

talk
to
me!

LET'S TALK EMPOWERMENT. LET'S TALK ENGLISH

Footprints without Feet 7

The Necklace

1. Summary

The short story "The Necklace" is written by Guy de Maupassant (1850-1893), a famous French author, who is remembered as the master of the short story form.

Matilda Loisel was a beautiful, but unhappy woman. Since she was pretty, she felt that she had been born for a life of luxury and elegance. Unfortunately, there was a complete mismatch between her expectations and her reality. She was married to a simple but kind and loving clerk who worked for the Minister of Education. They had to live modestly. He was content with his life. Matilda however could not accept the poverty of her apartment, the shabby walls and the worn chairs. All these things tortured and angered her.

One day, he brought home an invitation to a fancy party. He thought Matilda would be delighted! However, she wept because she felt she had nothing suitable to wear for the party. Her husband had saved four hundred francs to buy a new gun; he immediately offered it to her to buy a gown instead.

Next, Matilda's thoughts went to jewelry. She had none. How could she go to a fancy party without jewelry? So she borrowed a diamond necklace from her rich friend Mme. Forestier. Matilda was the most beautiful woman at the party, and everyone noticed her. She was intoxicated by the attention! This was the life she had yearned for!

When she got home, she found that she had lost the necklace! She and her husband made many frantic, but unsuccessful attempts to find the necklace. Matilda did not tell her friend about the missing necklace. Instead, she and her husband borrowed a large amount of money in order to buy an identical necklace, which Matilda then gave to her friend.

For the next ten years they worked very hard to earn money to repay the loan. They moved to a smaller apartment, and let go of their maid. Matilda

had to do all the housework herself while her husband worked at multiple jobs to pay back all the money they borrowed. After ten years, the loan was finally repaid.

One day, Matilda saw Mme. Forestier on the street. She told her the truth about the necklace. She was shocked to learn from her friend that the necklace was made of fake diamonds, and that its price was not more than five hundred francs! Matilda had paid thirty-six thousand francs, and slaved for ten years to replace a fake! In the process, she had aged a great deal and lost the beauty that was the source of her vanity.

To watch an animated movie of the short story click on the link below.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AuXiRChOCIO>

And here is a really good analysis of the story. Do listen to it!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XgRfoOGtn8>

This story is set in Paris. Take a short tour of Paris by clicking on the link below.

<https://www.youtube.c/watch?v=zyWeSF9FAgA>

2. Vocabulary

1. **Destiny** – fate, fortune, events that will necessarily happen to a person in the future
Is it Prince Charle's **destiny** to be King of England one day, or will the crown go straight to his son William?
2. **Dowry** – in some societies, an amount of money or property that a woman's parents give to the man she marries
Giving or taking **dowry** in India is punishable by law.
3. **Distinguished** – eminent, famous, renowned, respected
The Principal introduced the **distinguished** guest of honour to the assembled teachers and students.
4. **Petty** – trivial, small, unimportant
It was a **petty** job but it paid for their food.
Sometimes police officers let off a **petty** thief with a warning.

5. **Incessantly** – continuously
It rained **incessantly** for a week and the weather department issued a flood warning.
6. **Delicacies** – usually a rare or expensive food item that is considered very desirable and sophisticated; fine or subtle quality
The **delicacies** served at the Italian restaurant are very popular with the customers.
7. **Luxuries** – a state of great comfort or elegance, richness
The **luxuries** offered by the Taj resorts are extraordinary.
8. **Poverty** – the state of being extremely poor; scarcity; lack
The focus of the government should be to tackle **poverty**.
9. **Shabby** – in poor condition due to long use or lack of care; run down
The **shabby** curtains and carpets in the room made it look worse.
10. **Worn** – old and tattered due to much use; very tired
She refused to replace the carpet though it looked old and **worn**.
After a full day of carrying heavy loads, he looked **worn** out.
11. **Tortured** – ill-treatment, putting through severe pain to punish
The prisoners of war were **tortured** and no food was given to them for two days.
12. **Tureen** – covered dish from which soup is served at the table
The **tureen** in the Chinese restaurant was made of copper.
13. **Potpie** – meat and vegetables baked inside a flour covering, called pastry
The **potpie** baked by Susan's mother was very delicious.
14. **Elegant** – graceful and stylish in appearance, smart, sophisticated
The saree is a very **elegant** dress.
15. **Shining silver** – here, this refers to cutlery, that is, forks, spoons and knives, made of silver, which is a white shining metal
The dining table looked lovely with the **shining silver**, the sparkling crystal glasses and the beautiful flowers.
16. **Exquisite** – extremely beautiful, superb
This box is expensive because of its **exquisite** carving.

