

**THE ROLES OF SUPPORTING CHARACTERS TO MATHILDE'S CONFLICTS IN
MAUPASSANT'S *THE NECKLACE*****Fransiska Dewi Hastuti**

English Study Program, Faculty of Economics and Business

University of Widya Dharma Pontianak

Email: f_dewi@widyadharm.ac.id**Abstract**

Characters in fictions are essential as they relate the readers to the theme, the storyline, and the conflicts in stories. While main character is the center of the story, supporting characters also contribute to the building of the story although they are not as prominent. In Maupassant's The Necklace, the main character is Mathilde who undergoes an unfortunate event that changes her life. This research aims at revealing the roles of the supporting characters to the conflicts experienced by the main character, Mathilde. This is a descriptive, qualitative research and the data was taken by reading the short story. The analysis was conducted by examining the roles of two supporting characters, Monsieur Loisel and Madame Forestier. The conclusion reveals that the roles of Monsieur Loisel are as a guide and problem solver to the main character's conflicts, while Madam Forestier is the indirect cause as well as the expositor in this plot-twisted story.

Keywords: *conflict, Guy de Maupassant, roles, supporting characters, The Necklace*

INTRODUCTION

Prose is one of the most popular genres in literature used to express imaginative ideas in storyline in forms such as novels, novellas, and short stories. It is different from poetry as it lacks a fixed metrical or rhythmic pattern, and from drama as it is not meant to be performed. Prose is capacitated to capture the organic flow of spoken language and mimic the everyday conversation. This makes reading more approachable and relatable for the readers. Besides, authors of prose have flexibility to experiment with various structures, styles, and voices to create stories with adaptable characters.

Characters are fundamental elements in prose created in different characterization as the centre of the story. Main and supporting characters represent participative narrator (Kennedy & Gioia, 1995) to show the daily lives of readers so as to make them real. A main character refers to the major entity that plays throughout the story in which the storyline is created. While main characters are essential in the story, supporting characters complement the void in the story as they provide different points of view and contribute to the development of the plot. These characters often offer insight into the main characters' perspective, initiate changes positively or negatively, or represent a certain social dynamic. Overall, supporting characters in literature are frequently vital in constructing tales and boosting the overall reading experience.

Guy de Maupassant's short story "La Parure" or "The Necklace" (1884) is an interesting story that deals with issues such as social class, pride, materialism and the consequences of an action. Although the story mainly revolves around the main character Mathilde Loisel, supporting characters also play an important contribution in shaping the plot and adding depth to the story. They not only give complexity and background to the plot but also act as catalysts for major events.

Some studies have been conducted in analyzing "The Necklace". Irwan (2019) and Yadav (2019) focuses on the main character's characterization. The former discusses the three-dimensional aspects that build the main character, namely physiological, sociological, and psychological. The latter reveals the main character's life before and after the main conflict occurs. Meanwhile, Sumbayak & Winarti (2019) and Nurhidayah & Prihantini (2020) analyze the major themes in the story reflected through the main character's personality.

Differently, this study aimed to analyze the role of minor, supporting characters in "The Necklace" and their contributions to the story in general. By examining the interactions and relationships between Mathilde and the supporting characters, a deeper understanding of the themes and conflicts of the story can be gained. Furthermore, this research hopes to discover the importance of the supporting characters in "The Necklace" and their contributions to the plot, character development, and overall theme of the story. By delving into the nuances of these characters, a broader understanding of Maupassant's narrative techniques and the influence of secondary characters on the story can be revealed.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Minor, Supporting Characters

In literary work, a character verbally represents a human being through the action, speech, description, and commentary created by the author (Roberts & Zweig, 2011). A story is made up to tell what happens to the characters and how the characters act and react to the situation. From the beginning of the story until the end, the author focuses on the main characters. Minor, supporting characters usually refer to secondary or tertiary characters with simple and one-dimensional personality. These characters may have a single role to perform in a story, yet they contribute to the development of the main character.

Gill (1995) explains that minor characters in fiction are characters who play a supporting role in the story and are not the main focus of the narrative. While the main characters drive the plot and are the primary focus of the story, minor characters can contribute to the plot in various ways (Johnson & Arp, 2017). They can provide support, conflict, and context to the main character's actions, influencing the trajectory of the plot. Minor characters can also add depth to the story by providing additional perspectives or insights into the main character or the story's themes. They can move the plot forward by introducing new information or events that affect the main character or the story's trajectory. Additionally, minor characters can help to create the story's atmosphere by providing a sense of place or time. Overall, minor characters in fiction play a significant role in shaping the plot and adding depth to the narrative.

