

The Necklace Lesson Plan

Thanks for purchasing this two-day lesson plan covering Guy de Maupassant's classic tale, "The Necklace."

Day 1:

You'll need a class set of the short story with attached questions. I like to read the story aloud, but students could also read it silently if you're crunched for time.

After reading the story, have students complete the eight questions on the last page. Once they've finished, it's a good idea to review the answers together to serve as a model for lower-level students. Expect a lively discussion about questions #1, 7, and 8.

Day 2:

Use the Prezi file to take students through an interactive thinking/writing exercise. When you get to slides #17 and #19, write the student volunteer's sentences on your regular white board with a dry erase marker atop the projection and the class should discuss the strengths/weaknesses of the writing. Together, revise the two commentary sentences until they are close to the same level as the first example in the presentation. Obviously, you'll want to guide the class discussion to be positive and nurturing toward the brave volunteer who put his/her words on the board. Oddly, I never have a lack of volunteers; most students want to have

feedback on their work and gladly offer up their sentences.

This presentation, with time for brainstorming and writing, usually takes about 45 minutes. If you finish early, you can have students begin the homework paragraph assignment (see the last slide of the Prezi.)

Note: If you don't want to have a full paragraph writing assignment, just don't show the class the last slide of the Prezi. I tacked it on at the very end so that those who want it can use it as a homework writing assignment, but it's not necessary for this lesson plan to work.

That's it! I hope you like this product.

Please stop by my store at <http://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Store/Laura-Randazzo> for more visually dynamic lesson plans designed to engage teen eyes and brains.

Thanks again!
Laura



The Necklace

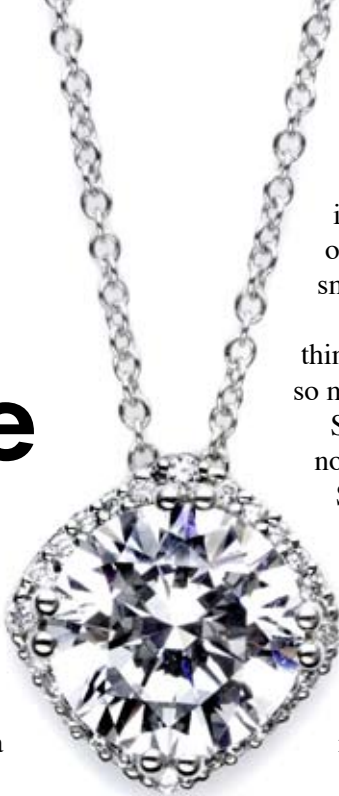
By Guy de Maupassant

She was one of those pretty, charming young creatures who sometimes are born, as if by a slip of fate, into a petty official's family. She had no dowry, no expectations, no way of being known, understood, loved, married by a rich and distinguished man; so she let herself be married to a minor civil servant at the Ministry of Education.

She dressed plainly because she could not dress well, but she was unhappy as if she had really fallen from a higher station, since with women there is neither caste nor rank, for beauty, grace and charm take the place of family and birth. Natural ingenuity, instinct for what is elegant, a supple mind are their sole hierarchy, and often make humble girls the peers of the grandest ladies.

Mathilde suffered ceaselessly, feeling herself born to enjoy all delicacies and all luxuries. She was distressed at the poverty of her dwelling, at the worn walls, at the shabby chairs, the ugly curtains. All those things, of which another woman of her rank would never even have been conscious, tortured her and made her angry. The sight of the little Breton peasant girl who did her humble housework aroused in Mathilde despairing regrets and bewildering dreams. She thought of silent antechambers hung with Oriental tapestry, illumined by tall bronze candelabra, and of two great footmen in knee breeches who sleep in the big armchairs, made drowsy by the oppressive heat of the stove. She thought of long reception halls hung with ancient silk, of dainty cabinets containing priceless curiosities and of little coquettish perfumed reception rooms made for chatting at five o'clock with intimate friends – famous, sought-after men whose attentions all women long for.

