

Tikrit University

College of Education for Humanities

English Department

Introduction to Literature- First Year-2026

Lect. Suhad Jasim M. Al-Sammarraie



Literary Analysis of "The Luncheon"

By

Somerset Maugham

I was startled when the bill of fare was brought, for the prices were a great deal higher than I had anticipated. But she reassured me.

'I never eat anything for luncheon,' she said.

'Oh, don't say that!' I answered generously.

'I never eat more than one thing. I think people eat far too much nowadays. A little fish, perhaps. I wonder if they have any salmon.'

Well, it was early in the year for salmon and it was not on the bill of fare, but I asked the waiter if there was any. Yes, a beautiful salmon had just come in, it was the first they had had. I ordered it for my guest. The waiter asked her if she would have something while it was being cooked.

'No,' she answered, 'I never eat more than one thing. Unless you had a little caviare. I never mind caviare.'

My heart sank a little. I knew I could not afford caviare, but I could not very well tell her that. I told the waiter by all means to bring caviare. For myself I chose the cheapest dish on the menu and that was a mutton chop.

'I think you're unwise to eat meat,' she said. 'I don't know how you can expect to work after eating heavy things like chops. I don't believe in overloading my stomach.'

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Then came the question of drink.

'I never drink anything for luncheon,' she said.

'Neither do I, I answered promptly.

'Except white wine,' she proceeded as though I had not spoken. 'These French white wines are so light. They're wonderful for the digestion.'

'What would you like?' I asked, hospitable still, but not exactly effusive. She gave me a bright and amicable flash of her white teeth.

'My doctor won't let me drink anything but champagne.'

Vocabulary

anticipated (11. 2-3): expected.

effusive (1. 33): hearty, encouraging.

amicable (1. 34): friendly.

Biography and Historical Background: Somerset Maugham/mo.m/(1874 – 1965) was an English writer of novels, short stories and plays. He was famous of his ironic and realistic writing. "The Luncheon" is a famous 1924 short story by Maugham.

Form: This passage is taken from a **short story** by the Irish writer, Somerset Maugham.

The Content:

The Plot: (The Detailed Meaning)

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This story is about a playing game of pretension and reality. A man invited a woman to unexpectedly expensive restaurant believing her pretension that she would eat only one thing. But that one thing turned to be an expensive salmon, caviar and French white wine. The guest was so pretentious, greedy, talkative and

insensitive. The host was so hospitable and generous, at the beginning of the story, but turned to become embarrassed, startled, disappointed and angry from within. The story is narrated by the host and is built on the dialogue between him and his guest.

Unity:

The repetition of the sentence "I never eat more than one thing" gives the story its unity. Whenever the greedy guest said it, she would order an expensive thing. The whole story is built around it.

The Theme:

Do not take things at its face value. Be aware of the deceiving appearances. Be yourself always. Do not fake.

Characters: Two characters are in this story. The narrator is the host in the story. He is polite, shy, generous, inexperienced and not rich man. The guest is selfish, manipulative, hypocritical, pretentious woman.

The Conflict (Contrast):

There is a conflict between the two characters in this story. Another conflict is between pretension and reality and between generosity and greed.

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Dialogue

The writer helps his characters to come alive not only by describing the way they act but by letting us hear them speak. Effective dialogue enables the reader to feel that he is actually witnessing what is going on. The passage from "**The Luncheon**" is built almost entirely on dialogue. Through dialogue, we can hear, imagine and understand the features of each character in the story.

Style:

The style in "**The Luncheon**" is ironic and not so direct at the beginning because of the guest game.

Use of Words and Figures of Speech

The writer uses simple words and many adverbs to describe the speech of both the guest and the host. The repetition of the sentence, "I never eat more than one thing" is used to relate the incidents of the story and to create a picture of the guest in our minds.

The sentence, "my heart sank a little" is a metaphor that suggests the embarrassed and ironic situation of the host.