

Biographical and cultural background paper on John Updike and his story

[Linguistics](#), [English](#)



Influenced by his mother's love of writing short stories during his childhood (De Bellis p. 30), John Updike claims his own victory in the world of literature. Among the number of short fictions and novels he wrote, Sammy's coming of age account in his 1961 short story *A & P* is the most renowned. This short fiction reveals so much of Updike's background as it does equally about the history of the United States during his childhood.

His artistic inclination during his childhood was evident in Updike's detailed description of the characters and the events in the story. By simply reading through the texts, one might not see how much of the American society in the 1950's Updike has exposed. As such, his attitude towards the issues of the society in which the author lived in was also apparent. The irony in the manner he illustrates the settings and the events in *A & P* shows how much involved the author was in the different issues surrounding him. His sarcasm and negative point of view about Russia and the Cold War was evident in Stokesie's character where Sammy narrates that he thinks he's going to be manager some sunny day, maybe in 1990 when it's called the Great Alexandrov and Petrooshki Tea Company or something (Kirsznner and Mandell, p. 95)

In D. Quentin Miller's (p. 3) *John Updike and the Cold War: Drawing the Iron Curtain*, he describes Updike's writings as those that reveal the underlying truth about the American society during the Cold War era that requires aggressiveness in order to attain its goals. Sammy's character in *A & P* shows the same aggressiveness that each single individual in the American society should possess in order to achieve what they aspire for. However, Updike simply did not make his readers live by the disillusion that they could

achieve everything they wish for through any aggressive acts, whereas the reality in which risks and disappointments occur as well. A & P's end clearly shows how Updike sticks to the existent condition in the society rather than a dream.

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