When she sat down to dinner, before the round table covered with a tablecloth in use three days, opposite her husband, who uncovered the soup tureen and



declared with a delighted air, "Ah, a good beef stew! There's nothing better..." she thought of dainty dinners, of shining silverware, of tapestry that peopled the walls with ancient personages and with strange birds flying in the midst of a fairy forest; and she thought of delicious dishes served on marvelous plates and of the whispered gallantries that elicit sphinx-like smiles while guests nibbled the pink flesh of a trout or the wings of a quail.

She had no proper wardrobe, no jewels, nothing. And those were the only things that she loved – she felt she was made for them. She would have loved so much to please, to be envied, to charm, to be sought after.

She had a friend, a former schoolmate, who was rich, and whom she did not like to go to see anymore because she felt so sad when she came home. She would weep for whole days at a time from sorrow, regret, despair, and distress.

Then one evening her husband arrived home with a triumphant air, holding a large envelope in his hand. "There," said he, "there is something for you." She tore the paper quickly and drew out a printed card which read, "The Minister of Education and Madame Georges Ramponneau request the pleasure of the company of M. and Mme. Loisel at an evening reception at the Ministry on Monday, January 18th."

Instead of being delighted, as her husband had hoped, she threw the invitation on the table crossly, muttering, "What do you wish me to do with that?"

"Why, my dear, I thought you would be glad. You never go out, and this is such a fine opportunity. I had great trouble getting it; everyone wants to go. It is very select, and they are not giving many invitations to clerks. All the officials will be there."

She looked at him with an irritated glance and said impatiently, "I haven't a thing to wear. How could I go?"

He had not thought of that. He stammered, "Why, the blue dress you go to the theater in. I think it's lovely on you."

He stopped, distracted, seeing that his wife was weeping. Two great tears escaped from the corners of her eyes and rolled slowly toward the corners of her mouth.

"What's the matter? Oh, what's the matter, Mathilde?" he answered.

By a violent effort she conquered her grief and replied in a calm voice, while she wiped her wet cheeks, "Nothing. Only I have no gown, and, therefore, I can't go to this ball. Give your card to some colleague whose wife would be better dressed than I."

He was in despair. "Come, let us see, Mathilde. How much would it cost, a suitable gown, which you could use on other occasions – something very simple?"

She reflected several seconds, making her calculations and wondering also what sum she could seek without drawing an immediate refusal and a frightened exclamation from this economical government clerk. Finally, she replied, hesitating, "I don't know exactly, but I think I could manage it with four hundred francs."

He grew a little pale because that was just the amount he had put aside to buy a rifle and treat himself to a little shooting next summer on the plain of Nanterre, with several friends who went to shoot larks there on Sundays. But he said, "Very well. I will give you four hundred francs. But do try to get something really nice."

The day of the ball drew near and Madame Loisel seemed sad, uneasy, anxious, even though her frock was ready. Her husband said to her one evening, "What is the matter? Come, you have seemed very strange these last three days."

And she answered. "I hate not having a single jewel, not one stone, to wear. I shall look so dowdy. I would almost rather not go at all."

"You might wear natural flowers," said her husband. "They're seen as very stylish at this time of year. For ten francs you can get two or three magnificent roses."

She was not convinced. "No. There's nothing more humiliating than to look poverty-stricken among a lot of rich women."

"Wait, you silly thing!" her husband cried. "Go look up your friend, Madame Forestier, and ask her to lend you some jewels. You know her well enough to do that, don't you think?"

She uttered a cry of joy, "True! I never thought of it."

The next day she went to her friend and told her of her distress. Madame Forestier went to a wardrobe with a mirror, took out a large jewel box, brought it back, opened it and said to Madame Loisel, "Choose whatever you like."

She saw first some bracelets, then a pearl necklace, then a Venetian gold cross set with precious stones, of admirable workmanship. She tried on the ornaments before the mirror, hesitating, unable to bring herself to take them off, to give them back. And she kept asking, "Haven't you any more?"

"Why, yes. Look for yourself; I don't know what you like."

Suddenly, she discovered, in a black satin box, a superb diamond necklace, and her heart throbbed with overwhelming desire. Her hands trembled as she took it. She fastened it snugly round her throat, outside her high-necked dress, and was lost in ecstasy at her reflection in the mirror.

Then she asked, hesitating, filled with anxious doubt, "Will you lend me this, just this one?"

"Why, yes, certainly."

She threw her arms round her friend's neck, kissed her passionately, then fled with her treasure.

