Past Mark Scheme Revision Notes on The Necklace

What life is like for Madame and Monsieur Loisel before the reception

 • homely, down-at-heel life, dissatisfaction of Madame Loisel “made unhappy by the run-down apartment”

 • Madame Loisel’s dreams and ambitions Her long daydream, contrasting her modest present with images of luxury, wealth and status

 • satisfaction of Monsieur Loisel, invited to the “highly pleased”, “brandished”, “instead of being delighted…tossed 4 reception; deflated by Madame Loisel peevishly”

• Monsieur Loisel’s more modest dreams and ambitions “setting aside just that amount to buy a gun and finance hunting trips”

• excitement and anticipation just before the reception “She threw her arms around her friend, kissed her extravagantly, and then ran home, taking her treasure with her” The night of the reception

• Madame Loisel is admired by everybody “was a success”, “prettiest woman there, elegant, graceful, radiant, and wonderfully happy”, “All the men looked at her”, “All the Cabinet secretaries and under-secretaries wanted to waltz with her”

• complex sentence/paragraph mirroring Madame Loisel’s dance and feelings “She danced ecstatically…a woman’s heart”

 • coming back to reality “a commonplace coat violently at odds with the elegance of her dress. It brought her down to earth…”

• even before the loss of the necklace, there is a sense of sadness and anti-climax “they walked sadly to their apartment. For her it was all over, while he was thinking that he had to be at the Ministry at ten.”

• the loss of the necklace “The necklace was no longer round her throat”, “panic”, “thunderstruck” What happens after the loss of the necklace

• frantic search for necklace and the strain of this “tried anywhere where the faintest of hoped led him”, “the appalling catastrophe which had befallen them”, “hollow cheeked and very pale”,

• Monsieur Loisel’s realization of what lies ahead “the grim poverty which stood ready to pounce”

• the effect on their health “both ill with worry and anxiety”; “aged five years”, “looked old now”

• life of poverty “the grindingly horrible life of the very poor”, “moved out of their apartment and rented an attic room”, “heavy domestic work”, “working-class woman”, “counting every penny”,

Madame Loisel’s meeting with Madame Forestier: the contrasts between them

“still young, still beautiful and still attractive”, “common woman”

• eventual recognition, showing how much Madame Loisel has changed “But my poor Mathilde, how you’ve changed!”

• dialogue Madame Loisel’s pride and the gradual unfolding of what has happened

• final irony, ending in ellipsis “imitation necklace…five hundred franc…”

The use of language

• form Overall structure: one of contrasts and stages in life. Early life; married life before reception; reception; loss of necklace and aftermath; life of poverty for ten years; final meeting at end of story. Short story form. Omniscient narrator, with particular focus on Mathilde Loisel

• importance of outward things; symbolism clothes and the necklace

• language associated with rich and poor “refinement and luxury”, “There’s nothing so humiliating as to look poor when you’re with women who are rich”, “grindingly”

• language associated with money and social class; language associated with opulence “minor civil servants”, “hierarchy”, “rank nor class”, numerous mentions of money; “elegant dinners, gleaming silverware, and tapestries”, “silent antechambers hung with oriental tapestries”

• rule of three “no dowry, no expectations, no means of meeting”, “sad, worried, anxious”, “elegant dinners, gleaming silverware, and tapestries”, “Her hair was untidy, her skirts were askew, and her hands were red”, “still young, still beautiful, and still attractive”

• negatives and language associated with negative feelings “unhappy”, “sad”, “no dowry, no expectations, no means of meeting”, “sad, worried, anxious”, “weep tears of sorrow, regret, despair and 6 anguish”

 • simile connected with social status “I’ll look like a church mouse”

• personification “hackney cab…as if ashamed to parade their poverty”, suggestive of impending poverty for the Loisels; “the grim poverty which stood ready to pounce”

• use of dialogue dialogue reflects concerns over social status; initial exchanges contain down-to-earth language of Monsieur Loisel contrasted with the more melodramatic language of Madame Loisel; staccato dialogue after necklace is lost reflects the desperation of the couple • pathetic fallacy “empty grate, her mind a blank”

• irony “But it was only an imitation necklace”

• sentence structure Example of long paragraph with complex sentences reflecting Madame Loisel’s thoughts and dreams towards the beginning of the story; shorter, blunt sentences to demonstrate shock and to move the narrative on elsewhere

 • rhetorical questions “what would she have thought? What would she have said? Would she not have concluded she was a thief?”, “What might have happened had she not lost the necklace? Who could tell?”

• exclamations, showing Madame Loisel’s thoughts, but also authorial comment “Life is so strange, so fickle! How little is needed to make or break us!”