

The Luncheon Themes

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Hypocrisy and Social Pretence: The main theme of the story is hypocrisy. The woman repeatedly claims that she “never eat anything for luncheon” and that she “just eat one thing.” But she keeps ordering one expensive dish after another; caviar, salmon, asparagus, ice-cream, and even an out-of-season peach.

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Poverty and Economic Struggle: The narrator is a young and poor writer. He lives in Paris with great difficulty. He has only eighty francs left for the month. When the woman orders expensive foods, he becomes frightened. The story shows that the politeness of a poor person can sometimes put them in serious trouble. Wealthy people often fail to see or understand the suffering of the poor. The narrator’s helplessness, constant calculations, and fear of the bill make the story very realistic.

Irony and Human Foolishness: The story is full of irony and humor. The woman acts hypocritically. The narrator is too polite and ashamed to protest. The waiter gives fake smiles. Together, these elements reveal human weaknesses and foolish behavior. At the end, when the narrator says, “Today she weighs twenty-one stone.”, it becomes a soft form of revenge and satire. The story shows that people often cannot see their own hypocrisy, though it is very clear to others.

Politeness, Weakness, and Inner Conflict: The narrator is gentle, polite, and shy. He never wants to hurt anyone’s feelings. So he accepts all the woman’s unreasonable requests. He knows his own financial limits, yet he stays silent because of the situation. Inside, he is terrified, embarrassed, and under pressure. The story shows that politeness can sometimes turn into weakness. And this weakness allows others to take advantage of a person’s kindness.