Materials and Lessons for Teaching Close Reading of “The Necklace”

Created by Megan Pankiewicz, on behalf of The English Teacher’s Friend
**Name:**

**Close Reading and Annotating “The Necklace”**

**Directions:** In the “Annotated Quotes” column, highlight or circle important words, images, or sentences in the quote. In the “Notes – Thoughts – Questions” column, write down observations or insights you have about the quote or any questions presented.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Annotated Quotes</th>
<th>Notes – Thoughts - Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>She was one of those pretty, charming young ladies, born, as if through an error</td>
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<td>of destiny, into a family of clerks. She had no dowry, no hopes, no means of</td>
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<td>becoming known, appreciated, loved, and married by a man either rich or</td>
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<td>distinguished; and she allowed herself to marry a petty clerk in the office of</td>
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<tr>
<td>the Board of Education.</td>
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<td>She suffered incessantly, feeling herself born for all delicacies and luxuries.</td>
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<tr>
<td>She suffered from the poverty of her apartment, the shabby walls, the worn</td>
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<td>chair, and the faded stuffs.</td>
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<td>She had neither frocks nor jewels, nothing. And she loved only those things.</td>
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<td>She felt that she was made for them. She had such a desire to please, to be</td>
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<td>sought after, to be clever, and courted.</td>
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<td>She saw at first some bracelets, then a collar of pearls, then a Venetian cross</td>
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<td>of gold and jewels of admirable workmanship. She tried the jewels before the</td>
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<td>glass, hesitated, but could neither decide to take them or leave them. Then</td>
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<td>she said: “Have you nothing more?”</td>
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<td>She danced with enthusiasm, with passion, intoxicated with pleasure, thinking</td>
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<td>of nothing, in the triumph of her beauty, in the glory of her success, in a</td>
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<td>kind of cloud of happiness that came of all this homage, and of all this</td>
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<td>admiration, of all these awakened desires, and this victory so complete and</td>
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<td>sweet to the heart of woman.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
He borrowed it, asking for a thousand francs of one, five hundred of another, five louis of this one, and three louis of that one. He gave notes, made ruinous promises, took money of usurers and the whole race of lenders. He compromised his whole existence, in fact, risked his signature, without even knowing whether he could make it good or not, and, harassed by anxiety for the future, by the black misery which surrounded him, and by the prospect of all physical privations and moral torture, he went to get the new necklace, depositing on the merchant’s counter thirty-six thousand francs.

Madame Loisel seemed old now. She had become a strong, hard woman, the crude woman of the poor household. Her hair badly dressed, her skirts awry, her hands red, she spoke in a loud tone, and washed the floors with large pails of water.

And she smiled with a proud and simple joy.

**FIVE SIGNIFICANT POINTS FROM CLASS DISCUSSION:**
CLOSE READING OF “The Necklace”

Materials for students:
Copies of the excerpted text; three different colored highlighters; pencil or pen

Materials for instructor:
Overhead projector or document camera

Agenda:
1) Distribute copies of text and highlighters to students.
2) Explain difference between reading for comprehension and reading for analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reading for comprehension</th>
<th>Reading for analysis</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus on understanding story</td>
<td>Focus on investigating writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looking at whole picture</td>
<td>Zooming in on tiny pieces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acting as a reader</td>
<td>Acting as a scientist or detective</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

3) Walk the students through the annotating steps below. Before beginning, tell the students not to worry about being right or wrong; rather, make decisions based on knowledge and gut instinct.
   a) Highlight words associated with wealth and beauty in pink.
   b) Highlight words associated with poverty and homeliness in yellow.

4) It is up to the instructor whether or not to stop for discussion and sharing after each step of the annotation process. Essentially, the activity should follow the following process:

5) After giving students a few minutes for highlighting, the instructor should invite students to share what one thing they have highlighted. This is an excellent opportunity to gauge understanding, engage the entire class, and create a low-stress moment for participation by those students who typically don’t share. In some cases the instructor may simply highlight the word and call on the next student, but in other cases a follow question of “Why did you highlight that word?” is necessary and needed to further discussion and promote metacognition.

6) Once the shared annotations are marked, the instructor will lead the students in a class discussion of what those annotations reveal. This is the most crucial step. It is not enough for students to identify similes; we want to move them forward in understanding WHY an author uses them – in general and in specific circumstances. Oftentimes students need help finding patterns, but seeing patterns in writing leads to a deeper understanding of a text.

Assessment:
Students can be assessed on their participation during the activity, their annotations on the excerpt, and/or in a follow-up writing activity in which they are asked to explain their analysis in a paragraph or more.

