

The Necklace

Introduction

This story has been written by Guy De Maupassant. This story is about a young woman and the hardships that she has to face due to her impractical aspirations and desires.

Summary

Matilda was a very pretty young lady. She was born as if through an error of destiny, into a family of clerks, but she felt that she was born for all delicacies and luxuries. She was married to a petty clerk, who worked in the office of the Board of Education. She was not happy with her life. She was tortured by seeing the shabby walls and worn chairs of her apartment. When she sat down to have dinner with her husband, she thought of elegant dinners, shining silver, exquisite food served in marvellous dishes. She had neither frocks nor jewels and she loved only these things.

One evening, her husband returned home carrying a large envelope in his hand. The envelope contained an invitation to a party at the Minister's residence.

Her husband had hoped that the invitation would delight her, but that was not to be. She said that she couldn't attend that party as she had nothing to wear to such a party.

Her husband wanted to make her happy, so he gave her four hundred francs to buy a good dress. Matilda bought a pretty dress. But then she said to her husband that she didn't have a jewel to wear with the dress.

On the advice of her husband, she borrowed a necklace from her friend, Madame Forestier, who was her schoolmate at the convent.

The day of the party arrived. Mme Loisel was a great success there. She was the prettiest of all, was elegant and gracious. All the men noticed her. She danced with enthusiasm. She was ecstatic and she won a lot of admiration.

They returned home at about four o'clock in the morning. When she removed the wraps from her shoulders before the glass, she screamed. Her necklace was not around her neck.

They looked for the necklace everywhere but couldn't find it. They even put an advertisement in the newspaper offering a reward to the person who returned it. But there was no result. At last, Loisel decided that they must replace that jewel.

They found a chaplet of diamonds in a shop of the Palais Royal which seemed to them exactly like the one they had lost. It was valued at forty-thousand francs. But they could get it for thirty-six thousand. Loisel had eighteen-thousand francs which his father had left him. He borrowed the rest from lenders at a high rate of interest.

Mme Loisel went to Mme Forestier and returned the jewel. Mme Forestier complained about the late return of the necklace and kept the box aside. She did not inspect the necklace.

However, this event completely changed the life of the Loisel's. They sent away the maid. They changed their apartment and rented some rooms in an attic. Matilda washed the dishes and the clothes, she brought up the water, she went to the grocer's, the butcher's and the fruiterer's and haggled for the last sou. Her husband worked evenings and during night he did copying work at five sous a page. They worked hard and repaid the debt in ten years.

One Sunday, Mme Loisel came across Mme Forestier while she was taking a walk in the Champs-Elysees. Mme Forestier still looked pretty and attractive. Matilda approached her. Mme Forestier did not recognise Matilda but when she introduced herself, she was greatly astonished. Matilda looked like a commoner. She had lost her beauty and charm. Matilda then told her how she and her husband had to work hard to repay the debt that they had taken to replace Mme Forestier's lost necklace. At this, Mme Forestier was taken aback. She told Matilda that the necklace she had lent her was artificial and cost only five hundred francs.

Message

This story conveys the message that we should be satisfied with what we have in our life. Envy others and being jealous of them can only harm us and lead to our downfall.

Extract Based Questions ↘

Read the following extracts carefully and answer the questions that follow:

1. He threw around her shoulders the modest wraps they had carried whose poverty clashed with the elegance of the ball costume. She wished to hurry away in order not to be noticed by the other women who were wrapping themselves in rich furs.

(a) Who is 'he' in this extract?

- (i) Anil (ii) M. Loisel
(iii) The minister (iv) The author

(b) Why did Matilda wish to hurry away?

(c) Who is 'she' here?

- (i) Madame George (ii) Mme Forestier
(iii) Matilda (iv) Matilda's friend

(d) Complete the analogy with a word from the extract:

elegance : gaudiness :: affluence :

Answers

- (a) (ii) M. Loisel
(b) Matilda wished to hurry away in order not to be noticed by the other women who were wrapping themselves in rich furs.
(c) (iii) Matilda
(d) poverty
2. One evening her husband returned elated bearing in his hand a large envelope.
"Here," he said, "here is something for you."
(a) One evening, the husband brought:
(i) a necklace (ii) an invitation
(iii) a dress (iv) a gift
(b) Why was the husband elated?
(c) Who is 'you' here?
(i) His friend (ii) His colleague
(iii) His wife (iv) His neighbour
(d) Which word in the extract is opposite in meaning to the word 'tiny'?

