

“After Twenty Years” by O. Henry

In the story “After Twenty Years” by O. Henry, two friends are about to reunite at the same place they parted twenty years before. After carefully reading “After Twenty Years,” write a multi-paragraph essay analyzing the author’s message. Be sure to use specific details and examples from the text to support your response.

The following essays demonstrate what a 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1 point essay would look like. Copying any portion of these essays is plagiarism and will result in a failing grade for the student. These essays were all taken from the “My Access” web site.

Score Point 6 - very effectively communicates the writer's message.

Model Essay

If you were to meet a friend after not seeing them for twenty years, would you recognize them? Do you think they might have changed from when you last met? In the short story “After Twenty Years” by O. Henry, this very concept is tested. Two best friends had moved apart, one moving to the west as the other stayed in New York. Both men, true to their word, showed up at ten o’clock at the restaurant where Bob and Jimmy had last seen each other. Although one of the two didn’t reveal who he truly was until the end of the story, there is a twist. When you, or anyone in general, are faced with a certain decision where you could lose a friendship, being loyal isn’t always the proper choice. Making the right decisions, even through our better judgments, is the most understandable.

In this story, the idea of someone changing over time is probable, though some of us hope that that unavoidable truth doesn’t happen. A quote from the story reads “a tall man in a long overcoat, with a collar turned up to his ears, hurried across the street...Is that you, Bob? he asked, doubtfully.” His actions were suspicious and it turns out that he wasn’t really Jimmy. Nearly every second of everyday, people all over the world have a choice; something in their self-conscience that tells them whether something is right or wrong. We as human beings are judged, even under our best wishes, and, for the most part, are discriminated against by our actions. It depends on what we believe, but making the correct decision, in your point of view, could be different from the next person. Some would say that Jimmy should not have turned Bob in, seeing as they were best friends and Bob had described him as loyal. Others would say that Jimmy did the honorable thing by not performing the arrest himself.

Another example from “After Twenty Years” is “when they came into this glare...gazed upon each other’s faces.... ‘You’re not Jimmy Wells,’ he snapped. ‘Twenty years is a long time, but not long enough to change a man’s nose from a Roman to a pug.’ ‘It sometimes changes a good man into a bad one.’” This long but helpful quote indicates that over a period of time, there are certain changes a person undergoes. It also shows that there are some things that can’t change for a visibly more amount of time. If you were to take one picture of yourself, once a year, for twenty years, you would most likely find many differences. But, once again, there are a few things that can change a person and whether we think it justice or not, it is up to the one person who decision will be the outcome of an affair.

A third and final quote/example is “when you stuck the match to light your cigar, I saw it was the face of the man wanted in Chicago. Somehow I couldn’t do it myself, so I went around and got a plainclothes man to do the job.” Despite the fact that there isn’t much said in this specific quote, it most accurately portrays the author’s message. Even though Jimmy didn’t want to turn in his best friend, he did, acting on his best intentions, if only to show his friend that had done what he had done and had taken the liberty to write Bob a note about it. For most people, they will, eventually, be involved in a dispute between friends. The reasons, whatever they may be, will either be because of something important or something unimportant. We just have to think twice about what we plan to do before actually fulfilling something, considering who we may, unintentionally hurt.

For the most part, a huge percentage of people will have the ordeals of using our choices and deciding upon what evidence there is to contradict someone due to their actions. The author was trying to tell the reader(s) that you may think you know someone, but people can and do change, whether we want(ed) them to are not. So, overall, when it comes to choosing what is the right, true and honorable thing to and what is bad, making your decision on how you think you should is what is most important.

Score Point 5 - strongly communicates the writer's message.

Model Essay

In *After Twenty Years*, by O. Henry or William Sydney Porter, the story talks about two friends, Bob and Jimmy, who part ways and plan to meet again twenty years later. Jimmy remained in New York while Bob ventured to the West to seek his fortune. Both men arrived at the scheduled location at exactly 10:00 P.M. Bob didn't recognize Jimmy but, unfortunately for Bob, Jimmy recognized him as a wanted criminal from Chicago. Jimmy, now a police officer, couldn't arrest his old friend, so he got a plainclothes policeman to do the job for him. In *After Twenty Years*, Bob learns that friendship does not always survive the test of time.

Jimmy's actions demonstrate that he was now more loyal to his job than to his old friend. He had a responsibility as a police officer to arrest criminals. Because he didn't have the heart to arrest his longtime friend himself, Jimmy told another police officer who wasn't in uniform to arrest Bob for him. Jimmy wrote a note for Bob that the other police officer gave to him. 'Bob: I was at the appointed place on time. When you struck the match to light your cigar, I saw it was the face of the man wanted in Chicago. Somehow I couldn't do it myself, so I got a plainclothes man to do the job. Jimmy.' (page 160) Jimmy didn't let his past interfere with his future.

Although Jimmy allowed his new life to control his feelings for his old friend, Bob remained loyal to his history with Jimmy. Bob's feelings for Jimmy did not change over time. At the appointed place, Bob told the police officer, Jimmy, "I dined at Big Joe' Brady's with Jimmy Wells, my best chum and the finest chap in the world." (page 158) Upon reading the note that Jimmy wrote, Bob started to shake. "His hand was steady when he began to read, but it trembled a little by the time he had finished." (page 160) Bob was bewildered when he realized that his longtime friend had betrayed him. Bob was still true to his past while Jimmy had moved on to bigger and better ideals.

