

# John updike's a ; p man vs. society conflict

Society



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A ; amp; P Conflict Sammy vs. the Sheep There are many different opinions and views as to what is right or wrong. Society has developed a standard as to how an individual should act or portray themselves. In reality the majority of public comply with this policy. They prefer to be average and mundane. A literary analysis of John Updike's A ; amp; P will show how the main character chooses to rebel against this social order. An ordinary day at work can change the rest of your life. The story is told in the third person point of view. The setting is a petite and old-fashioned town that sits just North of Boston.

In this touristy town is a typical grocery store labeled A ; amp; P. The store sits in the middle of town on Central Street, looking out of the doors two banks, three real-estate offices, a newspaper store and the Congregational church are all in view. Bright fluorescent lighting, organized aisles, and conventional setting depict the atmosphere. The main character is Sammy who is an employee at A ; amp; P and dislikes his job. He is an adolescent, who resides with his parents and enjoys making them proud. Sammy does not enjoy the customers and their boring personas.

He states, " I bet you could set off dynamite in an A ; amp; P and the people would by and large keep reaching and checking oatmeal off their lists and muttering, let me see, there was a third thing, began with an A asparagus, no applesauce" (Updike para. 5). The customers Sammy deals with are ignorant and arrogant. Except three good looking girls who come into the store less dressed than others, Sammy relates to them and chooses to defend them. Sammy is faced with the conflict of man vs. society. Throughout the story Sammy struggles with the customers at his job.

This battle first presents itself, while he is ringing up a patronizing, snobbish lady who is always pointing out his mistakes. He then notices a lady sneering at the girls because of them being dressed in beach attire. McMahon, a meat counter employee, began patting his mouth and sizing up the girls' joints after they asked for his assistance with something. Sammy begins to sympathize with the girls. " Poor kids, I began to feel sorry for them, they couldn't help it," he says (Updike para. 10). Ultimately, Lengal, his manager, approaches the girls and informs them of how inappropriate their garments are.

Sammy is furious with the way Lengal humiliates the girls. Sammy defends the girls, and stands up to Lengal. As an end result he quits his job as a direct effect of the way Lengal treated the girls. Sammy is hopeful that the girls will recognize his chivalry and wait for him after he resigns, but they do not. Nevertheless, as he steps outside a feeling of accomplishment is present, although he knows how much more difficult his life is going to be. The definition of " sheep" in this sense is a conventional person, a traditionalist. During the story, Sammy refers to the customers as sheep several times.

Referencing society to sheep symbolizes the fashion in which they flock together. Instead of having their own beliefs and judgment of the girls, they follow the policy that society has already created for them. Like sheep who do not journey out on their own. They abide by the structure already formed, never breaking the cycle. While Lengal scolds the girls, Sammy describes " All this while, the customers had been showing up with their carts but, you know, sheep, seeing a scene, they had all bunch up on Stokesie, who shook

open a paper bag as gently as peeling a peach, not wanting to miss a word” (Updike para. 1). In closing, Sammy stood up for what he believed was the right. He disagreed with the preconceived attitude others in the story had toward the girls. He knew that quitting his job would upset his parents terribly, but to him it was worth it. He took a stand that day that changed his life forever. Even though the girls were gone after he quit, he still has the satisfaction that he did what was honorable. Sammy can truly say that he is not a follower, he is not a sheep. Works Cited Updike, John. “ A ; amp; P. ” Blair Reader. September 14, 2011.