



A Marxist Analysis of Class Struggle and Materialism in Guy de Maupassant's *The Necklace*

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ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes *The Necklace* (1884) by Guy de Maupassant based on the Marxist literary theory; specifically, the issues of the class struggle, materialism and capitalist ideology. The study follows a qualitative method with the use of textual analysis, which is backed up by secondary sources in the form of scholarly articles, books, and critical essays. The study was directed by three goals which included to identify the reflection of class struggle and social disparity in the story, to explore how materialism and false consciousness influenced the destiny of Mathilde Loisel, and to understand how Maupassant criticized the ideology of capitalism and how it changed the identity and desires of individuals. Results indicate that it is not personal misfortune and disappointment that lead Mathilde to her downfall but rather a manifestation of structural inequalities that were supported by ideology. The necklace is used as fetishized commodity which shows the distortion of human identity and propagation of illusion of prosperity and wealth by capitalist values. The realist narration by Maupassant shows how the desires of capitalism lead to alienation, exploitation and wastage of lives and the irony of the unnecessary sufferings by Mathilde. The research leads to the field of literature by establishing the applicability of Marxist criticism to the discovery of the ideological aspects of literature, and the research provides current literature with its timeless value of exploring the issue of consumerism, inequality, and the struggle of classes in past and present.

1. Introduction

1.1. Overview

Marxist literary criticism became a strong model of understanding literature in that it related literature to material realities and socio-economic formations in which the literature is produced. Instead of attempting to view literature as an entirely imaginative product that is not based in the context, Marxist criticism places it into the context of power relations, class struggle, and ideology. Fundamentally, the theory is based on the initial concepts of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels who stated that the human consciousness is determined not by personal thinking but by material conditions and economic systems. The split of the base (forces and relations of production, class systems and economic reality) and superstructure (which encompasses ideology, culture, art, and literature) is one of the keys to comprehending how the texts reproduce or struggle with dominant ideologies. To the Marxist critics, literature is a tool that simultaneously mirrors and masks the struggles between classes and that it acts as a naturalizing force of inequality and sometimes also reveals contradictions in the capitalist society. Eagleton and other Marxist critics are keen to highlight that there is no text that is ideologically neutral; every literary work has in it a hint of any

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class relations and historical processes that require analysis. According to the explanation provided by Writing Commons, Marxist criticism considers the literary works as a mirror of the social institutions in which they are produced, which provides a means to discover how fiction reflects and challenges the socio-economic reality.

1.2. Capitalist, Class and Ideology in Fiction of Realism

Marxist readings found a rich source in realist fiction especially in the 19th century due to its close concern with social conditions of daily life. Writers of this tradition strived to represent mundane human experiences yet they were usually entangled in the relationships of wealth and poverty and the changes in class. The capitalist era at this time promoted more the materialistic gains and consumerism as the personal valuation more and so people now will equate material properties with joy or status. According to Marxist critics, literature that is placed in a capitalist society tends to portray the internalization of the values of the ruling class by the working or middle classes a so-called false consciousness that Marx referred to. This implies that characters could think that they are seeking freedom, dignity or social mobility when they are actually continuing to create systems that restrict them. The tension between the seemingly true reality and the underlying reality in the realist texts is a manifestation of this ideological masking: the concepts of wealth and social position are depicted as beautiful but ultimately false and wobbly constructions.

1.3. The Necklace and Material Aspiration

The Necklace, a short story by Guy de Maupassant, which was originally published in 1884, is an ideal example of a Marxist theme of material desire mixed with dissatisfaction with the classes. The main character, Mathilde Loisel, is introduced as a woman who was born in rather humble conditions and who is incarcerated by what she believes is a poor social standing. Unsatisfied with her middle-class existence and embarrassed by her inability to gain entry into the ability to indulge in luxury, she fantasizes of fine dinners, jewels, and company. Her dissatisfaction is not necessarily a result of actual impoverishment but rather a result of comparison, envy and internalized ideals of wealth and beauty sold by the bourgeois society. This discontent peaks when she takes out a necklace that appears costly to go to a fancy ball in the hope that she will look good and the people will like her. The irony, of course, is that necklace is worth nothing, but she and her husband lose ten years of their life to pay the debt of having replaced it. According to Marxist interpretations, this path represents a critique of the ideology of consumerism: human fate is determined by the need to acquire commodities, alienation, suffering and disappointment are its results. According to the commentary of the studycorgi (2022), the story of Maupassant is also a strong argument that it should be understood as a Marxist work of literature since it shows how people internalize social norms that put material wealth over their heads to their own downfall.

