

Compare and
contrast a well lighted
room and a and p



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[Teacher 25 March Two Workplace Tales The short stories “ A Clean, Well-Lighted Place” by Earnest Hemingway and “ A & P” by John Updike are similar stories that are told in different ways. Both stories are about men in the service industry in their place of work. Both tell the stories of customers, and how the customers’ experience affects the narrators. However, each story has its own distinct style. In “ A & P,” the narrator, a nineteen-year-old cashier at the A&P store, watches three young girls in bathing suits walk through the store. When his boss embarrasses the girls by telling them they can’t come in to the store dressed that way, the narrator quits his job in protest, even though the girls don’t see or hear what he has done. In “ A Clean, Well-Lighted Place,” two waiters are closing up a restaurant and talking about the old man who is their last customer. The young waiter is unkind to the old man, but the older waiter thinks he understands how the old man feels. After the young waiter gets the old man to leave, the older waiter thinks about a prayer where all of the important words are replaced by “ nada,” Spanish for “ nothing,” then goes to a bar. The two stories have two very different narration styles. In “ A & P,” the narration is first-person, and is from the point of view of the nineteen-year-old clerk. It is in the language and tone that he thinks in, and it is clear and tells a distinct story. The audience sees his view of the customers, for example when he makes a mistake at the register: “ She's one of these cash-register-watchers, a witch about fifty with rouge on her cheekbones and no eyebrows, and I know it made her day to trip me up” (Updike). The story is as the narrator imagines it, which the reader can imagine might not be the way things really happened. In “ A Clean, Well-Lighted Place,” the narration is third-person limited, and follows the point of view and thoughts of the older waiter. It

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does not tell a very clear story, and it takes a few readings before it is easy to understand what is going on in the story. The lack of dialog tags makes it difficult to tell who is talking. This story is also the way that the character imagines it, although it seems like a more reliable account because it is in third person. The setting of the two stories is similar. Although they appear to be in two different countries, one in the US in a sea-side town, and the other in a Spanish-Speaking country, perhaps Spain or Mexico, both seem to take place in the mid-twentieth century, and both take place in bright, modern businesses. Both the cafe and the A&P are probably “ clean” and “ well-lighted,” and both are public places where people go for a particular service, communal places that are important to the towns they are in. The two stories have different tones. “ A & P” has a casual, rude, somewhat comic tone. The feeling conveyed by the text matches the young man’s irreverent way of thinking. This story is much more light-hearted than the other. “ A Clean, Well-Lighted Place” has a deeper, more introspective tone. It makes the reader think more about things like aging, loneliness, and death. It is a much darker, sadder story than “ A & P.” The most striking moment is when the waiter thinks, “ Hail nothing full of nothing, nothing is with thee” (Hemingway). These two stories are both great in their own way, but each has a very different feel. The authors made unique choices about how to tell their stories, and each style is effective, even though the styles are not alike. The subject matter of the two stories is very similar, however. Each story is about a man working in a job that serves customers who is affected by a customer in a way the customer will never know about.