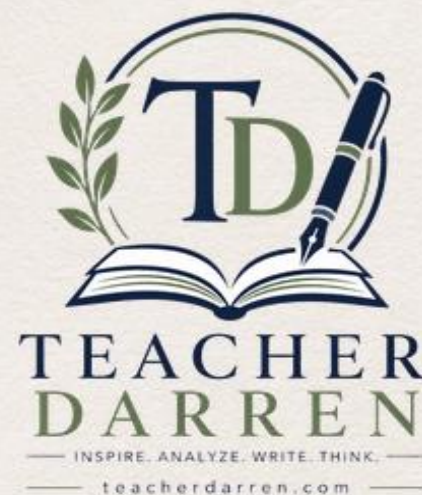




The Carter English Curriculum™

Reading • Writing • Thinking

Grade 9 – Cambridge IGCSE English Language (0500)



Narrative Writing

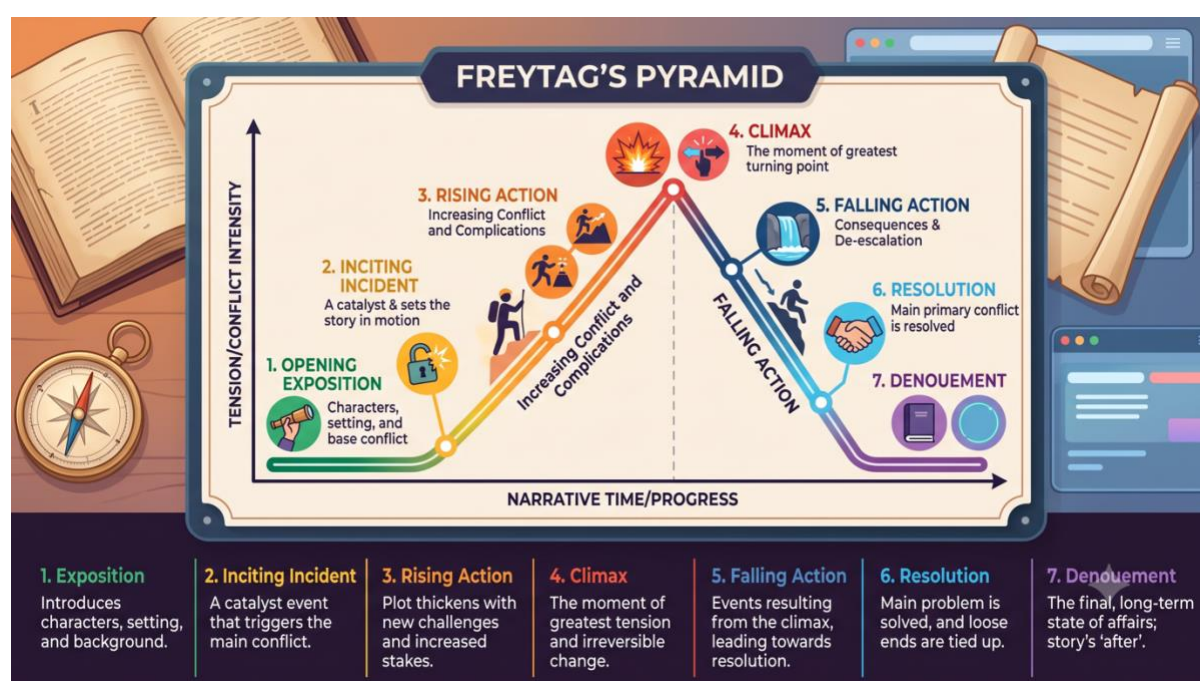
Understanding Plot

Before Reading

Understanding Plot Structure

Stories often follow a recognizable pattern that helps readers understand how events unfold and how tension is created. One of the best-known models is **Freytag's Pyramid**, developed by German novelist Gustav Freytag in the nineteenth century. Although not every story follows this structure exactly, it provides a useful framework for analyzing plot.

As you read *The Necklace*, pay attention to how each event builds upon the previous one. Ask yourself where the story introduces its characters, where the conflict begins, how tension increases, and how the ending resolves the central problem.



The Five Parts of Plot

Exposition

Introduces the setting, characters, and the protagonist's ordinary world.

Inciting Incident

The event that disrupts the protagonist's ordinary life and begins the central conflict.

Rising Action

A series of events that develop the conflict, increase tension, and move the story toward its turning point.

Climax

The turning point of the story and the moment of greatest emotional or dramatic impact.

