**Analysis of 'The Necklace'**

**How does Maupassant make the ending of the story so dramatically effective?**

**Possible Likely Questions:**

**1. How does the writer create the character of Madame Loisel?**

**2. How does the writer present the relationship between Madame Loisel and either, her husband or her friend?**

**3. How does the writer create mood and atmosphere in [any given section]?**

**4. How does the writer make the opening of the story so dramatically effective?**

**5. How does Maupassant make the ending of the story so dramatically effective?**

**6. Explore the symbolism of the necklace.**

**7. How does Maupassant build tension?**

The end of the story is a real-time confrontation between Madame Loisel and the 'one rich friend' she has envied through the story. Mme Loisel's 'ill-fortune' is to be merely comfortable and not rich - like Mme Forestier, who functions almost as doppelganger: possessing everything Mathilde feels she is entitled to. Bitter envy results, producing 'unendurable' 'degrading' 'torment'. Maupassant speculates on alternative realities later, saying 'What would have happened...?' and in Mme Forestier, we see the torment of envy - alternative possibilities and being so near, but so far. Dreadful suffering ensues, emphasised by the listing of Mme Loisel's mental pain as she would: 'cry and cry, shedding tears of misery, regret, despair, and anguish.' The asyndeton in this list makes it feel endless, emphasised by the repetition of 'cry'.

As we can see from the reversal at the end of the story, though, Mme Loisel's sufferings are mental, not real. The 'squalid wallpapers', 'hideous upholstery' hide an underlying ease. The truly poor would not have such things. Words like 'squalid' and 'hideous' are emotive value judgements produced by Mme Loisel's distorted world-view, and hide the reality. The difference between surface, value-judgements and flawed judgements are drawn out by the symbolism of the necklace - and the idea 'all that glitters is not gold'. In retrospect, we can see, Mme Loisel's problem was not her imagined poverty, but her thwarted ambition. It was her desire that was the disease. When she experiences truly 'miserable poverty', she reacts 'heroically'. Her idle daydreams are replaced by grinding reality and by action, not passive sobs of despair. Her character is transformed. At the start of the story, looking at the 'girl who does the humble domestic chores' fills her with 'hopeless longings'. Now, she does these chores herself, and as, 'she undertook all the heavy work', she gains a dignity that she did not have before. For the first time, she is 'simple and proud'. She has learned her lesson, though the greatest lesson is reserved for the final lines in her conversation with Mme Forestier, 'still young, still beautiful', a parody of what Mme Loisel still should be - though comfortable, not rich.

The pathos of her friend not recognising her is huge, and seals the transformation from comfortable to 'a low class creature'. The fact her friend 'uttered a cry' almost suggests she is monstrous. Both images suggest she has lost some of her humanity, through ironically, she has gained in dignity from a vacant envious woman, to one who is rightly 'proud' of her hard work, though none of this is outwardly visible.

The symbolism of the necklace is revealed at the end. Mme Loisel has degraded herself, worked and toiled to replace something that was merely an 'imitation'. It was beautiful - like Mme Loisel, but not expensive. Maupassant shows that beauty is beauty, whatever its worth. And it's not worth ruining your life to lust after expensive luxuries that are no more delightful than the ten franc 'posy' her husband wanted her to buy in the first place. The pathos of Mme Forestier at the end is touching 'Oh you poor, poor thing.' Mme Loisel is an object of sympathy now we see where her 'hopeless dreams' have brought her. The name of her former home on the 'Rue des Martyrs' links to the final theme. This woman is a martyr: to envy, to living in imagination, not in reality - she is deceived by the 'imitation', and her pride of wanting to keep up appearances in front of her rich friend.

How does Maupassant present (show or portray) Mme Loisel in the Necklace?

The story is written in the omniscient third person, this means that it zooms in on the main character. At first the main characters name is not said but she is described as ‘pretty’ and ‘delightful’. The fact that she is pretty and delightful yet born into a fairly poor family is described as a ‘error of fate.’ This idea of hopes and reality is a major theme throughout the story for the main character.

Throughout the story her unhappiness is palpable and this is emphasized when Maupassant describes her home, he uses the semantic field of a dilapidated place, with words such as ‘battered,’ ‘peeling,’ ‘run-down,’ and ‘ugly.’ The problem that the main character has with the situation is that she feels that her beauty is made for bigger things this where the idea of ‘thwarted ambition’ comes to play. She feels she is equal to the high society ladies even though she is fairly poor, this is emphasized when Maupassant says ‘a girl of no birth to speak may easily be the equal of any society lady.’

The semantic field of envy comes in a lot throughout the story and the emphatic language really brings us to feel her torture. In a way though the torture is self-made. For example when she thinks of all the things she hasn’t got and what she wants this is an example of hopes and reality, for example it says, ‘she dreamed of silent antechambers hung with oriental tapestries.’ She is constantly dreaming about what she hasn’t got and what she thinks she deserves. This portrays her as a character with a lacking unfulfilled life.

The juxtaposition between the husband’s character and the main character’s own is interesting because of the satisfaction which the husband has with his life in comparison to her dissatisfaction. For example when the couple have stew together the husband says ‘Ah! Stew! Splendid!’ He uses very positive language and the exclamation marks emphasize his excitement. `on the other hand the wife continues to dream about her ambitions and hopes of ‘elegant dinners’ and ‘exquisite dishes.’

Maupassant uses alliteration and a rule of three to get across the point of the girl having nothing that she wants and again the theme of ‘thwarted ambition’ comes into play. Maupassant says ‘She had no fine dresses, no jewelry, nothing. And that was all she cared about.’ The rule of three really gives this a dramatic feel, When he goes on to say the second part of this quote, it really emphasizes the fact that this woman is desperate and that her knowledge of her beauty eats her up inside because she is desperate for the life she could have had.

The woman has an unhealthy friendship with a rich woman whom she envies and is always unhappy after seeing her. It says ‘she would weep tears of sorrow, regret, despair and anguish.’ This is in respects to the jealousy she feels towards her friend and there is an obvious semantic field of despair. Although the rule of three is usually used to emphasize a point or feeling the writer has used 4 words, which show that, this is something that really, truly pains the main character.

When her husband brings her an envelope with the invite for a party he is very satisfied with his efforts, the text states he looked ‘highly pleased with himself.’ This contrast with the girl’s reaction is highly effective. Maupassant says ‘Instead of being delighted as her husband had hoped, she tossed the invitation peevishly onto the table.’ The juxtaposition between the words used when talking about the husband, ‘delighted’ and ‘hoped’, and when talking about the girls reaction, ‘tossed’ and ‘peevishly’, causes the contrast between the two characters to become even more prominent.

Throughout the next passage of the story the woman comes up with issues surrounding the party and the husband comes up with the solutions. Again juxtaposition between the negativity of the woman and the positivity of the husband is very prominent.