

THE MULHERN STORY LIBRARY — SALON READING GUIDE

The Necklace

Guy de Maupassant · French Realism / Naturalism · first published 1884

AUTHOR	Guy de Maupassant
PUBLISHED	1884
ERA	French Realism / Naturalism
THEMES	Vanity, Class, Irony
READER PATHWAY	Accessible adult / college entry

INTRODUCTION FOR THOUGHTFUL READERS

Mathilde Loisel, longing for a life of luxury, borrows a diamond necklace to wear to a ball, then loses it. She and her husband spend ten years in poverty to replace it, only to learn at the end that the original was a worthless imitation.

HISTORICAL & LITERARY CONTEXT

First published as 'La Parure' in *Le Gaulois* in 1884, the story is Maupassant's most famous tale and a model of the realist short story with a devastating twist ending. It dissects vanity and the rigid class anxieties of the French bourgeoisie.

DISCUSSION FOCUS

Situational irony, the twist ending, characterization, and materialism versus contentment. Pairs well with *The Gift of the Magi* for a sharper adult discussion of class, aspiration, and narrative justice.

SALON DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Is Mathilde punished for vanity, for class aspiration, or for living inside a social order built on appearances?
- How does Maupassant's realism make the final irony feel cruel rather than merely clever?

READ & RESEARCH

1. Full text at Wikisource — https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Necklace
2. The Works of Guy de Maupassant at Project Gutenberg — <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/3090>