

STUDY MATERIAL PART 1

AFTER TWENTY YEARS

CHARACTER SKETCH OF SILKY BOB AND JIMMY WEIS

1. CHARACTER SKETCH OF SILKY BOB

Bob is one of the main characters of the story, 'After Twenty Years', written by 'O Henry'. He has been presented as an over ambitious character. His ambition takes him to the world of crime & he becomes 'Silky Bob'.

He is introduced in the story standing in a dark corner in front of a hardware store and waiting for his friend to whom he had given a promise to meet at the place where once stood, 'Big Joe Brady's restaurant. His conversation with the policeman, who, later on, turns out to be his friend, Jimmy Wells, and whom Bob could not recognize in the darkness, reveals his character. His character can be drawn as under:-

An Ambitious Young Man:-He is about 38 year old and has a big scar on his right eyebrow. He is an over ambitious character. Twenty years ago, he made a promise to his friend Jimmy Wells to meet him at the place where he is standing now and where once stood 'Joe Big Brady's restaurant. He himself says,

'I'm just waiting for a friend. It's an appointment made twenty years ago.'

An Underworld Character:- He left his childhood friend Jimmy Wells 20 years ago and tried to make it big in the Wild West. He becomes an underworld character and indulges in all kinds of illegal activities. He earns money and fame in the underworld and becomes a target for law-enforcing agencies that are after him now.

A Man of Words:-He competes with the sharpest wits in the underworld activities and survives. He travels over a thousand miles to make it to the place and keep his promise. He is badly involved in his ambition of making money and in the process loses contact with his friend yet he keeps his promise showing that he is a man of words. He says,

'I came a thousand miles to stand in this door tonight and it's worth it if my old partner turns up'.

Has Sharp Memories:- The span of twenty years doesn't make him forget his friend and he remembers how tall he was. That is why, at the very outset, he asks the man in the plainclothes, who approaches him in the disguise of Jimmy Wells, how he has grown taller during the period. He remarks,

'..... you've changed lots, Jimmy. I never thought you were so tall by two or three inches.'

Prosperes in life:- His dress and costumes show that he prospered well in the Wild West and has become worth his name ,that is why, the police in many countries is after him. He has a great ego and shows it in his conversation and behavior. A big diamond tiepin and diamond studded watch shows how well Bob has prospered after he left New York.

Over Confident But True Friend:- He is over confident and this makes him spill the beans to the man whom he takes as his childhood friend. His coming back to New York, against all odds and at the cost of his life, speaks of his sincerity in friendship.

Though, a bad character, he earns love and sympathies of the readers.

2. CHARACTER SKETCH OF JIMMY WELLS

Jimmy Wells is one of the main characters in the story 'After twenty Years' writer by 'O Henry'. He has been presented as a noble, duty bound and duty conscious fellow. His character sketch can be drawn as under.

Guardian of Peace:- Jimmy Wells is about 40 years old. He is a responsible policeman by profession. He leads a life of a responsible citizen. He is the man whose conduct and behaviour are exemplary. He is an upright man devoted to his duty. On his patrolling duty he moves up and down the venue as a 'guardian of peace'. His alertness is habitual and part of his behavior and what he does. He moves his club with artful movements. He is very conscious as he casts his watchful eyes on the surroundings every now and then, while performing his duty.

Law abiding citizen:- His behaviour and conduct show that he is a law abiding citizen. He not only earns a name and fame for himself but also brings credit to his department by performing his duties sincerely. His sincerity and sense of duty encourage him to arrest a criminal. His sense of duty and loyalty towards his profession is stronger than his love for his friend.

Mentally strong:- He is a strong fellow and is not carried away by the emotion. Though he has great regards and emotional feelings for his friend, yet these don't come in the way of his duty.

'Somehow I couldn't do it myself. So I went around and got a plain clothes man to do the job'.

The statement shows that he is not over powered by his emotions.

True and Sincere Friend:- According to Bob,

'.....my best chum and the finest chap in the world.'

Jimmy wells is a true and sincere friend and values his friendship. He keeps his promise of meeting his friend after twenty years. Bob remarks about him,

'But I know Jimmy will meet me here if he is alive ; for he always was the truest, staunchest old chap in the world.'

But when Jimmy finds that Bob, his friend, is the same person who is wanted by Chicago Police, he changes his mind. He finds himself in an awkward position but he gives preference to his duty. Taking the advantage of darkness and realizing that Bob has not recognized him, he moves away and sends a plainclothes man to arrest him. He does what an honest and good policeman should have done.

Though it may appear that Jimmy Wells cheats his friend who facing all odds travels a thousand miles to meet him, yet he is a true citizen, a true friend, an honest policeman and above all a good human being.