

“The Necklace” Discussion Board post with Peer Comments

My Original Post:

Q1. How does Madame Loisel's character differ from the opening of the story to the ending?

Q2. In your opinion, what is one lesson Madame Loisel learns by the end of the story?

(Q1) As we are introduced to Madame Loisel, we quickly find that she characterizes herself as "entitled to all the delicacies and luxuries of life" (de Maupassant, 1). Guy de Maupassant paints picture of a woman who had all she was supposed to have in life taken away from her. He states "she was as unhappy as if she had once been wealthy" (1). Madame Loisel starts out dreaming about so many items and desires that she never had but should have been born into having. The author repeats multiple times throughout the first couple pages, "she dreamed" or "she wanted" (1-2). After forcing herself into the role of a wealthier woman to appear at a ball, she loses her necklace she was borrowing from her friend. The turning of events causes Madame Loisel to change her mindset, as she need to work diligently to earn the money back to repay the debts for the replacement necklace. Her hard work changed her: "From then on, Madame Loisel know the horrible life of the very poor. But she played her part heroically The dreadful debt must be paid. She would pay it" (8). Madame Loisel seems, by the end of the story, to have changed her perception on her life and situation. For ten years, she assumes the role of a maid and housekeeper, doing chores like cleaning dishes, washing laundry, and running errands; during which time she seems to have put the fantasies of a wealthier existence behind her.

(Q2) In my opinion, one lesson she learns is that if she wants to live a certain way or have certain things, she should work for them. At the beginning of the story she doesn't seem to work. She just spends her days "suffer[ing] endlessly" (1). I feel that if she would have worked as hard as she did to pay off her debts, which took her ten years to complete, she would have had enough money to at least upgrade her life a little bit (8). Since she had to work hard for literally nothing because all the money she made went to their debts, she didn't get the chance to enhance her life. The greed for something better ultimately brought her even lower than she had at the beginning. Had she worked for what she wanted, she would have maybe found herself at a better place in society, instead of "suffering" for something grander and ending up lower than she had been when she started.

Peer 1:

Hi William!

I agree with you that Madame Loisel has changed by the end of the story and has learned a good work ethic, but I wonder if she still does not crave a lavish lifestyle. The passage that really made me wonder is when she explains how she sits down and thinks about the night that she finally achieved looking wealthy and was admired (De Maupassant 8). Even though she had changed and did not care about looking roughened throughout the years she still admires she the moment

at the ball. She could just be looking at the memory and thinking about the person she was, but it made me think if she thought that the ten years of hard work was worth the one night of looking how she ideally wanted to. No matter what her character evolved by the ending I just question if she still dreams of being wealthy.

I thought the exact same that if she would have just started to work like she had throughout the ten years she would have been able to have the lifestyle that she always wanted to. The story serves as such a great lesson to show that not putting in work and just being envious of others will only bring you down. Another lesson that is taught throughout the story is that if someone looks like they have it all does not mean they do because Madame Forestier looked like she had this expensive necklace, but it was fake all along. Great questions have a nice week!

Peer 2:

Hi William,

I really like your first question, as I think it leads to an even bigger one, does Mathilde's character actually change from the beginning to the end of the story? As I've been reading the posts and comments on this thread, I think it is interesting that there are so many differing opinions on whether or not Mathilde actually changed by the end of the story. When reading the story, I, like you, noticed how often she was dreaming about a life she wished she could have at the beginning. It was very clear she was not content with how she was living and wanted something more. I think it is interesting that you mention you think she has put her fantasies behind her by the end of the story. I'm not sure I agree. I began to think this when I saw the same passage that Annika mentioned in her comment. The fact that she is still thinking about how her life could have been makes me think she may still fantasize about being wealthy and admired even though they have lived a life far different from that for some time now. Of course, there isn't a lot of textual evidence to support my opinion. The story also doesn't give us a whole lot of information about her after her years of hard work, so it is hard to know for sure what she has learned from her experiences.

In regard to your second question, one thing I hope she has learned is that telling the truth is more important than protecting your pride. She of course doesn't find out until the end that she spent way more money than Madame Forestier did on the necklace so we as the readers don't know what she got from it, but I would like to think that she has realized she could have saved herself years of work and hardship if she had been honest in the first place. Whenever I have read this story, it has always bothered me that we don't get Mathilde's response to that last line in the story. She is so proud of herself for coming clean about the necklace that I wonder what she would say to being told she spent years working hard unnecessarily. As you mentioned, she has learned how to work hard since she was put in a situation where she had to in order to get by. A little off topic, but I wonder if after hearing Madame Forestier say the necklace was only worth 500 francs if she would resent the years she spent working instead of being proud of them?

I really enjoyed your questions and I think they will lead to interesting discussions!

Peer 3:

Hi William,

I totally agree with you that Mathilde had too much time on her hands. If she had only put the energy she wasted moaning around the house into something meaningful, perhaps she would have been more content. I like the quotes that you include showing Mathilde's dissatisfaction and sense of entitlement. It seems that she truly feels that she is deprived of what is rightfully hers. During that time in history, the late 19th century, it was customary for married women to stay home and care for their house and families. Although, there is no mention of children, so she could have done some kind of work outside the home - even volunteering. However, Mathilde would find this unacceptable because any kind of work would be below the class that she "belonged" to.

I think Mathilde's falling into poverty is what she needed. She was leading a miserable existence, initially, that would certainly have led to some kind of mental breakdown - how long can one go on in perpetual "suffering" before becoming mentally worn down. During her ten years in poverty, Mathilde developed a work ethic that would not have existed had she carried on as she was. Also, she accomplished something (getting out of debt). Furthermore, the narrator states that Mathilde lost her beauty due to the physical demands of poverty. Perhaps she can finally find some contentment. She believed that she was entitled to a luxurious life because of her physical attributes. Now that she has "lost" her beauty, she should (by her own logic) fit into the class she was born into.

See in class on Thursday, William.