Answers

- (a) (ii) an invitation
(b) The husband was elated because he thought that her wife would be overjoyed on receiving the invitation to a ball held by the Minister. He was also elated as only selected people had been invited.
(c) (iii) His wife
(d) large
3. Mme Forestier was touched and took her hands as she replied, "Oh! My poor Matilda! Mine were false. They were not worth over five hundred francs!"
(a) By what was Mme Forestier touched?
(b) State whether the given statement is True or False.
'Mine' in the extract refers to Mme Forestier's dress.

(c) Explain the last sentence of the extract.

(d) Mme Forestier and Matilda met after

Answers

- (a) Mme Forestier was touched by Matilda's flight.
(b) False
(c) Mme Forestier informed Matilda that the necklace which got lost was an artificial one and its cost was only about five hundred francs.
(d) ten years

Short Answer Type Questions ↘

Q 1. Why was Mme Loisel always unhappy? (CBSE 2016)

OR

Why was Matilda always unhappy? (CBSE 2016)

OR

Why was Matilda always unhappy after her marriage? (CBSE 2017)

Ans. Mme Loisel was a pretty and young lady who was born into a family of clerks. She had no dowry, no hopes and no means of becoming loved and married by a man either rich or distinguished. So, she married a petty clerk in the office of the Board of Education. But she felt that she was born for all delicacies and luxuries and she suffered incessantly for the poverty in the life. This was the reason behind her unhappiness.

Q 2. Why did Matilda not like to visit her rich friend?

OR

Why did Matilda not want to see her rich friend?

(CBSE 2016)

Ans. Matilda was not satisfied with her life. She thought that she deserved all the luxuries and the delicacies of life but was forced to live a life of penury. So, she resented her rich friend Mme Forestier. When she visited her, she compared her life with that of her friend and realised what a life she was missing. She felt dejected and disappointed and cried for days. Therefore, she avoided visiting her rich friend.

Q 3. What did Matilda's husband bring home one evening? Why was he so elated?

Ans. Matilda's husband brought home a large envelope one evening. The envelope contained an invitation card, inviting them to a ball which was being held by the Minister of Public Instruction. He was elated because he thought that Matilda would be overjoyed on receiving such an invitation. He was also happy because only selected people had been invited to it.

Q 4. What was Matilda's response towards the invitation?

Ans. Matilda's response towards the invitation was not as expected by her husband. She was not happy on seeing the invitation. She refused to go to the ball. She advised her husband to give the invitation to someone whose wife was better fitted and had good dress and jewellery. She threw away the invitation.

Q 5. From whom did Matilda borrow the necklace and why? (CBSE 2020)

Ans. Matilda borrowed the necklace from her rich friend, Mme Forestier, who was her schoolmate at the convent. Matilda had to attend a ball which was being hosted by the Minister of Public Relations. Her husband had given her the money to buy a suitable dress but she did not have any jewellery to wear with her dress. So, her husband suggested that she should borrow jewellery from her friend Mme Forestier.

Q 6. What happened at the ball? Was Matilda's dream fulfilled?

OR

Do you think M. Loisel had an enjoyable evening at the ball? Give reasons for your answer. (CBSE 2015)

Ans. I think that M. Loisel had an enjoyable evening at the ball. Mme Matilda Loisel was greatly appreciated by all at the ball. She was the prettiest of all. She looked elegant and gracious. All the men noticed her and wanted to be presented to her. She danced with enthusiasm and was ecstatic over the admiration that she was receiving. It was her dream to attend such high-class parties and be the centre of attraction in such parties. So, we can say that definitely her dream was fulfilled.

Q 7. Why did Matilda (Mme Loisel) leave the ball in a hurry? What does it show about her character?

OR

Why was Matilda in a hurry to go to her house after the ball? (CBSE 2015)

Ans. Matilda was a great success at the ball. She was the prettiest of all and looked elegant and gracious. All the men noticed her and wanted to be presented to her. When it was time to leave the ball, her husband threw around her shoulders the modest wraps they had brought. The poverty of these wraps clashed with the elegance of the ball costume. So, Matilda wants to hurry away from the ball so that the other women, who were wrapping themselves in fur, did not notice her.

This shows that Matilda was highly conscious of her physical appearance.

Q 8. When did Matilda come to know about the loss of the necklace?

