

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

English learning resource · EN

Key words & expressions · English

8 learning entries

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

1

look the part

DEF

to have the appearance that people expect for a particular role or situation

This expression is about outward appearance, not ability or character. Someone can look the part without truly being suitable for the role.

Mathilde believes that jewellery will help her look the part at the Ministry.

He wore a dark suit to look the part at the formal reception.

2

beyond your means

DEF

more expensive than you can reasonably afford with the money available to you

Means here refers to financial resources. The common patterns are beyond your means and live beyond your means; the latter describes regularly spending too much.

The replacement necklace is far beyond the Loisels' means.

A larger flat would be nice, but it is beyond our means at the moment.

3

pay off a debt

DEF

to finish repaying all the money that you owe

Pay off emphasises completion: after the final payment, nothing remains owed. Pay a debt may refer to one payment or to the whole process, but pay off normally signals the end.

The Loisels need ten years to pay off their debt.

She hopes to pay off her student loan before she turns thirty.

4

take something at face value

DEF

to accept something exactly as it appears or is presented, without questioning whether it is true

The expression often implies that a closer examination might reveal a different reality. It can refer to objects, statements, statistics or people's behaviour.

Everyone takes the necklace at face value and assumes that the diamonds are real.

Do not take the advertisement at face value; read the conditions carefully.



5

lend someone something / borrow something from someone

DEF

to give something temporarily / to receive and use something temporarily before returning it

Lend follows the direction from owner to user: Jeanne lends Mathilde a necklace. Borrow follows the direction towards the user: Mathilde borrows a necklace from Jeanne. English learners often reverse them.

Jeanne lends Mathilde the necklace, and Mathilde borrows it for the evening.

Could you lend me your notes, or may I borrow them until tomorrow?

6

attract attention

DEF

to cause people to notice or become interested in someone or something

Attention is normally uncountable in this collocation. Attract attention can be intentional or accidental and may describe positive, negative or neutral notice.

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

The bright sign attracted the attention of everyone passing the shop.

7

have something behind you

DEF

to have finished or overcome a difficult experience so that it is now in the past

This metaphor presents a problem as something left on the road behind you. It commonly appears as put something behind you or the problem is behind you.

Mathilde feels proud because the debt is finally behind her.

Once the exam is behind you, you can relax for the weekend.

8

If + past perfect, would have + past participle

DEF

a third conditional structure used to imagine a different result for a past situation that cannot now be changed

The if-clause describes the unreal past condition; the main clause describes its imagined consequence. It often expresses regret, criticism or reflection, but not a real future possibility.

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

If we had checked the address, we would have arrived on time.