Jimmy's actions demonstrate loyalty and responsibility more to his job rather than to his friend. The theme of the story is that friendships might not always survive the test of time. Bob and Jimmy were great pals but, over the next twenty years, they grew apart. Not only did they live on opposite sides of the nation, but they were on opposite sides of the law. Jimmy defended the law while Bob made his living by breaking it. Since Jimmy was the only one who knew Bob's whereabouts, he could have easily let Bob leave the area and ignore Bob's status as a criminal. Jimmy chose not to do this because he had grown up and was loyal to his profession, the law. Friendships can definitely change over time. In *After Twenty Years*, Bob and Jimmy's relationship was no exception.

Score Point 4 - adequately communicates the writer's message.

Model Essay

People often say friendship lasts forever although it isn't true according to what O'Henry states in his short story, *After Twenty Years*. The friendship between Bob and Jimmy Wells is no longer in existence when one night, they meet in a town on a dark and gloomy night. This short story clearly points out that friendships can change over time.

In the beginning of *After Twenty Years* a policeman continued wandering down the city patrolling any trouble that goes on. One night, he slowed his walk on a certain random street and gazed at a man. He quickly walked over to the man and started to become curious and talked to him. The man said quickly, "It's all right officer. I'm just waiting for a friend. It's an appointment made twenty years ago." So the policeman and the man had a conversation and the policeman had informed the man that the restaurant he had been searching for had been knocked down. The man lit his cigar with a big flame showing his "pale, square-jawed face with keen eyes, and a little white scar near his right eyebrow. His scarf pin was a large diamond, oddly set." After a nice chat, the policeman let the man go and he was off to his errand.

The man eventually ends his search of his friend and finds him. He had found his long lost friend Jimmy Wells. They shake hands and catch up on what has been happening to them over the past twenty years. Jimmy had apparently become taller. Although, when the streetlight shone upon them, Bob had realized that not only his height was different, his face was unique than before too. "'You're not Jimmy Wells,' he snapped. 'Twenty years is a long time, but not long enough to change a man's nose from a Roman to a pug.'" It had been revealed that the man was not Jimmy Wells. It was a complete stranger.

At the end, Jimmy had gone under arrest due to the crimes he had done in Chicago. Jimmy had not wanted to arrest him himself so he convinced another man to do the job. It appears that people and friendship can change dramatically overtime. Bob had changed from a good man into a criminal over time. Additionally, the friendship of Jimmy Wells and Bob had ended and no longer existed.

Score Point 3 - partially communicates the writer's message.

Model Essay

After I was finishing the novel, "After Twenty Years," and I learned a lot of lessons. There are times other people, doesn't trust anyone even though that person is your best friend, and the most important lesson is losing the friendship for the right thing.

From the novel, there are two men who are best friends when they were in their early age, first person name's Jimmy, the police man in New York. The second name's Bob, the criminal that Chicago wants. When they were small, they were promising to each other that they are going to meet in the restaurant. Twenty years later Bob came to the appointed place on time and waited for his friend. Jimmy also came on time but he didn't tell Bob that he is Jimmy. He remembers his friend's face well because he can remember Bob's nose. Jimmy knew that Bob is the bad person then he didn't want to heard his friend's feeling. Bob did not know that his friend was the police man. They had the conversation for a while then Jimmy go and tell the other police man comes to lock Bob. Jimmy will lost Bob as a friend because he turned Bob to the police. Jimmy said that he was at the appointed place on time. When Bob struck the match to light his cigar, he saw it was the face of the man wanted in Chicago. Somehow he couldn't do it himself, so he went around and got a plain clothes man to do the job.

The novel of "After Twenty Years" had taught me that "Losing the friendship for the right thing." I am supporting Jimmy that he turned Bob to the police because Bob is a bad man. If Bob is my friend and I am the police then I will do the same as what Jimmy had done because I am not a bad person.

Score Point 2 - limited in communication of the writer's message.

Model Essay

In the story "After Twenty Years" by O. Henry It talks about two friends that want to go two separate ways and they end up betraying each other later on in life.

The two friends names were Bob and Jimmy. Bob is tall with a squared jaw and keen eyes because he is always watching out for the cops. Jimmy is a tall police man with a roman nose and he is a successful man because he did not want to be a potter for the rest of his life. So in conclusion "it sometimes changes a good man into a bad one". Bob did not get the future that he wanted so he started to rob and that's how he became wanted in Chicago. On the other hand Jimmy made a good decision by staying in New York and getting a good education and then after that getting a good job as a police man instead of doing the same thing that Bob did by going to Chicago and turning into a thief. So in my opinion if I was Jimmy I would have put Bob in jail myself. I think that if a friend turns that way I too would betray them because then the police will accuse you of covering them from justice.

Score Point 1 - inadequately communicates the writer's message.

Model Essay

This is a story about two friends that grow up in New York City. The name of this story is After Twenty Years and written by O. Henry. Bob wanted to meet his old chum, but Bob was a criminal so he went to jail. In my opinion the theme is that people change and people don't