
Sammy's Character Change In "A & P"

At the beginning of "A & P," Sammy is portrayed as an immature young man. To start with, he makes it clear that he places a lot of significance on the physical attributes of individuals. This can be fetched from his descriptions of the three girls who come into the store. He describes them according to their bodily features which reveals his likes and dislikes in the opposite sex. For instance, he narrates, "The one that caught my eye first was the one in the plaid green two-piece. She was a chunky kid, with a good tan and a sweet broad soft-looking can with those two crescents of white just under it, where the sun never seems to hit, at the top of the backs of her legs' (Updike 19). He then proceeds to give the descriptions of the other girls. In this, he reveals his level of immaturity. This is because his focus is placed on things that are not of value when evaluating a person or character.

The fact that Sammy visually follows the girls almost throughout the whole time that they are in the store is also an indication of immaturity. He describes how they walk along the different aisles and even watches how other people react to the girls (Updike 20). He does all this while he is on duty at his place of work. This is an indication that he does not pay a lot of attention to whether he remains active at work. When the girls come to check out at his slot, one can detect the hint of excitement in him because he is fascinated with one of the girls who he names 'queen.' This also points out the level of immaturity in Sammy. Additionally, after the girls are humiliated by Lengel, Sammy says, "I quit," and at this moment, his focus is placed on the girls hearing his declaration. This can be seen as a way of seeking their attention or being valued by them as their hero. At that time, his only concern is to impress the girls and this further shows his immaturity.

Sammy, however, shows a change in maturity as the story nears the end. First, he takes a stand when he decides to quit his job. Lengel tries to talk him out of his decision by telling him that it will hurt Sammy's parents and that he will regret it. Sammy acknowledges these facts and still maintains his ground (Updike 23). This indicates heightened maturity because he shows that he has control over his life unlike before when his parents were in charge of him. He also shows that he is not afraid of his parents' reactions over quitting his job since it is his decision and no one can influence it to change.

Sammy's decision to quit his job is in opposition to how Lengel embarrasses and humiliates the girls who were in the store. Despite being afraid of how his life will turn out next, Sammy is happy that he has taken a stand to protect someone else (Updike 24). His acceptance that he is scared is also an indication that he is more mature than he was there before. Sammy's character is dynamic as it changes from one of an immature individual who is superficial to that of a mature person with the courage to face the decisions that he makes.

Work Cited

1. Updike, John. A & P in Kennedy, X. J., and Dana Gioia. Literature: An introduction to fiction, poetry, drama, and writing. Ed. Dan Stone. Pearson, 2013.