The night of the ball arrived. Madame Loisel was a great success. She was more beautiful than any other woman present, elegant, graceful, smiling and wild with joy. All the men looked at her, asked her name, sought to be introduced. All the Cabinet members wished to waltz with her. The Minister himself even noticed her.

She danced with rapture, with passion, intoxicated by pleasure, forgetting all in the triumph of her beauty, in the glory of her success, in a sort of cloud of happiness comprised of all this homage, admiration, these awakened desires and of that sense of triumph which is so sweet to the heart of a woman.

When she was ready to leave the party, it was nearly four o'clock in the morning. Her husband had been sleeping since midnight in a little deserted anteroom with three other gentlemen whose wives were having a wonderful time.

He brought her wraps so that they could leave and put them around her shoulders – the plain wraps from her everyday life whose shabbiness jarred with the elegance of her evening gown. She felt this and wished to escape so as not to be remarked by the other women, who were enveloping themselves in costly furs.

Loisel held her back, saying, "Wait a minute. You'll catch cold outside. I will call a cab."

But she did not listen to him and rapidly descended the stairs. When they reached the street, they could not find a carriage, searching in vain for one, shouting after the cabmen passing at a distance.

They went toward the Seine in despair, shivering with cold. At last, they found one of those ancient night carriages which, as though they were ashamed to show their shabbiness during the day, are never seen round Paris until after dark. The cab took them to their dwelling in the Rue des Martyrs, and sadly they mounted the stairs to their flat. For her, it was all over. And he was thinking that he had to be at the Ministry by ten.

She removed her wraps before the mirror so as to see herself once more in all her glory. But suddenly she uttered a cry. The necklace was gone; there was nothing around her neck.

Her husband, already half undressed, said, "What's the matter?"

She turned toward him in a frenzy. "The...the...necklace – it's gone!"



He got up, thunderstruck.

“What did you say?...What?...Impossible!”

And they searched the folds of her dress, the folds of her wrap, the pockets, everywhere. They didn’t find it.

“You’re sure you had it on when you left the ball?” he asked.

“Yes, I remember touching it in the hallway of the Ministry.”

“But if you had lost it in the street we should have heard it fall. It must be in the cab.”

“Yes, probably. Did you take his number?”

“No. And you – didn’t you notice it?”

“No.”

They looked at each other in utter dejection. At last, Loisel put on his clothes. “I shall go back on foot,” he said, “over the whole route, to see if I can find it.”

He went out. She sat waiting on a chair in her ball gown, without strength to go to bed, overwhelmed, without any fire, without a thought.

Her husband returned about seven o’clock. He had found nothing.

He went to police headquarters, to the newspaper offices to offer a reward; he went to the offices of the cab companies – in a word, wherever there seemed to be the slightest hope of tracing it.

She spent the whole day waiting, in a state of utter hopelessness before such an appalling catastrophe. Loisel returned at night with a hollow, pale face. He had discovered nothing.

“You must write to your friend,” he said, “that you have broken the clasp of her necklace and that you are having it mended. That will give us time to decide what to do.”

She wrote at his dictation.

By the end of the week, they had lost all hope. Loisel, who had aged five years, declared, “We’ll have to replace the necklace.”

The next day they took the case in which it had been kept and went to the jeweler whose name was found within. He consulted his books.

“It was not I, madame, who sold that necklace,” the jeweler said. “I must simply have furnished the case.”

Then they went from jeweler to jeweler, searching for a necklace like the other, trying to recall it, both sick with grief.

In a fashionable shop near the Palais Royal, they found a diamond necklace they decided was exactly like the other. It was worth 40,000 francs. They could have it for 36,000 francs.

They asked the jeweler to hold it for them for three days, and they stipulated that he should take it back for 34,000 francs if the other necklace was found before the end of February.

Loisel possessed 18,000 francs which his father had left him. He

would borrow the rest.

He did borrow, asking a thousand francs of one, five hundred of another, a hundred here, fifty there. He signed promissory notes, took up ruinous obligations, dealt with usurers and all the race of lenders. He compromised all the rest of his life, risked signing a note without even knowing whether he could meet it; and, frightened by the trouble yet to come, by the black misery that was about to fall upon him, by the prospect of all the physical privations and moral tortures that he was to suffer, he went to buy the new necklace, laying upon the jeweler’s counter 36,000 francs.

