

7. The Necklace

(Guy De Maupassant)

ABOUT THE STORY

Introduction

"The Necklace" describes the unfortunate disaster that befalls a lower middle class woman who was never content with who she was and what she had. She always felt sad at the absence of a lavish lifestyle and succumbed to this urge one day. She borrowed a diamond necklace from a rich friend in order to attend a ball. Unfortunately, she lost this piece of jewellery and had to undergo a difficult struggle to compensate this loss.

Summary

Madame Matilda Loisel is a very pretty and charming woman. She feels that she is born to enjoy all delicacies and luxuries of life. Unfortunately she is too poor to afford her rich dreams, so she suffers constantly, lamenting her destiny.

Married to Loisel, a clerk at the Board of Education, Matilda makes her life more miserable by comparing her humble reality with her dream to live a life of affluence and luxury. She dreams of adorning herself with exquisite dresses but in reality she has "neither frocks nor jewels, nothing".

Her husband cares for her and tries to cheer her up by admiring the little blessings of their ordinary life. One day, he brings to her an invitation to a party from the Minister of Public Instruction. But Matilda feels even more miserable on getting this invite. She fumes as she does not find any of her dresses suitable enough for the grand occasion. Her husband does not wish to miss this opportunity, so he readily parts with 400 francs that he had saved for a hunting gun, so that Matilda could buy herself a party dress.

A few days before the ball-party Loisel notices that Matilda has a gloomy appearance. He asks her the reason and she reveals that she does not have a decent piece of jewellery to match the gown. He advises her to wear some natural flowers but Matilda does not like this advice. Her husband then suggests that she can borrow the jewellery from her rich friend Madame Forestier. Finding this to be a good idea, Matilda goes to her friend the next day and shares her problem. The good Madame Forestier offers the entire box of jewels to Matilda so that she may take a piece of her choice. After examining and admiring the collection, Matilda finally borrows a superb necklace of diamonds.

An elegant, gracious, smiling and joyful Matilda reaches the ball dressed in her new dress adorned by the diamond necklace. Her charm and beauty draws the attention of everyone in that party. Matilda enjoys all the attention while her husband waits patiently in one of the little salons. The couple leaves for home at four o'clock in the morning. They have difficulty in finding a carriage for the homeward journey and are really tired by the time they reach home. When Matilda prepares to go to bed, she notices to her horror that her necklace is missing.

A dismayed Loisel looks all over for the lost piece of jewellery but to no avail. Finally, he advises Matilda to write to her friend that she has broken the clasp of the necklace and that she would have it repaired. Loisel wanted to buy some time to replace the loss. At the Palais-Royal, he finds a replica of the lost piece, valued at forty thousand francs but available for thirty-six thousand. He borrows money and pools it with the eighteen thousand francs that he had inherited from his father. Then he goes and gets the new chaplet of diamonds. Matilda returns the jewellery to her friend and is relieved that the 'change' remains hidden.

However, a long and difficult period of struggle begins for the Loisel

couple. They drastically cut down their expenses and adopt an economical lifestyle to repay the debt. They send away the maid, change their lodgings, and rent some rooms in an attic. The next ten years, Matilda spends in utter poverty, want and misery. Her wrinkled face, unkempt hair and untidy clothes give her an ugly look.

One day, she happens to meet her old friend Mme Forestier. Years of hard work reflects in Matilda's appearance. Mme Forestier finds it difficult to recognize her and asks her the reason behind such a drastic change. Matilda accuses her for the hard times that she had seen and discloses the truth about the lost necklace. Then comes a rude shock of fate. A deeply touched Madame Forestier tells Matilda that the diamond necklace that she had lent her was actually a piece of cheap imitation jewellery worth not over 500 francs.

THEME

The first part of the story deals with the theme, 'If wishes were horses, beggars would ride'. Fate plays such a vital role in our lives that those who try to spend beyond their means, land up in deep trouble. Unrealistic aspirations bring frustration and discontentment. The latter half of the story brings out how adversity shapes an individual into a stronger and a mature human being. The choice to uphold her dignity motivates Matilda to repay the debt and live a hard life. But this experience makes her develop a sense of pride about her abilities and enhances her self-esteem.

