

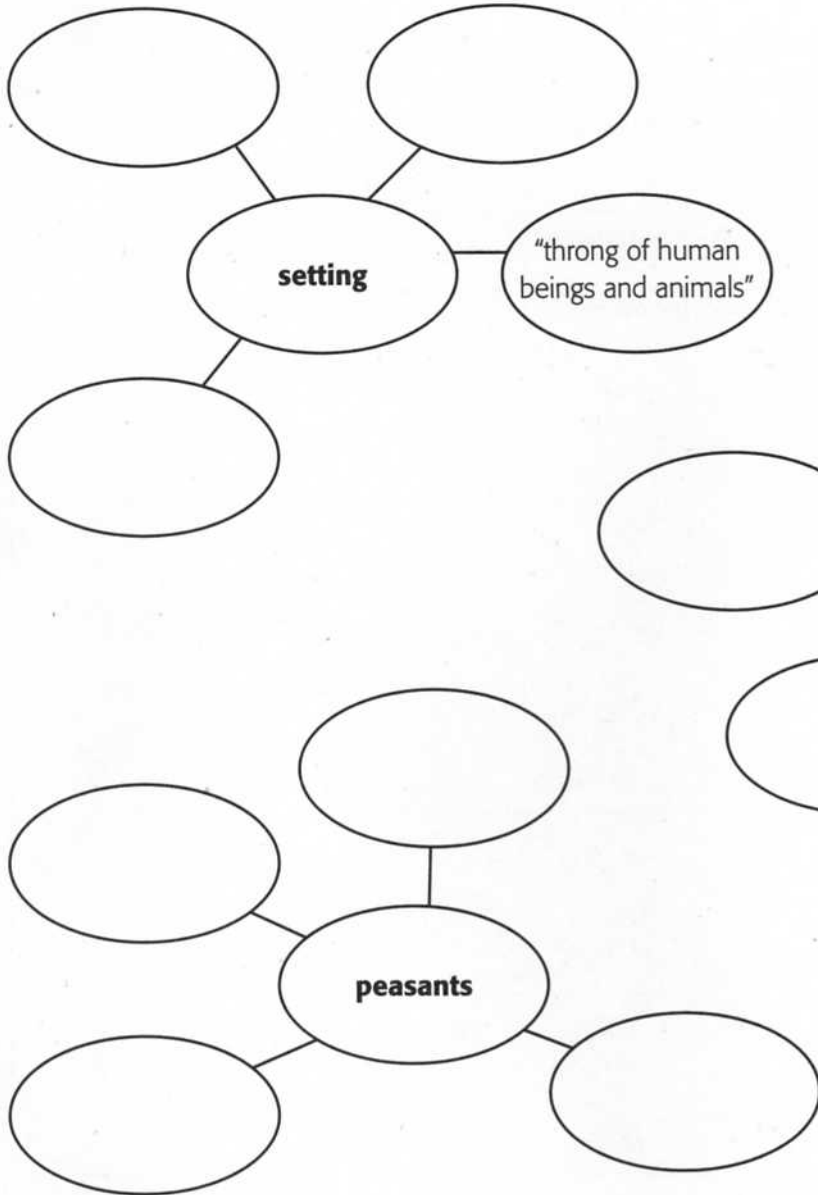
A Piece of String (page 944)



Active Reading SkillBuilder

Interpreting Details

Maupassant's descriptions are filled with **details** that help the reader see and understand the characters and setting. **Interpreting** what these details mean will help you draw conclusions about what the story means. Use the three cluster diagrams below to organize descriptive details.



Follow Up: With a classmate, compare the cluster diagrams. How would you describe the attitude of the other peasants toward Maître Hauchecome's suspected misbehavior? What details give you this impression?

A Piece of String (page 944)**Literary Analysis SkillBuilder****Characterization**

Methods writers use to develop a character include:

- the character's own speech, thoughts, feelings, or actions
- another character's speech, thoughts, feelings, or actions
- direct description from the narrator about the character

Work with a group of classmates to identify four details in the story that reveal aspects of Maître Hauchecome's character. Try to find an example of each method. Use the chart below to identify the characterization method that Maupassant used for each detail, and what that detail reveals about the character.

Detail	Characterization method	What it Reveals
1. "He bent painfully, for he suffered rheumatism."	direct narrator description	Hauchecome is older and not physically well.

Follow Up: Discuss with classmates how the story might have been different if even a few of the townspeople believed Maître Hauchecome was innocent. What affect might that have had on his character?

