

The Necklace

A twisted tale of greed and glamour
based on Guy de Maupassant's classic short story

About the Story

Lexile® 870L (captions)

For qualitative complexity factors, go to the Story tab.

Learning Objective: to analyze a central theme of a play through an examination of the characters and literary devices

Key Skills: character, situational irony, figurative language, inference

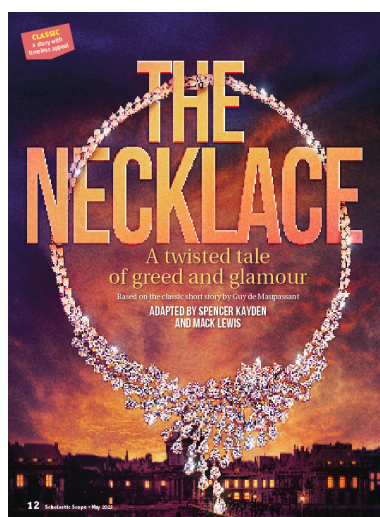
Essential Questions:

- Can money buy happiness?
- How does society influence our choices?
- What do our possessions reveal about us?

Standards:

The play and lesson support these Common Core anchor standards:
R.1, R.2, R.3, R.4, R.5, R.7, R.10, W.1, W.9, SL.1, SL.2, L.4, L.6

For more standards information—including TEKS—go to Scope Online.



Your Teaching Support Package

Find your full suite of support materials at scope.scholastic.com.

Audio:

- Text-to-speech
- Vocabulary
- Pronunciation Guide

Video:

- "Is It Ironical?"

Connected readings from the

Scope archives:

- "Good Enough"
- *The Interlopers*
- *The Gift of the Magi*

Skill Building Activities to print, project, or share digitally:

- Writing Planner: Pierre and Matilda
 - Vocabulary: Definitions and Practice
 - Close Reading and Critical Thinking
 - Pronunciation Guide
 - Choice Board
 - Quiz*
 - Contest Entry Form
- *Available on two levels

Step-by-Step Lesson

1. Preparing to Read 30 minutes

Do Now: Reflect on Proverbial Expressions (10 minutes)

- Project the following prompt on your whiteboard for students to respond to in their journals or on a piece of paper:

A proverb is a well-known saying that is considered wise or true. Consider the proverbial expressions below:

*"Appearances can be deceiving."
"Money can't buy happiness."
"Honesty is the best policy."*

- Put each expression in your own words.*
 - Describe a time when you or a fictional character you've encountered in a book or movie had an experience that supported one of these proverbs.*
 - Are there instances when any of these proverbs are not necessarily true? Explain.*
- Invite volunteers to share their responses. *Sample responses for Question 1:*
Appearances can be deceiving: Things can look different from the way they really are.
Money can't buy happiness: True happiness comes from within, not from material possessions.
Honesty is the best policy: It's always best to tell the truth.

Watch the Video (10 minutes)

- Watch the **"Is It Ironic?"** video at Scope Online. It will prepare students to identify situational irony in the play.

Preview Vocabulary (10 minutes)

- Project **Vocabulary: Definitions and Practice**. Review the definitions and practice using the words as a class. Highlighted words: *abject, aghast, appointed, dilapidated, fickle, sumptuous, unsavory*. Optionally, print or share the interactive link directly to your LMS and have students preview the words and complete the activity independently beforehand. Audio pronunciations of the words and a read-aloud of the definitions are embedded in the interactive slides.

- Project the **Pronunciation Guide** and play its audio at Scope Online to teach students how to pronounce the French character names and words in the play.

2. Reading and Discussing

55 minutes

- Have a volunteer read the **As You Read** box on page 13 of the magazine or at the top of the digital story page.
- Assign parts and read the play aloud as a class.
- Break students into groups to discuss the following close-reading and critical-thinking questions.

Close-Reading Questions

(30 minutes)

The following questions can be shared in printable or interactive form.

1. **In Scene 1, Matilda says, “How it tortures me to live in such squalor.” Does she actually live in squalor? What does this statement reveal about Matilda?** (character) *Squalor is a state of dirty, unpleasant neglect. When Matilda says she lives in squalor, she is exaggerating. Her home is small, with old and faded furnishings, but it is “cozy and neat,” and she can afford to employ Marie-Claire, a maid. Matilda’s statement reveals that she is not satisfied with her life—that she pities herself and yearns for a life of glamour and wealth. Students may say that Matilda’s lack of satisfaction reveals that she is greedy, materialistic, vain, or shallow.*
2. **In Scene 3, what conclusions can you draw about Matilda’s values?** (character) *Matilda says that she is ashamed because she has no jewels. She describes her kind and loving husband as “merely a clerk.” When her friend offers her a wide selection of jewels to choose from, she asks, “Is there anything else?” These lines show that Matilda highly values wealth and expensive items—perhaps more highly than she values her husband’s devotion or her friend’s generosity.*
3. **Does Pierre long for status as desperately as Matilda does? If not, what does he long for?** (character) *Pierre does not long for status, at least not as intensely as Matilda does. He seems to long for Matilda’s happiness. He goes out of his way to procure an invitation to the ambassador’s ball for her. He buys her an expensive gown when she says she needs one, even though they have little money to spare for luxuries. At the ball, while Matilda is basking in the admiration she is receiving from others, it warms Pierre’s heart to see her so happy.*