MESSAGE

The story conveys the message of contentment. It is advisable to count one's blessings instead of yearning for false glory. Unreasonable desires can prove to be disastrous as it did in the case of the Liosels. Matilda had enough to live with dignity but her desire for the excesses and extravagance deprived her even of the little that she had. Therefore, her story gives us a message that one should live within one's means.

TITLE

The story revolves around the necklace that brought a drastic turning point in Loisels' life. Matilda's urge to look beautiful made her borrow the necklace from her friend. Its loss robbed her and her husband of their peace of mind. The loss of the necklace not only helped Matilda become a more sensible person but also made her stronger and more patient. The necklace is at the centre of action in the end also when Madame Forestier reveals to Matilda that her necklace was a fake one. A necklace that was supposed to give Matilda immense happiness proved to be a source of immense suffering for her. Hence "The Necklace" is the central point of the story and is an apt title.

CHARACTERS

Matilda Loisel

Pretty as a picture, Matilda is very graceful. Suitable for an affluent household but born into a family of clerks, she often sulks at her fate. Further, she is married to a petty clerk, M. Loisel who works in the office of the Board of Education and has modest earnings with which he is unable to fulfill the rich dreams of his wife. Indulging in self-pity, Matilda feels that life has been very unkind to her and circumstances have cheated her of what she deserves. She is simple but is unhappy because she is dissatisfied with what life has offered her.

This complaining nature controls all her actions. She constantly grumbles about her poverty and craves for riches, luxury, comfort and attention. Her dissatisfaction and self-pity makes her and her husband's life miserable.

However, she has some good traits too that get revealed during adverse circumstances. Once humbled and humiliated, Matilda bears her loss and misery heroically. Though unused to daily chores, she takes upon herself all the drudgery without complaining. She courageously bears the responsibility of helping her husband pay off

the debt and therefore tries her level best to make her contribution. Her quality of self-respect eventually makes her a very strong and tenacious woman.

Mr Loisel

A humble clerk in the Board of Education, Loisel is a contented person. He is quite happy being what he is – an ordinary, middle class man. He does not believe in putting up appearances and enjoys his simple food and has no shame in accepting his low position or meagre means. He is at peace with himself, his surroundings and life. He has simple desires and joys which he can afford to have within his limited resources. He is thankful for all the little graces, even the 'good potpie'.

A loving, caring and sacrificing husband, he adores his wife very much and gives up his desire to own a gun so that she may buy a new party dress. He even brings home for her a rare invitation to a ball at the Ministry. Practical and wise, he cuts his coat according to his cloth. He suggests to his wife to borrow some jewellery to wear for the party. He is very understanding and sets his priorities right. When the necklace is lost, he frantically searches for it without holding Matilda's vanity, immaturity or negligence responsible for the entire mess. A gentleman and a good human being, Loisel silently suffers for ten years without complaining even once.

Hence, Loisel comes out as an ideal man, who contributes wholeheartedly to his married life.

Madame Forestier

Madame Forestier was a comfortably rich lady but wealth had not made her arrogant. She was large-hearted and had retained her relationship with her school friend Matilda even though the latter was married to a clerk. The gap in their social and financial status never once made her feel the need to sever her friendship with Matilda. So much so, that she opened her entire jewellery box in front

of Matilda and asked her to take anything of her choice. Though rich, she did not flaunt her wealth. However, this clear-hearted person could be blunt if the other person took undue liberty. That is why, she coldly tells Matilda that she could have taken care to return her necklace in time. Later, her meeting with Matilda in the park shows her to be a well-mannered person as she addresses the 'plain good wife' (who is actually Matilda) politely. This tender-hearted person is deeply moved on realising that she was indirectly responsible for her friend's plight. Feeling genuinely bad for her friend, she instantly tells her the truth about the worth of the necklace.

Madame Forestier hence proves to be a true friend and a nice human being.

EXTRACTS FOR COMPREHENSION

Read the following extracts and answer the questions that follow in one or two lines.

(I)

She was one of those pretty, young ladies, born as if through an error of destiny, into a family of clerks.

(a) Who is 'she' in these lines?

