

# Lesson 1

## “The Necklace”

**Materials Needed:**

-  journal
-  pen or pencil

### Journal Entry

Before beginning this course it is important to consider what you want to achieve. Think about this and decide what your goals are. Then write in your journal what you hope to accomplish when you finish this course. Discuss this with your mentor/teacher.

- Short-Term Goals** → My goal(s) in this unit for reading is –  
 → My goal(s) in this unit for writing is –



**Vocabulary:** Words to help you in your reading:



Word	Definition
<b>dowry</b>	a sum of money or material goods given by a bride’s family to the groom or his family
<b>finesse</b>	skill in handling a sensitive situation
<b>suppleness</b>	flexibility
<b>antechamber</b>	waiting room
<b>coquettish</b>	flirtatious
<b>chic</b>	in style, fashionable
<b>quay</b>	a type of pier
<b>coupé</b>	two-door automobile or carriage
<b>vestibule</b>	a hall between the outer and inner doors of a house
<b>chaplet</b>	a string of beads
<b>usurers</b>	money lenders who charge unfair interest rates
<b>mansard</b>	a roof style
<b>chemise</b>	dress unfitted or loose at the waist

**Add these words to your vocabulary:**

<b>Word</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Example</b>
<b>caste</b>	a social group limited to persons of the same rank	“She was born into a low <i>caste</i> , but felt she belonged to a higher one.”
<b>incessant</b>	continuous	“She suffered <i>incessantly</i> , feeling herself born for all delicacies and luxuries.”
<b>tureen</b>	large, deep dish	“...opposite her husband who uncovered the <i>tureen</i> with a delighted air...”
<b>elated</b>	very happy	“The woman was <i>elated</i> when she received the beautiful necklace.”
<b>spiteful</b>	acting out of a desire to humiliate or harm	“...she threw the invitation <i>spitefully</i> upon the table....”
<b>vexation</b>	something that irritates or causes worry	“By a violent effort, she had controlled her <i>vexation</i> and responded in a calm voice....”
<b>bewilderment</b>	state of confusion	“She waited all day in a state of <i>bewilderment</i> before this frightful disaster.”
<b>dismay</b>	apprehension, loss of courage	“His <i>dismay</i> was revealed in his frightened look.”

**About the Author**

Guy de Maupassant (1850-1893) was a French novelist and short story writer who explored the human mind in many of his literary works. Gustave Flaubert, another famous French writer, influenced his writing style. He published more than three hundred short stories, half a dozen novels, and some plays as well as other pieces of literature. The income from his publications allowed de Maupassant to live luxuriously. He never married; he eventually went insane in his last years as a result of syphilis.

**Reading Assignment**

Read “The Necklace.” This story is about a young, married woman, Madame (Mme. or Mrs. in English) Loisel, and her inability to deal with her social position within French society. She is a middle class woman possessing the characteristics of an upper class one. However, when she is given the chance to ‘show off’ her glamorous side, a tragedy occurs. Mme. Loisel is forced to live a hard life, losing both her beauty and dreams of becoming a member of the upper class. De Maupassant, however, delivers an ironic twist in the resolution of the story. As you read, notice how Mme. Loisel acts when she realizes that she is going to the party. Also, notice how she changes after she has lost her friend’s necklace.

## The Necklace

by Guy de Maupassant

She was one of those pretty, charming young ladies, born, as if through an error of destiny, into a family of clerks. She had no dowry, no hopes, no means of becoming known, appreciated, loved, and married by a man either rich or distinguished; and she allowed herself to marry a petty clerk in the office of the Board of Education.

She was simple, not being able to adorn herself; but she was unhappy, as one out of her class; for women belong to no caste, no race; their grace, their beauty, and their charm serving them in the place of birth and family. Their inborn finesse, their instinctive elegance, their suppleness of wit are their only aristocracy, making some daughters of the people the equal of great ladies.

She suffered incessantly, feeling herself born for all delicacies and luxuries. She suffered from the poverty of her apartment, the shabby walls, the worn chairs, and the faded stuffs. All these things, which another woman of her station would not have noticed, tortured and angered her. The sight of little Breton, who made this humble home, awoke in her sad regrets and desperate dreams. She thought of quiet antechambers, with their Oriental hangings, lighted by high, bronze torches, and of the two great footmen in short trousers who sleep in the large armchairs, made sleepy by the heavy air from the heating apparatus. She thought of large drawing-rooms, hung in old silks, of graceful pieces of furniture carrying bric-à-brac of inestimable value, and of the little perfumed coquettish apartments, made for five o'clock chats

with most intimate friends, men known and sought after, whose attention all women envied and desired.