17. **Marvellous** – wonderful, amazing, awesome
The Taj Mahal is a **marvellous** piece of architecture.
18. **Convent** – a Christian, religious, community of nuns living together; a school attached to and run by a convent; the building or buildings occupied by a convent
She was an orphan, brought up by nuns in a **convent**.
19. **Despair** – complete loss or absence of hope
He was overcome with **despair** at the thought of losing all his money.
20. **Disappointment** – failing to fulfil someone's or one's own expectations; discouraging, disheartening
The movie was a big **disappointment** and we left halfway through it.
21. **Elated** – very happy, thrilled, delighted
He was **elated** at hearing that he had got into Law College.
22. **Bearing** – bringing
Our neighbours came over, **bearing** a cake, to welcome us to the neighbourhood.
23. **Inscribed** – engraved, written, carved on
Inscribed on the rocks were the words, "God is great".
24. **M.** – abbreviation for Monsieur, form of address for a man in French
Agatha Christie's famous fictional detective was called **M.** Hercule Poirot.
25. **Mme.** – abbreviation for Madame, form of address for a married woman in French
The first woman to win a Nobel Prize was **Mme.** Marie Curie.
26. **Spitefully** – in a mean or cruel way; revengefully
Ravi **spitefully** destroyed her painting.
27. **Murmuring** – to speak or say something very quietly; to complain about something that you disagree with or dislike
We all stay silent when my grandmother is **murmuring** her prayers.
The players were **murmuring** among themselves because they were upset about the selection of the Minister's son to the team.

28. **Select** – a group of people carefully chosen from a larger number; choose, pick
Ravi is one of the **select** few who will meet with the Prime Minister.
Please **select** one book to discuss in class tomorrow.
29. **Declared** – announced something clearly, firmly, publicly or officially
The Principal **declared** the winners of the competition the next morning.
30. **Impatiently** – in a way that shows that you are annoyed by someone's mistakes or because you have to wait
We waited **impatiently** for the magic show to begin.
31. **Stammered** – said something with unusual pauses or repeated sounds, either because of speech problems or because of fear or nervousness
I **stammered** out a reply to the Principal and ran from there.
32. **Stupefied** – stunned, dazed, knocked out
She was **stupefied** to learn that she had failed the test.
33. **Dismay** – fear, worry or concern and distress caused by something unexpected
We all watched in **dismay** as the two men started fighting in the middle of the road.
34. **Vexation** – state of being distressed
The spoilt child kicked the wall in **vexation** because she did not get a new toy.
35. **Responded** – said or did something as a reaction to something that had been said or done
To every question asked by the police, he **responded** that he did not know.
36. **Moist** – wet, damp
The rich, **moist** soil helps the growth of plants.
37. **Consequently** – as a result
All the chemist shops were closed, and **consequently** we could not buy the medicines.