Ans. After returning home from the Minister's party, Matilda removed the wraps from her shoulders and stood before the mirror, for a final view of herself in her glory. Suddenly, she found that her necklace was not around her neck. It was then that she realised that she had lost her necklace.

Q 9. Why was Matilda sad after the ball?

Ans. Matilda had to attend a ball with her husband. This ball was being hosted by the Minister of Public Instruction. Matilda enjoyed herself very much at the ball but her happiness was short lived. Matilda was sad after the ball because she had lost the diamond necklace which she had borrowed from her friend, Mme Forestier.

Q 10. How did the Loisels react when they realised that the necklace had been lost? (CBSE 2015)

Ans. The Loisels experienced a number of emotions when they discovered that the necklace was lost. These emotions were of fear, disbelief, bewilderment, shock and dismay. Matilda uttered a cry. She couldn't speak and stammered. Her husband rose in dismay. He said that it was not possible that they had lost the necklace. They keep looking for it again and again at the same places. Loisel, though exhausted, goes out on a desperate quest, knowing fully well that his chances of finding a diamond necklace on the streets of Paris are practically nil. Both of them hope for a miracle.

Q 11. When Matilda lost the necklace what should she have done? (CBSE 2015)

Ans. When Matilda lost the necklace she should have confessed about it to her friend. Mme Forestier then she would have learnt the true price of the necklace and this would have saved them years of hardship which they faced on account of raising debts to replace the necklace.

Q 12. How did the Loisels replace the necklace? (CBSE 2015)

Ans. The Loisels found a chaplet of diamonds in a shop of the Palais-Royal which they could get for thirty-six thousand francs. Loisel possessed fifteen thousand francs, which his father had left for him. He borrowed the rest from usurers and lenders at high rate of interest. With the money, he bought the necklace and Mme Loisel took it back to Mme Forestier.

Q 13. How did Matilda come to know the real cost of the necklace?

Ans. After the Loisels had paid back all the borrowed money, Matilda met Mme Forestier. Mme Forestier could not recognise her. She was amazed to see a great change in Matilda. Then Matilda told Mme Forestier about the stolen necklace and how her life had been in the last ten years. She told her about the hard life that they had to lead to repay the thirty-six thousand francs spent on buying a replacement of the stolen necklace. At this, Mme Forestier was shocked and informed her that the necklace which got lost was an artificial one and its cost was only about five hundred francs. In this way, Matilda came to know the real cost of the necklace.

Q 14. Why do you think that Mr Loisel was a loving husband? (CBSE 2019)

OR

How did M. Loisel try to make his wife happy? (CBSE 2017)

Ans. Mr Loisel was, indeed, a loving husband. He cared for his wife. He knew that she loved attending big parties and balls. So, he brought a letter of invitation for the Minister's party. Then he gave her 400 francs, which he had been saving to buy a gun for himself, to buy a new party dress. Also, when Matilda lost the necklace, he never blamed her. He willingly gave up his inheritance and even borrowed at high

rates of interest so that the lost necklace could be replaced. He worked hard to repay the debt, but he never got angry on Matilda.

Q 15. Honesty is the best policy. Comment with reference to Mme Loisel.

Ans. This is a very common saying that 'Honesty is the best policy'. There is no doubt in this saying. It is the honest dealing which gives long lasting happiness. We should try to be honest in everything. If Mme Loisel was honest with her friend, then she would not have to face the life of hardship and penury.

Long Answer Type Questions

Q 1. Matilda's over ambitiousness was the cause of her destruction. Justify. (CBSE 2023)

OR

Matilda wanted to live a life above her status. How did this desire of hers lead to her sufferings?

(CBSE 2019)

OR

Mme Loisel's disposition invites her doom. Elucidate with reference to the text. (CBSE 2023)

OR

Contentment in one's life is very important to lead a peaceful life. We should be happy with what we have and should not crave for what we don't have. Matilda suffered in life because she was not content in her life. Her desires led to her disaster. What do you learn from her mistake in life?

(CBSE 2023)

OR

What was the cause of Matilda's ruin? (CBSE 2015)

OR

What was the cause of Matilda's ruin? How could she have avoided it?

OR

Not to accept the limitations of our life make us unhappy in our lives. Describe how Matilda Loisel suffers in her life because she does not accept that she is not a rich person.

OR

Briefly state how Matilda invited 'a dreadful life of necessity' into her family.