1.4. The Necklace as Place of Class Struggle

In addition to an ironic plot, The Necklace is a story of conflict of classes, a comparison between the weight of various layers of the society. Mathilde and her husband are lower middle classes and economic survival means one has to make sacrifices all the time and economic stability may be wrought by one misfortune. Their lives are derailed due to debt, which in a capitalistic regime, tends to be a means of oppression, to subject people to endless circles of work. Conversely, the Madame Forestier, who advances the necklace to Mathilde, is in an elite social class that perceives luxury as something informal and expendable. The necklace, which is a disaster to the Loisels but a trifle to her, indicates a massive difference in the definition of property and risk between classes. This is a structural imbalance that shows the way capitalism increases the exposure of those lacking wealth and conceals the rich as they get away with it. A Marxist reading, then, perceives in the story of Maupassant not only a moral message but an allegory of systematic exploitation, in which loss is being unequally distributed with the poor as the least able to manage it. According to Shah, Shakoor, and Ullah, The Necklace dramatizes the criticism of the distinction of the classes and the defiance by presenting the reality that the suffering of Mathilde is the outcome of the system of deep rooted inequalities between the social classes (2025).

1.5. False Consciousness and Ideological Illusion Materialism

One more aspect of Marxist analysis is an ideological illusion that motivates the decision of Mathilde. Her desire to be beautiful and admired is not a selfish one but rather it is informed by the capitalist ideology that places human value with material show. According to Marxist terminology, Mathilde is a victim of false consciousness: the woman does not see the true state of things and does not think that the possession or display of wealth will help her to get rid of her discontent. Rather, her search of goods catches her like a mumper and she lives the next few years in servitude where she cannot see the end of the end. The story by Maupassant shows how the capitalist ideology engulfs people into consumption and debt cycles that create inequality. At the symbolic level, the necklace is transformed into a symbol of commodity fetishism—something that is not cherished but because of the symbolic value it gives. This infatuation makes Mathilde unable to see her real world and she suffers in vain. Guven

(2025) in his comparative analysis concludes that materialism in *The Necklace* is a fake ideal leading to irony and disappointment thus making the story a critique of bourgeois ideals and destructive illusions given by the capitalist culture.

1.6. Maupassant Historical background of writing

The Necklace can be viewed in Marxist terms, but it should also be put in the wider context of social and historical life of 19th-century France. The 19th century had industrialization, a consumer society, and an increased tension between the bourgeoisie and working classes. Luxury items were used as more obvious standard of class difference, whereas social mobility was restrained and was frequently false. By being a writer of the realist tradition Maupassant managed to portray these inequalities by showing the lives of common people in struggle and illusion of richness in their economic endeavors. His attention to the details in the daily life and irony also predetermines the effectiveness of his works in stating the power of classes on the life of the individual. The realism of Maupassant is as Pierce (2003) sees in his review of the Maupassant fiction, immersed in the material and social institutions of the time, and makes the stories that connect with the Marxist interests in matters of class and power.

1.7. The Necklace Gender, Class and Ideology

The other important point about *The Necklace* is that it combines both class and gender roles. The fact that Mathilde is a woman in a patriarchal society contributes to her dissatisfaction as the identity and value of these women is directly related to looks and how well they perform in society. Her feeling of ineffectiveness is both classist and gendered in this system. It can be seen in a Marxist-feminist interpretation that she is alienated twice, first is the capitalist fixation on material show, and second is being enclosed in the patriarchal ideology that assigns women only to the value of beauty and social appeal. Therefore, the desire that Mathilde has of living a glamorous life is not entirely a weakness in her character but a cut-off assemblage of the structures of oppression. Women in literature as Showalter (1986) notes tend to reflect the fears of both economic and social systems and become the means by which larger ideological struggles are enacted.

1.8. The Topicality of the Marxist Reading

Lastly, Marxist interpretations of *The Necklace* are applicable even outside the historical time when Maupassant authored the narrative. Even nowadays in the world of consumerism and social comparison, where the cultural life is dominated by these phenomena, the issues of aspiration, debt, and disillusionment are evidently resonant. The narrative shows how people are, in most cases, misled to appreciate beauty more than reality, materialism more than intimacy, and consumption more than satisfaction. These stories reveal how the ideology of capitalism has always dominated ambitions and distorted values over time. As Eagleton (1996) observes, Marxist criticism does not confine itself to the study of class only but discusses how literature can be used as a dramatization of the destructive illusions created by capitalist society and *The Necklace* by Maupassant is a classic example.

