Critiques

Read the following excerpts from professional criticisms.

For “The Gift of the Magi” by Eugene Current-Garcia.

“It is not surprising that ‘The Gift of the Magi’ still enjoys such widespread fame, for in this trite little tale of mutual self-sacrifice between husband and wife, O. Henry crystallized dramatically what the world in all its stored-up wisdom knows to be of fundamental value in ordinary family life. Unselfish love shared, regardless of the attendant difficulties or distractions—this is the idea repeatedly implied as a criterion in his fictional treatment of domestic affairs. If such love is present, life can be a great adventure transcending all drabness; if it is absent, nothing else can take its place…O.Henry wrote few stories of ordinary family life that approach in tenderness and universal appeal the qualities found in ‘The Gift of the Magi’.

For “The Gift of the Magi” by Donald F. Peel.

“In ‘Gift of the Magi’ the surprise ending comes when Jim reveals that he has sold his watch to buy Della her present; then O. Henry goes on to add that of all who give gifts, these are the wisest. (This added moral is a favorite of his.) One outstanding characteristic of O. Henry’s work of which critics have taken little note is his use of the technique of ‘after the thunder, the still, small voice’. This is the adding of a moral after the punch line or surprise ending…O. Henry’s stories are often didactic in this fashion.”

The above criticisms are essentially positive in nature, though possible flaws are noted (trite, didactic). Do you agree? Write a review for “The Gift of the Magi”. Include the following:

1. Your opinion of the story…was it good? Why or why not?
2. Would you recommend others read the story? Why or why not?
3. What flaws (if any) does the story have? Explain.

For “The Necklace” (from enotes).

“Guy de Maupassant’s short story ‘The Necklace’ was first published in the Paris newspaper *Le Gaulois* on February 17,1884, and was subsequently included in his 1885 collection of short stories *Tales of Day and Night*. Like most of Maupassant’s short fiction, it was an instant success, and it has become his most widely read and anthologized story. In addition to its well-rounded characters, tight plotting, wealth of detail, and keen social commentary, ‘The Necklace’ is conspicuous for its use of completely changes the story’s meaning. Although Maupassant rarely made use of the device, its presence in this work has tied him to it irrevocably. Although it is not known where Maupassant got the idea for his story, certain connections may be made between ‘The Necklace’ and the novel *Madame Bovary*, written by Maupassant’s mentor and friend, Gustave Flaubert. Both stories feature a young, beautiful woman in a social situation that she finds distasteful. Like Madame Bovary, Mathilde Loisel attempts to escape her social situation in life scheming actions ultimately doom her.”

The above criticism is essentially positive in nature. Do you agree? Write a review for “The Necklace”. Include the following:

1. Your opinion of the story…was it good? Why or why not?
2. Would you recommend others read the story? Why or why not?
3. What flaws (if any) does the story have? Explain.