

## HIDDEN LABYRINTH

To complete a puzzle properly each and every piece must be accounted for; otherwise the final product is never comprehensive. A puzzle with missing pieces is very much like a story with missing elements. Every element plays an important role in the meaning and the integrity of the story. Clearly, with a puzzle there are pieces that are more consequential if missing than others. Just like a puzzle there are significant elements in a story that make a big difference. If such elements are removed some of the realistic aspects a story needs for readers to be able to relate are missing as well. Although there are many elements that go into a story there are two that are profoundly important to have in a story. These two elements are recognized as the plot and characters.

A plot can be described as the “sequence of events in a story and their relation to one another as they develop and usually resolve a conflict” (Charters, “Elements” 1003). It is usually desirable for the author to present the plot in the beginning of the story, laid out so readers can easily follow the events and their significance (Charters, “Elements” 1003). The conflict within the story is profoundly important to how the plot is going to be laid out since the plot itself is usually impacted by the conflict throughout the story. This point can be seen in Maupassant’s “The Necklace” extremely well.

In the beginning of the story “The Necklace” Maupassant lays out the foundation of the conflict for his readers. Mme. Loisel is a pretty woman who longs for something more than she has and she pays for this throughout the story (Maupassant 524). This internal conflict expands throughout the entire story. Mme. Loisel wants to be richer but she is married to a clerk and is far from rich (Maupassant 524). This first conflict illustrated by Maupassant drives the story very well. The second conflict presented in “The Necklace” was when the dinner invitation came. This conflict seems to be more external, because it is not a conflict Mme. Loisel has been struggling with internally for years. However, when the dinner invitation is presented another conflict is introduced. Mme. Loisel wants to attend this elaborate dinner, but not unless she can be in the most magnificent clothing and jewelry (Maupassant 525). This point is well illustrated when Mme. Loisel states, “there is nothing more humiliating than to look poor among other women who are rich” (Maupassant 526). Continuously after these two conflicts are introduced, she is introduced to more that get her into trouble. Thus the conflict within the story is driving the plot and consistently reappearing (Charters, “Elements” 1003).

Within the plot there are components that are critically important when exploring a story. These components consist of exposition, rising action, climax, falling action and

conclusion (Charters, "Elements" 1004-1005). Exposition includes the "introduction of characters, scene, time, and situation (Charters, "Elements" 1004). In "The Necklace" the exposition seemed to be in the beginning when the introduction of Mme. Loisel is taking place. At this point the author gives only a brief background of the past and present dimensions of her life (Maupassant 524). The rising action of a story is generally "the dramatization of events that complicate the situation and gradually intensify the conflict" (Charters, "Elements" 1005). In "The Necklace" this point would be when the couple is invited to the dinner party the reader can not tell at this point that the invitation is significant but it is (Maupassant 525). The climax can basically be described as the "turning point" in the story (Charters, "Elements" 1005). The climax in this particular story would surely be when Mme. Loisel discovers her necklace as missing (Maupassant 527). The falling action moves the conflict towards a solution (Charters, "Elements" 1005). In Mme. Loisel's case this would be when she sees her friend Mme. Forestier on the street and confronts her. Once the conclusion sets in and ties together all the loose strings, the reader get the surprise that the necklace was fake the entire time (Maupassant 530). As one can see the plot plays a huge role in the development of a short story.

Another important aspect of developing a short story is the character developed in the context of the story. It is important that characters be realistic in any story. Writers can accomplish the task of reality by making the characters either dynamic or static (Charters, "Elements" 1007). A static character is one that does not change throughout the story, while a dynamic character changes. Mme. Loisel is both a static and dynamic character. Mme. Loisel changes when the necklace disappears making her dynamic. This is true in the beginning she is from lower middle class where she has a comfortable home and servants (Maupassant 524). However, when the necklace disappears and must be replaced, she is forced to release her servants and change her lodging in order to pay off her debts. This change in Mme. Loisel is permanent thus making her a dynamic character (Maupassant 528).