4. **Reread Scenes 5 and 6. How does Pierre respond to the loss of the necklace? Do you think he does the right thing? Explain.** (character) *Pierre frantically searches for the necklace and then commits to a life of poverty so that he and Matilda can buy a replacement. Some students may say that he acted honorably by sacrificing to replace the necklace, while others may say that if he or Matilda had been honest with Jeanne, they could have avoided going into debt.*
5. **In Scene 6, Old Pierre says of the diamond necklace's 40,000-franc price, "That number still rings in my mind like a funeral bell." What does Old Pierre mean by this simile?** (figurative language) *Old Pierre compares the number to a funeral bell because a funeral bell signals the end of a life, and the high price of the necklace signaled the end of life as Pierre and Matilda knew it.*
6. **In what way is the end of the play ironic?** (situational irony) *The play's ending is ironic because Matilda and Pierre worked for 10 years to pay for an expensive necklace, only to find out that the original necklace was fake; their hard work and sacrifice were unnecessary. Also, Matilda's desire to appear rich is what led her into poverty.*
7. **At the end of Scene 7, Matilda calls life "fickle." What does she mean? What does Old Pierre mean when he calls life fickle at the end of the play?** (inference) *Fickle means "tending to change suddenly and unpredictably." Both Matilda and Old Pierre are commenting on how quickly their lives changed with the loss of the necklace. Both may also be suggesting that fate—rather than their own actions—was to blame for the misery they endured.*

Critical-Thinking Questions

(10 minutes)

The following questions can be shared in printable or interactive form.

1. **At the beginning of the play, Old Pierre says that he is about to tell you "a story that—if you have even a shred of compassion—will break your heart." Do you agree that this is a tragic story? Support your answer with text evidence.** *Answers will vary. Students may respond that the story is tragic because Pierre and Matilda spend 10 years struggling to pay off debt that they had no need to incur. Others may answer that the couple got what they deserved for lying and indulging Matilda's vain desire to appear rich.*
2. **What could Pierre and Matilda have done differently?** *Answers will vary. Students may offer that Matilda and Pierre could have been honest with Jeanne. Matilda could have gone to the ball wearing flowers instead of jewels—or with nothing around her neck at all. The pair could have chosen not to attend the ball in the first place if they believed it would require them to spend beyond their means.*

3. Revisit the expressions from the Do Now. How do they apply to the play?

- **“Appearances can be deceiving”:** *The idea of appearances being at odds with reality is developed throughout the play. Just as Matilda masquerades as a glamorous and wealthy person by wearing a new dress and borrowed jewels, the diamond necklace that appears valuable is just a convincing imitation. At the ball, people see Matilda as sophisticated, radiant, and poised, and she feels like the sparkling “treasure” she wears around her neck. Most of the time, though, she is consumed by an intense and selfish desire for wealth and finds no contentment in her life.*
- **“Money can’t buy happiness”:** *The idea that money can’t buy happiness—and that the pursuit of wealth can lead to ruin—is a theme of the play. Matilda is miserable with what many would see as a good life and believes that only the trappings of wealth will bring her happiness. Pierre, while more generous and content with his station in life, thinks that spending money on luxuries is worth it for the happiness it will bring Matilda, so he is willing to live beyond their means. In an attempt to possess more—or to appear to possess more—they end up losing everything and spending 10 years of their lives in misery and debt.*
- **“Honesty is the best policy”:** *Had Pierre and Matilda told Jeanne what had happened, they would not have bought the expensive replacement necklace and therefore would not have spent their lives laboring to pay for it.*

3. Skill Building and Writing

30 minutes

- Have students complete the **Writing Planner: Pierre and Matilda**. This activity will help them organize their ideas in preparation for the writing prompt on page 17 in the printed magazine and at the bottom of the digital story page.
- Alternatively, have students choose a culminating task from the **Choice Board**, a menu of differentiated activities.

Bonus! The Perfect Pairing

Teaching tips for exploring shared themes in *The Necklace* and “Good Enough”

Check out our fiction feature [“Good Enough”](#) from the November 2019 issue. We think it pairs perfectly with *The Necklace*.

Discussion questions to help students analyze, discuss, and synthesize the two works:

1. How do Lisa, Carleen, and their friends affect Dori? How is this “A group” similar to the elegant women of Paris in *The Necklace*?

2. What does the Orion shirt symbolize? What does the necklace Matilda wears to the ambassador's ball symbolize?
3. How are the shirt Dori receives on her birthday and Jeanne's necklace similar?
4. What is shame? Describe the moments Matilda feels shame in *The Necklace*. Then compare the two moments Dori feels shame in "Good Enough."
5. How does Dori feel about her family? How does Matilda feel about Pierre?
6. Why do Matilda and Pierre lie? Why does Dori lie?
7. How does Dori change over the course of the story? How does Matilda change over the course of the play?
8. Was there a particularly important or moving moment in "Good Enough" for you as a reader? What about in *The Necklace*?
9. A story's theme delivers a message from the author to the reader, or teaches a lesson or moral. What theme(s) do "Good Enough" and *The Necklace* share?
10. Have you ever felt the way Dori and Matilda do about an item of clothing or other object?
11. How much does approval from others affect our daily choices? Give an example of a choice that might be affected by what others think or say.
12. Did you like the stories? Did you prefer one story over the other? Explain.

Culminating Tasks:

- Create a hashtag theme statement for each story in no more than 50 characters. (Feel free to create more than one!) Here's an example for the story "The Three Little Pigs":
#takingyourtimetodosomethingrightreallypaysoff
- Write dialogue between Matilda and Pierre that takes place after Matilda's conversation with Jeanne in Scene 8.
- You are Dori. Write a note to your mom explaining what the shirt helped you learn.
- Retell "Good Enough" or *The Necklace* in the form of a graphic novel in no more than 10 panels. Be true to the characters—how they speak, behave, and interact with each other.

Other read-aloud plays from the *Scope* archives featuring situational irony:

- [The Interlopers](#) (November 2019)
- [The Gift of the Magi](#) (December 2018/January 2019)