

NCERT QUESTIONS WITH SOLUTIONS

Read and Find Out

1. What kind of a person is Madame Loisel — why is she always unhappy?

Ans. Madame Loisel was a pretty, young lady, born as if through an error of destiny, into a family of clerks. She had no dowry, no hopes, no means of becoming known, loved, and married by a man either rich or distinguished. She allowed herself to marry a petty clerk in the office of the Board of Education. She was simple, but she was always unhappy and suffered incessantly because she felt that she had been born for all the delicacies and luxuries and not to lead a simple life. She suffered from the poverty of her apartment, the shabby walls and the worn chairs. All these things tortured and angered her. At dinner while her husband genuinely appreciated the food served she would only think of elegant dinners, of shining silver and of the exquisite food served in marvellous dishes. She had neither frocks nor jewels, nothing and yet she loved only those things. She had a rich friend, whom she did not like to visit simply because she suffered so much when she returned and wept for whole days from despair and disappointment.

2. What kind of a person is her husband?

Ans. Her husband was a clerk in the office of the Board of Education. Unlike Madame Loisel, he was content with his life. While Madame Loisel used to suffer thinking about luxuries and delicacies, he could derive great sense of satisfaction even from a humble 'potpie'. He was also a loving husband, as is seen from his behaviour towards his wife. He readily parted with the four hundred francs that he had saved to buy a gun, so that Madame Loisel would be able to wear a nice dress to the Minister's ball. This shows that his wife's happiness was more important to him.

3. What fresh problem now disturbs Madame Loisel?

Ans. The fresh problem that now disturbed Madame Loisel is that although she had a pretty dress for the ball she was still vexed as she did not have a jewel to wear with it. Since she had nothing to adorn herself with, she was worried that she would have a poverty stricken look and so preferred not to go to the party. Her husband tried to solve her problem by suggesting she wear some natural flowers as they looked chic in that season but she refused saying that there was nothing more humiliating than to have a shabby air in the midst of rich women.

4. How is the problem solved?

Ans. Madame Loisel's husband solved this problem. He told his wife to request her friend, Madame Forestier to lend her some jewels. The next day she visited her friend and related her story of distress. Madame Forestier showed her the jewel-case and told her to take what she liked. At first she could not make up her mind but finally she looked into a black satin box, and found a superb necklace of diamonds which she decided to borrow.

5. What do M. and Madame Loisel do when they came to know that Matilda had lost Madame Forestier's necklace?

Ans. When Madame Loisel returned from the ball she found Madame Forestier's necklace was not around her neck. The couple looked in the folds of the dress, in the folds of the cloak, in the pockets, everywhere but they could not find it. They tried to recall where she could have lost it on the street or in the cab but they did not have the cab number. Loisel decided to go over the track where they had walked on foot, but still did not find it. He then went to the police and to the cab offices, and put an advertisement in the newspapers, offering a reward. To gain some time in the search for the necklace, he asked his wife to write to her friend and state that she had broken the clasp of the necklace and that she would soon have it repaired. Finally at the end of a week, they had lost all hope and decided to replace the necklace.

6. How do they replace the necklace?

Ans. Loisel asked Matilda to write a letter to Madame Forestier, explaining that she had broken the clasp of the necklace and would get it repaired. In a shop of the Palais-Royal, M and Madame Loisel found a chaplet of diamonds, which seemed to them exactly like the one she had lost. It was valued at forty thousand francs. They could get it for thirty-six thousand. Loisel possessed eighteen thousand francs, which his father had left him. He borrowed the rest. He made ruinous promises, took money from usurers and the whole race of lenders. Then he went to get the new necklace, depositing on the merchant's counter thirty-six thousand francs. Finally, he bought the necklace and gave it to Matilda for her to take it back to Madame Forestier.