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ANALYZING THE OPENING & CLOSING OF “THE NECKLACE”

In this short story, Guy De Maupassant uses his protagonist to develop his theme. Closely read the two excerpts below and compare how Madame Loisel is portrayed in the beginning and at the end of the story. Annotate the passage, then consider the questions below the excerpts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opening</th>
<th>Closing</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>She was one of those pretty, charming young ladies, born, as if through</td>
<td>Madame Loisel now knew the horrible life of necessity. She did her part,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>an error of destiny, into a family of clergymen. She had no dowry, no</td>
<td>however, completely heroically. It was necessary to pay this frightful</td>
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<tr>
<td>hopes, no means of becoming known, appreciated, loved, and married by a</td>
<td>debt. She would pay it. They sent away the maid; they changed their</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>man either rich or distinguished; and she allowed herself to marry a</td>
<td>lodgings; they rented some rooms under a mansard roof.</td>
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<tr>
<td>petty clerk in the office of the Board of Education.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>She was simple, not being able to adorn herself; but she was unhappy,</td>
<td>She learned the heavy cares of a household, the odious work of a kitchen.</td>
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<tr>
<td>as one out of her class; for women belong to no caste, no race; their</td>
<td>She washed the dishes, using her rosy nails upon the greasy pots and the</td>
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<tr>
<td>grace, their beauty, and their charm serving them in the place of birth</td>
<td>bottoms of the stewpans. She washed the soiled linens, the chemises and</td>
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<tr>
<td>and family. Their inborn finesse, their instinctive elegance, their</td>
<td>dishcloths, which she hung on the line to dry; she took down the refuse</td>
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<tr>
<td>suppleness of wit are their only aristocracy, making some daughters of</td>
<td>to the street each morning and brought up the water, stopping at each</td>
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<td>the people the equal of great ladies.</td>
<td>landing to breathe. And, clothes like a woman of the people, she went</td>
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<td></td>
<td>to the grocer’s, the butcher’s, and the fruiterer’s, with her basket on</td>
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<td></td>
<td>her arm, shopping, haggling over the last sou of her miserable money.</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>She suffered incessantly, feeling herself born for all delicacies and</td>
<td>Madame Loisel seemed old now. She had become a strong, hard woman, the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>luxuries. She suffered from the poverty of her apartment, the shabby</td>
<td>crude woman of the poor household. Her hair badly dressed, her skirts</td>
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<tr>
<td>walls, the worn chair, and the faded stuffs.</td>
<td>awry, her hands red, she spoke in a loud tone, and washed the floors with</td>
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<td></td>
<td>large pails of water.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
1) Go back and highlight words dealing with wealth and beauty in pink. Highlight words dealing with poverty and homeliness in yellow. Now look for patterns. What are they? What conclusions can you draw?

2) What do you notice about the sentence structure in these two sections? There is a technique called “Form Follows Function” that writer’s use; FFF means they use sentence structure to imitate or mimic an idea in the text. Where do you notice instances of this technique in these excerpts?

3) Tone is a writer’s attitude toward the writer or speaker towards the subject, the audience, or toward him/herself. What is De Maupassant’s attitude toward Madame Loisel? Does it change or remain the same? Support with textual evidence.
Fleshing out a character

What does this character think about the society s/he lives in?

What plans does this character make?

Important things s/he said (2)

What is at the heart of his/her personality that causes him/her to act and say what he/she does?

What s/he did

What s/he tried to do

Personality strengths

Personality weaknesses
Sample Character Traits

able
active
adventurous
affectionate
afraid
alert
ambitious
angry
annoyed
anxious
apologetic
arrogant
attentive
average
bad
blue
bold
bored
bossy
brainy
brave
bright
brilliant
busy
calm
careful
careless
cautious
charming
cheerful
childish
clever
clumsy
course
concerned
confident
confused
considerate
cooperative
courageous
cowardly
cross
cruel
curious
dangerous
daring
dark
decisive
demanding
dependable
depressed
determined
discouraged
dishonest
disrespectful
doubtful
dull
dutiful
eager
easygoing
efficient
embarassed
encouraging
energetic
evil
excited
expert
fair
faithful
fearless
fierce
foolish
fortunate
foul
fresh
friendly
frustrated
funny
gentle
giving
glamorous
gloomy
good
graceful
grateful
greedy
grouchy
grumpy
guilty
happy
harsh
hateful
healthy
helpful
honest
hopeful
hopeless
humorous
ignorant
imaginative
impatient
impolite
inconsiderate
independent
industrious
innocent
intelligent
jealous
kindly
lazy
leader
lively
lonely
loving
loyal
lucky
mature
mean
messy
miserable
mysterious
naughty
naive
nervous
nice
noisy
obedient
obnoxious
old
peaceful
picky
pleasant
polite
poor
popular
positive
precise
proper
proud
quick
quiet
rational
reliable
religious
responsible
restless
rich
rough
rowdy
rude
sad
safe
satisfied
scared
secretive
selfish
serious
sharp
short
shy
silly
skillful
sly
smart
sneaky
sorry
spoiled
stingy
strict
stubborn
sweet
talented
tall
thankful
thoughtful
thoughtless
tired
tolerant
touchy
trusting
trustworthy
unfriendly
unhappy
upset
useful
warm
weak
wicked
wise
worried
wrong
young
# Character Traits & Textual Evidence for ________________

