

# Character analysis "aandp" by john updike

Business



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Kristopher Brown English II, Maciel Essay 2~Short Story, Character Analysis  
26 February 2010 " How to Know When to Stand Up for What You Believe" In the short story " A&P" by John Updike, Sammy, the main character, finds himself in the middle of a situation he believes is being taken care of improperly. He is a young man who is just beginning to learn how to deal with difficult situations on his own. He seems to enjoy working at the place where his parents got him the job and finds himself very intrigued by analyzing the people who walk into his work.

Sammy has a lot to learn about life, and this experience is just one of the many stepping stones he has to take in figuring out how to deal with tough situations. Sammy is a nineteen year old boy who is just trying to figure out his place in this world. He is a clerk at a supermarket where his parents were able to get him the job. He finds himself standing behind the cash register entertained by analyzing the people who walk in trying to figure out what is going on in their minds. He stands up for what he believes, but just hasn't quite figured out how or when to confront a person when he finds himself disagreeing with them.

More specifically Sammy finds himself analyzing these three girls who walk into the supermarket one day in their bathing suits. Now keep in mind this story took place in 1961 so it was not very appropriate to be walking around a supermarket in nothing but a bathing suit. Sammy was intrigued by watching and analyzing the behaviors of these girls; as was another clerk, Stokesie. As Sammy said, " you never know for sure how girls' minds work" (260). As the story goes on Sammy tries to analyze what is really going on in

each of these girls' minds. Such as he had decided that this one in the dirty-pink-beige bathing suit was the "queen".

As Sammy says, "She was the queen. She didn't look around, not this queen, she just walked straight on slowly, on these long white prima-donna legs" (260). Sammy goes on later in the story to say "now she was showing them how to do it, walk slow and hold yourself high" (260). He has come to the conclusion that the other two girls mostly just do as the "Queenie" does. Sammy finds the girls also physically attractive, mostly the "Queenie," but he was generally just intrigued by watching and analyzing their behaviors.

As the girls walk up to Sammy's check-out line the manager notices that these girls are wearing nothing but their bathing suits.

Although Sammy is very flattered and excited that the girls choose his line over Stokesie, he knows his luck is about to take a turn for the worse now that the manager, Lengel, has noticed what little clothes the girls are wearing. Lengel, being the manager and trying to be professional, walks up to the girls and confronts them about what they are wearing. He says to them, "girls this isn't the beach" (262). As "Queenie" tries to explain why they are dressed in only bathing suites, Lengel says again "that's all right, but this isn't the beach" (262).

Further into their conversation he says "We want you decently dressed when you come in here" (262). "After this come in here with your shoulders covered. It's our policy" (262). Even though Lengel took care of the situation professionally Sammy did not agree with the way it was handled so Sammy,

hoping to say it quick enough for the girls to still hear him, tells his manager " I quite" (263). " You didn't have to embarrass them" (263), says Sammy.

Lengel tells Sammy " you don't want to do this to your Mom and Dad," In return Sammy says, " it's true, I don't" (263)...

Sammy chose to stand up for what he believes, but quitting his job is a little extreme. Sammy chose to be a " nonconformist" in this situation. He made a decision to quit his job, one he only made to get the attention and gratification of being noticed as the girls " unsuspected hero," but that backfired when he realized that the girls were already out the door and didn't hear any of what he was saying. It was too late to take it all back though because as he said " it seems to me that once you begin a gesture it's fatal not to go through with it" (263).

So he followed through, turned over his apron, and walked out. He has made a decision that this time he cannot undo, but if he so chooses may be able to learn from and go about things a little differently the next time he is confronted with a situation he does not agree with.

He also needs to step back and decide if what he is doing is rational or if it's just for the attention of others. Sammy states in the end of the story " my stomach kind of fell as I felt how hard the world was going to be to be hereafter" (264).

He is realizing that he is growing up and won't have his Mom and Dad there to stand up for him all the time. He is going to be put in situations like this for the rest of his life and it's going to be difficult, but he is going to have to

figure out a way to confront someone without overreacting. He has many more stepping stones to take in life and he will continue to learn from each one.

Works Cited Updike, John. " A&P. " Literature: Reading, Reacting, Writing. 7th ed. Ed. Laurie G.

Kirszner and Stephen R. Mandell. Boston: Wadsworth, 2009. 259-64.