

AFTER TWENTY YEARS

Theme of the story 'AFTER TWENTY YEARS'

The story 'After Twenty Years' by 'O Henry' revolves around two themes. These themes grow side by side as the story develops. One theme is about the performance of one's duty honestly and the second is how an individual's character, personality and aspirations grow over a period of twenty years.

To perform one's duty honestly should be the utmost priority of everyone. The two friends about whom the story is, were supposed to meet at a place decided twenty years ago. This was the place from where they had parted company with each other twenty years before.

Jimmy Wells, one of the two friends and now a policeman, came to meet his friend Silky Bob, who was already there at the decided place and fixed time. But once Jimmy Wells saw his friend's face in the light of the match stick, he realized that his friend was the same man who was wanted by Chicago Police. He did not allow his feelings to overcome his sense of duty and got him arrested.

The second theme reflects the growth of an individual's personality, character and aspirations. Two friends moved to their own worlds of aspirations. When Bob and Jimmy Wells were in New York, they were good friends and both were ordinary people. But once Bob went to Wild West, his aspirations & ambitions grew and to satisfy his aspirations and ambitions he started making money by every means. He got involved in underworld activities. He had become the most wanted criminal. Chicago Police was after him. The time had turned him into a criminal. On the other hand Jimmy Wells continued to stay in New York. He joined the police force. But with the passage of time he grew into a 'guardian of law' and performed his duty honestly. Thus the time led the two childhood friends to two extreme directions.

Sensational and dramatic arrest of Silky Bob

By Staff Reporter

Jammu_____ Silky Bob, the most criminal and notorious underworld character in Chicago was arrested in New York, late last night. His arrest was more dramatic than a perfectly executed police operation. His sensational arrest was made near a Hardware Store in New York. He was waiting there to meet his boyhood friend, Jimmy Wells.

Keeping the promise made twenty years ago, Bob was waiting to meet his friend. It was dark and the roads were deserted. Just then a policeman on petrol duty, walked up to him. Realizing that he might have been suspected, Bob told the policeman that he was waiting for his friend with whom he had made a promise twenty years before. It was then that Bob lit a match stick to light the cigar he was holding in his hand. This proved fatal for him as the light of the match stick exposed him to the man in uniform. The latter recognized Bob being the person wanted by the police in Chicago. Bob, who could not see the policeman as it was dark, could not guess the real identity of the policeman.

In fact, the man in uniform was none other than Jimmy Wells who keeping his promise had also come there to meet his friend. Jimmy's loyalty towards his profession and country encouraged him to hide his identity.

Jimmy wells could not arrest Bob himself but being a devoted and duty conscious citizen, he went away and sent a plain clothes policeman to arrest him. The sensational arrest was made by the policeman in plain clothes who approached Silky Bob in the disguise of Jimmy Wells

Q How will you characterize the story 'After Twenty Years' – Comic or Tragic?

The story 'After Twenty Years' is a tragic in nature and content. There is no element of fun or humour in the story, even then, the story keeps the interest of the readers alive because of its exciting, unexpected and surprise ending. It does not make us laugh at all. It is a tragic story with an unexpected ending and an anti climax. The ending touches the readers at their hearts.

Bob travels a thousand miles to meet his childhood friend Jimmy Wells. He keeps the promise given to his friend twenty years ago. He comes to the decided place at decided time. The Story takes a U-turn and becomes tragic. In order to make it big in the underworld and being over ambitious, Bob turns into a criminal. He is being chased by the police in Chicago. His friend Jimmy Wells grows into a 'guardian of peace'. He is an honest and responsible policeman, dedicated to his duty. When two friends, keeping their promise, meet each other after twenty years, Jimmy Wells comes to know that his childhood friend Bob is the same person who, for his involvement in the underworld activities, is wanted by the Chicago Police. He, therefore, as a responsible citizen and duty conscious fellow gets him arrested. He himself could not arrest him, so he sent a plainclothes man to arrest him. A long awaited happy meeting turns into a tragic moment and ends with the arrest of Bob. This makes the story a tragic one.

