

# [Ex-basketball player](https://assignbuster.com/ex-basketball-player-essay-samples/)

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Many people have a difficult time letting go of their past. When you can’t let go of your past, you can’t move forward into the future. In the “ Ex-Basketball Player” by John Updike, Flick Webb finds himself holding onto the past and not being able to move on. Flick’s disappointment in the present causes him to try and relive the glory days of life that he had in the past. To explore Flick’s disappointment in the present, Updike utilizes setting, tone, and irony. In the first stanza, Updike utilizes setting in order to explore Flick’s difficulty letting go of the past and disappointment in the present.

Flick is torn between the life that he led and the life that he is now forced to live. He lives with the constant reminder of the life that he has been left behind as he travels past the high school towards Berth’s Garage. Traveling from the high school to the garage symbolizes Flick’s path from past to present. The high school represents the past where he lived out his glory days as a basketball player. As he begins to travel down Pearl Avenue, he has the chance to walk down two different paths. Each path represents a different course that Flick’s life could take.

One of these blocks would lead him back to the past that he cannot let go of, and the other leads to his new life at the garage. He has to choose which path he is willing to take. Each day as Flick travels by the high school, he has to go through the internal conflict of letting go of the past in order to move on toward the future. In the fourth stanza, Updike utilizes tone in order to explore Flick's difficulty in letting go of the past and disappointment in the present. Specifically, these words express a morose tone.

Updike wrote, “ He never learned a trade, he just sells gas. ” While he does have a career and learned how to sell the gas, it was not the trade that he was meant to learn. He did not advance his knowledge about basketball, which was what had carried him through his high-school years. Instead, he is now stuck in a menial job looking back at the years of his past. That is why he dribbles the inner tube around. For him, it is a connection to the past, that he cannot let go of. Updike writes, “ It makes no difference to the lug wrench, though.

This illustrates the correlation that Flick is drawing between a basketball and a lug wrench. The basketball is something that he sees as a defining factor of his high school years. While it is something that he is trying to hold onto, he will always be nervous around it. This is because he is in a back and forth struggle between the past and the present. He is trying to move on from basketball and his life in high school, so he feels nervous around objects that once more bring that life back into focus.

Flick’s difficulty in letting go of the past is simply heightened when he is exposed to things that remind him of his life’s glory-days. He is stuck in the past and lives with the disappointment of the future as he looks back on what he left behind. In the fifth stanza, Updike utilizes irony in order to explore Flick’s difficulty letting go of the past and disappointment in the present. Throughout the final stanza, Updike uses diction to illustrate the contradictions surrounding Flick’s life and the actions he must take.

This idea is explored as he goes to Mae’s luncheonette and “ Grease-gray and kind of coiled, he plays pinball. ” This game of pinball reflects on the disappointment in Flick’s life and is the first of the contradictions that he faces. To start, let us look at a game of pinball. In this game, the person shoots the ball from the initial pocket and watches as it travels through the game’s maze. As the player tries to keep the ball from entering the flaps, eventually the ball will enter the flaps and end the game.

Like the game of pinball, Flick’s life is running through a maze. His starting point is the high school and glory-days of his life that he is desperately trying to move away from. After he leaves the high school, he travels through the maze, all the while trying to push himself away from the school and the disappointment it brings to him. Nevertheless, just like the ball returning to its starting point, Flick returns to his. Despite his efforts, he cannot help but continue to look back on the life that he used to lead.

In addition, irony is utilized by Updike when he writes, “ Beyond her face toward bright applauding tiers of Necco Wafers, Nibs, and Juju Beads. ” When first reading these lines it seems as though receiving this applause is a positive response. However, the applause of these snack foods is meant as a mockery of the life that Flick is now leading. As shown in the game of pinball, he is stuck in his high school glory days. These candies bring him back to the days when fans watched him play the game of his life.

As Flick sees these candies, he is reminded that he used to have fans cheering him on, and now the only objects cheering for him are old candies at a luncheonette. With Flick’s disappointment in the present, he will never be able to win the pinball game or forget about the applauding fans. Updike utilizes setting, tone, and irony to better illustrate to the reader the idea of living in the past and moving on in the future. Throughout Flick’s life, he is torn between two conflicting sides. On the one hand are the high-school and the basketball career he left behind, while on the other side is his future and Berth’s Garage.

He has to deal with the internal conflict of fighting to hold on to his glory-days while still moving on from them. He must also deal with the constant reminder of his past as he looks back on the things that he left behind. As we see in this poem, when your best years are behind you, you may fight to hold on to those years in whatever ways possible. In resemblance to Flick, we utilize past memories throughout our lives as a way to momentarily escape from the present. Everyone needs to find a balance between the past and the present.