1.9. Theoretical Lens Marxist Criticism

Marxist literary criticism does not recognize literary art works as independent aesthetic entities; it sees them as a product of socio-economic systems and relations of classes. It focuses on the idea that literature is a product of the base (relations of production, conflict of classes, material conditions) and is in contact with the superstructure (ideology, culture, values). The critics in this approach discuss the ways of reproduction or challenge to dominant ideologies of texts, influence of economic forces on characters, and the ways of power relationships in language and narrative. The objective is to unveil the mediations of literature in the contradictions of classes and social confrontations. In realist fiction particularly, authors tend to show people bargaining on materialistic conditions, money, and classes. In the capitalistic societies, the pressure of the consciousness and desire is enormous due to the presence of the division of classes and commodity culture. According to Marxist critics, the economic inequality in a capitalist system is technically naturalized and that the values that support the status quo are internalized by characters. In this respect, the struggle of an appearance and reality is not only psychological but ideological: the sphere of commodities covers structural injustices.

1.10. The Material Aspiration and the Necklace

The Necklace (French *La Parure*, 1884) by Guy de Maupassant is just a dramatized account of a struggle of a woman, Mathilde Loisel, who is poor although a person of middle class. She longs to live lavishly because she thinks that beauty will help her to gain social acceptance. The fact that she borrowed a supposedly costly necklace to go to an elite party is an expression of how material goods behave as symbolic capital. The ironic turnaround, the loss of the necklace and the years of suffering to get it back, reveals the tragic results of the mistake of identifying status with wealth. To those who read it as Marxism, the conflicts among classes are reflected in the interplay between the characters across various social statuses and their approach to money

and risk-taking (StudyCorgi, 2022). In *The Necklace*, the relationships of classes become clear as the characters in the different economic positions lose the necklace and become devastated by the price. This contrast in outcome highlights an imbalance in the system: a loss by the lower class is doomsday, whereas by the upper it is nothing. Therefore, Maupassant directly participates in the conflict of classes by distributing risk and burden indirectly (Shah, Shakoor, and Ullah, 2025).

1.11. Problem Statement

Although the story by Guy de Maupassant *The Necklace* has received a large amount of literary commentary regarding its irony, symbolism, and themes of morality, comparatively less literature has been done to utilize the Marxist literary theory in a systematic way to analyze the inherent class dynamics, materialist ideology, and structural inequalities expressed in the tale. The issue that this study intends to solve is that there has never been a dedicated Marxist investigation of the issue which explains the torment of Mathilde Loisel not as a personal tragedy, but as an illustration of capitalist ideals, false consciousness, and deeply rooted hierarchy between the classes.

1.12. Research Objectives

- To apply the Marxist literary theory to the presentation of the theme of class struggle and social inequality into the works on the representation of the theme of the necklace by Guy de Maupassant.
- To analyze how materialism and false consciousness developed to influence the behavior and destiny of Mathilde Loisel.
- To decipher how Maupassant criticizes the capitalist ideology and its effect on individual identity and ambitions in the story.

1.13. Research Questions

1. What does *The Necklace* tell us about the issue of the struggle of classes and social inequality by using the Marxist literary theory?
2. How does materialism and false consciousness affect the choice and subsequent demise of Mathilde Loisel?
3. In what ways does the Maupassant criticize the ideology of capitalism and its effects on personal identity and goals in the story?

1.14. Significance of the Study

The study is important since it emphasizes the importance of the Marxist criticism in the interpretation of literary texts that communicate on the themes of class, inequality and consumerism. Applying the *Necklace* to the Marxist theory, the study proves that literature is an accurate reflection of social-economic reality and a critique of dominant ideas to influence individual consciousness. The approach not only makes significant contributions to the literature-scholarship field, however, but also renders the work of Maupassant of great use to not only students and literary scholars but also the readers of the cultural field, sociology and history.

1.15. Delimitation

This study will only focus on the analysis of the *The Necklace* by Guy de Maupassant through the application of the Marxist literary theory as the only theoretical approach. The other potential approaches to critical thinking, i.e. psychoanalytic, structuralist, or even feminist criticism are not used here, but can also be used to obtain the insights. There has been a limitation of analysis to a single short story instead of the overall works of Maupassant and also of secondary sources which have been limited to peer reviewed articles and books and trustworthy online sources in English.