When she seated herself for dinner, before the round table where the tablecloth had been used three days, opposite her husband who uncovered the tureen with a delighted air, saying: "Oh! the good potpie! I know nothing better than that-" she would think of the elegant dinners, of the shining silver, of the tapestries peopling the walls with ancient personages and rare birds in the midst of fairy forests; she thought of the exquisite food served on marvelous dishes, of the whispered gallantries, listened to with the smile of the sphinx, while eating the rose-colored flesh of the trout or a chicken's wing.

She had neither frocks nor jewels, nothing. And she loved only those things. She felt that she was made for them. She had such a desire to please, to be sought after, to be clever, and courted.

She had a rich friend, a schoolmate at the convent, whom she did not like to visit, she suffered so much when she returned. And she wept for whole days from chagrin, from regret, from despair, and disappointment.

One evening her husband returned elated bearing in his hand a large envelope.

"Here," he said, "here is something for you."

9 She quickly tore open the wrapper  
and drew out a printed card on which  
were inscribed these words:

“The Minister of Public  
Instruction and Madame George  
Ramponneau ask the honor of  
Mr. and Mrs. Loisel’s company  
Monday evening, January 18, at  
the Minister’s residence.”

10 Instead of being delighted, as her  
husband had hoped, she threw the  
invitation spitefully upon the table  
murmuring:

11 “What do you suppose I want with  
that?”

“But, my dearie, I thought it would  
make you happy. You never go out, and  
this is an occasion, and a fine one! I had  
12 a great deal of trouble to get it.  
Everybody wishes one, and it is very  
select; not many are given to employees.  
You will see the whole official world  
there.”

13 She looked at him with an irritated  
eye and declared impatiently:

14 “What do you suppose I have to  
wear to such a thing as that?”

15 He had not thought of that; he  
stammered:

“Why, the dress you wear when we  
go to the theater. It seems very pretty to  
me -” He was silent, stupefied, in  
16 dismay, at the sight of his wife weeping.  
Two great tears fell slowly from the  
corners of her eyes toward the corners of  
her mouth; he stammered:

17 “What is the matter? What is the  
matter?”

By a violent effort, she had  
18 controlled her vexation and responded in  
a calm voice, wiping her moist cheeks:

19 “Nothing. Only I have no dress and  
consequently I cannot go to this affair.

Give your card to some colleague whose  
wife is better fitted out than I.”

He was grieved, but answered:

“Let us see, Matilda. How much  
would a suitable costume cost,  
20 something that would serve for other  
occasions, something very simple?”

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

Finally she said, in a hesitating voice:

22 “I cannot tell exactly, but it seems  
to me that four hundred francs ought to  
cover it.”

He turned a little pale, for he had  
saved just this sum to buy a gun that he  
might be able to join some hunting  
23 parties the next summer, on the plains at  
Nanterre, with some friends who went to  
shoot larks up there on Sunday.

Nevertheless, he answered:

24 “Very well. I will give you four  
hundred francs. But try to have a pretty  
dress.”

The day of the ball approached and  
Mme. Loisel seemed sad, disturbed,  
25 anxious. Nevertheless, her dress was  
nearly ready. Her husband said to her  
one evening:

“What is the matter with you? You  
have acted strangely for two or three  
days.” And she responded: “I am vexed  
26 not to have a jewel, not one stone,  
nothing to adorn myself with. I shall  
have such a poverty-laden look. I would  
prefer not to go to this party.”

He replied: "You can wear some  
27 natural flowers. At this season they look  
very *chic*. For ten francs you can have  
two or three magnificent roses."

She was not convinced. "No," she  
28 replied, "there is nothing more  
humiliating than to have a shabby air in  
the midst of rich women."

Then her husband cried out: "How  
stupid we are! Go and find your friend  
29 Mrs. Forestier and ask her to lend you  
her jewels. You are well enough  
acquainted with her to do this."

She uttered a cry of joy: "It is  
30 true!" she said. "I had not thought of  
that."

The next day she took herself to  
her friend's house and related her story  
31 of distress. Mrs. Forestier went to her  
closet with the glass doors, took out a  
large jewel-case, brought it, opened it,  
and said: "Choose, my dear."

She saw at first some bracelets,  
then a collar of pearls, then a Venetian  
cross of gold and jewels and of  
32 admirable workmanship. She tried the  
jewels before the glass, hesitated, but  
could neither decide to take them nor  
leave them. Then she asked:

33 "Have you nothing more?"

