

A white plate with various appetizers including canapés, asparagus, and a lime wedge.

# ‘The Luncheon’

By - William Somerset Maugham

B.A. First Year: English Language

# About the author

William Somerset Maugham (1874-1965) was a British playwright novelist and short story writer.

- He was one of the most popular writers of his time and the highest paid authors of the 1930s.
- Some of his famous work include
  - *Human Bondage* (1915)
  - *The Moon and Sixpence* (1919)
  - *Cakes and Ale* (1930)
  - *The Razor's Edge* (1944)
  - *The Circle* (1921)
  - *Our Betters* (1923)



# Summary



'The Luncheon' is one of the most delightfully amusing stories. It is a story about a lunch date with a lady who is an admirer of Maugham's stories. She wins the author's favor and expresses her wish to meet him at a high class restaurant called Foyot. In the story, the author exposes the false motives of modest eating habits, of the middle classes with a touch of humor.





The Story is set in Paris and can be divided into three Parts.

Part I  
Present

Part II  
20 years later

Part III  
Present

## Part 1

The book writer and the woman meet again after they last saw each other 20 years before, and then he starts to recall the luncheon at that day.



## Part 02

### Part II

- The author only communicated with the lady through the mail. So, he is rather surprised to meet a woman of forty. She gives him "the impression of having more teeth, white and large and even, than were necessary for any practical purpose."
- The author has only eighty francs in his pocket to last him the rest of the month. But the lady proposed to eat at one of the most expensive restaurants. So, he is anxious about eating at Fayot where only rich and influential can afford to dine.

## Part 02 (continue...)

At the restaurant, she keeps consuming such rich foods and drink. But all the time, she keeps on scolding Maugham for eating red meat, as he has ordered mutton:

"You see, you've filled your stomach with a lot of meat"—my one miserable little chop— "and you can't eat any more. But I've just had a snack and I shall enjoy a peach."



# Part 03

This brings us back to the present time, where the narrator and the lady are meeting after twenty long years. At the end, the author explains that he is not a vindictive man. But the immortal gods taken the revenge for the luncheon ordeal. Now this woman, who only eats light lunches and only one thing at a time. She now "weighs twenty-one stones" (nearly 295 pounds).



BEFORE



AFTER



# The Main Character: The Protagonist

**The narrator:** He is young, inexperienced young writer who is living in Paris.

**Well-Mannered:** He is also a educated man, polite from a good family tradition.

**Poor:** He is very poor and can hardly keep body and soul together. When the narrator meets the lady at foyot's , he has only eight francs to pay the bill. At last narrator is left with no money at all.

**Gullible and Easily-Manipulated:** When he gets the letter from the lady who was admired by his work and want to meet him. He feels flattered and is unable to be honest with her. He cannot say 'NO' to woman because of his traditional etiquettes . He cant afford expensive food but still allows her to have it.

**Development in His Character:** His Character develops throughout the story. His feelings change from FLATTERY AND EXCITEMENT to DISGUST AND ANGER to REVENGE.

# The lady

**Name Not Mentioned:** The lady was 40yrs old, talkative and not attractive. She was in fact a women of a charming age. But she is not one that excites a sudden and overwhelming passion at first sight.

**Probably a fan:** she loved the writing of narrator. She had read of his books and wrote a letter to congratulate him on his work.

**Manipulating and Insincere:** She manipulates him by requesting to chat with him and a little lunch at foyot- an expensive restaurant that he cannot afford to dine at. She gets what she wants but the poor author has to pay the price.

**Bold and Self-Centered:** She has her own way and just thinks about herself: her interests, her longings etc.. She doesn't consider whether the poor author can afford such expensive dishes.

**Demanding, Inconsiderate and Extravagant:** She is extremely food loving and ravenous woman. She doesn't even think a bit about the costs of the expensive dishes, that narrator have to pay for the lunch. Her, "I never eat more than one thing" is her signature dialogue. This woman is smart, experienced, selfish and hardly bothered about the expense.

# Theme of the Story

The leading themes of the short story 'Luncheon' by Somerset Maugham are **appearance vs. reality, manipulation and revenge**.

The speaker, in 'Luncheon', wishes from the beginning that his date (the lady) would be a beautiful woman. He imagines a portrayal of a graceful lady in his mind. But, when he goes to have a lunch with her, she appears as a surprising blast. She is totally opposite to his imagination. She is a food-loving and ravenous woman who does not even think a bit about the costs the speaker would have to pay for the lunch. She has a very good appetite, and gobbles a lot of expensive dishes also. The most interesting part is the verbal irony hidden in the lines she utters to the speaker: **"I never eat more than one thing"**. The irony concealed in her speeches helps to develop the main theme.



# Irony

- ❖ The story is full of irony. The luncheon date is proposed to the author by a woman whom he ironically thinks as a supporter of his art. But, the lady intends to exploit the narrator by pretending an interest and admiration for his work. She was not feeling any actual interest.
- ❖ The irony is that the narrator takes her to an expensive restaurant where he'd never dared to go himself. He can never afford it because of his meagre income.
- ❖ "I never eat more than one thing", "I never eat anything for luncheon", and "I never drink anything for luncheon" are the very ironical statement made by the lady. Because, she ends up eating a lot of horribly expensive dishes like: Salmon, Caviar, Asparagus, Peaches, Exotic Ice-cream etc.

# Moral Lesson

- ❖ It is necessary to say "no" when it is necessary.
- ❖ People receive the impact of their own behavior. People who manipulate others are sure to receive their just punishment.
- ❖ When one tries to covet small gains, one may suffer a great loss.





Thank You!

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