

# Lit analysis of smokers, inc. essay



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Kick the Habit, or Kick the Bucket Stephen King's short story "Quitters, Inc." involves a smoker trying to kick the habit, and getting results no matter the means. Dick Morrison meets Jimmy McCann, an old friend, in the bar of the Kennedy International airport.

McCann has stopped smoking, gained a promotion, and become physically fit since the last time they met. He tells Morrison about an agency that helped him quit smoking and gave him a business card for Quitters, Inc., which Morrison just put in his wallet. A month later he sees the card fall out of his wallet and decides to go see them. Upon going to Quitters, Inc. Morrison meets Vic Donatti, the man in charge of his case.

Morrison signs a contract saying that he won't reveal anything they do in the course of his treatment. Donatti tells Morrison that he will never smoke again after that day. When he goes back for his next appointment, Donatti starts by punching the cigarettes Morrison had on him whilst still smiling. Donatti then reveals how much they know about their clients by referencing Morrison's handicapped son who he told them nothing about. Donatti tells him that he is a pragmatist, or someone who is oriented towards the success or failure of something through practical means.

Donatti shows Morrison that a rabbit can be taught that eating food will cause an electric shock to occur and therefore after enough aversion training the rabbit will starve itself to avoid the shock. Donatti then explains the various ways they discipline their clients for slipping up, the tenth and last being death. They guarantee you won't ever smoke again. After a series of non-smoking, Morrison slips up, his wife is kidnapped, and he is called in to

watch her get electrocuted for thirty seconds. Afterwards she tells him that she understands what they are trying to do. After months of not smoking Morrison gains weight and Donatti says that if he can't lose it they will cut off his wife's pinky finger.

After that Morrison passes on the Quitters, Inc business card to a man known only as Crony, and tells him they changed his life. Years later Morrison and his wife meet McCann and his wife at a theatre. When he shakes the hand of McCann's wife he notices something is wrong. Later the realization hits him that she only had four fingers; her pinky was missing. King's take on smoking and the ways to stop it altogether are fairly emblematic of American society.

After Donatti pulls a gun out he says, " But even the unregenerate two percent never smoke again. We guarantee it. " (219) Donatti wants results and doesn't care how he reaches them. Americans do this all the time, though maybe on a smaller scale. They demand instant results for something, no matter the cost of it. The company showed how far it was willing to go to keep Morrison not smoking by kidnapping his wife and torturing her in front of him.

This action gave them the results they wanted; Morrison never slipped again. "Quitters, Inc" also showcases another part of society, its vices. Be it smoking, gambling, or drinking most are hooked by something. Morrison is no different. He doesn't believe that he can quit smoking and neither do the people around him.

In an excerpt by Jimmy McCann, "" Well, to put the capper on it, the doc told me I had an incipient ulcer. He told me quit smoking. " McCann grimaced. "

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Might as well tell me to quit breathing. ”” (209) Here we see a man who thought smoking was something he needed and eventually quit with the right motivations.

Morrison too did this later in the story. With the idea that his family might be harmed, he eventually conquered his habitual smoking. This also leads to another point the story shows. When your family is in danger you will do anything to stop them from being harmed.

Donatti uses this as a tool to stop people from smoking. Threatening to torture his wife and break his son’s arms, Morrison only slips once and becomes free from smoking. Quitters, Inc is not your typical rehabilitation center or place where you turn to when you want to stop feeding a habit. No, Quitters, Inc is more like the mafia than anything.

Though they want you to stop smoking, killing you is not off the table either. Since they guarantee you will stop smoking, even if it means death. Donatti even pulls out a gun to emphasize his point to Morrison; ‘ He opened up one of the desk drawers and laid a silenced . 45 on the desk. He smiled into Morrison’s eyes.

’ (219). Donatti isn’t interested in the legality of the matter; he just wants people to do exactly what he says. If they disobey they are met with dire consequences. Again, fairly reminiscent to what we think of when the word “ mafia” comes into play. In conclusion “ Quitters, Inc” is almost a mirror of something a businessman today might well start.

It shows the reality of society and vices, whilst displaying the typical American stereotype of wanting results no matter the cost. It portrays an average man put in a more than average situation that could either redeem or condemn him. Bibliography King, Stephen. "Quitters, Inc." *Night Shift* New York: Penguin Group, 1979. 208-228