2. Literature review

2.1. Class Differentiations and Rebellion in *The Necklace*

Shah, Shakoor, and Ullah (25) discuss *The Necklace* directly in the Marxist perspective, emphasizing the theme of class differentiation and opposing. Their analysis brings out the way in which Maupassant indicates unequal wealth distribution in 19th-century France, where the desire of Mathilde to look like one of the upper classes is hindered by the structures. According to the authors, the narrative is an opposition to the dominant class ideology because it reveals false hope of upward mobility: the dreams of luxurious life of Mathilde do not lead to luxury but to debt and suffering, and the mechanisms of class division and internalization are revealed. The authors of the article rely on qualitative textual analysis to follow the development of the value and agency of characters based on the influence of the difference in classes (Shah, Shakoor, and Ullah, 2025).

2.2. Materialism and Value: Greed vs Symbolic Wealth

The Necklace is a work that discusses the theme of greed, ambition, and material things, so LitCharts presents this theme as having a corrupted value system of Mathilde which is corrupted because of her obsession with the outer look and costly items. The LitCharts commentary claims that Maupassant is critical of a social structure in which money is equated with moral or personal values, and the greed and frivolity possessed by Mathilde, in contrast with the austere and stingy tastes of her husband, are used to highlight the contrast between the superficial and the real. This is a theme that highlights not only individual foolishness but also the social traditions that favor consumption and looks.

2.3. The apology of the illusion of value, symbolism, Irony

The symbolism and irony in The Necklace analyzed by Study.com focuses on how the symbol of the necklace itself is used by Maupassant to illustrate the illusion of life that Mathilde is desiring: object symbolizes the life that she is longing to, but what it really is (a fake necklace) highlights how the social status can be achieved through looks. The irony surrounding the years of hard work that Mathilde does to pay back what she believes to be true- and the inability of her friend to dispel misinformed perception is a critique on the way the ideologies of capitalism and class perpetuate the illusion of value.

2.4. False Consciousness, Ideology and Illusion

The Marxist theory also puts emphasis on the human condition being misled by ideology, as portrayed by Maupassant in the false values held by Mathilde. A woman views herself as a victim instead of a beneficiary of her simple yet stable life because ideology informs her that being wealthy is being happy and dignified. This is what Marxist would call a false consciousness that would lead her into a continuous lack of contentment and eventually decades of unwarranted work. According to Eagleton (1996), such distortion of ideologies as portrayed in literature is a result of the people not realizing their true situation by comparing their lives to false ideals. The interpretation of The Necklace within the framework of Eagleton depicts that the tragedy of Mathilde is not by chance but rather by her conditioning of ideas, that jewels and gowns will bring her liberation (Eagleton, 1996).

2.5. The Literature of Comparative Studies of Materialism

The Necklace could also be understood in a comparative way. Guven (2025) contrasts the story by Maupassant with that of O. Henry The Gift of the Magi, pointing out that the two works are based on the theme of material sacrifice that carries the moral connotation of opposite polarity. In contrast to O. Henry, who makes the sacrifice a positive gesture of love, Maupassant makes it a sour aftermath of a false sense of social norms and values. Guven concludes that in The Necklace materialism is a fake ideal, which results in irony, pain and futility. This contrasting approach reinforces the argument that the story by Maupassant has criticized the capitalist and bourgeois ideology showing that social ambitions and desire to acquire commodities ruin instead of enjoy human life (Guyen, 2025).

2.6. The Realism and Social Conditions in the work of Maupassant

A number of critics have underlined that the realism of Maupassant is specially efficient to reveal social and material circumstances of the lives of his characters. Maupassant does not idealize as romantic writers do, as he depicts the everyday life of ordinary people who have to juggle between aspiration and constriction. The form of this realism in The Necklace is the contrast between the dreamy imaginations of richness of Mathilde and her plain reality. Pierce (2003) states that the fiction of Maupassant was laced with the material and social order of his era and one cannot read the stories such as The Necklace without seeing how the issue of class and financial situations determine human destinies. Maupassant bases his story on the socio-economic dynamics of an 1890s France, which means he is able to capture the effects of materialistic lust in the society that was slowly becoming obsessed with consumerism and overt signs of social classification (Pierce, 2003).