'She' here is Matilda Loisel, the chief character of the story "The Necklace".

(b) Why does the author call her birth 'an error of destiny'?

The author calls her birth 'an error of destiny' because Matilda was a charming and delicate young woman who ought to have been born in riches, whereas she was born into a poor family of clerks.

(c) What had destiny given her?

Destiny had given her a modest but respectable life as the wife of a clerk.

(d) Was she happy with her destiny? Why/Why not?

No, Matilda was not happy with her destiny because she aspired for a life of affluence and luxury.

(II)

Instead of being delighted, as her husband had hoped, she threw the invitation spitefully upon the table murmuring, "What do you suppose I want with that?"

(a) Identify the husband and wife mentioned in these lines.

The husband mentioned in these lines is M. Loisel, the clerk at the Board of Education, and his wife is Mme. Matilda Loisel.

(b) Why had the husband hoped his wife to be delighted?

The husband had hoped his wife to be delighted because she now had an invitation to a grand party where she could enjoy herself in the company of the rich and affluent.

(c) Where had the invitation come from?

The invitation had come from the Minister of Public Instruction and his wife Madame George Ramponneau.

(d) Why did the wife throw the invitation at the table?

Matilda threw the invitation at the table because she felt that she would have to miss the occasion since she did not have an appropriate dress to wear to the party.

(III)

She reflected for some seconds thinking of a sum that she could ask for without bringing with it an immediate refusal and a frightened exclamation from the economical clerk.

(a) Who is 'she'? Who is the 'economical clerk'?

'She' is Matilda and the 'economical clerk' is her husband Mr Loisel.

(b) Why did 'she' need money?

Matilda needed money to buy a nice dress for the party.

- (c) Why was she worried that she might get an immediate refusal?

Matilda was worried that she might get an immediate refusal because her husband's income was meagre and he could not afford to part with a big amount.

- (d) What 'sum' did she finally ask for?

Matilda finally asked for a sum of four hundred francs.

(IV)

Finally she said, in a hesitating voice, "I cannot tell exactly, but it seems to me that four hundred francs ought to cover it."

- (a) Who is 'she' in this extract?

'She' in this extract is Matilda.

- (b) Why was 'she' hesitant?

Matilda was hesitant because she knew that the amount she was about to ask her husband to give her for buying a dress might be difficult for him to give.

- (c) What couldn't she tell exactly?

Matilda couldn't tell exactly how much her new dress would cost.

- (d) What is 'it' that 'she' wanted to cover with four hundred francs?

Matilda wanted to cover the cost of her new dress with four hundred francs.

(V)

When they were in the street, they found no carriage; and they began to seek for one, hailing the coachmen whom they saw at a distance.

- (a) Who are 'they'?

'They' are Matilda and her husband M. Loisel.

- (b) Why were 'they' in the street?

They were in the street because they were returning home after the ball had got over.

(c) Why didn't 'they' find any carriage?

They did not find any carriage because it was an odd time, four o'clock early in the morning, to find one.

(d) When and what type of carriage did they finally get?

They finally got an old carriage that one sees in Paris after nightfall. They got it after having walked some distance from the venue of the ball.

(VI)

He said, "Write to your friend that you have broken the clasp of the necklace and that you will have it repaired. That will give us time."

(a) Who is the speaker of these lines? Who is he talking to?

The speaker here is M. Loisel. He is talking to his wife Matilda.

(b) Name the friend being talked about here.

The friend being talked about here is Mme Forestier, Matilda's friend from her school days at the convent.

(c) Which 'necklace' did he wish to get repaired?

Loisel wished to get repaired the necklace that his wife had borrowed from her friend, Mme Forestier.

(d) Why did the speaker want time?

M. Loisel wanted time because the original necklace was lost and he required time to either find it or to get its replacement.

(VII)

Her friend did not recognise her and was astonished to be so familiarly addressed by this common personage. She stammered, "But, Madame – I do not know – you must be mistaken –"

(a) Who is the 'friend' and whom did she fail to recognize?

The friend is Mme Forestier and she failed to recognise Matilda.

(b) Why did the 'friend' stammer?

She stammered because she was confused about the identity of the person who had addressed her with such familiarity.