When Madame Loisel returned the necklace, Madame Forestier said to her in a faintly waspish tone, “You could have returned it a little sooner; I might have needed it.”

She did not open the case, as her friend had feared she might. If she had detected the substitution, what would she have thought, what would she have said? Would she not have taken Madame Loisel for a thief?

Thereafter, Madame Loisel came to know the awful life of the poverty-stricken. She bore her part, however, with unexpected fortitude. The dreadful debt must be paid. She would pay it. They dismissed their servant and they changed their lodgings, renting a garret under the roof.

She came to know all the heavy household chores, the loathsome work of the kitchen. She washed the dishes, wearing down her pink nails on greasy casseroles and the bottoms of saucepans. She washed the soiled linen, the shirts and the dishcloths, which she dried upon a line; she carried the slops down to the street every morning and carried up the buckets of water, stopping for breath at every landing. Dressed like a working-class woman, she went to the fruiterer, the grocer, the butcher with her basket on her arm, bargaining, outraged, contesting each sou of her pitiful funds.

Every month they had to meet some notes, renew others, obtain more time. Her husband worked evenings, making up a tradesman’s accounts, and late at night he often copied manuscript for five sous a page.

And it went on like that for ten years.

After ten years, they had paid everything, including the usurious rates and the compound interest.

Madame Loisel looked old now. She had become the woman of impoverished households – strong and hard and rough. With frowsy hair, skirts askew and red hands, she talked loud while washing the



floor with great swishes of water. But sometimes, when her husband was at the office, she sat down near the window and she thought of that thrilling evening of long ago, of that ball where she had been so beautiful and so admired.

How would things have turned out if she hadn't lost that necklace? Who could tell? How strange and fickle life is! How little it takes to make or break you!

Then one Sunday, having gone to take a walk along the Champs Elysées to refresh herself after the labors of the week, she suddenly perceived a woman who was leading a child. It was Madame Forestier, still young, still beautiful, still charming.

Madame Loisel started to tremble. Should she speak to her? Yes, certainly. And now that she had paid the debts, why shouldn't she tell the whole story?

She approached her friend.

"Hello, Jeanne."

The other, astonished to be familiarly addressed by this plainly dressed woman, did not recognize her at all and stammered, "But, madame, I do not know...You must have mistaken..."

"No. I am Mathilde Loisel."

Her friend uttered a cry. "Oh, my poor Mathilde! How you've changed!"

"Yes, I've been through some pretty hard times since I last saw you and I've had plenty of trouble – and all because of you!"

"Because of me? What do you mean?"

"Do you remember that diamond necklace you lent me to wear to the ball at the Ministry?"

"Yes?"

"Well, I lost it."

"What do you mean? You brought it back."

"No, I brought you back another exactly like it. And it has taken us ten years to pay for it. You can understand that it wasn't easy for us, for us who had nothing. At last it is ended, though, and I am very glad."

Madame Forestier stopped short.

"You say you bought a diamond necklace to replace the other one?"

"Yes. You didn't even notice then? They really were exactly alike."

And she smiled, full of a proud, simple joy.

Madame Forestier, profoundly moved, took Mathilde's hands in her own.

"Oh, my poor, poor Mathilde! Mine was false. It was worth five hundred francs at the most!"

Questions

On a separate sheet of paper, answer the following questions. To receive credit, you must write complete, thoughtful sentences.

1. Did Mathilde Loisel deserve the punishment she received? Explain your answer.
2. Some readers believe that the ten years of hard work changed Mathilde's spoiled nature and made her a better person. Give two pieces of evidence that support this position.
3. Other readers argue that, although Mathilde matured during this time, she wasn't completely transformed. Give two pieces of evidence from the end of the story that show Mathilde is still not a completely mature person.
4. Give two examples of personification from the story. Write down the full sentences in which the personified elements exist.
5. Give two examples of alliteration from the story. Write down the full sentences in which the alliterative elements exist.
6. The story's ironic ending is part of what makes this tale so famous. The author, however, gives a few hints about the tragic twist. Look back over the story and find an element of foreshadowing. Paraphrase this element of the story and then explain why you believe it is a good example of foreshadowing.
7. Closely examine the passage at Madame Forestier's house when Mathilde discovers and borrows the necklace. What symbolic elements are being used here by the author? Explain.
8. To what degree is Mr. Loisel also to blame for the misery he endures. Dig deep into your analysis of this character.