2.7. Intersectioning Forces: Gender and Patriarchy

Other researchers emphasize the fact that the sufferings of Mathilde are impossible to isolate in terms of her gender roles in a patriarchal society. Although the class undoubtedly has its toll in her life, denying her access to wealth and mobility, the gender rules take it a step further and bind her down to the importance of the beauty, grace and ability to evoke admiration as the only appropriate means of determining her value. A Marxist-feminist analysis would propose that the pressure to look good coupled with her dependency on appearance is indicative of capitalist consumerism and patriarchal pressure. In her work on women cultural history that became the most influential, Elaine Showalter (1986) states that female characters usually serve as the representatives of larger anxieties, representing simultaneously an economic and a social struggle. When applied to the text of Maupassant, the knowledge of Showalter can be used to understand how Mathilde becomes a victim of a dual oppression: she

is a person who is discriminated against due to her being the lower middle class and a woman in whose success in the society was perceived through charm and appearance (Showalter, 1986).

2.8. Materialism and Self-Image: Psycho-psychological Aspects

In the essay gathered in the websites like English-Studies.net, one can observe that character Mathilde is psychologically conditioned by the demands of society: she sees personal value towards what she does not have in her life. According to one author, Mathilde is a victim of what may be called materialist identity: her social identity is also connected to things; her embarrassment at the fact that she does not own fine dresses and jewels brings about the inner struggle. These analyses indicate materialism in *The Necklace* is not external (class, wealth) but internalized in personal identity and self-worth (English-Studies.net, n.d.).

2.9. Opposing Values: Moral Critique and Realism

Other critics enter into the discussion by putting *The Necklace* into the context of the realist tradition, pointing out that Maupassant is not only descriptive of the material conditions but also debunks the moral values associated with appearance. As an illustration, in the summary and message analysis provided by Enotes, it is apparent that the fact that Mathilde wanted expensive furnishings, three-course meals, clothes and jewels, was a sign of a profound unhappiness with the middle-class environment she lived in; and that Maupassant relied on the decline of her comfortable existence to poverty as a reminder that comfort and status as a source of pleasure and status were very short-lived and illusory. This adds to the literature in which the morality of Maupassant is seen as being within ordinary social reality, beyond romanticism and pure intellectual abstraction.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Overview

The qualitative research methodology is used in this study since the research purpose is the interpretation and critical analysis of a given literary text as opposed to quantifying numerical data. Literary studies using qualitative research are suitable because the research is concerned with meaning the themes and contextual interpretation. Through a textual analysis approach, the researcher is able to critically analyze the text, *The Necklace* by Guy de Maupassant, to establish patterns of class struggle, materialism and ideology in the story. Creswell and Poth (2018) define qualitative research as a method of discovery and interpretation of the meaning that individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem, and as such, it is appropriate in investigating how the predicament of the characters in *The Necklace* is indicative of the larger socio-economic constructions.

3.2. Data Collection Method

Secondary sources and textual material are the only sources used in this study to obtain data. The key source of analysis is the *Necklace* of Guy de Maupassant whose text is the main data. Among the secondary sources, there will be scholarly journal articles, books, and critical essays containing the interpretations of Marxist theory, realism, and the work by Maupassant. Data collection therefore entails the review, choice and synthesis of scholarly sources based on the credible databases, online repositories and published materials. According to Bowen (2009), qualitative document analysis enables researchers to critically assess printed or electronic documents to draw meaning, develop an understanding, and come up with empirical knowledge. This approach will allow the researcher to extend the existing academic knowledge, as well as implement a specialized Marxist literary interpretation.

3.3. Theoretical Framework

In the analysis in this paper, Marxist literature theory is used as the theoretical framework of interpreting *The Necklace*. The Marxist theory can play the critical role of investigating the way the social class, economic systems and ideology influence the choices and lives of characters. The base-superstructure model, the notions of false consciousness, and commodity fetishism are especially applicable to the issue of the need of Mathilde Loisel to be obsessed with wealth and appearance. Eagleton (1976) stresses that literature is not an isolated production, but a kind of ideology, which presents and criticizes the existing social relations. In such a way, Marxist criticism can be used to understand the systematic approach to the interpretation of the way Maupassant criticizes the values of capitalism, division of classes, and the illusion of material aspiration in his short story.

