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## Representation of Social Class in the Short Story *The Necklace*

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### ABSTRACT

The objective of this study is to examine Guy de Maupassant's short story, "The Necklace." This study applies Karl Marx's literary sociology theory along with a qualitative descriptive methodology. One method of data analysis used in this study is reading short stories and marking specific passages that discuss social elements. 2) choosing and identifying narrative elements that depict socioeconomic classes 3) explaining quotes in light of the applied theory 4) drawing recommendations and conclusions from the analysis's findings.

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### INTRODUCTION

Sociology of Literature is a discipline of social science that investigates the relationship between literature, society, and culture. Ahmadi (2021) revealed that Sociology of literature is a field of multidisciplinary studies which examines the impact of social structures on the production of literary texts. It is also a subfield of sociology that studies how literature, such as novels, plays, and poetry, interacts with society and what society provides to literature. According to Terry Eagleton, the sociology of literature studies how literary works reflect and shape social reality, and how social conditions influence literary production. Terry Eagleton is a literary critic and cultural theorist who has written extensively on the relationship between literature, culture and social class structures.

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In his work, Eagleton often combines literary analysis with theoretical frameworks influenced by Marxist theory and socialist thought. Eagleton analyzes literary works from a social class perspective, identifying how representations of social class in literature reflect and influence wider social realities. She also highlights how literature can be a tool for understanding the dynamics of power, exploitation, and inequality in class societies.

The study of literary sociology is a discipline that investigates the relationship between literature and society, culture and social structure. The correlation of sociology and literature is basic and sociology turns out to be a science while literature appears to be a phenomenon of society (Alwaqaa, M. A. 2020). The process of understanding and analyzing the relationship between literary works and various social aspects of society. Wellek and Warren (2016: 101) explain that sociology can be divided into three relationships: sociology of authors, sociology of literature, and sociology of readers. The understanding is how literary works reflect and influence the dynamics of life in society, where literary works can be produced and accepted. In addition, the role of an author in literary works is one of the most important aspects, in literary sociology it is usually reflected in themes, characters or other aspects derived from social reality.

The link between literature and society can be seen in various aspects. Literature can reflect values that society values, such as honesty, hard work and justice. Apart from that, the data source for this research is short stories. In short stories, several aspects are usually inseparable, including social aspects, educational aspects and religious aspects (Banjarnahor, 2022). Literature deals with developments in society, as well as being a cultural product, literature is also a product of society, reflecting its society. Literary sociology is defined as one approach in literary studies that understands and assesses literary works by considering social aspects (Damono, 1979: 1). Literature and sociology have the same object of study, namely humans in society.

This study researchers used Karl Marx's social class theory to find out the social life in the short story "The Necklace". Marx argued that social conflict often occurs as a result of conflict between the bourgeoisie or ruling class and the lower class or lower class (Fitriya, 2024). According to Karl Marx (in Magnis-Suseno, 1999: 110) the main actors in society are social classes. There are eight social classes formulated by Karl Marx, namely: 1) alienation in work that occurs due to a person's involvement in two opposing social classes at once (the labor class and the employer class), 2) private property rights, people who work only

because of wages not because of the work, 3) the upper class which is also called the oppressor class because they have tools and control all fields, 4) the lower class is also called the oppressed class because they have to work and sell their labor to the employer class, 5) class interest is a collaboration between two classes that both have the goal of defending themselves from world competition, 6) revolution is the transfer of power by the previous leader to the next generation who is considered to have more advanced thinking, 7) class state is a tool used by the upper class to oppress other weak classes, 8) ideology is a thought to trick opponents who explain about a situation, power in such a way that others believe and are considered legitimate when it is clearly not legitimate. This theory highlights the deep-rooted inequalities in society and reveals how conflicts between classes often shape individual destinies, as seen in *"The Necklace"*, where social aspirations and class pressures lead to profound consequences for the characters.

Short stories are a type of prose in which the content of the story is not a real event and is only made up. Generally Short stories are stories that can be read in about ten minutes to half an hour. Therefore, short stories are often defined as stories that can be read deeply one sitting (Subekti, 2022). Short stories tend to be short, concise, and to the point compared to other longer works of fiction, such as novelettes or novels. The definition of a short story emphasizes one of the narrative fictions with characters as the main part of the elements that make up a short story. Thahar (2009: 5) states that a short story, popularly known by the acronym short story, is one of the most common types of fiction written by people. Meanwhile, the setting and flashbacks are mentioned in passing. Short stories as works of fiction are built by the elements that make them up, namely by intrinsic and extrinsic elements (Somad, 2007: 61). This simplicity and brevity make short stories an ideal medium for conveying powerful messages or moral lessons without overwhelming readers.

