

After Twenty Years

By O. Henry

"After Twenty Years" is a short story by O. Henry, published in 1906. O. Henry, whose real name was William Sydney Porter, made a name for himself with his unexpected 'twist' endings, and many consider "After Twenty Years" to be one of the best examples of this literary technique.

The story begins with a beat cop walking down a New York City Street on a rainy, windy night. The cop projects a sense of strength and rectitude, and takes his rounds very seriously, trying all the doors of the shops as he passes them to ensure that they are locked and secured for the evening. When he sees a man standing near one of the closed stores, he approaches, and the man begins to explain his presence, telling him that he is waiting for an old friend. Twenty years before, he and his friend made a pact to meet at that site. He acknowledges that it's a pretty odd place to meet, explaining that twenty years before it was a restaurant owned by a man named Big Joe Brady. The cop tells him that the restaurant closed down about five years before.

The man, who is wearing a very large jewel as a tie pin, goes on to tell the cop that twenty years before he met his friend Jimmy Wells there. They were best friends and had grown up in New York City. He describes them as almost like brothers. The day after their dinner the man was scheduled to begin a trip out West to seek his fortune, but Jimmy believed the best place for him to be was New York, and opted to stay behind. They then made their agreement to meet on the same spot in twenty years, because they were each confident of having achieved great things in the future. The cop finds himself interested in the story, and asks if they stayed in touch during that time. The man admits that they tried to and wrote each other for a little while, but stopped after a few years. He moved around too much to keep up a correspondence. Despite this gap in their communication, the man is confident that Jimmy will meet him as promised, because Jimmy was an extremely reliable person. He tells the cop that he traveled a very long way to be there, but will consider it worth it if he gets to see his friend again. He checks the time on an expensive watch and notes that it is three minutes to ten, and ten o'clock was when they said goodbye twenty years before.

The cop, noting the jewel and the watch, suggests that the man was very successful out West, and the man enthusiastically confirms this. He expresses hope that Jimmy has done just as well for himself, but he notes that Jimmy was a 'slow mover' and is worried he may not have made his way very far in New York City.

The cop makes to leave, and offers his hope that Jimmy shows up. He asks if the man will leave if Jimmy doesn't make it by ten o'clock. The man says he'll wait at least an additional half hour, because he has total faith that if Jimmy is alive he will make the appointment. The cop accepts this and leaves.

The rain gets heavier, and the man waits. After about twenty minutes, a tall man appears wearing a long coat and hurries over. He asks if the man's name is Bob, but sounds doubtful. The man says it is, and asks if it's Jimmy Wells. He is, and they shake hands. Jimmy expresses a wish

that the old restaurant was still there so they could have one more dinner in it, and then asks if Bob's time out West was good to him. Bob assures him that it has been.

Bob then notes that Jimmy seems to be taller than he used to be, and Jimmy assures him that he grew a little after he left. Bob asks if Jimmy's doing well, and Jimmy says he is, and that he works for the city. Jimmy suggests they go to a place he knows so they can talk.

Bob and Jimmy begin to walk, arm in arm. Bob tells Jimmy the story of his life, and Jimmy listens, obviously interested. When they reach a corner and stand under a streetlight, however, Bob pulls away and declares that the other man is not Jimmy Wells.

The tall man tells Bob that he has, in fact, been under arrest since the tall man arrived. He tells Bob that the Chicago Police contacted the New York cops and told them to watch out for him. He asks if Bob will come quietly, and when Bob indicates he will, he hands him a note from a policeman named Wells. The note tells him that Jimmy came to their meeting, but did not wish to arrest him himself, and so sent another officer to do it.

Glossary

1. Chum: a close friend
2. figured: (of e.g., fabric design) adorned with patterns
3. work out: find the solution to or understand the meaning of
4. chap: boy or man
5. raise: move upwards
6. grim: harsh uninviting
7. avenue: a wide street
8. depeople: to empty a place of people
9. correspond: to stay in touch or communicate with one another
10. simultaneously: at the same time

SHORT QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. Answer the following questions in about 150 words each.