- (c) **Why did the 'friend' fail to recognise the other person?**

Mme Forestier failed to recognise Matilda because hard work and a tough life of ten years had taken its toll on her appearance.

- (d) **How did the other person react when he/she was not recognised?**

Matilda reacted with confidence and self-pride when she was not recognized by Mme Forestier.

(VIII)

"I returned another to you exactly like that. And it has taken us ten years to pay for it."

- (a) **Who is the speaker here and whom is he/she talking to?**

The speaker here is Matilda Loisel and she is talking to her rich friend Mme. Forestier.

- (b) **What does 'that' refer to in the above extract?**

'That' refers to the diamond necklace which had been borrowed by Matilda from Mme. Forestier to wear at the minister's ball.

- (c) **Who are 'us'? What did they have to pay for?**

'Us' are Matilda and her husband M. Loisel. They had to pay for the debt of eighteen thousand francs which they had taken to buy the replica of the diamond necklace to be returned to Mme. Forestier.

- (d) **Why did it take ten years for them to pay?**

It took ten years for Matilda and her husband to pay the debt because it was a huge amount for a middle class couple like the Loisels who struggled to pay it slowly.

SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS*(to be answered in about 30 – 40 words each)*

Q1. What kind of a person is Mme. Loisel? Why is she always unhappy?

Or

'She was simple, but she was unhappy'. Why was Matilda so unhappy?

Matilda was the kind of person who was not content with what life had given. She felt that her beauty and grace deserved delicacies and luxuries. She was unhappy to live a simple life within the limited means provided by her husband, who was a petty clerk.

Q2. "All these things tortured and angered her." What all tortured and angered Matilda?

Matilda had a general dissatisfaction with life. She expected a life of affluence and luxury but had to live in want and poverty. Her poor apartment, shabby walls and worn chairs tortured and angered her all the time and made her suffer incessantly.

Q3. How was Matilda different from the women of her rank? What sort of dreams did she have?

Unlike the women of her rank, Matilda looked very pretty, elegant and graceful. She dreamt of elegant dinners, shining silver, exquisite food served in marvellous dishes, jewels, dresses and every other luxury that money could buy.

Q4. Why did Matilda marry a petty clerk although she felt that she was born for delicacies and luxuries?

Matilda married a petty clerk although she felt that she was born for delicacies and luxuries because she was born into a family of clerks. With her humble family background, she did not have any means of becoming known, or getting dowry, or any chance of marrying a rich or a distinguished person.

Q5. Why did Madame Loisel avoid visiting her friend Madame Forestier?
Or

Why did Matilda not like to visit her former schoolmate?

Or

Why did Matilda suffer every time she met Mme Forestier?

Madame Loisel avoided visiting her friend Madame Forestier because her riches made her experience despair and disappointment over her own mediocre life. Every visit to her rich friend's place made her unhappy and she wept on returning home.

Q6. Why do you think Matilda's husband was elated to get the invitation to the Minister's ball?

Or

What did Matilda's husband bring home one evening? Why was he greatly elated?

Or

What surprise did Matilda's husband give her one evening?

Matilda's husband brought home one evening a surprise invitation to a prestigious ball-party at the Minister's house. This invitation made him elated because only a few selected employees were invited and he thought that it would make Matilda happy to attend such a grand party.

Q7. How did Matilda react to the invitation to the ball party? Why did this reaction upset her husband?

Matilda was so irritated and annoyed to see the invitation to the minister's ball party that she angrily threw away the invitation card and began to sob unconsolably. This impulsive reaction of her wife astonished her husband Mr Loisel, who had expected Matilda to be extremely happy at having been invited to such a grand party. He stood in silence, absolutely shocked at the sight of his weeping wife.

Q8. Why was Matilda reluctant to go to the ball?

Matilda was reluctant to go to the Minister's ball party because she felt that none of her dresses were suitable enough to be worn at such a fine occasion. She feared that absence of an appropriate costume would reveal her poor status and cause embarrassment.

Q9. How did Loisel react on learning that Matilda needed four hundred francs for a new dress?