38. **Colleague** – one of a group of people who work together
My **colleague** suggested that it would be easier to go home by Metro train.
39. **Grieved** – felt or expressed great sadness, especially when someone died
He **grieved** for his mother for over a year.
40. **Costume** – the set of clothes typical of a particular country or period of history, or suitable for a particular activity; an actor's or performer's clothes worn while they are performing
The children taking part in the Republic Day parade wore colourful **costumes** from their States.
In the circus, the animals were made to wear uncomfortable **costumes**.
41. **Occasions** – particular times, especially when something happens or has happened
The members of the committee met on several **occasions** to discuss the matter.
42. **Reflected** – thought over; to throw back heat or light without absorbing it
I **reflected** on what my teacher said, and decided to work harder for the exams.
The clouds were **reflected** in the clear waters of the lake.
43. **Immediate** – at once, instant, prompt
The office took **immediate** action against the rude and lazy employee.
44. **Refusal** – to refuse, denial
No reasons were given for the **refusal** to build a park in the locality.
45. **Exclamation** – a sudden cry in surprise or some strong emotion
A loud **exclamation** from the back of the hall disturbed the speaker.
46. **Economical** – not using a lot money, fuel, etc.
With taxi fares so high, it was more **economical** to travel to work in a bus.
47. **Hesitating** – pausing before doing or saying something, often because you are uncertain or nervous
He kept **hesitating** as he spoke, as he was very nervous in front of so many people.

48. **Francs** – the standard unit of money used in France, Belgium, and Luxembourg before the introduction of Euro
The painting was very expensive and cost thousands of **francs**.
49. **Larks** – small brown birds known for their beautiful singing
The **larks** in the tree were singing joyfully.
50. **Nevertheless** – in spite of that, all the same
We are still short of money; **nevertheless**, we shall proceed with our project.
51. **Approached** – came near or nearer to something or someone in space, time, quality or amount
The stranger **approached** her and asked her the way to the police station.
52. **Disturbed** – not thinking or behaving normally because of mental or emotional problems; to change the normal pattern
She was very **disturbed** by the way her son was behaving.
My children came home very late and **disturbed** my sleep.
53. **Adorn** – decorate, make more beautiful, ornament
It is the priests' job to **adorn** the statues of the gods during the festival.
54. **Poverty-stricken** – in a state of poverty
The **poverty-stricken** villagers moved to nearby towns to look for jobs.
55. **Prefer** – to like one thing better than another,
I **prefer** to go for a holiday to the hills.
56. **Chic** – stylish and fashionable
Her hairstyle was very **chic** and she looked very smart.
57. **Convinced** – sure, completely certain about something
The Indian cricket team was **convinced** they would win the World Cup final.
58. **Humiliating** – make someone feel ashamed or foolish by injuring their dignity
It was **humiliating** to lose in the finals, after having performed so well in the tournament.
59. **Midst** – in the middle of a group of people or things
She immediately spotted her friend in the **midst** of the crowd.

60. **Uttered** – to say something or make a sound; spoke, said
Throughout the meeting, he had not **uttered** a word.
61. **Distress** – state of being in great trouble, extreme anxiety, sorrow or pain, torment, agony
The poor family was in great **distress**, with no food or shelter in the new city.
62. **Closet** – a tall cupboard for storage
Please empty the **closet** in the guest room.
63. **Bracelets** – pieces of jewellery that are worn around the wrist or arm
The bride wore shining gold **bracelets** on both her wrists.
64. **Venetian** – of Venice, a city in Italy
The **Venetian** glass and lace industries attract a lot of tourists.
65. **Admirable** – commendable, praiseworthy
The fine quality of his work is **admirable**.
66. **Workmanship** – skill in doing your art or craft, artistry, craftsmanship
We were all admiring the skilled **workmanship** of the carpenter.
67. **Superb** – of excellent quality; very great
She is a **superb** dancer and is famous all over the world.
68. **Trembled** – shook slightly, usually because of cold, fright or strong emotions
Her bottom lip **trembled** and tears welled up in her eyes.
69. **Ecstatic** – overjoyed, elated, enthusiastic
He was **ecstatic** when he scored his first goal for the school team.
70. **Anxiety** – a feeling of worry, nervousness or unease about something or about an uncertain outcome
Stress and **anxiety** are the reasons for mental distress in children.
71. **Embraced** – hugged, hold closely in arms, enfold
My mother **embraced** me again and again when I returned from abroad.
72. **Passion** – very strong feeling about something or a strong belief in something
His **passion** for travel has taken him to a lot of countries.