(CBSE SQP 2022 Term-2)

Ans. Matilda or Mme Loisel was a pretty, young woman of humble beginnings. But, she was dreamy and overambitious. She was not happy with what she had and always craved for what she didn't have. She was discontented and always dreamt to be loved and known by the rich and distinguished. One day, her husband brought home an invitation card. They had been invited to a ball held by the Minister of Public Relations. To attend the ball Matilda got herself a beautiful dress and borrowed a diamond necklace from her friend, Mme Forestier. At the ball, she was the centre of attraction. She looked

quite pretty, elegant and gracious. But when she returned back she discovered that she had lost the borrowed diamond necklace. They tried very hard to find the missing necklace but to no avail. They had to replace it by buying another necklace worth thirty-six thousand francs. It took them ten years to repay the borrowed money. These ten years were very painful for them. They led a horrible life of deprivation. They lost their inheritance and were reduced to the status of commoners. Thus, it can be said that Matilda's disposition, her desires, her over ambitiousness and her discontentment led to her destruction.

Q 2. The 'Necklace' reveals that vanity is an evil. It may bring joy for a short period but ultimately it leads to ruin. If you were placed in a situation similar to that of Matilda, what would you have done? Write your views.

OR

Matilda was very proud of her beauty and charm and this led to her downfall. Elaborate. (CBSE 2023)

Ans. It is true that 'Necklace' shows that vanity is an evil. Matilda was very proud of her beauty and charm. She always wanted to be appreciated for her beauty. She always thought that she was meant for a higher society. The invitation to the ball was the beginning of this vanity as an evil. She borrowed a diamond necklace from her friend, Mme Forestier, to attend the ball. But she lost it. The ball and the appreciation that she received there brought her joy for a short period. But the loss of the necklace brought her ruin. She had to work hard for ten years and live a life of deprivation and penury to pay back the debts that they had incurred to buy a replacement of the lost necklace.

If I were placed in such a situation, I never would have borrowed jewellery from my friend. I would have worn what I had. I do not believe in show-off. A person is known not by his dresses and jewels but by his inner beauty. Matilda's pride and vanity prevented her from seeing the true value of things and led to her downfall.

Q 3. Give the character-sketch of Matilda.

Ans. Matilda was a very pretty young lady. She was born in a poor family. She was not a realistic rather she was a day-dreamer. She loved to have costly dresses and jewellery. She wanted to live like the rich. She was married to a petty clerk who worked in the office of the Education Board. He was a very simple and economical person. Matilda felt that her life was stifled by him. She did not behave like a mature lady. She insisted her husband to purchase a new costly dress for the ball. She even borrowed a diamond necklace from her friend Mme Forestier which ultimately led to the downfall of her family. She was also not brave enough to tell her about the loss to necklace to Mme Forestier. She was only given to outwardly appearances and lacked inner strength.

Q 4. The course of Loisel's life changed due to the necklace. Comment. (CBSE 2020)

Ans. A tremendous change came in the lifestyle of Loisel's family after Matilda lost the necklace. They had to purchase a new necklace for thirty-six thousand francs to replace the lost necklace. This amount was raised through debts and their inheritance. To repay their debt, they had to change their lifestyle. They sent away the maid. They changed their apartment and rented some rooms in an attic. Matilda washed the dishes and the clothes, she brought up the water, she went to the grocer's, the butcher's and the fruiterer's and haggled for the last sou. Her husband worked evenings and during night he did copying work at five sous a page.

Q 5. Imagine that M. Loisel, from 'The Necklace' by Guy de Maupassant, writes a diary entry, exploring the theme of class and social status, and the nature of social mobility, in the context of his own experience.

Write this diary entry, as M. Loisel.

(CBSE SQP 2023-24)

Ans. Monday, 28 August 20XX

8 pm

Dear Diary,

It's been a tough time the past few years, for my wife and me. As I reflect on our experience, I can't help but think about the broader societal issues that have contributed to our predicament.

It's clear to me now that our society is structured in a way that makes upward mobility difficult, if not impossible. The rich get richer, while the rest of us struggle to make ends meet. We live in a world where social status is determined by the amount of wealth one possesses, rather than by one's character or virtues. This narrow view of success has led many people, including Matilda, to pursue material possessions at the expense of their own happiness.

The loss of the borrowed necklace was a painful lesson for both of us. It reminded us that the pursuit of social status and upward mobility can be a trap, leading people to sacrifice their happiness and well-being in the pursuit of an unattainable dream.

M. Loisel