Loisel turned a little pale on learning that Matilda needed four hundred francs for a new dress. Nevertheless, he agreed to give her the money that he had saved to buy a gun to be able to join some hunting parties the following summer.

Q10. Why did Matilda seem disturbed and anxious even after having bought a new dress for the ball?

Despite getting a pretty dress, Matilda was dissatisfied as she now wanted suitable jewellery to wear with it. So her behaviour was strangely disturbed, stressed and sad. She did not wish to go to the ball with a poverty-stricken look.

Q11. Why did Matilda reject her husband's suggestion to wear natural flowers to the party?

Matilda rejected her husband's suggestion to wear natural flowers to the party because she was not convinced by this suggestion. She believed that wearing flowers would make her appearance shabby and she would be humiliated in the midst of rich women.

Q12. Why did Matilda utter a cry of joy when her husband suggested Mme. Forestier's name? Or

What suggestion made by Loisel did Matilda like? Why?

Matilda was anxious because she did not have a suitable piece of jewellery to match her new dress. So, when her husband

suggested her to borrow some jewels from her childhood friend Mme Forestier, Matilda uttered a cry of joy. She was confident that her rich friend would gladly lend her some fine jewellery.

Q13. From whom did Matilda borrow a necklace and why?

Matilda borrowed a necklace from her childhood friend Mme. Forestier. She borrowed it because she wanted to wear it with her new dress and project herself as a wealthy woman.

Q14. How did Mme. Forestier respond to Matilda's request to borrow her jewellery?

On reaching Mme Forestier's house, Matilda related her story of distress to her friend. A generous Mme. Forestier responded by going to her closet, taking out a large jewel-case and offering Matilda to choose what she liked.

Q15. Which jewel did Matilda finally choose from Mme Forestier's jewel-case? Did she like it?

Matilda took a superb necklace of diamonds from Mme Forestier's jewel-case. She was ecstatic to take it because her hands trembled as she took it out from its black satin box and placed it about the throat.

Q16. How do you know that Matilda was a great success at the ball?

Matilda was a great success at the ball as she looked prettiest of all in her new dress and a diamond necklace. She looked elegant and graceful when she smiled with joy. All the men noticed her and she was sought after by everyone.

Q17. What did M. Loisel do while Matilda enjoyed the ball?

M. Loisel waited half asleep in one of the little salons after midnight with three other gentlemen whose wives were enjoying at the party. He waited there till four o'clock in the morning when Matilda returned to him after the ball.

Q18. As her husband covered her with the wrap after the ball, Matilda wanted to escape immediately. Why?

Or

Why did Matilda hurry away not waiting for her husband to call a cab for returning home?

Matilda's wrap was an ordinary one that contrasted with the elegance of her ball dress and revealed her actual social status. She did not wish the rich women at the ball to notice it, so she hurried away and did not wait for her husband to call a cab for returning home.

Q19. When did the Loisels discover that the borrowed diamond necklace had been lost? *Or*

In spite of being a great success at the ball, Matilda could not enjoy her success for long. Why was it so?

After returning from the ball, Matilda stepped into her house and stood before the mirror to have one last look at her glorious self. When she removed the wraps from her shoulders, she discovered that she had lost the borrowed diamond necklace. This shocking discovery instantly ruined Matilda's success at the ball.

Q20. After the Loisels discovered that they had lost the necklace, they were thunderstruck. How did they handle this situation?

Or

Describe the efforts made by the Loisels to try and find the lost necklace.

After losing the necklace, the Loisels searched for it frantically in the dress, folds of the cloak and the pockets. Mr. Loisel then searched it over the track where they had gone on foot. Then he went to the police, the cab offices and put an ad in newspapers offering a reward.

Q21. What did M. Loisel suggest to his wife after all efforts to find the lost necklace failed?

When all efforts to find the lost necklace failed, Loisel suggested his wife to write to her friend that she had broken the clasp of the necklace and that she would have it repaired. He suggested this in order to buy time to replace the borrowed piece.

Q22. How were the Loisels able to find a similar necklace? How much did it cost?

Or

Where did the Loisels finally find a replacement of the lost necklace? How much did it cost?

