downfall.
- **Unwitting Role:** Madame Forestier's role in the story is crucial, as it is her necklace that triggers the chain of events leading to Mathilde's suffering.

## Themes

### Vanity and Materialism

- **Desire for Social Status:** Mathilde's longing for a high social status drives her actions and decisions, leading to her ultimate downfall.
- **Illusion of Wealth:** The story illustrates how the pursuit of wealth can lead to an illusionary life, as seen through the façade of the necklace.

## Inequality and Class Struggle

- Social Class Disparities: Maupassant highlights the stark differences between social classes and how they affect individuals' lives and aspirations.
- Impact of Poverty: The Loisels' descent into poverty serves as a harsh reminder of the fragility of wealth and the struggles faced by the lower class.

## Irony and Fate

- Situational Irony: The twist ending serves as a powerful example of situational irony, where Mathilde's sacrifices ultimately lead to her enduring a life worse than the one she initially had.
- Life's Unpredictability: The story emphasizes how fate can be cruel and ironic, often punishing those who strive for a life they cannot attain.

## Moral Lessons

1. Value What You Have: The narrative serves as a cautionary tale about appreciating one's current life and possessions instead of coveting what others have.
2. Consequences of Vanity: Mathilde's vanity and desire for a luxurious lifestyle lead to her downfall, illustrating the dangers of excessive pride and materialism.
3. Reality vs. Illusion: The story encourages readers to confront the difference between reality and illusion, particularly in the context of wealth and social status.

## Common Questions and Answers

1. What is the significance of the necklace?
  - The necklace symbolizes Mathilde's desire for wealth and status. Its loss triggers the events that lead to her downfall, making it a pivotal element in the story.
2. How does the story reflect the social conditions of Maupassant's time?
  - The story highlights the rigid class structures of the late 19th century in France, demonstrating how social mobility is often hindered by economic constraints.
3. What role does irony play in the story?
  - Irony is central to the narrative, particularly in the ending where Mathilde learns that the necklace was not worth the sacrifices she made. This

twist reinforces the theme of life's unpredictability.

4. How does Maupassant develop the character of Mathilde?

- Maupassant uses Mathilde's thoughts and actions to reveal her inner desires and eventual disillusionment, providing a deep psychological portrayal of a woman trapped by her own aspirations.

5. What is the significance of the ending?

- The ending serves as a commentary on the futility of Mathilde's sacrifices and the harsh realities of life. It leaves readers reflecting on the consequences of vanity and the importance of humility.

## Conclusion

The Necklace by Guy de Maupassant remains a powerful exploration of human desires and societal pressures. Through Mathilde Loisel's tragic journey, the story encapsulates timeless themes that resonate with readers to this day. The narrative teaches valuable lessons about the dangers of vanity and the importance of appreciating one's true worth rather than succumbing to the illusions of wealth and status. The story's ironic twist serves as a poignant reminder of life's unpredictability, making it a classic piece of literature that continues to inspire discussion and analysis.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What is the main theme of 'The Necklace' by Guy de Maupassant?

The main theme of 'The Necklace' is the danger of vanity and the pursuit of wealth, highlighting how materialism can lead to one's downfall.

### How does Mathilde Loisel's character contribute to the story's irony?

Mathilde Loisel's desire for a luxurious lifestyle leads her to borrow a necklace, which she loses, resulting in years of hardship to repay the debt. The irony lies in the realization that the necklace was a fake, emphasizing the futility of her aspirations.

### What role does social class play in 'The Necklace'?

Social class plays a crucial role in 'The Necklace' as it drives Mathilde's dissatisfaction with her middle-class life, motivating her to seek validation through wealth and status.

## **What is the significance of the necklace itself in the story?**

The necklace symbolizes the allure of wealth and the deceptive nature of appearances. Its loss leads to Mathilde's transformation and ultimate realization of what is truly valuable in life.

## **What lesson can be drawn from the ending of 'The Necklace'?**

The ending of 'The Necklace' teaches that honesty and acceptance of one's circumstances are more valuable than the pursuit of superficial status and that the consequences of our choices can be profound and life-altering.

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