Characterization

Roberts and Zweig (2011) explicate several ways that the authors use to disclose a character in literature. Firstly, the characters reveal their qualities through their actions. To understand what they are, it is necessary to observe what they do. Their actions and thoughts give insights into their characters. Secondly, a character can be disclosed by the author's description. A character social status and traits can be revealed by his appearance and environment. Next, what characters say tells what they are like. The speeches of characters are mostly functional as they keep the action moving along, but they necessarily provide material from which readers may draw conclusions. Besides, speech is sometimes used to hide the characters' motives from others. Lastly, what other characters say can reveal about a character. Analyzing about what characters say about each other helps to enhance the readers' understanding of not only the characters being discussed, but also about the characters who do the talking.

To be more specific, the characters in the story are presented either directly or indirectly (Johnson & Arp, 2017). In direct presentation, what the characters are like is revealed through the author's exposition or description, or by another character in the story who describes them. In indirect presentation, the characters are shown through their actions and what they say.

Conflict

According to Gill (1995), a plot is formulated as giving a conflicted situation for the characters and exploring how the characters cope with it. The storyline surrounds how the conflict starts, how it affects the characters life, and how it ends. Barnet, Burto, and Cain (2008) refers conflict as part of a plot involving a complication that moves to a climax in the story. Conflicts happen in a course of events that the characters undergo.

A conflict causes characters to engage in the situations, decisions, actions, reactions, interactions, and responses that create fictional literature. As the major element of plot, a conflict as opposing forces cause doubt, create tension, and produce interest (Roberts & Zweig, 2011). The character's success or failure should be uncertain so as to create doubt. The doubt will lead to tension, and thus, result in interest that can captivate the readers.

METHODOLOGY

This research employed descriptive approach through reading and analyzing the story in depth in order to produce descriptive data (Leavy, 2017). This approach is used to analyze the roles of supporting characters to the main character's attitude toward the conflict in the story entitled "The Necklace", written by Guy de Maupassant in 1884 with its original title "La Parure". The story consists of 127 paragraphs that tell about the main character's struggle in enduring a life of poverty and sacrifice due to her desire for wealth and luxury that end up as her materialistic problem.

In collecting the data, the short story is read several times, and the characters are divided based on their occurrence in the story. Then, the data is classified and limited to the supporting characters that play the major role to the main characters. In the process of analyzing the data, the discussion begins with the secondary character, Mr. Loisel, the main character's husband. Lastly, the discussion is on the tertiary character, Madame Forestier, the main character's friend.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The story tells about Mathilde Loisel, the main character who fantasizes of being wealthy and living in luxury. She then has to deal with a problem that turns her life to worse conditions. In dealing with this situation, Mathilde's husband and friend contribute to some extents.

Monsieur Loisel

Monsieur Loisel himself is an important minor figure. Although he appears to be a minor character at first glance, his everlasting loyalty to his wife is clear throughout the story. He is a clerk in the Ministry of Public Instruction who lives a modest life with his wife, Mathilde. Loisel is devoted to his wife that he tries every way to please his wife.

But, my dear, I thought you would be glad. You never go out, and this is such a fine opportunity. I had awful trouble to get it. Everyone wants to go; it is very select, and they are not giving many invitations to clerks. The whole official world will be there."

(Paragraph 13)

He succeeds in obtaining an invitation to an exclusive dance ball, a critical event that sets off a chain reaction that leads to both victory and tragedy. Little do they know that this is the beginning of the misery that this couple will undergo. Loisel hopes that Mathilde feels satisfied only with the invitation, but Mathilde is so overpowered with her desire of wealth and luxury that she finds it undelightful to attend the ball as she is. She berates of not having appropriate jewels to wear to the ball. To overcome this situation, Loisel tries to suggest her some alternative, yet she is not convinced.

"What is the matter? Come, you've been so queer these last three days."

And she answered:

"It annoys me not to have a single jewel, not a single stone, nothing to put on. I shall look like distress. I should almost rather not go at all."

He resumed:

"You might wear natural flowers. It's very stylish at this time of the year. For ten francs you can get two or three magnificent roses."

She was not convinced.

"No; there's nothing more humiliating than to look poor among other women who are rich."

But her husband cried:

"How stupid you are! Go look up your friend Mme. Forestier, and ask her to lend you some jewels. You're quite thick enough with her to do that."