In the short story *"The Necklace"* the author also describes social conflict, the struggle of the main character in dealing with social class differences. This can be seen in the life of the main character, Mathilde Loisel as she tries to look different from her real life just to attend an invitation from the ministry. Mathilde is a woman from the lower middle class who is dissatisfied with her simple life. Mathilde always had the desire to have a luxurious life and be able to mingle with people from the upper middle class. Besides herself, her husband Monsieur Loisel is described as a low-income civil servant. He works hard to fulfill his wife's wishes in various ways.

In this chapter, the writer will explain about the theory which is applied to analyze "The Necklace" as the chosen literary work in this study. Regarding of the problem, the theory which is used in this study is social class. Social class is one of the main factors that cause inequality in society. By studying social class, we can understand how injustice occurs in various aspects of life, such as access to education, health, employment and wealth. The aim of this research is to understand how social class affects access to resources, educational opportunities and welfare levels. definition of social class according to Karl Marx "Social class is determined by one's position in the production system".

The link between literature and society can be seen in various aspects. Literature can reflect values that society values, such as honesty, hard work and justice. Literature deals with developments in society, as well as being a cultural product, literature is also a product of society, reflecting its society. The method used in this research is descriptive qualitative method which is realized by interpreting the social life of society in the short story "The Necklace". The story narrates a beautiful woman, Mathilde, a wife of a clerk of law estate longing for glamorous and luxurious things that accompany her life (Nurhidayah,2020). The approach used in this research is Karl Marx's literary sociology approach. The data source used in this analysis is a short story by Guy de Maupassant entitled "The Necklace" which was released on February 17, 1884.

## **METHOD**

The method used in this research is descriptive qualitative method which is realized by interpreting the social life of society in the short story "The Necklace". The approach used in this research is Karl Marx's literary sociology approach. Marxism is the thought of Karl Marx who formulated a theory relating to economic systems, social systems and political systems (Kusumastuti, 2017). The data source used in this analysis is a short story by Guy de Maupassant entitled "The Necklace" which was released on February 17, 1884.

The data in this study are text sentences that tell about the representation of social class and the implications for women's lives at that time. The data collection technique used is qualitative research with a descriptive approach. Pujileksono (2015) said that qualitative research is aimed at understanding social phenomena from the point of view of the research subjects. Qualitative research is one that emphasizes understanding problems in social life based on holistic, complex and detailed conditions of reality or settingsm (Sulistiyo, 2023).

Qualitative research explains the results of research by collecting data and shows the importance of the depth and detail of the data studied.

The data analysis technique in this research is descriptive analysis. According to Surakhmad (1994: 139) research using descriptive methods is not limited to data collection but includes analysis and interpretation of the data. This research examines the social aspects in the short story "The Necklace" by Guy de Maupassant using Karl Marx's social class theory. Data analysis techniques in this study include 1) reading and marking certain parts that describe social aspects in short stories 2) selecting and determining parts of the story that describe social classes 3) describing quotations in accordance with the theory used 4) making conclusions and suggestions based on the results of the analysis conducted.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

From the results of the analysis conducted, researchers found social class data based on social conflicts and differences in social classes in short stories using Karl Marx's social class theory. The following is the social conflict in social classes found in the short story:

In the short story "The Necklace," the depiction of social class is reflected in several aspects of the story, especially through the comparison between Mathilde Loisel and Madame Forestier, as well as through the description of their daily lives. The following are quotes that illustrate the depiction of social class in the short story:

*"Madame Loisel looked old now. She had become like all the other strong, hard, coarse women of poor households. Her hair was badly done, her skirts were awry, her hands were red. She spoke in a shrill voice, and the water slopped all over the floor when she scrubbed it. But sometimes, when her husband was at the office, she sat down by the window and thought of that evening long ago, of the ball at which she had been so beautiful and so much admired."*

The above quote reflects how Mathilde Loisel, after losing the fake necklace she borrowed to attend a ministerial event, is forced to live in poverty and the harshness of daily life. This is in stark contrast to Madame Forestier's more established and elegant life, showing the difference in their social status and material life. Here is another quote that describes social class:

*"Madame Loisel came to know the ghastly life of abject poverty. From the very first she played her part heroically. This fearful debt must be paid off. She would pay it. The servant was dismissed. They changed their flat; they took a garret under the roof."*

This quote shows how Mathilde Loisel and her husband were forced to live in poverty after losing the necklace. They are forced to make drastic changes in their lifestyle, including firing their servants, moving to cheaper housing, and facing a heavy burden of household chores. This description highlights the contrast between life before and after losing the necklace, emphasizing the dramatic change in their social status and living conditions as a result of one wrong decision.

