

Effect of Prestige Issue on the Main Character in the Necklace

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Abstract: *The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between prestige and social life by examining the main character's experience in the Necklace short tale, deciphering the symbolism of the necklace, and elaborating on how the lifestyle shown in the story relates to individuals in this era. The qualitative analysis used in this literary work study is content analysis. The conclusion shows that Mathilde's life is significantly impacted by prestige in The Necklace. Owing to her lofty goals, she tries her hardest to achieve them even though they are beyond her capabilities, which ultimately leads to her foolishness and demise. The necklace represents dishonesty. It suddenly dawns on her that all the glitz she craves is unreal. She loses sight of the fact that genuine self - esteem is modesty and integrity. There are parallels between this current era and the Necklace. Individuals are overly preoccupied with wealth, status, and self - worth. Using social media and credit payment systems, people compete to gain a wonderful image and become prestigious in society. People in civilizations are greatly impacted by prestige. But with the resources at our disposal, we must be reasonable in what we can accomplish.*

Keywords: prestige, symbol, lifestyle, the necklace, main character

1. Introduction

Like any other text, a short tale includes unique features, both internal and external. Internal aspects include theme, place, plot, character, point of view, style, and tone (Yasmin, 2017).

A crucial extrinsic component is character, as it carries the author's thoughts through, adds vividness to the story, and provides a message that may be applied to a variety of aspects of human existence, including morals and education. Prestige, as defined by the Online Cambridge Dictionary, is the regard and appreciation that is bestowed onto a someone or thing due to their perceived superiority, accomplishment, or social standing.

In present day and past societies, environmental pressure urges individuals to increase social strata in order to obtain respect and admiration from those around them, we see this phenomenon play out with Mrs. Loisel in The Necklace. When taking into account the society Mrs. Loisel was living in, it's important to note that The Necklace was written during the La Belle Époque era. This was period defined by the aristocracy dominating the weak essentially judging individuals based on social standards and not merit (College, n. d.). Research from San Jose State University suggests that three distinct classes shaped the hierarchy of the time: the upper, middle and lower class. The hierarchy of each class stemmed from their wealth, land ownership, occupation, living conditions, dress and social characteristics. Those who were from higher classes were given more worldly pleasures and privileges like the ability to buy homes in the countryside and enjoy the high tiers in auditoriums (University, n. d.). We can see this dynamic in The Necklace's background when our protagonist wishes for all the things she had, showcasing the large wealth gap in the 19th century. We see the reality of the Belle Époque era play

out in the story as the lower class did not receive much benefit and had terrible living conditions like Mrs. Loisel towards the end with cramped housing and limited luxury goods. According to the Yale Department of economics, the top 1% controlled half of the wealth in Belle Époque France (Gilles Postel Vinay, n. d.), this showcases the high rank and prestige given to those with money. With this rank came great admiration and longing to lead a similar life from those in lower classes, like we see Mrs. Loisel wish for a far wealthier life. Hence, the social stigma of that time fuels her yearning to 'fit' into a society that is carried by and prefers the wealthy. Her motives to appear rich to gain validation and prestige are very well a product of French society in the 1880's. Sometimes it can force us to do things we don't have or are unable to accomplish to win praise, or vice versa if doing so could raise our status. (Kompas. com) (People often feel compelled to move up the social scale as a result of societal pressure. But there are a lot of obstacles in the way of elevating one's own self - worth and showing respect for people. This inclination is present in people who have lofty goals that drive them to spend money, borrow things they can't afford, or even do harm to others. Whatever Mrs. Loisel's motives to gain respect and acknowledgement in society may be, people do various things to achieve prestige in society and attain a higher rank. We see Mrs. Loisel try to 'appear' as if she is from a higher status by wearing jewelry and an expensive dress. People try to achieve respect in a variety of ways, Dr. Sabina Siebert from the University of Glasgow wrote that we use status symbols to show status. She gave the example of professors who dressed up in professional dress to their workplace in order to show their ranking and maintain social status (Siebert, 2020). In 1880's France, the elite showed their status by booking loge seats in theatres and living in better houses (University, n. d.). We see Mrs. Loisel's old friend Madam Forestier own a copy of an expensive necklace, showcasing how material possessions were status symbols and people manufactured