Falling Action

The events that follow the climax and show the consequences of the protagonist's choices.

Resolution

The conclusion of the story, where the central conflict is resolved and readers understand the outcome.

Denouement

The Denouement (pronounced *day-noo-MAHN*) is the final stage of a story. It follows the resolution and ties up any remaining loose ends, showing what happens to the characters after the main conflict has been resolved. A denouement helps readers understand the lasting effects of the story's events and provides a sense of closure.

Literary Note

Freytag's Pyramid is a model—not a rule. Many modern novels and short stories follow this pattern closely, while others combine, shorten, or rearrange different stages. As you work through this module, focus on using evidence from the text to support your interpretation of the story's plot.

The Necklace

By Guy de Maupassant



Section 1: Opening Exposition

She was one of those pretty and charming girls born, as if by an error of fate, into a family of clerks. She had no dowry, no expectations, no means of becoming known, understood, loved or wedded by a man of wealth and distinction; and so she let herself be married to a minor official at the Ministry of Education.

She dressed plainly because she had never been able to afford anything better, but she was as unhappy as if she had once been wealthy. Women don't belong to a caste or class; their beauty, grace, and natural charm take the place of birth and family. Natural delicacy, instinctive elegance and a quick wit determine their place in society, and make the daughters of commoners the equals of the very finest ladies.

She suffered endlessly, feeling she was entitled to all the delicacies and luxuries of life. She suffered because of the poorness of her house as she looked at the dirty walls, the worn-out chairs and the ugly curtains. All these things that another woman of her class would not even have noticed, tormented her and made her resentful. The sight of the little Brenton girl who did her housework filled her with terrible regrets and hopeless fantasies. She dreamed of silent antechambers hung with Oriental tapestries, lit from above by torches in bronze holders, while two tall footmen in knee-length breeches napped in huge armchairs, sleepy from the stove's oppressive warmth. She dreamed of vast living rooms furnished in rare old silks, elegant furniture loaded with priceless ornaments, and inviting smaller rooms, perfumed, made for afternoon chats with close friends - famous, sought after men, who all women envy and desire.

When she sat down to dinner at a round table covered with a three-day-old cloth opposite her husband who, lifting the lid off the soup, shouted excitedly, "Ah! Beef stew! What could be better," she dreamed of fine dinners, of shining silverware, of tapestries which peopled the walls with figures from another time and strange birds in fairy forests; she dreamed of delicious dishes served on wonderful plates, of whispered gallantries listened to with an inscrutable smile as one ate the pink flesh of a trout or the wings of a quail.

She had no dresses, no jewels, nothing; and these were the only things she loved. She felt she was made for them alone. She wanted so much to charm, to be envied, to be desired and sought after.

She had a rich friend, a former schoolmate at the convent, whom she no longer wanted to visit because she suffered so much when she came home. For whole days afterwards she would weep with sorrow, regret, despair and misery.

Exposition

The exposition introduces the setting, the main character, and the protagonist's ordinary life before the main conflict begins. It also reveals the character's desires and motivations, helping readers understand what is at stake before the story changes.

In *The Necklace*

The exposition introduces Mathilde Loisel, a woman who dreams of wealth and luxury despite living a modest life. Her dissatisfaction with her ordinary circumstances prepares readers for the conflict that follows.

Check Your Understanding

1. What does Mathilde desire most?
2. What details show that she is unhappy with her life?
3. Why is it important for readers to understand Mathilde's personality before the main conflict begins?

Vocabulary

- **Dowry** – property or money brought into a marriage.
- **Distinction** – high social status or importance.
- **Resentment** – bitterness caused by feeling unfairly treated.
- **Luxury** – great comfort or expensive surroundings.

Writer's Toolbox

Introduce a Character's Motivation

Strong expositions do more than introduce characters—they reveal what the protagonist wants. A character's desires and dissatisfaction often foreshadow the conflict that will drive the story.

Ask yourself:

- What does my protagonist want most?
- Why can't they have it?
- How will this desire create future conflict?

Section 2: Inciting Incident

One evening her husband came home with an air of triumph, holding a large envelope in his hand.

"Look," he said, "here's something for you."

She tore open the paper and drew out a card, on which was printed the words:

"The Minister of Education and Mme. Georges Ramponeau request the pleasure of M. and Mme. Loisel's company at the Ministry, on the evening of Monday January 18th."