73. **Treasure** – very valuable things, usually in the form of a store of precious metals, precious stones, or money
They were digging for buried **treasure** in the garden of the old house.
74. **Gracious** – of a kind, polite and generous nature
She is a **gracious** hostess and welcomes everyone warmly.
75. **To be presented** – to be introduced
All the guests at the official function lined up **to be presented** to the minister.
76. **Enthusiasm** – a feeling of energetic interest in a particular subject or activity and an eagerness to be involved in it
She got ready for the show with great **enthusiasm** and ran to the car.
77. **Intoxicated** – very excited and happy; having had too much alcohol to drink
She was **intoxicated** with joy at winning the top prize in the dance competition.
The old man is addicted to alcohol and lies **intoxicated** all day long.
78. **Admiration** – the feeling of finding some attractive and pleasant to look at; the feeling of respect and approval for someone or something
All the fans looked at the beautifully dressed movie star in **admiration**.
My **admiration** for Mahatma Gandhi is boundless.
79. **Victory** – an occasion when you have won a game, competition, war, etc. or the fact that you have won
The fans were out on the street, celebrating India's **victory** in the World Cup.
80. **Salons** – meeting rooms in large houses; French term for drawing rooms
The **salons** in the President's palace are beautifully decorated.
81. **Modest** – not large in size or amount, or not expensive; humble
They live in a **modest** house, even though they are very rich.
She is so **modest**; you would never suspect that she is a famous scientist.

82. **Wraps** – here shawls or cloaks; to cover something; food items made with a very thin bread, with a filling inside
She clutched her **wrap** tightly as the wind was so strong.
I will **wrap** the gift in silver paper.
McDonalds' chicken **wraps** are very tasty.
83. **Clashed** – to fight or disagree seriously about something; if two events happen together
The two armies **clashed** at the border and there were many casualties.
I could not go to Shreya's birthday party as it **clashed** with my father's fiftieth birthday celebrations.
84. **Furs** – coats made of the hairy covering of the body of animals
The actresses wore expensive **furs** over their dresses.
85. **Detained** – forced someone to stay in a place
He was **detained** in the hospital overnight for observation.
86. **Descended** – to go down
We **descended** the hillside and came to a clear, grassy spot.
87. **Rapidly** – quickly, very fast
She ran **rapidly** to catch the bus.
88. **Carriage** – a vehicle with wheels pulled by horses, parts of trains where people sit
In the olden days, a horse drawn **carriage** was the standard mode of transport.
89. **Hailing** – to call someone; to attract their attention
She stood in the middle of the road, **hailing** a taxi.
90. **Coachmen** – men who drive horse drawn carriages
As soon as the carriage stopped, the **coachman** jumped down to open the door.
91. **Nightfall** – the coming of night
My mother expected us home by **nightfall**.
92. **Wearily** – in a tired manner
We drove **wearily** through the night to reach Delhi by morning.

93. **Glory** – great beauty, or something special or extremely beautiful, that gives great pleasure
We should restore the palace to its former **glory**.
94. **Excitedly** – in an enthusiastic and eager manner
Sanjay spoke **excitedly** about his plans to open a shop for branded goods.
95. **Cloak** – a loose outer piece of clothing without sleeves, that fastens at the neck, and is worn instead of a coat
The magician was dressed in black with a red **cloak** around his shoulders.
96. **Utterly** – completely or extremely
She looked **utterly** miserable when she didn't win the competition.
97. **Cast down** – discouraged, downhearted, saddened, lower someone's spirits (more often used as 'down cast')
After her team lost in the finals, she looked very **cast down**.
98. **Track** – a mud path or rough road that cut through trees, bushes or rocks, surface not covered with stone or other material; a mark or line of marks left by passing person, animal, or vehicle
The horse cart went down the rough **track** leading to the farm.
We followed the **track** of the tiger's pug marks to look for him.
99. **Not having the force** – not having the power, strength or will
Not having the force to control her children, she let them run around wild on the streets.
100. **Advertisement** – a paid notice that tells people about something, usually jobs, products or services
I saw an **advertisement** for government jobs in the newspaper yesterday.
101. **Reward** – something given in exchange for an useful idea, good behaviour, excellent work, etc; it is also an amount of money given to someone who gives information about a crime to the police, or who helps to return lost or stolen property to its owner
When she lost her dog, she announced a **reward** of a thousand rupees to whoever found it.