## Character Trait #1:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quote (pg. ____):</th>
<th>Commentary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td></td>
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</table>

## Character Trait #2:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quote (pg. ____):</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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</tbody>
</table>
Character Analysis

Directions:
1. Complete the “Character Traits and Textual Evidence.”
2. Take your quotes and analysis and formulate it into a well-written paragraph using the following outline to help you. Don’t forget transition words.

I. Write a sentence containing the first adjective (character trait).
II. Write a sentence using your first quote that supports your first adjective. Incorporate the quote, don’t just copy it.
III. Write a sentence explaining how the quote supports the trait.
IV. Repeat steps II. and III. for the other quote.
V. Write a sentence containing the second adjective (character trait).
VI. Write a sentence using your second quote that supports your second adjective. Incorporate the quote, don’t just copy it.
VII. Write a sentence explaining how the quote supports the trait.
VIII. Repeat steps VI. and VII. for the other quote.
IX. Revise and edit your paragraph.
X. Turn in!
In Ray Bradbury’s novel, *Fahrenheit 451*, Granger functions as a wise old man. He and the other Book People accept (and expected) Montag from the beginning, saying, “Welcome back from the dead, Montag.” By acknowledging Montag’s previous state of mind and accepting him into the group, Granger acts as the experienced elder who takes a mentee under his wing. After Montag claims he’s been “an idiot all the way,” Granger reassures him, “We’re used to that. We all made the *right* kind of mistakes, or we wouldn’t be here.” Through Granger’s understanding, Montag can feel better about his past errors in judgment.

As an older person, Granger is also a realist. He understands that the Book People are “book burners, too.” Granger realizes that incriminatory evidence could possibly destroy the knowledge each runaway contains, so to avoid that conflict, he and the others “read the books and burnt them.” He also understands that one individual is not enough to change the world. He tells Montag, “You’re not important. You’re not anything.” Granger understands that the knowledge each person carries is what is important, not the individual body.

**Character Analysis – Poor**

I think that Montag is a curious person. I think that because he stayed with Clarisse and listened to her the whole time. If he wasn’t curious, he wouldn’t have stayed and listened to her. Montag is also open-minded. He is open-minded because when Beatty came to his house, Beatty had the 2 hour long lecture about life and books. For example Beatty said “Once, books appealed to a few people here, there, everywhere…” Beatty shows some books caught people’s eyes by attention, then everyone wanted it.
Using Highlighters for Close Reading

Overview:
Traditionally, honors or Advanced Placement students comprehend the texts we assign them to read. Our goal is to help students to notice elements of fiction beyond the plot and characters, and to break apart those elements to see what really makes writing function.

Materials:
Photocopy excerpt(s) from fictional texts – one for each student to write on
Several different colored highlighters for each student
Overhead transparency of text or photocopied version for document reader

Directions:
1. Pass out excerpt(s) to students
2. Read through the excerpt once, if new to students
3. Guide students through highlighting different elements (i.e. symbolism, figurative language, syntax, diction, imagery, characterization, etc.)
4. Approach each element one at a time. After each element, ask students to share what they marked and mark elements on an overhead transparency.
5. Once all elements have been marked, ask students to look for patterns or to offer explanations for the purpose or effect of each element. Instruct them to write down their thoughts – this gives all students the time and opportunity to arrive at their conclusions. After the majority of students have written their thoughts, ask for volunteers to share their insights.
6. Follow-up activities might include allowing students to work individually or with a partner on a new passage, or building in a writing assignment whereupon students would write an analytical paragraph or essay.

Assessment:
If this is the first time students have participated in this type of lesson, grade primarily for completion. After they have had practice with close reading, look for insight and complexity of thought and analysis.