(Paragraph 31 – 39)

Dialogue above shows how Loisel tries to guide Mathilde to safer option that does not cost them much. However, Mathilde's pride disallows her to follow him. Thus, the husband eventually suggests her to come to her wealthy friend, Madame Forestier, as the final option. It can be seen how Loisel is so patient with his wife that he is willing to support her with solutions.

Later, after this couple go back to their home, they realize that the jewel necklace that Mathilde borrowed from her friend is gone. Loisel, a patient man he is, does not blame his wife, but he helps her to look for it. In a panic situation, Loisel stays calm and tries some ways to overcome their problem. Loisel guides Mathilde in undergoing their situation well so that they can have the minimum risk of losing the jewel.

They looked, thunderstruck, at one another. At last, Loisel put on his clothes.

"I shall go back on foot," said he, "over the whole route which we have taken to see if I can find it."

And he went out. She sat waiting on a chair in her ball dress, without strength to go to bed, overwhelmed, without fire, without a thought.

Her husband came back about seven o'clock. He had found nothing.

He went to Police Headquarters, to the newspaper offices, to offer a reward: he went to the cab companies—everywhere, in fact, whither he was urged by the least suspicion of hope.

(Paragraph 76 – 80)

Loisel tries to solve their problem of losing the necklace by reporting it to the police office and newspaper offices. He even goes to the cab companies; in case it is left in the cab they used at that night. Unfortunately, they cannot get the necklace back. Then, he has no choice but to propose a lie to save his wife. He guides his wife to write a letter to Madame Forestier telling that they cannot return the necklace soon after the ball. Without his guide, Mathilde will find it hard to get out of the situation well.

*"You must write to your friend," said he, "that you have broken the clasp of her necklace and that you are having it mended. That will give us time to turn round."
She wrote at his dictation.*

...

*And Loisel, who had aged five years, declared:
"We must consider how to replace that ornament."*

(Paragraph 83 – 84, 86 – 87)

After writing the letter, Loisel suggests that they find a replacement for the necklace. This indicates that he wants Mathilde relationship with her friend to stay close. He prefers struggling on their own without Madame Forestier knowing, rather than having her deny Mathilde as her friend due to the circumstances. Hence, Loisel gathers some money to buy the identical necklace to give to Madame Forestier. He sacrifices his money and time to help Mathilde by using the inheritance from his father and by working harder than usual. He even borrows money to cover the expenses.

Loisel possessed eighteen thousand francs which his father had left him. He would borrow the rest.

He did borrow, asking a thousand francs of one, five hundred of another, five louis here, three louis there. He gave notes, took up ruinous obligations, dealt with usurers and all the race of lenders. He compromised all the rest of his life, risked his signature without even knowing if he could meet it; and, frightened by the pains yet to come, by the black misery which was about to fall upon him, by the prospect of all the physical privation and of all the moral tortures which he was to suffer, he went to get the new necklace, putting down upon the merchant's counter thirty-six thousand francs.

(Paragraph 93-94)

Loisel does not stop caring for his wife as he finds a way to get the replacement of the missing necklace. Their life has changed but he never gives up maintaining their well-being in their unfortunate situation. This lasts for a decade. Fusco (2004) highlights the repayment of these loans as a tool to make Mathilde admit the true poverty and physical and emotional hardship. She has sacrificed the few luxuries she has but never fully appreciated.

*Her husband worked in the evening making a fair copy of some tradesman's accounts, and late at night he often copied manuscript for five sous a page.
And this life lasted for ten years.*

(Paragraph 101 – 102)

As supporting character in the story, Monsieur Loisel contributes to keep his family survive the harsh situation. He guides Mathilde to get out of their circumstances and he solves their problems eventually. Without him, Mathilde will not know what to do and her relationship with her friend, Madame Forestier, may be ruined. Their relationship is important because Madame Forestier symbolizes the wealth and luxury that Mathilde desires. Thus, it can be concluded that Monsieur Loisel roles in Mathilde's conflict are to give guidance and to solve the problems that they have to endure.

Madame Forestier

Madame Forestier, an old friend from Mathilde's past, is a well-known supporting character in "The Necklace." Despite the fact that she only appears briefly in the story, Madame Forestier plays a crucial part in encouraging Mathilde's desire for wealth and elegance. Madame Forestier is a wealthy friend of Mathilde who lends her the stunning necklace for a

social event. Her character serves as a symbol of wealth and privilege. The contrast between Madame Forestier's prosperity and Mathilde's desire to be part of that world highlights themes of social class and dissatisfaction with one's own circumstances.

