



Narrative Writing

Module 1: Understanding Plot

Day 2 – Rising Action



Bell Ringer

Review Yesterday — With a Partner

Take a few minutes with a partner to answer the following questions. Be prepared to share one answer with the class.

1

What is exposition?

Recall how a story introduces its characters, setting, and situation at the very beginning.

2

What is the inciting incident?

Think about the single event that sets the main conflict in motion and changes everything.

3

Inciting incident in *The Necklace*?

Identify the moment in Maupassant's story that launches Mathilde into her central conflict.

Learning Objectives

By the end of today's lesson, you will be able to do all of the following:



Define rising action

Explain what rising action is and where it appears in the plot structure.



Identify complications in *The Necklace*

Locate and describe the key complications that Mathilde faces throughout the story.



Explain how authors build suspense

Identify the techniques writers use to keep readers engaged and eager for more.



Connect rising action to the climax

Explain how rising action prepares readers for the most important moment of the story.

What Is Rising Action?

The Definition

Rising action is the series of events that follows the inciting incident. These events build on each other, escalating conflict and creating complications that push the story forward toward its most critical moment.

Rising Action Always...

- **Increases conflict**
Problems grow more serious and harder to ignore.
- **Creates complications**
New obstacles appear just when a solution seems near.
- **Builds suspense & raises the stakes**
Every new problem makes solving the conflict more difficult, drawing readers deeper into the story.



Why Does Rising Action Matter?

Imagine climbing a mountain. Each step becomes more difficult. Each obstacle requires greater effort. Stories work exactly the same way — as tension rises, readers cannot stop asking themselves:

"What will happen next?"

Without rising action, a story feels flat and unconvincing. The complications are what keep readers turning pages, emotionally invested in the characters and desperate to discover the outcome. The goal is suspense — and rising action is the engine that creates it.

Guided Reading: Preparing for the Ball

Continue reading *The Necklace* by Guy de Maupassant. As you read this section, keep these focus questions in mind:

Problems

What specific problems does Mathilde face as she prepares for the ball?

Mr. Loisel

How does Mr. Loisel respond to each of Mathilde's complaints and demands?

First Complication

Which complication appears first, and what does it immediately reveal about Mathilde's character?



Complication #1: The Dress

What Happens

Mathilde refuses to attend the ball because she has nothing suitable to wear. Rather than accepting the situation, she insists she cannot go without a beautiful gown — something far beyond their modest means.

Mr. Loisel, wanting to make his wife happy, sacrifices money he had been carefully saving — money intended for himself — so that Mathilde can purchase an elegant dress.

Class Discussion

What does this moment reveal about each character?

- **Mathilde — What do her demands suggest about her values and priorities?**
- **Mr. Loisel — What does his sacrifice reveal about his character and his love for Mathilde?**

Complication #2: The Necklace

Although Mathilde now has a beautiful dress, a new problem immediately emerges — she believes she cannot attend the ball because she owns no jewelry. A woman of her imagined status cannot appear without adornment.

The Solution

Her friend Madame Forestier generously lends Mathilde a magnificent diamond necklace — exactly the kind of luxury Mathilde has always dreamed of possessing.

Predict: Discuss with a Partner

Will borrowing the necklace truly solve Mathilde's problems — or is it simply creating the conditions for a far greater complication? What clues in the story support your prediction?

Guided Reading: The Ball

Read the section describing Mathilde's evening at the Ministerial Ball. As you read, consider these questions carefully:



How does Mathilde feel?

Pay attention to Maupassant's descriptions of her emotions and behavior throughout the evening.



Has she achieved her dream?

Consider whether this evening gives Mathilde everything she has always longed for.



Why does this moment matter?

Think about why Maupassant includes this scene and what role it plays in the larger story structure.



Success Before Disaster

One Perfect Evening

For one single evening, Mathilde experiences everything she has always desperately wanted. She is admired. She is beautiful. She is surrounded by luxury. She is genuinely happy — perhaps for the first and only time in the story.

- **Admiration from everyone around her**
- **Beauty enhanced by the borrowed necklace**
- **Luxury and elegance she has craved**
- **A feeling of happiness and belonging**

Class Discussion

Maupassant deliberately allows Mathilde to taste success — and then immediately takes it away. Why?

Consider: How does experiencing joy before disaster make the next complication feel even more devastating for Mathilde — and for the reader? What does this technique reveal about how skilled authors craft emotional impact?



Complication #3: The Necklace Disappears

As Mathilde and her husband return home from the ball... the necklace is gone.