34 "Why, yes. Look for yourself. I do  
not know what will please you."

Suddenly she discovered, in a black  
satin box, a superb necklace of  
diamonds, and her heart beat fast with an  
immoderate desire. Her hands trembled  
35 as she took them up. She placed them  
about her throat against her dress, and  
remained in ecstasy before them. Then  
she asked, in a hesitating voice, full of  
anxiety:

36 "Could you lend me this? Only  
this?"

37 "Why, yes, certainly."

She fell upon the neck of her

38 friend, embraced her with passion, then  
went away with her treasure.

The day of the ball arrived. Mme.  
Loisel was a great success. She was the  
prettiest of all, elegant, gracious, smiling,  
and full of joy. All the men noticed her,  
39 asked her name, and wanted to be  
presented. All the members of the  
Cabinet wished to waltz with her. The  
Minister of Education paid her some  
attention.

She danced with enthusiasm, with  
passion, intoxicated with pleasure,  
thinking of nothing, in the triumph of her  
beauty, in the glory of her success, in a  
40 kind of cloud of happiness that came of  
all this homage, and all this admiration,  
of all these awakened desires, and this  
victory so complete and sweet to the  
heart of woman.

She went home toward four  
o'clock in the morning. Her husband  
had been half asleep in one of the little  
salons since midnight, with three other  
41 gentlemen whose wives were enjoying  
themselves very much.

He threw around her shoulders the  
wraps they had carried for the coming  
home, modest garments of everyday  
42 wear, whose poverty clashed with the  
elegance of the ball costume. She felt  
this and wished to hurry away in order  
not to be noticed by the other women  
who were wrapping themselves in rich  
furs.

Loisel retained her: "Wait," said  
43 he. "You will catch cold out there. I am  
going to call a cab."

But she would not listen and  
descended the steps rapidly. When they  
44 were in the street, they found no  
carriage; and they began to seek for one,  
hailing

the coachmen whom they saw at a distance.

They walked along toward the Seine, hopeless and shivering. Finally they found on the quay one of those old, nocturnal *coupés* that one sees in Paris after nightfall, as if they were ashamed of their misery by day.

It took them as far as their door in Martyr Street, and they went wearily up to their apartment. It was all over for her. And on his part, he remembered that he would have to be at the office by ten o'clock.

She removed the wraps from her shoulders before the glass, for a final view of herself in her glory. Suddenly she uttered a cry. Her necklace was not around her neck.

Her husband, already half undressed, asked: "What is the matter?"

She turned toward him excitedly:

"I have—I have—I no longer have Mrs. Forestier's necklace."

He arose in dismay: "What! How is that? It is not possible."

And they looked in the folds of the dress, in the folds of the mantle, in the pockets, everywhere. They could not find it.

He asked: "You are sure you still had it when we left the house?"

"Yes, I felt it in the vestibule as we came out."

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

"Yes. It is probable. Did you take the number?"

"No. And you, did you notice what it was?"

"No."

They looked at each other utterly cast down. Finally, Loisel dressed himself again.

"I am going," said he, "over the track where we went on foot, to see if I can find it."

And he went. She remained in her evening gown, not having the force to go to bed, stretched upon a chair, without ambition or thoughts.

Toward seven o'clock her husband returned. He had found nothing.

He went to the police and to the cab offices, and put an advertisement in the newspapers, offering a reward; he did everything that afforded them a suspicion of hope.

She waited all day in a state of bewilderment before this frightful disaster. Loisel returned at evening with his face harrowed and pale; and had discovered nothing.

"It will be necessary," said he, "to 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 to turn around."

She wrote as he dictated.

At the end of a week, they had lost all hope. And Loisel, older by five years, declared:

"We must take measures to replace this jewel."



The next day they took the box which had inclosed it, to the jeweler whose name was on the inside. He

69 consulted his books:

“It is not I, Madame,” said he, “who sold this necklace; I only furnished the casket.”

70 Then they went from jeweler to jeweler seeking a necklace like the other one, consulting their memories, and ill, both of them, with chagrin and anxiety.

In a shop of the Palais-Royal, they found a chaplet of diamonds which 71 seemed to them exactly like the one they had lost. It was valued at forty thousand francs. They could get it for thirty-six thousand.

They begged the jeweler not to sell it for three days. And they made an 72 arrangement by which they might return it for thirty-four thousand francs if they found the other one before the end of February.

Loisel possessed eighteen thousand 73 francs which his father had left him. He borrowed the rest.