102. **Bewilderment** – feeling of being confused; puzzlement
There was complete **bewilderment** in school when the popular Principal was suddenly fired.
103. **Disaster** – a sudden accident or natural calamity causing damage, ruin
The **disaster** caused by the earthquake was unimaginable.
104. **Clasp** – here a device to fasten things together; to grasp or hold tight
The **clasp** of the pearl necklace broke and the pearls rolled all over the floor.
I told the little girl to **clasp** my hand tightly while crossing the road.
105. **Dictated** – gave orders; spoke something aloud for a person or a machine to record what is said, so that it can be written down
Hitler **dictated** that Jews should be killed.
My father **dictated** a letter for me to write, since he was illiterate.
106. **Chaplet** – a garland or wreath
She wore a **chaplet** of flowers around her head.
107. **Ruinous** – disastrous
It would be **ruinous** to start a business in the current economic environment.
108. **Usurers** – money lenders, especially those who lend money at a high interest
Poor villagers are often caught in the trap of **usurers**.
109. **Depositing** – placing something somewhere for safekeeping; putting down or placing
My father is **depositing** money into his savings account every month.
The river floods every year **depositing** silt on its banks.
110. **Frigid** – very cold, freezing, unfriendly, lacking affection
It is **frigid** in the Himalayas in winter.
The atmosphere of the meeting was so **frigid**, it was clear that no issues would be resolved.
111. **Perceive** – see, come to realize or understand
I can **perceive** a striking change in his attitude after he joined the army.

112. **Substitution** – to replace a thing/person for something/someone else; replacing, switching
The **substitution** of an injured player with another player is allowed in football.
113. **Horrible** – shocking, very unpleasant, causing horror
The **horrible** smell began from the top floor and then spread to the whole building.
114. **Necessity** – the state or fact of being required
Necessity is the mother of invention!
115. **Heroically** – in a very brave way or by trying very hard
He fought **heroically** with the robber and managed to overcome him.
116. **Frightful** – horrible, very unpleasant, shocking, terrifying
The **frightful** images of war still haunt my mind.
117. **Lodgings** – living quarters, accommodations, usually on rent
The landlord was charging a high rent for the shabby **lodging**.
118. **Attic** – a space or a room partly inside the roof of a building
All our old things are stored in the **attic**.
119. **Odious** – extremely unpleasant, offensive, disgusting
He has committed so many **odious** crimes that he is no longer fit for civilized society.
120. **Soiled** – dirty
The **soiled** clothes will be sent to the laundry.
121. **Dishcloths** – cloths for washing and cleaning dirty plates, cups, etc.
Please wash these dirty **dishcloths** and put them out to dry.
122. **Refuse** – here, garbage; to deny
The RWA has ordered that **refuse** be separated into recyclable items and wet garbage.
It may appear rude to **refuse** Anita's dinner invitation for the second time.
123. **Landing** – a level area between a flight of stairs; a plane coming down on the ground
The **landing** between the two floors is cluttered with discarded boxes.
Many people climb trees near the runway to see planes **landing** and taking off.