Q. 1: What are the impressions you get of the man from the West from the story?

Ans: Twenty Years by O. Henry. Ans.: In the short story Twenty Years by O. Henry, the two main characters policeman Jimmy Wells and outlaw Silky Bob-learn this lesson all too well. At one time, the two had been as close as brothers. However, once Bob left to pursue his fortunes in the West, the two eventually lost touch. Nevertheless, they had promised to meet each other in 20 years, to the hour, after their last dinner together at the same spot in New York City.

Twenty years later, Bob's waiting outside where the restaurant once stood when he and Jimmy parted ways; the latter, who's now a policeman, comes upon him while he's walking his beat. After hearing Bob's story about the friends, pledge to meet up again and watching him light up a cigar, Jimmy recognizes Bob. He also realizes his old friend is a escapee from Chicago, whom he'd seen earlier on a police bulletin. At that point, Bob isn't aware that the policeman is Jimmy, who goes about on his patrol, leaving the outlaw to wait for his friend.

After a few moments, another man appears. At first, Bob thinks he is Jimmy. Although Bob can't see the man too well in the dark, he begins to notice that some things are off about him, the man reveals that he's a plainclothes officer taking Bob under arrest. Before he does so, he hands Bob a note from the patrolman, who turns out to be his former best friend and betrayer, Jimmy.

Q. 2: What sort of relationship did Bob and Jimmy share? What happened to their relationship over time?

Ans: The story "After Twenty Years", by O. Henry, revolves around the friendship of two childhood friends, Jimmy Wells and Bob. The story carries themes of Loyalty, Friendship, and Trust as well. The character of the Constable, Jimmy, remains hidden throughout the story but his true identity is revealed when the story approaches it's end. The two friends - Jimmy Wells and Bob were raised in New York City and grew up as bosom buddies (Best friends). The two parted their ways when Bob moved towards West in order to earn money while Jimmy opted to stay in New York as young adults. In this story, the outlaw Silky Bob has come home to reunite with his friend Jimmy Wells after 20 years. Their reunion is bittersweet, though, since Jimmy- now a patrolman whom Bob unwittingly meets - sends a plainclothesman to arrest his old friend whom he recognized as a fugitive.

Friendship:

Many of us probably know what it's like to feel compelled to do something out of friendship. May be it's working for no money, listening to long stories, or traveling hundreds of miles after 20 years. Bob clearly values the bonds of friendship that were forged between him and Jimmy all those years ago. However, it seems some of the knots may have come loose over the years that tied Jimmy to Bob.

Loyalty:

Loyalties to people and ideas can sometimes be difficult to maintain, especially when they're split between a person and an idea that might be close to our hearts. Keeping their 20-year appointment to the minute, Bob's loyalty to Jimmy is obviously unwavering. However, now that's he's a policeman, Jimmy's loyalties to Bob and to the law are put to the test when he discovers his old friend is a wanted fugitive.

Trust:

A police officer who arrested his best friend, it's clear that Bob isn't able to trust Jimmy when it comes to keeping him out of jail. Actually, by the end of the story, it doesn't seem that he is able to trust Jimmy about very much at all.

Q. 3: What is the importance of the note to the story After Twenty Years by O.Henry?

Ans: What does the note reveal and imply? Ans: Jimmy and Bob are close friends. Jimmy is an honest police officer. When he comes to know that his friend is a criminal, he does not have the courage to arrest him himself. He sends another policeman to arrest Bob. For him duty is more important than friendship. As far as Bob is concerned, he is a true friend. He wants to fulfil his promise at any cost.

The reader expects that Bob and Jimmy Wells, the two close friends, would meet each other after long separation. They would share their experiences of the past twenty years. But instead, the ending of the story fills the reader with sadness when one of the friends is arrested by police. In spite of the tragic end, the author makes the story very effective. Bob is not arrested by Jimmy Wells directly. He sends another police officer to arrest Bob. The writer prepares for the end of the story contrary to the expectations of the readers. The story begins very interestingly. Two close friends Bob and Jimmy meet each other after twenty years. Bob does not recognize Jimmy in the police uniform. After Jimmy's departure, another police officer in plain clothes comes whom Bob considers to be his Jimmy. The police officer arrests Bob because he is wanted in Chicago.