Although Madame Forestier is Mathilde's old friend, Mathilde does not have bravery to tell her the truth about the missing necklace. Instead of telling the truth, she follows her husband instruction to replace the missing necklace with the duplicate one. She knows that if she is honest with her situation, Madame Forestier will not forgive her. It can be seen when she returns the necklace with the duplicate one. Madame Forestier does not react amiably.

When Mme. Loisel took back the necklace, Mme. Forestier said to her, with a chilly manner:

"You should have returned it sooner; I might have needed it."

She did not open the case, as her friend had so much feared. If she had detected the substitution, what would she have thought, what would she have said? Would she not have taken Mme. Loisel for a thief?

(Paragraph 95-97)

Madame Forestier's unfriendly reaction toward Mathilde indirectly causes her to be in misery. She has conflicted mind that she might be accused of being a thief as she does not have much fortune. This is why Mathilde and her husband are fearful when they the necklace is gone. They prefer getting a replacement rather than telling the truth.

Finally, after Mathilde and her husband struggle for their life for ten years, they meet with Madame Forestier. Madame Forestier pities Mathilde as she exposes that the necklace borrowed by Mathilde is a fake one. This is when the story ends.

"Oh, my poor Mathilde! Why, my necklace was paste. It was worth at most five hundred francs!"

(Paragraph 127)

The revelation at the end of the story signifies an unexpected ending. This surprising conclusion was repeatedly used by Maupassant to appeal more audience (Fusco, 2004). Here, the character of Madame Forestier plays an important role as an expositor who twists the ending of the story. Without her, the ending will just be as expected and thus, it will not have a certain effect that can evoke the readers' emotion.

CONCLUSION

The findings and discussion above reveal that the supporting characters in "The Necklace" contribute to the main character's conflicted circumstances. Monsieur Loisel, the main character's husband, helps to give guidance on what Mathilde should do. Moreover, he acts as the problem solvers as he proposes significant solutions to her problems that change their lives. Without him, Mathilde might not survive on her guilt.

As for Madame Forestier, the main character's friend, she indirectly causes Mathilde's misery. She symbolizes wealth and luxury that Mathilde desires but cannot have. She is necessarily contributive to the story since she acts as an expositor at the end of the story. Without her exposing that the necklace is fake, Mathilde will not know the truth. Thus, this creates a twist at the end of the plot. This significantly affects the readers emotion as the ending is unexpected.

REFERENCES

- Barnet, S., Burto, W., & Cain, W.E. (2008). *An Introduction to Literature: Fiction, Poetry, and Drama*. Pearson.
- De Maupassant, G. (2021). The Necklace. In *In the Mind's Eye* (pp. 105-115). Routledge.
- Fusco, R. (2004). The inversion story. In H. Bloom (Ed), *Bloom's Major Short Story Writers: Guy de Maupassant*. Chelsea House Publishers.
- Gill, R. (1995). *Mastering English Literature*. United Kingdom: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Irawan, B. (2019). Three Dimensional Aspect of a Main Character Mathilde in Guy De Maupassant's "The Necklace". *Morphosis*.
- Johnson, G. & Arp, T.R. (2017). *Perrine's Literature: Structure, Sound, and Sense*. Cengage Learning.
- Kennedy, X. J. & Gioia, D. (1995). *Literature: An Introduction to Fiction, Poetry, and Drama*. HarperCollins.
- Leavy, P. (2017). *Research design: Quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods, arts-based, and community-based participatory research approaches*. The Guilford Press.
- Nurhidayah, S., & Prihantini, A. (2020, June). Handcuffs of the Beauty Myth in Maupassant's The Necklace. In *Proceedings of the Third International Seminar on Recent Language, Literature, and Local Culture Studies, BASA, 20-21 September 2019, Surakarta, Central Java, Indonesia*.
- Roberts, E. V. & Zweig, R. (2011). *Literature: An Introduction to Reading and Writing*. Longman Publishing Group.
- Sumbayak, S. C., & Winarti, W. (2021). Insatiable Behavior as Reflected in *The Necklace* and Its Connection to Social Media Consumerism. *FRASA: English Education and Literature Journal*, 2(2), 67-74.
- Yadav, S. (2019). Character Analysis of 'Mathilde Loisel' in the Maupassant's "The Necklace". *International Journal of English Literature and Social Sciences (IJELS)*, 4(3).