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situations to make it appear as if they fall into the status criteria. Apart from using status symbols, status also comes from an individual's competence. Individuals tend to try and exceed established standards by showcasing excellence for example how Mrs. Loisel dresses in a way that exceeds all others at the party, giving her the status she targeted. Individuals also tend to try and increase their visibility to attain prestige by seeking proximity with those who are respected or participating in activities that give status like our protagonist had when attending the ball. At times people imitate those they admire or are admired to achieve similar rank as Mrs. Loisel tried to imitate the rich women of the time with the expensive dress and jewelry, in order to look and be seen as the same (Diana Onu, 2016). Individuals can put in a lot of study time and earn advanced degrees in their subjects, launch and manage a profitable business, compete in and win multiple competitions, or just display their belongingness. The literary piece "The Necklace" raised the question of status.

In this tale, a woman aspires to accomplish something that is beyond her capabilities. In her fantasies, she likes to consume fine cuisine that is different from what she typically enjoys in her tiny home and lives in a mansion. She receives an offer to attend a ball one day from her husband, Mr. Loisel. He was aware that having this sort of flair was what was desired. She does, however, respond icily, asking to forward the invitation to other girls who are wearing nicer dresses to the event. Her spouse, feeling remorseful, inquires about the cost of purchasing a suitable outfit. She pays 4000 francs for the clothing of her choice. She sobs as she studies her reflection in the mirror. She claims that jewelry is necessary to finish her appearance. Madame Loisel's husband specifically insisting her to wear flowers instead of jewels can be a clear picture of how materialism and consumerism is against nature, or perhaps derails us from truly seeking what is authentic. In literature flowers have symbolized beauty and love for example in Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet "A rose by any other name would smell as sweet." Or the Daffodils in William Wordsworth's "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" that symbolize nature and the joy it can bring. Whereas diamonds are a flag of luxury, wealth and power e. g. in 'The Great Gatsby.' This could suggest that Madame Loisel chose to sacrifice real beauty and joy for power. The spouse proposes that they take the jewelry from Madame Forestier. The best jewel that fits Matilde's will is then borrowed when she visits Madame Forestier's home. She eats and dances happily that evening. She now has what she desires in her possession. She believes that everyone is drawn to her because she is the most attractive woman at the ball. When Matilde gets home, she goes to the mirror to take one last look at herself. She lets out a startled cry of dread. Madame Forestier's necklace was lost by her. The spouse leaves right away and looks at the route they used to get home. He searches everywhere, but to no avail. They search through other jewelry stores and discover one that is comparable and costs forty hundred francs. It's true that the expense exceeds their means. In the end, they succeed in getting the loans they need to purchase the jewelry. Madame Forestier gives her a chilly reception when she visits her home. She's afraid her friend would discover that this jewelry isn't the same as the one she borrowed.

For the couple, especially Matilde, the worst days are those after the necklace's return. They relocate into a garret and fire their servant. They exert every effort to settle the necklace's debts. In addition to taking care of the kitchen and laundry, Matilde must fetch water from the bottom of the home and haggle for a lower price. It has been a terrible ten years of struggle. They had accomplished everything after ten years of labor. After a workweek, she walks to Champs Elysees to clear her head. She spots Madame Forestier and her child there. She makes the decision to come clean and moves past her. She alters so much that Madame Forestier is unable to identify her. Her hard workload over the past ten years has made her appear older. When she finally admits the truth, Madame Forestier is taken aback. Madame Forestier informs her that the necklace she misplaced was made of paste and had a mere five - hundred - franc value. The research conducted by Kapau, Chilala, and Simwiga (2019) and other earlier investigations served as inspiration for this one. The character analysis of Mathilde, the necklace's protagonist, was the main focus of their investigation.