Instead of being delighted, as her husband had hoped, she threw the invitation on the table resentfully, and muttered:

"What do you want me to do with that?"

"But, my dear, I thought you would be pleased. You never go out, and it will be such a lovely occasion! I had awful trouble getting it. Every one wants to go; it is very exclusive, and they're not giving many invitations to clerks. The whole ministry will be there."

She stared at him angrily, and said, impatiently:

"And what do you expect me to wear if I go?"

He hadn't thought of that. He stammered:

"Why, the dress you go to the theatre in. It seems very nice to me ..."

He stopped, stunned, distressed to see his wife crying. Two large tears ran slowly from the corners of her eyes towards the corners of her mouth. He stuttered:

"What's the matter? What's the matter?"

With great effort she overcame her grief and replied in a calm voice, as she wiped her wet cheeks:

"Nothing. Only I have no dress and so I can't go to this party. Give your invitation to a friend whose wife has better clothes than I do."

He was distraught, but tried again:

"Let's see, Mathilde. How much would a suitable dress cost, one which you could use again on other occasions, something very simple?"

She thought for a moment, computing the cost, and also wondering what amount she could ask for without an immediate refusal and an alarmed exclamation from the thrifty clerk.

At last she answered hesitantly:

"I don't know exactly, but I think I could do it with four hundred francs."

He turned a little pale, because he had been saving that exact amount to buy a gun and treat himself to a hunting trip the following summer, in the country near Nanterre, with a few friends who went lark-shooting there on Sundays.

However, he said:

"Very well, I can give you four hundred francs. But try and get a really beautiful dress."

*

The Inciting Incident

The inciting incident is the event that disrupts the protagonist's ordinary life and introduces the main conflict. It is the moment when the story truly begins. From this point forward, the protagonist must face new challenges that drive the plot.

In *The Necklace*

Mathilde's ordinary life changes when her husband brings home an invitation to an elegant ball. What should have been a joyful opportunity quickly becomes a source of conflict, setting the rest of the story in motion.

Check Your Understanding

1. What is the inciting incident in *The Necklace*?
2. How does this event change Mathilde's life?
3. Why is this event important to the rest of the story?

Vocabulary

- **Inciting incident** – the event that introduces the main conflict and sets the story in motion.
- **Conflict** – the problem or struggle that drives the plot forward.
- **Protagonist** – the main character in a story.
- **Ordinary world** – the protagonist's life before the main conflict begins.

Writer's Toolbox

Start with a Moment That Changes Everything

An effective story begins when something important disrupts the protagonist's ordinary life. A strong inciting incident creates a problem that cannot be ignored and motivates the protagonist to act.

Ask yourself:

- What unexpected event changes my protagonist's life?
- What new problem does this event create?
- Why can't my protagonist simply ignore it?

Section 3: Rising Action

The day of the party drew near, and Madame Loisel seemed sad, restless, anxious. Her dress was ready, however. One evening her husband said to her:

"What's the matter? You've been acting strange these last three days."

She replied: "I'm upset that I have no jewels, not a single stone to wear. I will look cheap. I would almost rather not go to the party."

"You could wear flowers," he said, "They are very fashionable at this time of year. For ten francs you could get two or three magnificent roses."

She was not convinced.

"No; there is nothing more humiliating than looking poor in the middle of a lot of rich women."

"How stupid you are!" her husband cried. "Go and see your friend Madame Forestier and ask her to lend you some jewels. You know her well enough for that."

She uttered a cry of joy.

"Of course. I had not thought of that."

The next day she went to her friend's house and told her of her distress.

Madame Forestier went to her mirrored wardrobe, took out a large box, brought it back, opened it, and said to Madame Loisel:

"Choose, my dear."

First she saw some bracelets, then a pearl necklace, then a gold Venetian cross set with precious stones, of exquisite craftsmanship. She tried on the jewelry in the mirror, hesitated, could not bear to part with them, to give them back. She kept asking:

"You have nothing else?"

"Why, yes. But I don't know what you like."

Suddenly she discovered, in a black satin box, a superb diamond necklace, and her heart began to beat with uncontrolled desire. Her hands trembled as she took it. She fastened it around her neck, over her high-necked dress, and stood lost in ecstasy as she looked at herself.

Then she asked anxiously, hesitating:

"Would you lend me this, just this?"

"Why, yes, of course."

She threw her arms around her friend's neck, embraced her rapturously, then fled with her treasure.