4. Analysis and Discussion

4.1. Overview

The analysis attempts to point out the role of *The Necklace* in dramatizing the stiff class differences and inequalities of the late 19th century French society. In the discontent of Mathilde Loisel with her humble middle-class life and her ambitions to improve social status by means of looks and material belongings, Maupassant shows the leading role of classes in determining the goals and the results. Mathilde can be observed not just as vain, but as a victim of a society where the value of an individual is determined by the amount of money that they possess. In the story, numerous passages have been subject to foregrounding of the struggle of classes and inequality that show how opportunity is constrained by economic status and human sufferings are influenced by economic status.

4.2. Unsatisfaction with the Middle-Class Life

Since the very start, Mathilde is displayed as a victim of what she deems a lower social status: she experienced never-ending suffering and believed she was being doomed to all the pleasures and delights. She was a victim of the poverty of her home, of her poor walls, old-fashioned chairs and ugly curtains” (de Maupassant, 1884, p. 2). This excerpt underscores her internalization of the hierarchy of the classes where comfort and a simple life is felt to be deprivation just because she dreams of the bourgeois world of riches.

4.3. The longing of Upward Mobility

The wish to get out of the position she is in as a girl is most apparent when Mathilde dreams of the social events where she can show off her beauty and wealth: “She thought about the silent antechambers with Oriental tapestries, where tall bronze candelabra would burn, and two great footmen in knee breeches would be asleep in great armchairs, lost in the hot comfort of the stove (de Maupassant, 1884, p. 3). Maupassant, here, demonstrates her fantasies of elite privilege, one that is created by the ideology of social status based on material opulence. The Marxist approach shows that this was a way of upward social desire in which Mathilde perceives upward social progress not in terms of labor or achievement but in terms of symbolic embodiment of self-appearance, jewels, and gowns and which expresses the cultural hegemony of the bourgeois values.

4.4. Reliance on the Borrowed Wealth

The turning point happens when Mathilde takes a loan of a necklace to Madame Forestier: she put her arms on her neck and kissed her with passion, then she escaped with her treasure on her hands (de Maupassant, 1884, p. 6). Even though the necklace is borrowed, it is a temporary passport to the world of superior social status, and Mathilde can seem like a member of a social elite at the ball. This act, in Marxist terminology, is a symbol of how people in the lower classes have to use the borrowed capital or resources in order to pretend to be such. The borrowed necklace is also an allusion to the illusionary quality of capitalistic wealth, as it turns out to be worthless later. This shows that Mathilde can never have genuine movement in the classes because she can only gain access to the prestige by the borrowed and misleading means.

4.5. Implications of Class Illusions

The final irony of the novel lies in the number of years Mathilde spent in misery to buy what she thought to be an expensive item: “She had learned what a burdened housework was, and how unpleasant the kitchen chores were... she was as dressed as a woman of the people... By the expiry of a decade, they were repaying all of it” (de Maupassant, 1884, p. 8). In this text, we can see how the status system traps people: trying to escape her position and live a higher life, Mathilde gets doomed to even worse labor than she used to. Rather than becoming a better person, she deteriorates into the working age and suffers physically. A Marxist reading reveals the illusion of being rich and mobile as a tool to strengthen the issues of classes and retaliate against those who dream too big but cannot afford it, and the ones who can appear to be something different, like Madame Forestier.

4.6. The Deception of Happiness by Owning Things

All happiness is materialized in the mind of Mathilde, and is not associated with material value or even with relationships: she was deprived of fine clothes, jewelry, nothing. And nothing she loved but that; she was created to that”(de Maupassant, 1884, p. 2). This quote sums up her opinion that dignity and happiness can only be attained by material embellishment. According to Marxism, this is false consciousness where ideology makes people believe that the real sense of self-fulfillment is found in commodities, not in social or human relations. This failure to understand that the stable life she has is humble shows that the capitalist ideology has reversed consciousness so that she thinks that being happy means consuming.

4.7. The Commodity of Necklace as Fetish

The necklace plays the role of the main symbol of materialistic delusion of Mathilde. Maupassant writes: When she borrows it, she was as radiant. She danced with drunkenness, with rapture, without thinking about anything, in the joy of her beauty, in the success of her success, in a cloud of happiness composed of all this homage, of all this admiration" (de Maupassant, 1884, p. 7). The necklace changes her view of herself not due to some transformation over her actual identity, but due to the symbolic strength that the jewel has. This process of giving material objects a social power and identity is what Marx calls commodity fetishism. The necklace is the personification of her imagined upper-class identity to Mathilde, and has been shown to represent how materialism is rebranding consciousness and false values of worth.

