

The Luncheon Key Facts

Writer: W. Somerset Maugham | Generated: Jan 26, 2026

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Key Facts

- **Full Title:** The Luncheon
- **Author:** William Somerset Maugham (1874–1965)
- **Language:** English
- **Written Date:** Around 1924
- **First Published:** 1924 (in a magazine), later included in the collection “Here and There”
- **Genre:** Realistic Short Story
- **Form:** Short Fiction (humorous, ironic, character-centered narrative)
- **Type of Work:** A humorous and ironic social story about vanity, class behaviour, and economic pressure
- **Period:** Early Twentieth-Century British Literature
- **Narrative Style:** First-person narrative; simple, direct, observant, ironic tone
- **Tone:** Humorous, ironic, light, witty, and slightly bitter
- **Climax:** The narrator becomes desperate about the bill as the woman keeps ordering costly items while claiming she “never eats more than one thing.”
- **Famous Line:** “I never eat anything for luncheon.”
- **One-Line Summary:** A young writer takes a woman to an expensive lunch, only to find she orders costly foods while pretending to eat very little.
- **Point of View:** First-person point of view (the narrator himself tells the story)
- **Setting**
 - **Time Setting:** Early 20th century, during the narrator’s struggling days as a young writer in Paris
 - **Place Setting:** Paris, mainly in the expensive restaurant “Foyot’s”; includes the narrator’s memory of living in the Latin Quarter.

Key Notes - English

The Luncheon: The Luncheon is a popular short story by William Somerset Maugham that highlights his typical humor, satire, and keen observation of human nature. The story centers on a young, poor writer who invites a woman admirer to lunch at the expensive Paris restaurant Foyot's. The woman repeatedly claims that she "never eats anything for luncheon," yet she keeps ordering costly dishes such as caviar, salmon, asparagus, ice-cream, and even a peach, putting the narrator in financial trouble. The entire story exposes human hypocrisy, class behavior, economic pressure, and the humorous conflict created by social politeness. In the end, the narrator realizes that the woman is not a modest eater at all; she simply hides her desires behind false statements. Through satire, Maugham shows how some people take advantage of others' politeness to serve their own interests.

Foyot's: Foyot's is a famous and very expensive restaurant in Paris where French senators and wealthy aristocrats usually dine. For a poor young writer, eating at such a place is almost impossible. Therefore, in the story, Foyot's is not just a restaurant; it represents the luxurious lifestyle of the rich upper class. The woman's demands and arrogance, and the narrator's financial struggle, both revolve around Foyot's. Everything there is expensive: caviar, salmon, asparagus, and out-of-season peaches. For the narrator, having lunch at Foyot's is a risk, and this setting creates the humor and tension of rising expenses in the story. Thus, Foyot's becomes a symbol of class difference, social politeness, and the economic stress that exposes human helplessness.