The Necklace worksheet answers

1. Did Mathilde Loisel deserve the punishment she received? Explain your answer. *Answers will vary. Usually, about a third of the class will say that the punishment was too harsh, while the two-thirds majority doesn't have much sympathy for Mathilde. Make sure students support their stance.*
2. Some readers believe that the ten years of hard work changed Mathilde's spoiled nature and made her a better person. Give two pieces of evidence that support this position. *Students will point to the various household tasks that Mathilde now completes without any help – the shopping, the scrubbing of dishes and laundry, the carrying of pails up and down the steps. They move into a tiny attic apartment and she no longer spends any money on the finer things in life. She, along with her husband, repay all the debts; neither of them turns away from their responsibilities.*
3. Other readers argue that, although Mathilde matured during this time, she wasn't completely transformed. Give two pieces of evidence from the end of the story that show Mathilde is still not a completely mature person. *Although she is working hard, Mathilde still daydreams of her glorious moment at the ball. She takes a Sunday walk along the Champs Elysées, a fashionable street where she can't afford anything in the stores. This is almost like she's torturing herself with window shopping. Finally, there's a line in the tale (... "I've had plenty of trouble – and all because of you!") where she blames Madame Forestier for all of the trouble, as though none of this would've happened if Forestier simply hadn't loaned her the jewelry. This habit of blaming an innocent party is something that a child does, not a mature woman.*
4. Give two examples of personification from the story. Write down the full sentences in which the personified elements exist. *Students will find several of these, but here's two: 1. Two great tears escaped from the corners of her eyes and rolled slowly toward the corners of her mouth. 2. At last, they found one of those ancient night carriages which, as though they were ashamed to show their shabbiness during the day, are never seen round Paris until after dark.*
5. Give two examples of alliteration from the story. Write down the full sentences in which the alliterative elements exist. *1. The dreadful debt must be paid. 2. She came to know all the heavy household chores, the loathsome work of the kitchen.*
6. The story's ironic ending is part of what makes this tale so famous. The author, however, gives a few hints about the tragic twist. Look back over the story and find an element of foreshadowing. Paraphrase this element of the story and then explain why you believe it is a good example of foreshadowing. *The most common element of foreshadowing that students spot is the jeweler mentioning that he didn't sell the necklace. He supplied only the case. Obviously, this is a clue that the Loisels ignore.*
7. Closely examine the passage at Madame Forestier's house when Mathilde discovers and borrows the necklace. What symbolic elements are being used here by the author? Explain. *Looking at this passage, there's a few dark elements that symbolize the tragedy that the necklace will bring to Mathilde. First, the case is made of black satin, a color which evokes sin, darkness, and even death. This should be a warning that the lust Mathilde feels in holding the diamond necklace is a sinful vanity. Later in the story, the author describes a "black misery" that's about to befall Mr. Loisel and the visual link to the black satin case is interesting. Next, she "fastened [the necklace] snugly round her throat," which is an odd way to describe putting on a necklace since it brings forth imagery of a hangman's noose. Finally, we now know that the necklace was fake, just as Mathilde's herself was a playing a role at the ball. She was not a member of the high class; she was faking in that moment, too. Finally, the pursuit of materialistic wealth is also an artifice; there's nothing real or substantial about the life Mathilda dreams about early in the tale.*
8. To what degree is Mr. Loisel also to blame for the misery he endures. Dig deep into your analysis of this character. *Students will want to blame him for dictating the letter and supporting the lie. He is guilty of these things, but he's also guilty of indulging a spoiled brat of a wife. He wants to make her happy (which is a sweet thing for a husband to want), but he sacrifices his hard-earned rifle money for his wife's vanity. Later, he'll sacrifice so much more for the very same reason. While self-sacrificing love is to be respected, the reader can't help feel that Mr. Loisel is a bit of a fool since his sacrifice was in support of his wife's vain nonsense.*