At the beginning of the story there is a quote that illustrates how the representation of social class affects the lives and perceptions of women, namely:

*“She was one of those pretty and charming girls born, as though fate had blundered over her, into a family of artisans. She had no marriage portion, no expectations, no means of getting known, understood, loved, and wedded by a man of wealth and distinction; and she let herself be married off to a little clerk in the Ministry of Education.”*

This quote shows how Mathilde Loisel feels trapped in her life that is considered low-class. She feels that she should have been born into a more wealthy and influential family, and she regrets the circumstances that forced her to marry a clerk who was unable to provide her with the lifestyle she envisioned. This perception affects her view of herself and her life, creating a deep sense of dissatisfaction and a desire for better in terms of social status and luxury.

*“She suffered endlessly, feeling herself born for every delicacy and luxury. She suffered from the poorness of her house, from its mean walls, worn chairs, and ugly curtains. All these things, of which other women of her class would not even have been aware, tormented and insulted her.”*

Mathilde is dissatisfied with her life and her surroundings, which are considered low-class, as shown by the data above. She feels she deserves to live in luxury and opulence and does not fit in with the state of poverty and deprivation around her. Mathilde feels humiliated and tormented by these conditions, even though the items in her home may be sufficient for most women of her social class. This shows how the representation of social class affects her perception of herself and causes her to be deeply dissatisfied.

*“She had no clothes, no jewels, nothing. And these were the only things she loved; she felt that she was made for them. She had longed so eagerly to charm, to be desired, to be wildly attractive and sought after.”*

This quote shows that Mathilde feels humiliated and unhappy with the material she is faced with. She rejects a lifestyle of luxury and beauty, and believes that she is entitled to

both. Being dissatisfied with her life due to her economic and social limitations encourages her to dream about a better life. This shows how Mathilde's self-perception is affected by the representation of social class. It also shows how strong her spirit is.

The character of Madame Forestier and the social events attended by Mathilde Loisel in the short story "The Necklace" show social class. Examples of quotations that reflect the description of the upper class in this short story are as follows:

*"She had a rich friend, an old school friend whom she refused to visit, because she suffered so keenly when she returned home. She would weep whole days, with grief, regret, despair, and misery."*

Madame Forestier is described as elegant, attractive, and full of jewelry. She is often present at lavish social events and can give expensive gifts without considering who receives them. This description gives an idea of the lifestyle and social status of the upper class, where wealth and luxury are considered natural and necessary to maintain a high social position.

Depiction of ideology in the short story "The Necklace" 1) The focus on social image and materialism is clearly shown in this short story. Besides being mesmerized by luxury and wealth, Mathilde Loisel is obsessed with her appearance and social status. To fulfill false social expectations, she borrows fake necklaces and risks her financial safety because of her obsession. 2) This short story criticizes dissatisfaction and unbridled ambition through the character of Mathilde Loisel. Mathilde is always dissatisfied with her simple life, although she actually lives quite well. Misery and loss occur due to her uncontrollable desire to improve her social status. 3) Criticism of Social Injustice: "The Necklace" shows the class gap and social injustice that prevailed at the time. Mathilde Loisel has a low social and economic status, despite her beauty and talent. This shows the structural injustice in society where a person's family background and status often determine their life possibilities and opportunities. 4) Rejection of Reality and Consciousness: Mathilde Loisel refuses to accept her real life situation. She lives in illusions and false fantasies of wealth and beauty, which eventually leads to misery and disappointment. This shows the moral message in the story that dissatisfaction and unlimited desires will only lead to suffering; accepting yourself and appreciating what you have is the way to be happy.

Some elements related to the social, economic and cultural situation of the time depicted in "The Necklace" can help explain the impact of the short story on the lives of women at that time. The following are some possible implications, 1) Limited Opportunities:

Mathilde Loisel felt frustrated and dissatisfied due to her inadequate financial and social circumstances. This illustrates the limited chances that many women had at the time to pursue their hopes and aspirations outside of the home. 2) Gender Roles and Expectations: Mathilde Loisel aspired to be attractive and elegant, reflecting the social pressures on women at the time to maintain beauty and aesthetics. However, her economic and social limits stopped her from meeting these expectations, demonstrating how gender roles and societal conventions restricted women's independence and options at the time.

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The short narrative makes it quite evident how a character's social class impacts their outlook on life. The story's protagonist struggles to find happiness and prosperity because of his low social and economic standing. The way socioeconomic class is portrayed demonstrates the strong social pressure that exists to uphold the status quo and materialism. She goes to great lengths to satisfy society's expectations by pursuing wealth and social position, even if it means taking foolish and dangerous risks.

The short story offers a profound grasp of the constraints encountered by women in a culture dominated by rigid social and gender norms, the pressures of materialism, and the consequences of unrestrained desire, in addition to portraying the social class dynamics of the time.

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