They employ a few theoretical frameworks, including local methodological Corpus Linguistic (Cl), literary understanding of characterization, and Systemic Functional Linguistic (SFL). The findings demonstrate that Mathilde, the primary character, gets assigned transitivity patterns in process - types that result in modifications to Mathilde's character states, including Kapau and others (2019). The author intentionally portrays Mathilde as a poor, resentful, materialistic, and desperate lady. She eventually transforms into a devoted housewife who is appreciative of her circumstances and can work hard for what she has. Shubham Yadav (2019) conducted an analysis of the second study. His main topic of conversation was Mathilde Loisel's portrayal. In contrast to Kapau and others (2019), he employed analysis rather than theoretical frontiers. Yadav (2019) thinks that the necklace's disappearance is indeed a godsend. After ten years of hardship, Mathilde gains strength, optimism, and confidence (Yadav, 2019). Opeyemi Olodasu then carried out a study (2017). He draws attention to the significance of wearing jewelry. Olodasu (2017) claims that the findings indicate that jewelry may serve as a social status marker, with those who wear it signifying their membership in the upper echelons of the palace's society. A piece of jewelry could be an authority sign. However, Olodasu (2017) points out that because jewelry is superstitiously linked to magical power, it can be used as a tool to ward off evil rather than being worn as an adornment. Because wearers place their reliance in the manufactured object rather than the deity, wearing jewelry can therefore be seen as idolatry. Additionally, he included in his results an appeal for people to display more of their inner beauty by forgoing artificial jewelry in favor of wearing it as an adornment. Additionally, Nurmalasari and Samanik (2018) used Karl Marx and Max Weber's sociological technique to evaluate The Necklace's protagonist. The study's primary goal is to examine the main character in the short story's social life. They claim that France has very high standards for wealthy families.

People will behave with greater respect if they are dressed more expensively. Because of this, the impoverished face a

great deal of temptation to appear wealthy. Additionally, Nurmalasari and Sumanik (2018) advise us to try to be grateful for what we have and learn from the story. The final piece of data to be reviewed here is a 2017 study by Maner that emphasizes the prestige and power needed to rise to a high social stratum. He concluded from his research that humans who live in hunter - gatherer societies are the reason behind the evolution of the prestige strategy. This personality type is known for its conscientiousness, agreeableness, high self - esteem, and dread of making bad decisions. Through pride, honor, affection, and freely given reverence, they will acquire and maintain prestige. In their society, social acceptance is important to them. Although it addressed various issues, the current study examined the Necklace as well. This essay will go over how a person's social life is impacted by their status.

It begins by examining the ways in which Madame Loisel's status influences her in the narrative, outlining the symbolism of the necklace, and discussing the story's applicability to the way of life of the time. The way prestige governs social interactions is similar to discovering a flower in a park. Since this occurrence occurs frequently in real life, we choose to examine this civilization in further detail. As a result, we develop three research questions, which are as follows: (1) How does Mathilde's social life in the narrative depend on her status?; (2) What does the necklace represent in the story?; and (3) How relevant is the lifestyle in the story to people's lives in the modern era?

2. Method

In this research work, the researchers tried to do a literary work analysis. The main source of this analysis was the short story entitled "The Necklace" written by Guy de Maupassant. So, the complete data was taken from the above - mentioned short story. There are some important steps by which the data was collected through library research:

- a) Thorough reading and understanding of the whole story
- b) Take out the important data related to the research work.
- c) To note down the important points.

The researchers used a qualitative descriptive analysis which is the content analysis to get to the crux of this research work. The collected data was scrutinized by carving up the main character and explaining the main character's behavior based on problem investigation with the help of the findings & theories of the previous researchers. Lastly, the results were introduced precisely.

3. Findings and Discussion

In this part, we will present research findings and discussion based on the three research questions:

1) How does prestige affect the social life of Mathilde in the story?

Mathilde, a married woman, is living in France in the 19th century. The name of her husband was Monsieur Loisel, who was a clerk. According to Yadav (2019) the era that Mathilde lived in was an era when British bourgeois strained a revolutionary phase change in Europe. This makes France bourgeois have dominant control of the state. Continuously,

they were bringing change in every aspect that happens in the environment, especially social life. Because of the high standard of living coming from the bourgeois, social life was using the superior standard which caused a big gap between the poor and the rich (Nurmalasari and Samanik, 2018). The standard of living can be judged by what a person wears. The more expensive the dress that the person wears, the more respectful the person will be (Nurmalasari and Sumanik, 2018). That means richness was the standard of being a respectful person. More prestige a person would have, if he was the richest. Coming from the natural motivation of Mathilde, she has an ungrateful, materialistic, and desperate character (Kapau, Chilala, and Simwiga, 2019). These characters were continuously making her dissatisfied with what she had in her life. With the immense desire of luxury coming from the upper - class society, she possesses to be like them with her ordinary finances. This attitude is shown in this part of the story below.