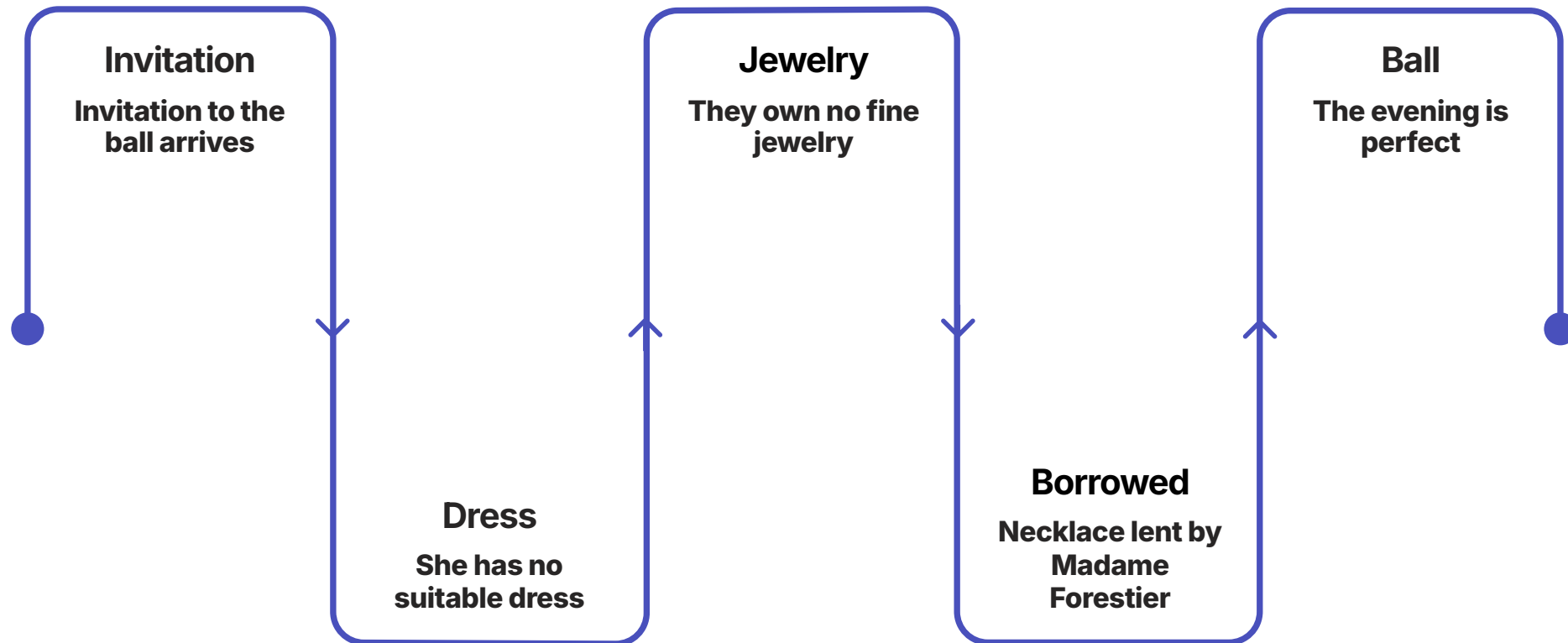
In an instant, everything changes. The joy of the evening collapses. The borrowed necklace — the symbol of Mathilde's one perfect night — has vanished completely.

Discuss with a Partner

Why is losing the necklace far more serious than simply misplacing an expensive piece of jewelry? Think about what the necklace represents, who it belongs to, and what Mathilde and her husband will be forced to do next. How does this single event change the entire trajectory of their lives?

Tension Meter

Watch how the tension grows with every single event. Each complication raises the stakes higher than the last, making every moment that follows even more critical.



Notice how Maupassant never lets the tension drop for long. Each complication builds directly on the previous one, creating an escalating chain of cause and effect that drives the story relentlessly forward toward the climax.

Where Are We in the Story?

Think back to Freytag's Pyramid — the model that maps out the structure of a story's plot. We have climbed steadily through the rising action, complication by complication, with tension increasing at every step.

Where We Are Now

We have moved well beyond the inciting incident. Every complication has tightened the conflict and increased our investment in Mathilde's fate. But we have not yet reached the most important moment.

Coming Tomorrow

- What is the climax?
- Why is it called the turning point of the story?
- Where exactly does the climax occur in *The Necklace*?



Rising Action Leads to the Climax

Let's review everything rising action accomplishes in a well-crafted story:

Follows the inciting incident

Rising action begins the moment the central conflict is set in motion.



Introduces complications

New obstacles arise and prevent easy solutions to the conflict.

Raises the stakes

Each event makes the consequences feel more serious and unavoidable.



Builds toward the climax

Every complication prepares readers emotionally for the story's most critical moment.

 Think: Why shouldn't a story jump directly from the inciting incident straight to the climax? What would be lost?

Writer's Toolbox

Great Stories Build One Problem at a Time

Strong writers rarely solve their characters' problems quickly or easily. Instead, they continuously ask themselves a set of powerful craft questions as they write:



What obstacle comes next?

Every time a solution appears to be within reach, a skilled author places a new barrier in the character's path — keeping the outcome uncertain.



How can I increase the tension?

The emotional pressure on the reader must keep rising. Comfort is the enemy of suspense. Great writers never let readers feel completely safe.



What decision makes things worse?

Characters often make choices that seem reasonable in the moment — but lead to even greater trouble. This is what makes stories feel authentic and compelling.

Exit Ticket

Answer each question in complete sentences.

Before you leave today, demonstrate what you have learned. Write your responses on a piece of paper or in your notebook and submit them to your teacher.

1

What is rising action?

Write a clear, complete definition in your own words. You may also describe where rising action appears in a story's plot structure.

2

Identify three complications in *The Necklace*.

Name each complication and briefly explain what happens and why it matters to the story.

3

How does rising action prepare readers for the climax?

Explain the connection between the complications we read today and the story's most important upcoming moment.



Looking Ahead: The Climax

Every complication has been building toward one unforgettable moment.

Tomorrow we arrive at the peak of Freytag's Pyramid — the moment that every complication in the rising action has been preparing us for.

What makes a climax different?

We'll explore what separates the climax from every other event in the story — and why it carries so much weight.

Why is it the turning point?

We'll examine how the climax changes everything for the characters and marks the shift from rising to falling action.

Where is it in *The Necklace*?

We'll identify exactly where the climax occurs in Maupassant's story — and why Maupassant places it there.