

Name

Professor

Course

Date

Use of Imagery in ‘The Necklace’.

Outline.

1. Introduction.
2. Identification of the dominant literary device and explanation of its general uses.
3. Discussion of the use of organic imagery and citation of instances.
4. Discussion of the use of visual imagery and citation of instances where used.
5. Conclusion.
6. Works Cited.

In his short story, ‘The Necklace’, author Guy de Maupassant tells the tale of a beautiful girl who is forced to live a life which she thinks is below her. When she loses a borrowed necklace, the character discovers just how low one can go (De Maupassant, 2019). The writer makes the most use of the literary technique of imagery through which he expresses the experiences, feelings and events in Madam Mathilde Louise’s unbecoming lifestyle. Through his involvement of the different senses, the reader is able to better capture the setting of the tale and even draw the lesson and conclusion that the writer intends to be drawn.

At the very onset, the author draws on his mastery of organic imagery to introduce the reader to the main character, Miss Mathilde. He uses an omniscient narrator who succinctly describes Mathilde as “one of those pretty and charming young creatures who sometimes are born, as if by a slip of fate, into a family of clerks” (De Maupassant, 2019). The conception of Mathilde then is that of a stock character, a representation of the rare beautiful girl who finds herself in unfortunate circumstances and whom those around her are drawn to and struggle to please her. The difference in this tale is that Mathilde is well aware of her beauty and pities her situation above all others.

The author speaks of Mathilde disdainfully by first acknowledging her beauty and lamenting the perhaps she should have been born into better circumstances but condemns her attitude in that she does not only see her beauty for admiration as others would but is actually delusional and believes that she should have been born into a higher station and lived a better life. From the words, ‘she dressed plainly because she could not dress well, but she was unhappy as if she had really fallen from a higher station’ (De Maupassant, 2019) the author describes Mathilde’s superiority complex and the fact that she merely tolerated her present circumstances. Use of this particular kind of imagery serves to develop the intended attitudes and views in the reader. Indeed, Mathilde’s character is developed as one would expect from the very wording of the first paragraph. The beautiful girl is well aware of her good looks and harbors delusions of grandiose and that she should be better-placed. Throughout the narrative she exhibits her dissatisfaction with her station to the extent of crying over lacking a gown to the ball which her husband has gone to lengths to get them invited to. When she gets a gown she agonizes over her lack of jewelry then the cheap cloak instead of fur and even the mode of transport. It comes as no

surprise when she abandons her husband to waltz with the high and mighty at the ball (De Maupassant, 2019). By describing Mathilde's constant and often unwarranted grumbling, the author manages to arouse a dislike for materialism which is clearly a goal of the writing considering the fate that he lets Mathilde have.

Visual imagery is largely used in describing the places, items and people in the story. In justifying Mathilde's discontentment with her surroundings, the author describes her home as having bare walls, shabby chairs and ugly curtains (De Maupassant, 2019). Even her help is just a 'little Breton' and should perhaps be bigger. This is an attempted explanation of the character's environment and why she thought it to be truly unbecoming for a woman such as herself. She rather wishes for a castle-like house with long hallways and enough servants that some would doze off in the warmth of the fireplace while waiting on her. Having seen all these, the reader is drawn to near sympathy of Mathilde's situation and is actually inclined to join in her aspirations of moving out of the gory picture she so loathes into one where she can have the finer things such as Miss Frosstier's 'superb diamond necklace' which strongly caught her eye.

The words describing Mr. Loisel's arrival home as doing so 'with a triumphant air and holding a large envelope in his hand' (De Maupassant, 2019) describe the husband's struggle in his bid to ultimately please his wife. When he explains to Mathilde how truly prestigious the ball would be and how difficult it had been for him to get the invitation considering his lowly stature, it is clear that he has often struggled in trying to quench his wife's thirst for grandeur. Unknown to him, what his wife actually wants and tactfully hides from him is very much over and above what he can conjure, even if he were to hold multiple jobs as he later has to do through her loss

of the infamous necklace. It is for this reason that he is so bewildered by her open displeasure with the invitation and readily gives up the money he has put away for himself for her to buy a gown (De Maupassant, 2019).

Madam Loisel's materialistic nature is exhibited in the only instance of her joy being when she rubs shoulders and dances with the high and mighty. She lets her husband hang back as she enjoys the attention and admiration which her beauty and clothing attracts. She is described as a 'a great success' and 'prettier than any other woman present, elegant, graceful, smiling and wild with joy' (De Maupassant, 2019). She would later have a flashback to this time and long for it in her time as an ordinary woman because she is simply incapable of being happy in the absence of wealth and luxury.

The writer has made good use of imagery to depict scenes, people and places and even inspire moral feelings in the reader. One is able to see the livelihood of Mathilde and her husband as quite descent and therefore sympathize with Mr. Loisel for his having to put up with his wife's irrational longings for grandiose through the visual and organic imagery.

Works Cited.

De Maupassant, G. (2019). *The Necklace*. [online] Americanliterature.com. Available at:
<https://americanliterature.com/author/guy-de-maupassant/short-story/the-necklace>
[Accessed 25 Mar. 2019].