

“A Retrieved Reformation”

Investigate, Inquire, and Imagine

Recall

- 1a. What advice does the warden give Jimmy just before Jimmy is released from prison? How does Jimmy respond to the warden?
- 2a. What does the clerk hand to Jimmy as he is released from prison? What does Jimmy do with it?
- 3a. What happens to Jimmy in front of the Elmore Bank?

Interpret

- 1b. Why do you think the warden offers this advice? Do you agree with the warden? Why do you think Jimmy responds the way he does? Do you think the warden believes Jimmy's response? Do you believe Jimmy's response?
- 2b. Do you think Jimmy has a good chance of changing his life immediately after his release from prison? Why, or why not? What would make it easier for Jimmy to get an honest start?
- 3b. Do you think this is the only thing that changes Jimmy Valentine? Explain.

Analyze

- 4a. Identify what you think is the main or central conflict in "A Retrieved Reformation." Is the main conflict between Jimmy and the prison system? Jimmy's new life and his past life? Jimmy and Ben Price? Explain.

Synthesize

- 4b. Based on your analysis of the central conflict in the story, what is the point in which that conflict gets resolved? In other words, what finally ends the conflict? Is it when Jimmy falls in love? When Jimmy writes the letter to Billy? When Ben Price pretends not to recognize Jimmy? Why does this event resolve the conflict?

Evaluate

- 5a. What reasons does Jimmy give for his new and honest life in the letter he writes to Billy? Do the reasons seem genuine? Explain.

Extend

- 5b. What do you think Jimmy's relationship with Annabel offers him that he didn't have before? If Jimmy hadn't met Annabel, how else do you think he could have found the qualities that would make him want to live an honest life? Do you think he would have found them had he not met Annabel? Explain.

Understanding Literature

Character and Characterization. Who is the protagonist in this story? Who is the antagonist in this story? Categorize each of these characters as one-dimensional or three-dimensional, and explain why. Identify some examples of O. Henry's use of characterization in the story. Does he use all three techniques of characterization? Does he rely on one technique more than the others? Explain.

Verbal Irony. Look back through the story and complete your graphic organizer. For each example of verbal irony, note what you think the true meaning is and how it adds to the story. In general, how does O. Henry use verbal irony in this story—to create humor or to make a point? Explain your answer.

Writer's Journal

1. Imagine that you are Ben Price before he meets up with Jimmy Valentine in the town of Elmore. Write the copy for a wanted poster for the capture of Jimmy Valentine. What important clues will you include on the poster to help citizens recall whether they have seen Jimmy Valentine anywhere and thereby help the police capture him?

2. Imagine that you are Jimmy Valentine sitting in your cell after you have just been told that you'll be released from prison soon. Write an outline or a long narrative list of what you want to do once you are free. Do you want to go back to committing burglary? Do you want to make a fresh start? If so, how will you do it? Can you think of a way to make a fresh start that doesn't involve burglary?

3. Create a character sketch for Jimmy Valentine. Note details about his physical appearance, the way he talks, his personality, events in his life, and any significant changes in his personality or behavior.

Skill Builders

Vocabulary

Fill in the Blank. Fill in each blank with the most appropriate word from the list below.

genially convulsion confederate eminent platform

retribution assiduously unobtrusively clemency specious

1. I once had a _____ that left my muscles very weak.
2. The _____ he received for stealing the cash seemed fair to me.
3. He _____ left the theater in the middle of the movie.
4. We listened to each candidate's _____ before casting our vote.
5. She _____ greeted the guests, happy to show off her new house.
6. I knew he was angry, yet he maintained a _____ smile.
7. I wanted a _____ to help me plan the party.
8. He received no _____, even though he'd never gotten in trouble before.
9. She _____ looked over her exam before turning it in.
10. In our grade, Ralph became _____ for his superior math abilities.

Language, Grammar, and Style

Correcting Spelling Errors. Some of the words below are misspelled. If a word is misspelled, write the correct spelling on the space provided. If the word is spelled correctly, write correct.

1. accessible
2. cellar
3. bussiness
4. occurance
5. orchestera
6. symbol
7. deecatful
8. presteage
9. lightning
10. artical