The Loisels were able to find a replacement of the lost necklace in a shop of the Palais-Royal. Here they found a chaplet of diamonds which seemed to them exactly like the one they had lost. The cost of this new piece was forty thousand francs but they could get it for thirty-six thousand francs.

Q23. How did the Loisels arrange for the money to replace the lost necklace?

The Loisels required thirty-six thousand francs to buy the replica of the lost necklace. Although an enormous amount for them, they pooled eighteen thousand francs, which Mr. Loisel had inherited from his father, with eighteen thousand, borrowed from usurers and many other lenders.

Q24. What did Matilda fear while returning the necklace to Mme Forestier?

While returning the necklace to Mme Forestier, Matilda feared that her friend would open the jewel-box and might notice the substitution. She might say something unpleasant to her and think of her to be a robber.

Q25. How long did it take the Loisels to repay the debt? How did Matilda face the adverse times?

Or

How did Matilda spend ten years of her life since the day she returned from the ball?

It took the Loisels ten long years to repay the debt. During that time Matilda faced adversity heroically. She sent away the maid, did all the household chores herself and rented some rooms in an attic. She dressed modestly and saved every little bit of money haggling with the grocer and butcher to help her husband repay the debt.

Q26. What did M. Loisel do to repay the debt?

M. Loisel worked overtime to repay the debt. He put the books of some merchants in order in the evenings and often copied at night at five sous a page. He did this for ten years and repaid the entire debt.

Q27. Briefly describe the condition of Mrs. Loisel, ten years after she had lost the necklace. Or

What effect did ten years of hardship and poverty have on Matilda's appearance?

Ten years of hard work and toiling changed Matilda from a pretty, graceful, well dressed lady into a rough woman with badly dressed hair, away skirts, red hands and a loud voice. She lost all her charm and could not be recognised easily.

Q28. What type of changes marked the emotional status of Matilda after ten years of hard work?

Ten years of hard work made Matilda a strong woman emotionally. Now, she neither indulged in any self-pity nor had any grudge against fate. Rather, she felt proud of having survived the crisis. She got over her complexes and carried herself with an air of self-respect.

Q29. Why did Mme. Forestier not recognise her friend Matilda towards the end of the story?

Excessive and endless drudgery of ten years had robbed Matilda of all her charm, beauty and sophistication. She got transformed from an elegant and pretty woman to a coarse and old housewife. This radical change was so pronounced that Jeanne Forestier could not recognise her friend Matilda.

Q30. Why was Matilda moved when she saw Madame Forestier in the Champs-Elysees?

The sight of Madame Forestier looking still young, pretty and attractive probably reminded Matilda of what she had lost in terms of her own youth and beauty. This affected her as she had once dreamt of a similar life for herself.

Q31. Where did Matilda meet Mme Forestier ten years later? What did she confess to her?

Ten years later Matilda met Mme Forestier on a Sunday as she was taking a walk in the Champs-Elysees. She confessed to Mme Forestier that she had lost the diamond necklace which she had borrowed from her. The one she had returned was a replica of the original.

Q32. At the end of the story, why did Matilda smile with pride while talking to Mme. Forestier?

Matilda smiled with pride while talking to Mme. Forestier as she was happy at having been able to pay back the huge debt. She was pleased at her new found confidence and strength with which she had countered her struggle.

Q33. What is the twist at the end of the story "The Necklace"?

The story "The Necklace" ends with a twist about the real worth of the lost necklace. Matilda had believed that the exquisite piece was worth thousands of francs while her friend revealed to her that the necklace was actually a fake one and was not worth over five hundred francs.

Q34. What could have happened to Matilda if she had confessed to her friend that she had lost the necklace?

A confession to Mrs. Forestier might have put Matilda in a very awkward and embarrassing position. However, since the true worth of the necklace could have been easily paid by the Loisels, they would have been spared ten years of drudgery.

LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS

(to be answered in about 100 – 150 words each)

Q1. Compare the kind of life Matilda aspired for and the kind of life she was forced to live.

Delicacies and luxuries were what Matilda felt she had been born for. She yearned for riches and a life of luxury where elegant dinners and shining silver would be part of her life. She thought of exquisite food served in marvellous dishes.