*

The day of the party arrived. Madame Loisel was a success. She was prettier than all the other women, elegant, gracious, smiling, and full of joy. All the men stared at her, asked her name, tried to be introduced. All the cabinet officials wanted to waltz with her. The minister noticed her.

She danced wildly, with passion, drunk on pleasure, forgetting everything in the triumph of her beauty, in the glory of her success, in a sort of cloud of happiness, made up of all this respect, all this admiration, all these awakened desires, of that sense of triumph that is so sweet to a woman's heart.

She left at about four o'clock in the morning. Her husband had been dozing since midnight in a little deserted anteroom with three other gentlemen whose wives were having a good time.

He threw over her shoulders the clothes he had brought for her to go outside in, the modest clothes of an ordinary life, whose poverty contrasted sharply with the elegance of the ball dress. She felt this and wanted to run away, so she wouldn't be noticed by the other women who were wrapping themselves in expensive furs.

Loisel held her back.

"Wait a moment, you'll catch a cold outside. I'll go and find a cab."

But she would not listen to him, and ran down the stairs. When they were finally in the street, they could not find a cab, and began to look for one, shouting at the cabmen they saw passing in the distance.

They walked down toward the Seine in despair, shivering with cold. At last they found on the quay one of those old night cabs that one sees in Paris only after dark, as if they were ashamed to show their shabbiness during the day.

They were dropped off at their door in the Rue des Martyrs, and sadly walked up the steps to their apartment. It was all over, for her. And he was remembering that he had to be back at his office at ten o'clock.

In front of the mirror, she took off the clothes around her shoulders, taking a final look at herself in all her glory. But suddenly she uttered a cry. She no longer had the necklace round her neck!

*

Rising Action

The rising action is the series of events that develops the conflict and builds tension. Each event creates new challenges for the protagonist, making the problem more difficult to solve. As the story progresses, readers become more invested in the outcome and eager to discover what happens next.

In *The Necklace*

Mathilde borrows a beautiful diamond necklace to attend the ball, enjoys an unforgettable evening, and then discovers the necklace is missing. Each event increases the tension and brings her closer to a life-changing crisis.

Check Your Understanding

1. What events cause the conflict to become more serious?
2. How does Mathilde's decision to borrow the necklace affect the story?
3. Which event in the rising action creates the greatest sense of tension? Explain your answer.

Vocabulary

- **Rising action** – the series of events that develops the conflict and builds tension before the climax.
- **Tension** – the feeling of suspense or uncertainty that keeps readers interested.
- **Consequence** – the result of a character's actions or decisions.
- **Escalate** – to become more serious or intense.

Writer's Toolbox

Build Tension with Complications

A strong rising action is made up of several connected events that gradually make the protagonist's problem more difficult to solve. Each complication should increase the tension and encourage readers to keep turning the page.

Ask yourself:

- Does each event make the conflict more serious?
- Are the challenges becoming more difficult?
- Will readers want to keep reading to find out what happens next?

***Literary Note:** *Not every story follows Freytag's Pyramid perfectly. In many short stories, the climax and resolution occur very close together, and different readers may identify the climax differently. What matters most is being able to explain your interpretation using evidence from the text.**

Section 4: The Climax

"What is the matter?" asked her husband, already half undressed.

She turned towards him, panic-stricken.

"I have ... I have ... I no longer have Madame Forestier's necklace."

He stood up, distraught.

"What! ... how! ... That's impossible!"

They looked in the folds of her dress, in the folds of her cloak, in her pockets, everywhere. But they could not find it.

"Are you sure you still had it on when you left the ball?" he asked.

"Yes. I touched it in the hall at the Ministry."

"But if you had lost it in the street we would have heard it fall. It must be in the cab."

"Yes. That's probably it. Did you take his number?"

"No. And you, didn't you notice it?"

"No."

They stared at each other, stunned. At last Loisel put his clothes on again.

"I'm going back," he said, "over the whole route we walked, see if I can find it."

He left. She remained in her ball dress all evening, without the strength to go to bed, sitting on a chair, with no fire, her mind blank.

Her husband returned at about seven o'clock. He had found nothing.

He went to the police, to the newspapers to offer a reward, to the cab companies, everywhere the tiniest glimmer of hope led him.

She waited all day, in the same state of blank despair from before this frightful disaster.

Loisel returned in the evening, a hollow, pale figure; he had found nothing.

"You must write to your friend," he said, "tell her you have broken the clasp of her necklace and that you are having it mended. It will give us time to look some more."