A Piece of String (page 944)**Words to Know SkillBuilder****Words to Know**

credence

impassive

indignation

din

indifferent

A. Circle the word in each group that is a synonym for the boldfaced word.

- | | | | |
|-----------------------|-------------|---------------|----------------|
| 1. impassive | concerned | arrogant | expressionless |
| 2. credence | faith | discredit | skeptic |
| 3. indignation | anger | forgiveness | irreverence |
| 4. din | nonviolence | silence | noise |
| 5. indifferent | confident | disinterested | compassionate |

B. Fill in each blank with the correct Word to Know.

- The candidate's speech could barely be heard over the _____ of the crowd.
- The Robinson family expressed feelings of _____ after their house had been broken into.
- He was a hardened criminal, his face so _____ it seemed he was devoid of human emotion.
- "I put no _____ in advertising. Salespeople don't always tell the truth," Mr. Donnabee warned his students.
- There are those on one side of an argument, there are those on the other side of an argument, and those that are _____.

C. Write an editorial expressing your thoughts about what happened to Maître Hauchecome in "A Piece of String." Was he treated fairly by Maître Malandain? the judge? the townspeople? Explain your view, using at least **three** Words to Know.

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Selection Quiz

Recall the events in the story "A Piece of String." Then answer each question in one or two sentences.

1. What did Maître Hauchecome pick up in the street?

2. What announcement was made by a public crier that same afternoon?

3. Why is Maître Hauchecome summoned to the mayor's office?

4. What does Maître Hauchecome try to convince the villagers of, repeatedly?

5. Do the townspeople believe his story? Why or why not?

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Selection Test

A. Writers use four techniques to convey characters to the reader. Read the excerpts below, and decide which technique is used and what is learned about Maître Hauchecome. There may be more than one technique per excerpt. (10 points each)

The techniques are: physical description of character, character's words and actions, words and actions of other characters, and direct commentary by narrator.

Excerpt	Technique(s) used	What is learned
1. "Maître Hauchecome, economical like a true Norman, thought that everything useful ought to be picked up, and he bent painfully, for he suffered from rheumatism."		
2. "But the mayor, incredulous, shook his head. 'You will not make me believe, Maître Hauchecome, that Monsieur Malandain, who is a man worthy of credence, mistook this cord for a pocketbook!'"		
3. "He talked of his adventure all day long, he told it on the highway to people who were passing by . . . He stopped strangers to tell them about it."		

B. Write the letter of the best answer. This exercise is continued on the next page. (5 points each)

- _____ 1. What is the setting at the beginning of "A Piece of String"?
- the circus
 - Christmas time
 - an auction
 - market day
- _____ 2. Maître Hauchecome, and others in the village that day, are described by the author as
- rich merchants.
 - peasants and farmers.
 - bankers and lawyers.
 - gypsies.

- _____ 3. What do we learn really happened to the missing pocketbook?
- A peasant found it, and gave it to his employer.
 - A peasant stole it.
 - Cattle trampled it.
 - Hauchecome hid it in his pocket.
- _____ 4. What happens to Maître Hauchecome at the end of the story?
- He convinces the townspeople of his innocence.
 - He decides to steal a pocketbook.
 - He kills Malandain.
 - He dies.

C. Words to Know. Write the letter of the best answer on the line provided.
(2 points each)

- _____ 1. If a crowd is creating a din, they are making
- noise.
 - a meal.
 - war.
- _____ 2. When a person feels indifferent to an issue, he or she is
- uninterested.
 - guilty.
 - passionate.
- _____ 3. To give credence to an idea means to
- criticize it.
 - believe in it.
 - analyze it.
- _____ 4. A person feeling indignation is
- angry.
 - care-free.
 - confused.
- _____ 5. An impassive person appears
- frightened.
 - confident.
 - without expression.

D. Answer **one** of the following questions based on your understanding of "A Piece of String." Write your answers on a separate sheet of paper. (20 points)

- How did Maître Hauchecome respond when people did not believe his story? What happened as a result?
- Consider the last line of the story, "A piece of string, a piece of string—look—here it is, M'sieu' the Mayor." Explain who says this, what the circumstances are, and why the line is significant.

E. Linking Literature to Life. Answer the following question based on your own experience and knowledge. Write your answer on a separate sheet of paper. (20 points)

Maître Hauchecome becomes obsessed with proving his innocence. If you were Maître Hauchecome, how would you have handled the situation? Support your answer with examples from the story and from your own experience.