

DIRECTIONS: 1. Read and use FULL-Annotations – 3 FULL ANNOTATIONS per page (symbols and notes). Highlight, circle and underline as needed. 2. Complete the COMPREHENSION CHECK & TEXT QUESTIONS.

A Retrieved Reformation

O. Henry

SHORT STORY



Jimmy Valentine, who was given a sentence of four years, has been in prison for nearly ten months. He meets with the warden, who tells Jimmy he received a pardon from the governor. Jimmy will be released the following morning.

“Now, Valentine,” said the warden, “you’ll go out in the morning. Brace up, and make a man of yourself. You’re not a bad fellow at heart. Stop cracking safes, and live straight.”

Jimmy pretends not to know what the warden means. The next morning, Jimmy boards a train home. In his apartment, Jimmy recalls that the last time he was home, a detective named Ben Price had arrested him. Jimmy takes out a suitcase hidden behind a wall panel in his apartment.

He opened this and gazed fondly at the finest set of burglar’s tools in the East. It was a complete set, made of specially tempered steel, the latest designs in drills, punches, braces and bits, jimmies, clamps, and augers,¹ with two or three novelties invented by Jimmy himself, in which he took pride.

Jimmy leaves the apartment with his suitcase. A week after Jimmy left prison, someone breaks into a safe in Indiana. Another burglary is reported in a different town two weeks later. A safe in yet another city is robbed of \$5,000. Ben Price begins investigating these robberies. He notices what they all have in common.

“That’s Dandy Jim Valentine’s autograph. He’s resumed business. Look at that combination knob—jerked out as easy as pulling up a radish in wet weather. He’s got the only clamps that can do it. And look how clean those tumblers were punched out! Jimmy never has to drill but one hole. ...”

Ben Price searches for Jimmy, but Jimmy is on his way to Elmore, Arkansas, with his suitcase. When Jimmy arrives in Elmore, he falls in love at first sight with a young woman leaving a bank. A boy tells Jimmy that she is Annabel Adams, daughter of the bank owner. Jimmy goes to his hotel and checks in under the name Ralph Spencer. He asks the clerk about local businesses. The clerk notes that there is no shoe store in Elmore. Jimmy sees this as an opportunity to stay in the town and open his own business.

Mr. Ralph Spencer, the phoenix that arose from Jimmy Valentine’s ashes—ashes left by the flame of a sudden and alternative attack of love—remained in Elmore, and prospered. He opened a shoe store and secured a good run of trade. ...

1. drills ... augers (AW guhrz) *n.* tools used to bore holes in metal.

This version of the selection alternates original text with summarized passages. Dotted lines appear next to the summarized passages.

NOTES



At the end of a year the situation of Mr. Ralph Spencer was this: he had won the respect of the community, his shoe store was flourishing, and he and Annabel were engaged to be married in two weeks.

Two weeks before the wedding, Jimmy writes a letter to an old friend, Billy. He asks Billy to meet him in Little Rock, Arkansas. He wants to give Billy his suitcase. Jimmy explains that he is done breaking into safes. After he gets married, Jimmy plans to move West, where there are no enemies from his past crimes.

On the Monday night after Jimmy wrote this letter, Ben Price jogged unobtrusively into Elmore in a livery buggy. He lounged about town in his quiet way until he found out what he wanted to know. From the drugstore across the street from Spencer's shoe store he got a good look at Ralph D. Spencer.

"Going to marry the banker's daughter are you, Jimmy?" said Ben to himself softly. "Well, I don't know!"

Jimmy plans to head to Little Rock the next morning. A horse and buggy will be picking him up to take him to the railroad station. Before he leaves, he goes with Annabel's family to the bank. He takes his suitcase with him. Mr. Adams wants to show them the new safe and vault. Annabel's sister's children, May and Agatha, are interested in the vault's shiny metal. While they look at it, Ben Price walks into the bank.

Suddenly there was a scream or two from the women, and a commotion. Unperceived by the elders, May, the nine-year-old girl, in a spirit of play, had shut Agatha in the vault. She had then shot the bolts and turned the knob of the combination as she had seen Mr. Adams do.

The old banker sprang to the handle and tugged at it for a moment. "The door can't be opened," he groaned. "The clock hasn't been wound nor the combination set."

Agatha screams. Annabel pleads with Jimmy to do something to get the girl out. He takes off his jacket and tells everyone to move away from the vault.

He set his suitcase on the table, and opened it out flat. From that time on he seemed to be unconscious of the presence of anyone else. He laid out the shining, queer implements swiftly and orderly, whistling softly to himself as he always did when at work.

Jimmy opens the safe in ten minutes, and Agatha is freed. Jimmy walks toward the door and sees Ben Price. Jimmy says hello to him and is willing to let the detective take him. But Ben Price is acting strangely.

"Guess you're mistaken, Mr. Spencer," he said. "Don't believe I recognize you. Your buggy's waiting for you, ain't it?"

And Ben Price turned and strolled down the street.

"A Retrieved Reformation" by O. Henry, originally appeared in *Cosmopolitan Magazine*, April 1903

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Name:	Date:
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COMPREHENSION CHECK**A Retrieved Reformation** *By O. Henry***DIRECTIONS:** Complete the following items after you finish your first read.

1. Why is Jimmy in prison at the beginning of the story?
2. Who does Ben Price think is responsible for the burglaries that happen after Jimmy is released from prison? Why?
3. What makes Jimmy give up his life as a burglar?
4. Why does Jimmy decide to crack the safe at Mr. Adams's bank?
5. To confirm your understanding, write a summary of "A Retrieved Reformation."

Name:	Date:
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TEXT QUESTIONS

DIRECTIONS: Respond to these questions. Use textual evidence to support your responses.

- 1. Make a Judgment** What kind of man is Jimmy Valentine? Explain.
- 2. Draw Conclusions** Why does Jimmy take the rose from Annabel and place it in his vest pocket?
- 3. Analyze** How can the reader be sure that Ben Rice really does recognize Jimmy?
- 4. Speculate** What do you think happens to Jimmy, Annabel, and the Adams family after Ben Price walks off?