She wrote as he dictated.

*

At the end of one week they had lost all hope.

And Loisel, who had aged five years, declared:

"We must consider how to replace the jewel."

The next day they took the box which had held it, and went to the jeweler whose name they found inside. He consulted his books.

"It was not I, madame, who sold the necklace; I must simply have supplied the case."

And so they went from jeweler to jeweler, looking for a necklace like the other one, consulting their memories, both sick with grief and anguish.

In a shop at the Palais Royal, they found a string of diamonds which seemed to be exactly what they were looking for. It was worth forty thousand francs. They could have it for thirty-six thousand.

So they begged the jeweler not to sell it for three days. And they made an arrangement that he would take it back for thirty-four thousand francs if the other necklace was found before the end of February.

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

And he did borrow, asking for a thousand francs from one man, five hundred from another, five louis here, three louis there. He gave notes, made ruinous agreements, dealt with usurers, with every type of money-lender. He compromised the rest of his life, risked signing notes without knowing if he could ever honor them, and, terrified by the anguish still to come, by the black misery about to fall on him, by the prospect of every physical privation and every moral torture he was about to suffer, he went to get the new necklace, and laid down on the jeweler's counter thirty-six thousand francs.

When Madame Loisel took the necklace back, Madame Forestier said coldly:

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

To the relief of her friend, she did not open the case. If she had detected the substitution, what would she have thought? What would she have said? Would she have taken her friend for a thief?

*

Climax

The climax is the turning point of a story and the moment of greatest emotional impact. It is where the central conflict reaches its peak and the story's most important question is answered. The climax often changes the reader's understanding of everything that came before it.

In *The Necklace*

Mathilde finally learns that the necklace she spent ten years replacing was only an imitation. This shocking revelation transforms the entire story and highlights its central themes of pride, appearance, and irony.

Check Your Understanding

1. What shocking truth does Mathilde discover at the end of the story?
2. Why is this revelation considered the climax?
3. How does the ending change your opinion of Mathilde and her choices?

Vocabulary

- **Climax** – the turning point of a story where the central conflict reaches its highest point.
- **Revelation** – a surprising piece of information that changes a character's or reader's understanding.
- **Irony** – a contrast between what is expected and what actually happens.
- **Theme** – the central message or idea explored in a story.

Writer's Toolbox

Create a Memorable Climax

A strong climax delivers the story's most important emotional or dramatic moment. Whether it is an exciting action scene, a difficult decision, or a surprising revelation, the climax should feel like a natural result of everything that came before it.

Ask yourself:

- Does my climax resolve the central conflict?
- Will it surprise or satisfy my readers?
- Does it connect naturally to the events of the story?

Section 5: Falling Action

From then on, Madame Loisel knew the horrible life of the very poor. But she played her part heroically. The dreadful debt must be paid. She would pay it. They dismissed their maid; they changed their lodgings; they rented a garret under the roof.

She came to know the drudgery of housework, the odious labors of the kitchen. She washed the dishes, staining her rosy nails on greasy pots and the bottoms of pans. She washed the dirty linen, the shirts and the dishcloths, which she hung to dry on a line; she carried the garbage down to the street every morning, and carried up the water, stopping at each landing to catch her breath. And, dressed like a commoner, she went to the fruiterer's, the grocer's, the butcher's, her basket on her arm, bargaining, insulted, fighting over every miserable sou.

Each month they had to pay some notes, renew others, get more time.

Her husband worked every evening, doing accounts for a tradesman, and often, late into the night, he sat copying a manuscript at five sous a page.

And this life lasted ten years.

At the end of ten years they had paid off everything, everything, at usurer's rates and with the accumulations of compound interest.

Falling Action

The falling action follows the climax and shows the consequences of the protagonist's choices. Loose ends begin to be resolved, and the story moves toward its conclusion. Although the main conflict has reached its turning point, the effects of the climax continue to shape the characters' lives.

In *The Necklace*

After replacing the necklace, Mathilde and her husband spend ten years working to repay their enormous debt. Their once ordinary lives become filled with hardship and sacrifice as they face the consequences of one costly mistake.

Check Your Understanding

1. How does Mathilde's life change after replacing the necklace?
2. What sacrifices do Mathilde and her husband make to repay their debt?
3. How does the falling action prepare readers for the story's resolution?