Q. Do you approve of Jimmy Wells' action?

Ans: - Yes, I approve of Jimmy Wells' action of getting his friend Silky Bob arrested. By doing so Jimmy Wells on one hand shows his loyalty, sincerity and devotion towards his duty and on the other hand ensures the safety of his friend's life. Had he not got Bob arrested the latter would have been killed by the police that was on his trail. Even his rivals and enemies in the underworld would have killed him. This would have reduced his chances of reforming him. By arresting him Jimmy not only ensures the safety of his friend's life but also gives him a chance to reform himself and become a good citizen. Jimmy would never have been able to do so if he had allowed Bob to run away & would have not arrested him.

TEXTUAL QUESTION

Q1. How impressive was the policeman? How would you justify your answer?

Ans :- The policeman, 'the guardian of peace' was really very impressive. He was well-built, strong and walking along the street in a manner not to show off. As he went along he moved his club or stick in a complicated and skillful manner. He also cast his watchful eyes down the wide street as went along. This showed that he was very impressive.

Q2. Why did the man tell the policeman 'it's alright officer'?

Ans The man standing at the doorway of a hardware store spoke these words to the policeman to assure him that there was nothing to worry as he (the man) was waisting for a friend with whom he had an appointment. In fact cold outside had made the roads empty. The man was standing all alone. It was natural for an alert policeman to smell something fishy. When the policeman walked up to the man standing in the dark doorway, he felt that he might have been suspected. That is why he told the policeman that it was alright and there was nothing wrong or suspicious

Q3. Were the two friends in the regular contact with each other during twenty years? Why? Why not?

No, the two friends were not in regular contact with each other. When they parted company with each other twenty years ago and Bob went to the West to make his fortune, the two did keep in

touch with each other as they corresponded for a year or two but after that they lost contact with each other as Bob kept moving from one place to another in Europe.

Q4. How did Jimmy's friend prosper in life? How do you know?

Jimmy's friend prospered very well in life. He had become very rich. This is evident from his dress and outlook. His scarf pin was made of a large diamond. He had a beautiful watch lids of which were set with small diamonds. But all his wealth was earned through unlawful and illegal activities.

Q5 When a tall man in a long overcoat walked up to Bob, what made him think that it was Jimmy and not anyone else.

.Ans :- Bob was waiting for his friend Jimmy Wells. So when a tall man in long overcoat walked along the deserted road in chilly cold and came straight to Bob, and asked if he was Bob, he naturally could only think that the tall man in raincoat was none other than Jimmy Wells.

Q6. Why was Bob arrested?

Ans:- Bob was involved in unlawful and illegal activities. For that he was wanted in Chicago. Jimmy Wells recognized that his friend was the same man wanted by Chicago police. So he got him arrested. He sent a policeman in plain clothes to arrest Bob.

Q7. Why did Bob's hand begin to tremble as he almost finished reading the note?

Ans:- Bob's hand began to tremble, when he finished reading the note because he realized that the man, he was talking to earlier was Jimmy wells. He trembled with the thought that his friend had recognized that he was a criminal. His hands trembled because he had been arrested.

OR Bob's hands began to tremble as he almost finished reading the note because he could not believe that his own friend could bring about his arrest. It was for this friend that he had come across a long distance just to keep a promise made twenty years ago. He loved his friend a lot and to him his friend was the 'truest, staunchest, old chap in the world'. When he read the note he could not believe that it was the same friend who got him arrested.

Q8. Jimmy did not arrest his friend because

D) He could not bring himself to arrest his friend.

Q9. Why is this story titled 'After Twenty Years'?

Ans :- The title of the story 'After Twenty Years' reflects the main content of the story and is the most appropriate one. The story is about two childhood friend, Bob and Jimmy, who part company with each other to make their individual fortune and meet each other at Joe Brandy's restaurant after 20 years on the same day and same time, when they parted twenty years ago. Twenty years is a long gap of time. Drastic changes take place in their lives. Bob who is over ambitious and seeks his fortune in Wild West, makes his fortune using his sharp wits and by hustling his way through the world of crime and unlawful activities. Jimmy sticks to New York and he earns an honourable position for himself in the society as a policeman. After 20 years two friends came face to face with each other. Twenty years is a big time to change a man, his life, his behaviour and even change his fortune. It is this time that is an important factor and that ultimately decides Bob's fortune. Had he not made a promise to meet his friend, he would not have been arrested.