4.8. The Debt of the delusion to be punished

The loss of the necklace increases Mathilde to a decade of misery: she was forced to pay this terrible debt. She would pay it. They fired their servant; they changed apartments; they leased some garret on the roof" (de Maupassant, 1884, p. 8). In this case, her fixation on material things leads to both short-term and long-term discomfort as well as social and physical degradation. The tragedy is not helped by the fact she is suffering an unnecessary death, the necklace was worth nothing. This can be explained as a kind of ideological punishment according to a Marxist analysis: materialism is exploitative and puts people in the circles of work to afford fake things. The novel laments the nature of capitalist society that brings about pain not in material possessions but in false values placed on material symbols.

4.9. Discovery and Fall of the False Consciousness

The last ironic point of the story is when Mathilde is disclosed by her mother, Madame Forestier: Oh, my poor Mathilde! Mine was imitation. It was not worth five hundred francs! (de Maupassant, 1884, p. 10). This devastating revelation reveals how meaningless the suffering of Mathilde was: years of work were spent in order to be replaced by a worthless thing. The exposure of her false consciousness breaks her down, and this is a show of the devastating nature of materialism. By this conclusion, Maupassant implies that capitalistic society is run on illusions- things become valuable not due to their intrinsic value but because of the ideology surrounding prestige that is placed on them. The tragedy of Mathilde is that she can never realize this illusion until it is too late and her life is an allegory about how destructive the ideology of consumerism can become.

4.10. Personality Made by Class and Appearance

At the very beginning, Mathilde does not identify herself by any special qualities but by her lack of it: deprivation of dowry, hopes, a way to become recognized, loved, married by a man with rich and high connections: she was left free to be married to a little clerk in the Ministry of Public Instruction (de Maupassant, 1884, p. 1). In this, Maupassant criticizes a capitalist order of the society where identity and self-value are determined by the status in the society and material belongings instead of human attributes. Mathilde is not complete and worthy as she is taught by ideology that the worth of a woman is in her capacity to get married to rich. With this line, the novel demonstrates the penetration of capitalist ideology deep into individual identity that influences desires and inadequacy.

4.11. Artificially implying ideological control, Social Prestige

The passion of Mathilde to go to the ball at the Ministry is an example of how the capitalist ideology leads to the desire to get the recognition through the status symbols: she thought of nothing but that ball, where she will shine more than those around her; her success will be the basis of her charm, her success will be her triumph of beauty and grace (de Maupassant, 1884, p. 5). The ball serves as an ideological arena in which social classes are strengthened—women are not respected in terms of their intelligence or virtues but as women who can showcase beauty that is encircled by money. According to Marxist theory, ideology operates to ensure the status quo of the ruling classes by influencing people to envision attaining values that are of benefit to the elite. In this regard, the obsession of Mathilde with shining at the ball can be interpreted as an indication of how ideology does control ideals, bringing her into a world where worth is judged by superficial indications of status.

4.12. Labor as an Instrument of Exploitation and Alienation.

The time of work that Mathilde and her husband spend to substitute the necklace shows the criticism of capitalistic exploitation by Maupassant. The passage goes on to state: she was taught the uncultured job of the household, the nasty job of the kitchen. She did the washing, scanning out the pink nails on the oily pots and the bottoms of the pans" (de Maupassant, 1884, p. 8). This portrayal of back breaking degrading work is a sign that work in capitalism is alienating it takes away beauty, dignity and humanity in workers. The hands that Mathilde could previously envision as being covered with jewels have been ruined by hard labor. According to a Marxist reading, this change is read as an indication that capitalist ideology punishes those who go beyond

the role of their own class, making them laborers devoid of individuals. Maupassant therefore criticizes the way the system predetermines individual destiny in the name of personal decisions.

4.13. The pointlessness of Capitalist Vision

The most striking attack on the ideology of capitalism is brought out at the very end of the tale: "It was five hundred francs at most! (de Maupassant, 1884, p. 10). In this disclosure Maupassant reveals how hopeless the dreams of Mathilde are and how disastrous the results of her chasing illusionary dreams with the help of capitalism are. She spent ten years of her life in misery paying a debt that is not actually there – which represents how capitalist systems pervert the illusion of value and prestige. According to Marxist terminologies, this is the self-perpetuating nature of ideology: people are ready to part with labor, health and identity to preserve the ideals in the natural superiority of commodities. The story of Maupassant provides a moral pounding: the materialistic and classist dreams of capitalistic societies are empty, and people are left exploited and disappointed.