Vocabulary

- **Falling action** – the events that follow the climax and lead toward the story's resolution.
- **Consequence** – the result of a character's actions or decisions.
- **Sacrifice** – giving up something valuable for a greater purpose or necessity.
- **Resolution** – the final part of a story where remaining questions are answered and the conflict is concluded.

Writer's Toolbox

Show the Consequences

A strong falling action gives readers time to see how the climax has changed the characters and their world. Instead of introducing new conflicts, it reveals the lasting effects of earlier decisions and prepares readers for the ending.

Ask yourself:

- How has my protagonist changed because of the climax?
- What consequences do they now face?

Does the falling action lead naturally to the resolution?

Section 6: Resolution

Madame Loisel looked old now. She had become strong, hard and rough like all women of impoverished households. With hair half combed, with skirts awry, and reddened hands, she talked loudly as she washed the floor with great swishes of water. But sometimes, when her husband was at the office, she sat down near the window and thought of that evening at the ball so long ago, when she had been so beautiful and so admired.

What would have happened if she had not lost that necklace? Who knows, who knows? How strange life is, how fickle! How little is needed for one to be ruined or saved!

*

One Sunday, as she was walking in the Champs Élysées to refresh herself after the week's work, suddenly she saw a woman walking with a child. It was Madame Forestier, still young, still beautiful, still charming.

Madame Loisel felt emotional. Should she speak to her? Yes, of course. And now that she had paid, she would tell her all. Why not?

She went up to her.

"Good morning, Jeanne."

The other, astonished to be addressed so familiarly by this common woman, did not recognize her. She stammered:

"But - madame - I don't know. You must have made a mistake."

"No, I am Mathilde Loisel."

Her friend uttered a cry.

"Oh! ... my poor Mathilde, how you've changed! ..."

"Yes, I have had some hard times since I last saw you, and many miseries ... and all because of you! ..."

"Me? How can that be?"

"You remember that diamond necklace that you lent me to wear to the Ministry party?"

"Yes. Well?"

"Well, I lost it."

"What do you mean? You brought it back."

"I brought you back another exactly like it. And it has taken us ten years to pay for it. It wasn't easy for us, we had very little. But at last it is over, and I am very glad."

Madame Forestier was stunned.

"You say that you bought a diamond necklace to replace mine?"

"Yes; you didn't notice then? They were very similar."

And she smiled with proud and innocent pleasure.

Madame Forestier, deeply moved, took both her hands.

"Oh, my poor Mathilde! Mine was an imitation! It was worth five hundred francs at most! ..."

Resolution

The resolution is the final part of a story where the central conflict is resolved and readers learn the outcome of the protagonist's journey. It answers the story's most important questions and reveals the lasting effects of the characters' choices.

In *The Necklace*

The resolution occurs when Mathilde discovers that the necklace she spent ten years replacing was only an imitation. This unexpected revelation explains the story's central irony and reinforces its themes of pride, appearance, and the consequences of one's decisions.

Check Your Understanding

1. How does the resolution answer the story's central conflict?
2. Why is the revelation about the necklace so ironic?
3. What lesson do you think Guy de Maupassant wanted readers to learn from the ending?

Vocabulary

- **Resolution** – the final part of a story where the main conflict is resolved.
- **Denouement** – the events after the resolution that tie up any remaining loose ends.
- **Irony** – a contrast between what is expected and what actually happens.
- **Theme** – the central message or idea explored in a story.

Writer's Toolbox

Finish with Purpose

A strong resolution gives readers a satisfying ending by answering the story's most important questions. The ending should connect naturally to the events that came before it and leave readers with a lasting impression.

Ask yourself:

- Does my ending resolve the main conflict?
- What message will readers take away from my story?
- Does my ending feel satisfying and meaningful?

Literary Note

Not every story includes a separate **denouement**. In some stories, the resolution is followed by a brief period that ties up loose ends and shows what happens to the characters afterward. In other stories, such as *The Necklace*, the resolution and ending occur almost at the same moment. The story ends immediately after the final revelation, leaving readers to reflect on its meaning for themselves.

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The Carter English Curriculum

Narrative Writing

Module 1: Understanding Plot – *The Necklace*

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Educational Use

This resource has been developed as a supplementary educational module for the study of narrative structure and literary analysis. It is intended for classroom instruction, independent study, and teacher professional use.

Acknowledgments

Guy de Maupassant's timeless short story provides an outstanding model for studying plot structure, characterization, irony, and theme. The accompanying instructional materials were developed to support students in reading critically, thinking analytically, and writing effectively.

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