However, Matilda's real life was ordinary and middle class. It was as if fate had cheated her and had deprived her of an affluent life. She was born into a family of clerks and was married to a petty clerk. Her dwelling was a modest place with bare walls, shabby furniture and limited means. She was compelled to eat simple food served in ordinary dishes. It was a sad, unfulfilled and dissatisfied life for someone like Matilda who always yearned for wealth and comfort.

Q2. The intoxicating success of one night cost Madame Loisel drudgery for ten years. Discuss.

Or

"We should be content with what life gives us." Discuss this statement in light of the story "The Necklace."

Matilda was not content with what life had given her. She aspired for a life of riches and luxury. So, determined to shine at

the ministerial ball, she borrowed a diamond necklace from her friend Mme Forestier. This brought her a brief moment of glory when she was the centre of attraction at the ball. As desired by her, she was noticed and sought after by everyone.

However, her dream was abruptly shattered with the discovery that the borrowed necklace had been lost. All efforts to find it failed and finally she and her husband were forced to take huge debts in order to purchase a similar necklace. The repayment of the debt took ten long years of backbreaking labour which cost Matilda her youth, beauty and grace.

Hence, the intoxicating success of one night cost Madame Loisel ten long years of drudgery. Had she been content with what life had given her, she would have been spared of the trauma.

Q3. "Vanity comes before a fall." Elaborate on this statement with reference to Matilda Loisel.

Matilda Loisel was a woman who took great pride in her looks. As a result, she felt that fate had cheated her and that she actually deserved a life of luxury and wealth, matching her beauty and grace. It was this dissatisfaction with her economic status that drove her to borrow a valuable necklace from a friend to wear to a ball. She was not content to use natural flowers. Her vanity demanded some real jewels to adorn her. The subsequent loss of the necklace and her vanity that refused to let her face humiliation at the hands of a friend, led to a life of poverty and drudgery. Ten years of hard work and worry followed which deprived her of the very looks and grace that she had once prided herself in. The irony in this situation leads one to agree with the saying, "Vanity comes before a fall".

Q4. How did the Loisels arrange money to buy the replica of the lost diamond necklace?

Matilda discovered the loss of necklace minutes after reaching home from the ball. She and her husband searched frantically for it for a week and then lost all hope. However, M. Loisel decided to replace it. The couple found a chaplet of diamonds in a shop of the Palais-Royal, which seemed to them exactly like the one they had lost. This piece 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 took that money and borrowed the rest eighteen thousand francs from usurers and money lenders. He then paid that money to the jeweller and got the new necklace. This new piece was returned by Matilda to Mme. Forestier without revealing the truth about the original necklace.

Q5. Madame Loisel played her part heroically in the face of adversities.

Comment.

Or

How did the Loisels face the challenge of repaying the debt?

Or

What changes occurred in the Loisels' lifestyle after the necklace was lost?

In the face of adversity, Madame Loisel rose to the occasion. From being a dissatisfied dreamer, she became a hardworking woman. She gave up the services of a maid and moved with her husband into some rented rooms in an attic. She took upon herself all the backbreaking housework. She cooked, cleaned dishes, washed the soiled linen, carried refuse to the street each morning and brought up the water. She gave up fine dressing and did her own shopping, bargaining hard for every sou that she could save.

M. Loisel, on his part, worked hard in the evenings making up tradesman's accounts. At night, he even copied manuscripts for a mere five sous a page.

This remarkable transformation in Matilda was indeed heroic. Her behaviour during this tough time in life revealed that she had humbly accepted her fault and was determined to rise again with dignity. She did not grudge or grumble even once and took the challenge of repaying the debt with all her might.

Q6. Matilda's husband earns the respect and sympathy of the reader through his quiet, unassuming nature. Explain.

Mr. Loisel is a quiet, unassuming, and a warm person who tolerates the tantrums of his wife without getting annoyed. Kind, considerate and affectionate, he tries to please her and brings home an invitation for the ministerial ball. He readily parts with the money that he had saved to buy himself a gun, so that his dear wife can buy a new dress to wear to the ball. This generosity and maturity endears him to the reader. He earns even more respect and sympathy of the readers when he waits patiently in the salon while Matilda enjoys the party. Above all, he never once shouts at his wife for the loss of the necklace or the subsequent life of hardships. Instead, he readily contributes eighteen thousand francs towards the payment of the necklace and raises loans at exorbitant rates to arrange the exact price of the diamond necklace. Later on, he does odd jobs to earn extra to repay the loans. All these qualities win over the reader's respect and admiration for Loisel.