It is also easy for one to see Mme. Loisel as a static character also. This is due to the fact that Mme. Loisel never really changes in some aspects. Throughout the entire story she is envious of other people. One can see this at the beginning of the story with the introduction of the invitation. At this point Mme. Loisel insists on an expensive dress and necklace (Maupassant 525-526). It can also be seen at the end of the story when Mme. Loisel sees her friend Jeanne again for the first time in awhile and is still envious of her wealth and beauty. This aspect of Mme. Loisel's character also makes her static (Maupassant 529-530). One can see how the plot and characters' play an important role together in shaping the story and laying it out for the reader to understand. The plot helps to set the conflict, which in turn drives the plot as well as characters actions and motives.

As an author, having the ability to integrate such important elements of a story successfully can be very difficult. Guy De Maupassant was not a naturally gifted writer, which makes the morals and outline of his stories even more believable (Charters, "Guy De" 523). Maupassant had difficulties in school while he was younger, which may explain why he joined the army during the 1870-71 Franco-Prussian War (Charters, "Guy De" 523). Maupassant was later taught how to write by a relative of the name Gustave Flaubert. Maupassant recalled writing, "verses, short stories, longer stories, even a wretched play. Nothing survived. The master read everything" (Charters, "Guy De" 523). It seemed that Maupassant was not a natural talent when it came to writing, which makes his writing meaningful because he must have struggled to write well and overcame the challenge. Flaubert instructed Maupassant that "talent is nothing other than a long patience. Work" (Charters, "Guy De" 523). This may be an important aspect of Maupassant's life to examine. Maupassant writings seem to be packed with morals and hidden messages possibly due to lessons installed by Flaubert.

Another important lesson Flaubert tried to install in his pupil was to look at everything within the context of any literary work and discover the one component that every other reader has missed. Flaubert explained the fact that every piece has some hidden labyrinth or message unexplored (Charters, “Guy De” 523). The lessons installed in Maupassant by Flaubert may be a large factor in the way he wrote. Since Flaubert focused so much on details and hidden unexplored messages, it is easy to see why there are so many subtle clues in “The Necklace” that readers can discover and interpret as they wish.

Another important influence on Maupassant’s writing may simply be the era he was living in while he composed his stories. Ann Charters explains that “Maupassant’s plots are tightly organized and usually conclude with a decisive action” (Charters, “Brief History” 998). Maupassant plays close attention to physical and mental details. As a writer he favors a surprise ending, as one can tell by the ending of “The Necklace” (Charters, Brief History 998). Maupassant’s literary era could be classified primarily as 19<sup>th</sup> Century Literary Realism (Agatucci 3). This period of literature involved real people with everyday events in which ordinary people could relate. Also this period places a large importance on classes and relationships between upper and lower classes, which is what Maupassant does extremely well (Agatucci 3).

Maupassant is an exceptional writer and as explained in her essay “How I Stumbled upon Maupassant,” Kate Chopin explains how readers may not realize just how wonderful he is until they truly understand him. Kate Chopin explains her findings of Maupassant’s writing as somewhat of an inspiration. Chopin believes that his writings do not speak to everyone as a group but to each reader individually, by what the reader sees and hears within the pages (Chopin 861). Chopin describes Maupassant “as a man who escaped from tradition and authority, who had entered into himself and look out upon life through his own being” (Chopin 861).

It is almost as if Chopin found herself as a writer when she began to study Maupassant's work. Also she sees him as secretly telling hints of his stories within the pages. Maupassant does not just come out and explain the important hidden messages within his stories; he expresses them through the feelings each reader experiences while reading his literature (Chopin 861).

It takes many special components to write a story. Maupassant had the opportunity to show his readers the elegance of his writing. Maupassant had a gift at combining elements of fiction like characters and plot. Through the combination of his history, era and hard work he developed stories literature readers could enjoy and relate to for generations.