4.14. Discussion of the Study

The comparison of the story *The Necklace* by Guy de Maupassant shows that the tragedy of Mathilde Loisel is not just a consequence of personal vanity, but the manifestation of the structural reality of the class and ideology of the late nineteenth century that reigned in France. The study demonstrated, through Objective 1, that the dynamics of class struggle is a focal point in the narrative: Mathilde is unsatisfied with her modest place of residence, desires to climb the social ladder, and has to use borrowed money, which highlights the impact of social relations on restricting and establishing identity. These conclusions are consistent with the message of Shah, Shakoor, and Ullah (2025), who believe that Maupassant is a critique of class distinction and resistance by satirizing the pointlessness of leaving the social status in a capitalist society. Further, irony of the story where the value of the necklace turns out to be nothing also reveals the power of appearances to maintain social lines that make people live in circles of deceit and agony.

The analysis indicate that Maupassant criticizes the capitalistic ideology in terms of materialism, false consciousness, and alienation. The necklace in itself becomes a commodity of fetishism which changes the self-image of Mathilde and determines her destiny although it is not valuable in itself. This is in line with the fact that ideology makes people blind to what they are actually in and therefore, makes people believe that they are chasing after imaginary definitions of happiness (Eagleton, 1996). Manless labor that Mathilde experiences over a ten-year period represents one of the criticisms Marx made on alienated labor in which human life has been transformed into endless labor without meaningless rewards. Placing these themes in a realist context, Maupassant is able to comment on and criticize them by revealing the devastating impacts of capitalist desires on personal identity and health. In conclusion, it is true that this work makes *The Necklace* a strong Marxist text since it provides a glimpse into the survival of the connection between literature, ideology and class struggle.

5. Conclusion

This study has shown that *The Necklace* by Guy de Maupassant is a complex critique of the class, materialism and ideology when it is viewed through the prism of the Marxist literary theory. Instead of portraying the fate of Mathilde Loisel as a mere moral lesson of vanity, the analysis has revealed that her tragedy is a representation of overall social and economic systems that keep people in tight hierarchies. The realist narrative of Maupassant highlights the fact that it is not just personal shortfalls that bring about dissatisfaction, ambition and ultimate suffering, but also a society that values human being based on the value of money and looks. In this regard, the text is a contribution to the confounding of personal identity and the position of classes, and how ideology is an unseen yet a strong tool.

The results also highlight that the core of the story is materialism and false consciousness which is the main cause of the irony and strength of the story. This fixation on material objects and appearances of Mathilde is not only a personal need but also the ideology of the capitalist system that makes people believe that commodities are a form of happiness. The necklace itself represents such illusion: a value-lacking item that will be filled with the perceived value and be able to alter the identity of Mathilde and predetermine ten years of her life. The story by Maupassant is thus a critique of how futile the dream of capitalism can be, as sometimes the whole life can be chased by some imaginary notions that are dictated by the society. This adds to the view of literature as a mode that does not only entertain but also aids in revealing ideological processes in the society.

In conclusion, the study confirms that *The Necklace* has not lost its relevance to the modern reader especially in a community where consumerism, inequality, and the acquisition of status through material things are still being experienced. Through the Marxist theory, the paper has exposed that it is not just the downfall of one woman but also the condition of the rest of humanity in the face of capitalism. The critique of alienation, exploitation and the sterility of material values finds an outreach to the contexts of the twentieth century and further with an indication of the universal implications of false consciousness. This way,

this research paper highlights the timelessness of the work of Maupassant and the significance of Marxist literary criticism to the discovery of ideological aspects of literature.

5.1. Suggestions

The research may be broadened in future by a comparative approach, using *The Necklace* as a starting point to study other works that explore the themes of class, ideology, and materialism as well as *The Necklace*, including O. Henry: *The Gift of the Magi* or by the author Emile Zola. Also, interdisciplinary research would be able to give more depth to the analysis by connecting the Marxist literary theory to feminist analysis to find out how the gender expectations collide with the class struggles to determine the fate of Mathilde. Such methods would make the analysis further comprehensive and more knowledgeable about the way in which literature evaluates not only the economic systems but also the cultural ideologies that are still echoed in the contemporary setting.

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