Q7. What role does fate play in the story "The Necklace"?

Fate plays a significant role in the story "The Necklace." The first stroke of irony is played by fate when a pretty and charming Matilda, who is worthy of palaces, riches, luxury and comforts is born in a family of clerks.

Fate strikes again when on growing up she gets a petty clerk for a husband. But the worst stroke of fate is yet to come. The

'diamond' necklace she borrows for a moment's glory at the ball is lost and she and her husband are forced to live a lifetime of poverty, want and misery as they repay the loans they had to raise to make good the loss. Yet again, fate has the last laugh when Madame Forestier reveals to her that the necklace for which the couple ruined ten precious years of their life was imitation jewellery worth not more than five hundred francs.

Q8. Do you think telling the truth to her friend would have saved Matilda and Loisel from a lot of physical and mental pain?

Or

What would have happened to Matilda if she had confessed to her friend that she had lost her necklace? *(Textual)*

Of course, telling the truth to her friend would have saved Matilda and Loisel from a lot of physical and mental pain. It was quite likely that Mme. Forestier, who was a very kind and understanding person, would not have let her school-time friend to undergo distress. She would have allowed her a comfortable period of time to repay the loss. Besides, confession would have led to the revelation of the true cost of the lost necklace.

Another possibility could have been that Madame Forestier would have refused any further help to Matilda. She could also have developed mistrust for her middle class friend. Still, it would have been better than having undergone an arduous life that cost Matilda her youth and gave her husband back-breaking struggle. Therefore, being honest would have been the best policy in this case.

Q9. What was the cause of Matilda's ruin? How could she have avoided it?

The cause of Matilda's ruin was her desire to live beyond her means. She may not have got a luxurious life but she had dignity

and respect within the modest income of her husband. The delicacies that she yearned for brought her immense suffering and unhappiness. Her aspiration to be rich blinded her to the genuine love of her husband. She sought happiness in expensive dresses and exquisite diamonds.

She could have avoided all this by staying content with what destiny had given her. Had she followed her husband's advice to wear fresh flowers to the party, her life would have been different. She would not have to undergo backbreaking hardships to repay the debt taken for buying the replica of the lost diamond necklace. She would have also saved her husband the misery of working overtime. Her health, beauty and charm too would have remained with her for a longer time.

Q10. Imagine you are Madame Forestier. Today evening you happened to come across Matilda who is totally changed beyond recognition. She gave you an account of how she and her husband had sacrificed ten precious years of their lives to make up for the loss of your necklace that they had thought to be a real diamond necklace. Write a diary entry describing your reaction.

Friday, March 20, 1913

8.30 p.m.

Dear Diary

Today, I was taken by surprise when a crude, strong, hard and rough woman of a poor household with badly dressed hair and red hands approached me in Champs-Elysees where I had gone for a walk. She addressed me in a familiar tone calling me 'Jeanne'. When I tried to recognise her, to my great shock and disbelief, she told me that she was Matilda. I stood there dumbfounded. How poor and miserable she looked!

Poor Matilda narrated to me how ten years of her and her

husband's lives had to be sacrificed in order to substitute the necklace that she had borrowed from me and had lost after the ball. Mistaking that fake necklace for a real one, they had spent thirty-six thousand francs to buy its replacement! The loan that they raised to buy the replacement took ten years to be repaid. A life of poverty and the back-breaking labour during this period robbed Matilda of her youth, vitality, joy and grace.

I felt tremendously sorry for my dear friend and was deeply moved by her plight. When I told her that my necklace was fake and was not worth more than five hundred francs, she stood shocked like a stone. I had no words to console her.

However I have decided to return the diamond necklace to her the first thing in the morning. Of course, I cannot reverse the pain and suffering she has seen but by selling the real diamond necklace, she can certainly have some comfort in the years to come.

Jeaneé

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