He borrowed it, asking for a thousand francs of one, five hundred of another, five louis of this one, and three louis of that one. He gave notes, made ruinous promises, took money of usurers and the whole race of lenders. He 74 compromised his whole existence, in fact, risked his signature, without even knowing whether he could make it good or not, and, harassed by anxiety for the future, by the black misery which surrounded him, and by the prospect of all physical privations and moral torture, he went to get the new necklace, depositing on the merchant’s counter thirty-six thousand francs.

75 When Mrs. Loisel took back the jewels to Mrs. Forestier, the latter said to her in a frigid tone:

“You should have returned them to me sooner, for I might have needed them.” She did open the jewel-box as 76 her friend feared she would. If she should perceive the substitution, what would she think? What should she say? Would she take her for a robber?

Mrs. Loisel now knew the horrible life of necessity. She did her part, however, completely, heroically. It was 77 necessary to pay this frightful debt. She would pay it. They sent away the maid; they changed their lodgings; they rented some rooms under a mansard roof.

She learned the heavy cares of a household, the odious work of a kitchen. She washed the dishes, using her rosy nails upon the greasy pots and the bottoms of the stewpans. She washed 78 the soiled linen, the chemises and dishcloths, which she hung on the line to dry; she took down the refuse to the street each morning and brought up the water, stopping at each landing to breathe. And, clothed like a woman of the people, she went to the grocer’s, the butcher’s, and the fruiterer’s, with her basket on her arm, shopping, haggling to the last sou her miserable money.

79 Every month it was necessary to renew some notes, thus obtaining time, and to pay others.

The husband worked evenings, 80 putting the books of some merchants in order, and nights he often did copying at five sous a page.

81 And this life lasted for ten years.

82 At the end of ten years, they had restored all, all, with interest of the usurer, and accumulated interest besides.

Mrs. Loisel seemed old now. She had become a strong, hard woman, the crude woman of the poor household. Her hair badly dressed, her skirts awry, her hands red, she spoke in a loud tone, and washed the floors in large pails of water. But sometimes, when her husband was at the office, she would seat herself before the window and think of that evening party of former times, of that ball where she was so beautiful and so flattered.

How would it have been if she had not lost that necklace? Who knows? Who knows? How singular is life, and how full of changes! How small a thing will ruin or save one!

One Sunday, as she was taking a walk in the Champs-Élysées to rid herself of the cares of the week, she suddenly perceived a woman walking with a child. It was Mrs. Forestier, still young, still pretty, still attractive. Mrs. Loisel was affected. Should she speak to her? Yes, certainly. And now that she had paid, she would tell her all. Why not?

She approached her. “Good morning, Jeanne.”

Her friend did not recognize 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 -”

“No, I am Matilda Loisel.”

Her friend uttered a cry of astonishment: “Oh! my poor Matilda! How you have changed -”

“Yes, I have had some hard days since I saw you; and some miserable ones - and all because of you -”

“Because of me? How is that?”

“You recall the diamond necklace that you loaned me to wear to the Commissioner’s ball?”

“Yes, very well.”

“Well, I lost it.”

“How is that, since you returned it to me?”

“I returned another to you exactly like it. And it has taken us ten years to pay for it. You can understand that it was not easy for us who have nothing. But it is finished and I am decently content.”

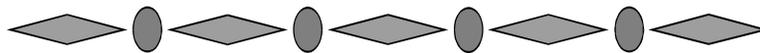
Madame Forestier stopped short. She said:

“You say that you bought a diamond necklace to replace mine?”

“Yes. You did not perceive it then? They were just alike.”

And she smiled with a proud and simple joy. Madame Forestier was touched and took both her hands as she replied:

“Oh! my poor Matilda! Mine were false. They were not worth over five hundred francs!”



**Reading Comprehension**

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. According to the selection, which word best describes the setting?
- a. large manor
  - b. elegant penthouse
  - c. nice farmhouse
  - d. small shabby apartment
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Which of the following best describes Mme. Loisel?
- a. prideful
  - b. annoying
  - c. outgoing
  - d. rude

**Answer these questions in complete sentences.**

3. Why is Mme Loisel dissatisfied with her situation? Include two details to support your answer.

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4. Explain why she is unhappy about the invitation to the party? Include a detail from the text to support your answer.

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5. Why does she wish to hurry away after the party? Did this part of the story remind you of a certain fairy tale? Explain.

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6. What problem do the Loiseles face? What are three steps they take to solve the problem? Include information from the selection in your answer.

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7. What does Mme. Loisel discover at the end of the story? How is this ironic? (See Glossary at end of unit)

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