Q10. If you were in Jimmy's shoes, what would have been the best thing to do from the following points of view?

Ans :- Part c.

EXTRA QUESTIONS

Q1. Why were the streets deserted?

Ans:- The streets were deserted because it was 10'o clock at night. It was the month of December and chilly gusts of wind with rain were blowing.

Q2. Who was the man at the doorway of the hardware store waiting for?

Ans:- The man, Silky Bob standing at the doorway of the Hardware Store was waiting for his friend Jimmy Wells. Bob and Jimmy Wells had promised each other twenty years ago that they would meet each other at that very place at 10'o clock, in the night. So, Bob was waiting for Jimmy.

3:- Did Bob notice any change in his friend Jimmy?

Ans:- Yes, Bob did notice the change in the height of his friend Jimmy Wells. He noticed that Jimmy had grown taller by two or three inches.

Q4. What was the real identity of the man in the overcoat? Why had he gone there? Who had sent him?

Ans:- The real identity of the tall man in the overcoat was that he was a policeman in plainclothes. He had gone there to arrest Bob who was involved in illegal and unlawful activities in the West. He was wanted in Chicago. Jimmy Wells had recognized that Bob was the man who was being chased by the police. But he could not arrest Bob himself. So, he sent a policeman in plain clothes to arrest him.

Q5. How was Jimmy able to recognize the man in the dark?

Ans:- Jimmy Wells was on his patrolling duty. He saw a man standing in the doorway of a darkened hardware store. The man was holding an unlighted cigar in his mouth. The man told Jimmy that he was waiting for his friend. When the man struck a match to light his cigar, Jimmy Wells saw his face and was able to recognize that the man in the doorway was the one wanted in Chicago.

RTC

'You are not Jimmy Wellsa Roman to a pug.'

a. 'He' in these lines is Silky Bob

b. He was shocked and surprised when he realized that the man he was walking with was not Jimmy wells. He had spilled beans and told everything about himself to the man who in fact was a policeman in plain clothes and had come to arrest him.

c. He recognized him from his nose. His friend Jimmy Wells had a Roman nose where as the man who was with him had a pug nose

The man was there to arrest Silky Bob who was wanted by Chicago Police. Silky Bob's friend Jimmy Wells had sent him to arrest Bob.

RTC

Reference :- These lines have been taken from the story, 'After Twenty Years', written by 'O' Henry', a writer known for his stories based on first hand experience.

Context: - The story is about two friends who move out in opposite directions to try their destiny after promising each other to meet after twenty years at a fixed place at an appointed time on a particular day. Bob , one of the two friends who grows into an underworld character and is being haunted by the police, travels a long way to meet his friend.

When about midwayan appointment made 20 years ago.

Explanation – in the lines under reference the writer tells us about Bob who is waiting for his friend. A policeman on the patrolling duty happens to come along that way. Bob is leaning against the doorway of a darkened hardware store. On seeing the policeman approaching him realizes that he might be suspected as some dubious character, immediately reacts by telling the officer that there is nothing wrong in his being there at that odd time of the evening. He makes it clear that he is waiting for his friend with whom he had an appointment some twenty years before.

VOCABULARY

1	Inspect	inspecting	inspection	inspector
2	Advertise	advertising	advertisement	advertiser
3	Introduce	introductory	introduction	introducer
4	Support	supportive/ supporting	support	supporter
5	Impose	imposing	imposition	imposer
6	Compose	composite	composition	compositor
7	Oppress	oppressive	oppression	oppressor

GRAMMAR

1.it is the nicest room in the hotel. 2. it is the cheapest watch in the shop.

3.She is the most intelligent student in the class. 4. It is the most valuable painting in the gallery.

5.It was the happiest day of my life. 6. Which is the longest river in the world.

7. What is the quickest method of reaching the station? 8. What is the most popular sport in your school?

9 That is the most boring film I have ever seen. 10. Mr. and Mrs, Das have three sons. The eldest is 16 Years

STUDY SKILL

a. Get out. b. Get through c Got away with d Get behind e Getting up .