124. **Butcher** – a person who sells meat in a shop
She went to the local **butcher** to get some scraps of meat for the dog.
125. **Fruiterer** – a fruit seller or retailer (this term is not in common use)
The **fruiterer** in Khan Market keeps all varieties of fruits.
126. **Haggling** – bargaining
The market is full of people **haggling** loudly with vendors.
127. **Sou** – a former French coin of low value
She is so poor; she does not own a **sou**.
128. **Miserable** – very unhappy
She had a miserable childhood, working hard and looking after her brothers and sisters.
129. **Books of some merchants** – financial records, accounts of traders
He earns some money by auditing the **books of some local merchants**.
130. **Restored** – returned something or someone to its earlier (good) condition or position
The damaged painting has been carefully **restored**.
131. **Crude** – unrefined, rough, lacking in sophistication
We constructed a **crude** shelter for the stray dog.
Her **crude** behavior has put off her friends.
132. **Awry** – off the usual course, uneven
Something went **awry** with their travel plans, and they ended up in Solan instead of Shimla.
133. **Pails** – buckets
We have to fill up **pails** of drinking water from the tanker and carry them home.
134. **Former** – of or in an earlier time; before the present time or in the past
Her **former** boss talks very highly of her.
135. **Flattered** – said nice things to somebody often in an insincere way
I am very **flattered** to be invited as the chief guest at the college function.

136. **Singular** – outstanding, remarkable; referring to just one person or thing
His **singular** goal in life is to climb Mount Everest.
137. **Champs-Elysees** – this is a famous, tree-lined road in Paris, where there are many theatres, cafes and shops
We strolled down the **Champs-Elysees** admiring the sights on either side.
138. **Attractive** – very pleasing in appearance or sound
She is a very **attractive** young woman and she has many admirers.
139. **Affected** – emotionally moved; attacked by disease; put on, pretended
Meena was deeply **affected** by the news of her grandfather's death, she would not stop crying.
The whole nation has been **affected** by the corona virus.
Payal has such an **affected** way of speaking, she doesn't seem sincere.
140. **Recognise** – to know something or someone because you have seen or heard him or her or experienced it before
I could not **recognise** her as she had aged a lot over the past ten years.
141. **Astonished** – surprised
I was **astonished** at her rude and unfriendly behaviour.
142. **Familiarly** – in an informal or friendly way
The area around Chandni Chowk is **familiarly** known as the Old City.
143. **Addressed** – spoke or wrote to someone; wrote someone's name and address on envelope
The minister **addressed** the protesters and said that their problems would be looked into.
The letter was **addressed** to me.
144. **Common** – here, typical of low social class
She looked very **common** in her bright and shiny dress.
145. **Personage** – a person of importance or high status
The **personage** who was honoured at the Republic day Parade was my brother.
146. **Astonishment** – very great surprise
To the **astonishment** of his parents, he managed to pass the exam.

147. **Decently** – in a way that is socially acceptable or good
You have to be **decently** dressed for the interview.
148. **Content** – pleased with your situation and not hoping for change or improvement
He was **content** to live in the small village and teach at the local school.
149. **Stopped short** – decided not to do or say something, although you almost did
I **stopped short** of telling him the truth about his sister.
150. **Touched** – grateful for something kind that someone has done
I was very **touched** by all the flowers and cards my friends sent me on my birthday.

3. Questions

Read and Find out

1. What kind of a person is Mme Loisel – why is she always unhappy?
2. What kind of a person is her husband?
3. What fresh problem now disturbs Mme Loisel?
4. How is the problem solved?
5. What do M. and Mme. Loisel do next?
6. How do they replace the necklace?

Think about it

1. The course of the Loiseles' life changed due to the necklace. Comment.
2. What was the cause of Matilda's ruin? How could she have avoided it?
3. What would have happened to Matilda if she had confessed to her friend that she had lost her necklace?

4. If you were caught in a situation like this, how would you have dealt with it?

Talk about it

1. The characters in this story speak in English. Do you think this is their language? What clues are there in the story about the language its characters must be speaking in?
2. Honesty is the best policy
3. We should be content with what life gives us.

4. Suggested reading

- 'The Dowry' by Guy de Maupassant
- 'A Cup of Tea' by Katherine Mansfield
- 'The Bet' by Anton Chekov