"She dreamed of silent antechambers hung with Oriental tapestries, lit from above by torches in bronze holders, while two tall footmen in knee - length breeches napped in huge armchairs, sleepy from the stove's oppressive warmth. She dreamed of vast living rooms furnished in rare old silks, elegant furniture loaded with priceless ornaments, and inviting smaller rooms, perfumed, made for afternoon chats with close friends - famous, sought after men, who all women envy and desire. "

In this story, we can see that she imagines living in a big house that has priceless ornaments and expensive furniture. She feels that she was searched by the famous man. Her ambition to be rich is so strong that she started thinking of being rich anyhow in reality. The thirst for having high prestige also drove Mathilde to do what she cannot do. This shows in the part when she asks her husband for a new dress. She feels that the previous dress is not suitable for the ball. She is not satisfied with what she has. If she aims for the husband to give the invitation to his friends, she will not cry and accept the offer to buy a new dress from her husband. This scene shows that she wants to go and be seen as a respectful person by wearing a beautiful dress. Another reason of wanting to have high prestige is when she denied using a flower as her splendour. She wants to use the jewelry and said:

"No; there is nothing more humiliating than looking poor in the middle of a lot of rich women. "

This saying shows that she feels ashamed to appear as she is. That feeling leads her to borrow jewelry from her friend, Madame Forestier. When choosing the jewelry, she does not feel content and asks for more options out of the first cabinet. She thought that the jewelry is not beautiful enough to be shown at the ball.

She is afraid to be known as a poor woman. It is shown when she left the ball, her husband gives her clothes to protect her from the cold. However, she directly goes away, afraid to be noticed by other women who use expensive furs. She also did not tell the truth if she lost the necklace. She chooses to lie and is afraid if her friend sees her as a thief.

Because of her lie, she should face the reality that she needs to pay off all her debt.

To sum up, prestige affects the main character, Mathilde, in a bad way. Her ambitions of being rich make her think irrationally. To pursue high prestige in society, she does what she cannot do. She is willing to suffer for ten years because of her exaggeration to be known as rich and respectable.

2) What is symbolized by the necklace in that story?

Jewelry may be decorative objects worn on clothes or the body, like rings and necklaces, often made of valuable metals and containing precious stones (Online Cambridge Dictionary). People have used jewelry for several reasons, for example as a wedding ring, as an adornment in fashion, or even as a sign of social rank in society (Olodasu, 2017). In "The Necklace" short story, Mathilde Loisel thinks wearing jewelry is a sign of social rank and prestige. Without the jewelry, Mathilde comes from the middle class who does not belong to the fancy party. At the party, there are many distinguished guests, and they come from the bourgeois class. A human's social rank is considered based on prestige, or freely given difference from others (Henrich & Gil - White, 2001; Cheng & Tracey, 2013). Mathilde changed her appearance to look like a rich and dignified woman like the bourgeoisie by borrowing the necklace from her friend, Madame Forestier. The necklace reflects everything Mathilde desires but does not have, worthy things that she never had in her lifetime.

"Madame Loisel was a great success. She was prettier 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 attaches of the Cabinet wished to waltz with her. She was remarked on by the minister himself. "

The narrator is drawn Mathilde's big changed only in one night with one thing, the jewelry. The necklace has a role to turn Mathilde's social status becoming as same as the upper crust. Therefore, the jewelry would give her the aura of fortune she has always wanted. However, Mathilde is falling to her illusion and falsity because she is jealous of Madame Forestier's wealth, and she never ensures the authenticity of that jewelry. The loss of the jewelry led Mathilde to 10 years of downfall.

"They dismissed their servant; they changed their lodgings; they rented a garret under the roof. She came to know what heavy housework meant and the odious cares of the kitchen. She washed the dishes, using her dainty fingers and rosy nails on greasy pots and pans. She washed the soiled linen, the shirts, and the dishcloths, which she dried upon a line; she carried the slopes down to the street every morning and carried up the water, stopping for breath at every landing. And dressed like a woman of the people, she went to the fruiter, the grocer, the butcher, a basket on her arm, bargaining, meeting with impertinence, defending on her miserable money, sou by sou. "

The narrator shows that Mathilde made great sacrifices for a piece of jewelry. Mathilde lives a miserable life only to

make up for the falsehood she is not aware of. She ends up feeling disappointed and frustrated over her stupidity. The necklace here represents the meaning of poverty of soul and falsehood. Madame Forestier does not tell Mathilde if the necklace was passed because she was trying to give the illusion of being rich. Individuals with higher status supported prestige, instead of money, will live longer rather than economically equal peers without prestige (Liu et al, 2017). This can be interpreted that everybody who comes from the middle class is trying to become a bourgeois with falsity jewelry that has many similarities with expensive jewelry. Mathilde is one who is deceived. She was fooled by the desire and ambition for recognition. Mathilde had forgotten about being humble and having integrity is actual self - esteem. Discourage wearing jewelry as an accessory but to show her inner beauty without using artificial adornment is better (Olodasu, 2017). Preciousness themselves instead of treasure filled with falsehoods and only temporary.

