

Short Stories with Peter: The Necklace by Guy de Maupassant (Abridged B1–B2 Level)

English learning resource · EN

Full episode script · English

71 lines

Study task: Listen again and notice the expressions you studied.

Welcome to Short Stories with Peter from Your English Toolbox.

I am Peter.

Tonight, one borrowed necklace will give a woman the happiest evening of her life.

By the next morning, it will seem to have destroyed her future.

The truth will arrive ten years too late.

This is The Necklace by Guy de Maupassant, first published in French in 1884.

This is a new English abridgement adapted for B1–B2 learners by Your English Toolbox.

Mathilde Loisel was young, beautiful, and unhappy with her ordinary life.

She dreamed of elegant rooms, fine dresses, and admiration.

Instead, she lived in a small Paris apartment with her husband, a kind government clerk.

One evening, Monsieur Loisel came home holding a large envelope.

Inside was an invitation to an important evening at the Ministry.

What can I wear when every woman there will look rich?

Her husband quietly offered her the money he had been saving for a hunting trip.

The new dress was soon ready, but Mathilde was still miserable.

I have no jewellery, so I will never look the part.

Ask your friend Jeanne Forestier to lend you something.

The next day, Jeanne opened her jewellery box and invited Mathilde to choose.

Among the bracelets and pearls, Mathilde found a magnificent diamond necklace in a black satin case.

Could you lend me this one?

Of course.

At the Ministry, Mathilde attracted more attention than she had ever imagined.

For a few perfect hours, she danced and felt that she belonged to the world she desired.

At four in the morning, Monsieur Loisel placed their plain old coat around Mathilde's beautiful dress.



Ashamed that the wealthy guests might see it, she hurried into the cold street.

After a long carriage ride home, Mathilde stood before the mirror for one last look at herself.

Then she screamed.

The necklace is gone.

They searched the dress, the coat, the apartment, and the route home.

Monsieur Loisel went to the police and the carriage companies, but nothing was found.

Write to Jeanne and say that the clasp has broken and is being repaired.

The lie gave them time, but after a week they chose to replace the necklace without telling Jeanne the truth.

They found an almost identical necklace costing thirty-six thousand francs, far beyond their means.

Monsieur Loisel used his inheritance and borrowed the rest from many lenders.

You should have brought it back sooner.

Jeanne accepted the replacement without opening its case.

The Loisels dismissed their servant and moved into a tiny room.

Mathilde carried water, washed clothes, and counted every coin.

Her husband worked by day and copied documents late into the night.

Ten years passed before they finally paid off the debt.

By then, Mathilde looked older and harder.

One Sunday, Mathilde saw Jeanne on the Champs-Élysées.

She did not recognise Mathilde.

It is me, Jeanne, Mathilde Loisel.

Mathilde, how you have changed.

I lost the necklace you lent me.

We bought another one, and it took us ten years to pay for it.

Mathilde smiled with tired pride because the debt was behind her.

Oh, my poor Mathilde.

My necklace was not made of real diamonds.

It was worth no more than five hundred francs.

Ten years of poverty had paid for a mistake that honesty might have prevented.

Now notice four expressions that carry the meaning of the story.

To look the part means to have the appearance expected in a particular situation.



Mathilde thinks jewellery will help her look the part.

Beyond your means describes something you cannot reasonably afford.

The replacement necklace is far beyond the Loisels' means.

To pay off a debt means to return all the money you owe.

The couple need ten years to pay off their debt.

To take something at face value means to accept its appearance without questioning it.

Everyone takes the necklace at face value.

The ending also gives us a powerful third conditional.

If Mathilde had told Jeanne the truth, she would not have lost ten years of her life.

We use if plus the past perfect and would have plus a past participle to imagine a different past result.

What would you have done?

Would you have confessed immediately, or would you have tried to replace the necklace?

You can find the complete transcript, translations in several languages, and a vocabulary guide on our website, yourenglishtoolbox.com.

There is a direct link to the episode page and all its resources in this episode description.

This was The Necklace by Guy de Maupassant, newly abridged in English for B1–B2 learners by Your English Toolbox.

I am Peter.

Thank you for listening.