Think About It

1. The course of the Loiseles' life changed due to the necklace. Comment.

Ans. The course of the Loiseles' life changed due to the necklace because once Matilda had replaced the necklace, she had to pay back all the money she had borrowed to purchase the new one. They sent away the maid, they changed their lodgings; they rented some rooms in an attic. Matilda learned the odious work of a kitchen. She washed the dishes. She washed the soiled linen, their clothes and dish cloths, which she hung on the line to dry; she took down the refuse to the street each morning and brought up the water, she went to the grocer's, the butcher's and the fruiterer's, with her basket on her arm, shopping, haggling to the last sou of her miserable money all this clothed like a woman of the people. Her husband worked evenings, putting the books of some merchants in order. At night, he did copy at five sous a page. This lasted for ten years, and at the end of the said period, they were able to repay their lenders.

2. What was the cause of Matilda's ruin? How could she have avoided it?

Ans. The cause of Matilda's ruin was her longing for a good life. She suffered from the poverty of her apartment, the shabby walls and the worn chairs. All these things tortured and angered her. She was always dissatisfied, always unhappy, always craving for all the delicacies and luxuries of life. She could have avoided it by accepting her fate and like her husband, been happy, contented, satisfied and lived the life she was destined to live. Had she lived in this way, she would not have had to borrow the necklace which changed the course of their lives.

3. What would have happened to Matilda if she had confessed to her friend that she had lost her necklace?

Ans. Truth and honesty would have saved Matilda from her doom. If only she had been courageous enough to confess to her friend the truth of the necklace, she would have come to know that it was a fake one that cost a mere five hundred francs.

Although her friend might have been upset or even angry with her in the beginning, eventually she would have forgiven her. She may have asked her to replace the jewels and told her from where she had purchased them. In that case Matilda would have found out that they were not real diamonds and she would have had to pay much less to replace them. She would not have spent her husband's entire inheritance and borrowed eighteen thousand francs to pay for its replacement. In fact, she would have saved herself and her husband from ten long years of crushing poverty, misery and back breaking labour.

4. If you were caught in a situation like this, how would you have dealt with it?

Ans. Foremost of all, I would have done my best not to become a victim of my own pride and aspirations. If, I was caught in such a situation, I would have let the truth out and then face the consequences. Honesty would have been the way out for me. I would have gone straight to my friend and confessed to her the loss of the necklace. Although she would have been angry with me in the beginning, being a true friend, she would have eventually forgiven me. If she was truly very upset with me because she liked the necklace a lot, I would have offered to replace it. Had I then visited the store where she had bought the necklace, I would have realised that they were not real diamonds and in this way, I would not have suffered the way she did. (Answers may vary)

Talk About It

1. The characters in this story speak in English. Do you think this is their language? What clues are there in the story about the language its characters must be speaking in?

Ans. Though the characters speak in English, it is not their language. Maupassant wrote the story in French and it was translated into English. Again, the very text throws up enough words in French to prove it otherwise. First, the very names of characters like Madame Loisel, Madame Forestier and the minister's name George Ramponneau indicate their French origin. Then, the words for currency like 'Franc' and 'Sou' show the same. Also, the shop's location at 'Palais Royal' and 'Champs Elysees' point out the French history of the characters and the story.

2. Honesty is the best Policy.

Ans. Honesty is definitely the best policy. Falsehood and hypocrisy seem very attractive and rewarding at first. But, the path they tread on leads to nothing but misery, evil and utter gloom. Honesty, on the contrary, seems to be a difficult choice in pursuit of material happiness. However, it is the only choice for a life of contentment, peace and everlasting happiness.

3. We should be content with what life gives us.

Ans. Life is a great mystery. For every individual this mystery of life comes wrapped in a unique package. For some, it is all riches, comfort, name and fame. For some, it is nothing but sheer hunger, poverty, anguish and an everyday quest for bare survival. One, however, must learn to live within one's means and be content with what one has. One may try to improve his lot by honest means but eventually must be at peace with what one manages to have.