In conclusion, the necklace represents the falsehood and poverty of the soul of the main character in the story. It was Mathilde trying her best to be seen as having great self - esteem, a beautiful and rich woman. She borrows the jewelry merely because she wants to be considered bourgeois. After all, Mathilde has realized that every wealth owned by Madam Forestier is fake and she does not need to feel jealous and starts to feel grateful for what she has.

3) How is the relevance of the lifestyle in that story compared to the people's lifestyle in this present era?

From the story, we can see that prestige is something that Mathilde pursues the most. It is relevant to the present era. Nowadays in our society, we frequently find people who do nothing but behave like rich people. However, people are looking for prestige in many ways. We can see from the use of social media. People tend to post everything about their life on social media. They tend to share everything about what they are doing from day until night. They want to be seen by other people. The system of social media also encourages people to promote themselves. The like button is made to score people based on what they are doing on the platform. The other features like followers, views, subscribers, and friends determine how strong their influence in society. People who want to get popularity do not hesitate to buy fake followers to increase their influence. This means it is like Mathilde's effort to borrow Madame Fortier's necklace. The next lifestyle is the use of a credit payment system. It is a very common thing that people buy expensive things with credit payments. By using a credit payment system, people cannot afford to pay with cash. It means, they need to struggle to fulfill all the credits. It is like the phenomenon in The Necklace when Mathilde struggles to buy a necklace in the store. Furthermore, it is very contradictory to the traditional lifestyle. The previous generation tends to invest something for the next generation. They invest not for themselves. The investment can be formed as lands, gold, or patrimonial businesses. In old age, they just sit and relax because they have confirmed the next generation will live a better life. Not like nowadays people who leave the legacy form as debt because of temporary satisfaction.

4. Conclusion

To address the three research questions, this study examined the short narrative *The Necklace*. The study questions center on how the protagonist of "The Necklace" is impacted by powerful status, what the necklace means in the narrative, and how relevant the story is to today's world. Mathilde's life is significantly impacted by the Necklace. It makes Mathilde do things that she can't do. Without seeing the truth beneath the bourgeois glamour, she uses expensive items in her quest to become a wealthy and respectable woman. Owing to her lofty goals, she tries her hardest to achieve them even when they are above her capabilities. For ten years, Mathilde was unaware that her illusory aspirations had brought her to ignorance and ultimately to her demise.

In addition, the necklace's emblem is the subject of the second query. For one night wearing the necklace, Mathilde is attempting to pass for a refined and well-to-do lady. She believes that by wearing a priceless necklace, people will appreciate her. But as it happens, the jewelry is phony. The necklace represents dishonesty. At last, she understands that all the glitz she so desperately wants is unreal. She's fooling herself because she wants to be noticed. She loses sight of the fact that genuine self-esteem is humility and integrity rather than a fleeting and false treasure.

Here Maupassant serves a wider narrative of how society has begun to diminish the line between beauty and luxury, the idea of everyone at the party also thinking of Madam Loisel as the most beautiful shows how society as a whole has fallen for the falsehood and trickery of wealth.

We can comment on the protagonist by saying that she is typical to the 1880's womanhood, it paints a patriarchal image of the man being the main earner as Mr. Loisel was and the wife is concerned with beauty and materialistic values, it depicts the family dynamics of the time as well.

The final query concerns *The Necklace*'s applicability to the current day. *The Necklace* and the current era share several characteristics. Individuals are overly preoccupied with wealth, status, and self-worth. Individuals strive to project a positive image and rise to prominence in the community. It is evident in how credit payment systems and social media are used.

In general, status has a significant impact on individuals inside their communities. We cannot dispute our need for it to interact with people. But in assessing what we can accomplish with what we already have, we also need to be practical. Therefore, we ought to begin to value all that we have and work toward raising our own standards of quality.

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