Q.4: How different is Jimmy's life from Bob's? How have their lives panned out?

Ans.: The short story "After Twenty Years" portrays two different characters. Bob is a criminal; he has earned a lot of money. But he has no home, no peace of mind. He is always by the fear that he may be arrested by the police any time. On the other hand, his friend Jimmy Wells is a police officer. He is honest, simple and duty-conscious. Though the two men were friends in their boyhood, now Jimmy Wells sends another police officer and gets Bob arrested. Silky Bob, as he's known to authorities, is a fugitive from Chicago coming back to New York City to meet an old friend. When he lights his cigar on the dark city street, the patrolman instantly recognizes him from a police bulletin, but readers might also quickly recognize him as an outlaw from this same brief glimpse. Bob's noted as 'pale' and 'square-jawed with a 'scar near his right eyebrow.' These facial features combined with his diamond-encrusted scarfpin and watch begin to paint a picture of someone who's been up to no good.

Bob had left 20 years ago to seek his fortune in the West, and it seems he's done so, only very illegally. Despite these flaws, though, there are still redeemable qualities in his character. For one, Bob can't seem to speak highly enough of his good friend, Jimmy Wells, to whom he kept his promise of meeting even after 20 years. This kind of loyalty appears to also make him rather trusting person, which, however, turns out not to work so well for him in the end.

Q.5: What kind of a person was Jimmy Wells? Describe his character with suitable evidence from the story 'After Twenty Years'.

Ans.: The short story "After Twenty Years" portrays two different characters. Bob is a criminal; he has earned a lot of money. But he has no home, no peace of mind. He is always by the fear that he may be arrested by the police any time. On the other hand, his friend Jimmy Wells is a police officer. He is sincere, honest, simple and duty-conscious. Though the two men were friends in their boyhood, now Jimmy Wells sends another police officer and gets Bob arrested.

Jimmy Wells is a police officer in New York. On a dull cold evening he is doing his duty. He walks with a straight looking face and steady steps. As he nears the door of a hardware store, he meets a man. That man is Bob who tells Jimmy Wells about the promise of meeting here made between himself and his friend twenty years ago. Now he is the friend. When Bob lights up his cigar, he realizes that Bob is notorious criminal and he is wanted by the police. He could have arrested Bob on the spot. But he recalls their early friendship and therefore sends another police officer to arrest him. Thus, Jimmy Wells is duty-conscious. He places duty above friendship.

Q. 6: Examine how O. Henry builds suspense and provides a twist in the story 'After Twenty Years'.

Ans.: "After Twenty Years" by O. Henry is an interesting story with a twist at the end. A 38-year old Bob is waiting at the door of a hardware store in New York to meet his friend Jimmy Wells. A policeman is on patrol duty. He asks Bob why he is standing there. Bob tells the cop that he is waiting to meet his friend Jimmy Wells. He says that they make a promise to meet at the same place at the same time on the same date after twenty years, before parting. He tells the policeman that he has kept his promise. He is sure that Jimmy Wells will surely come and meet him. After listening to the story, the cop walks away. Twenty minutes later, a tall man in plain clothes comes to meet him. Bob thinks him Jimmy Wells. Later he identifies that the man he is talking to is not his friend. Actually, the man is a police officer in plain clothes. He gives Bob a letter from Jimmy. Bob learns from the letter that the police officer whom he met earlier was Jimmy, his old friend. Since Bob is a criminal wanted by the Police, Jimmy Wells does not want to arrest his intimate friend so he has sent another police officer to do the work.

Here Bob is a criminal. But he is a true friend. He wants to fulfill his promise at any cost. On the other hand, his friend Jimmy Wells is an honest police officer. When he comes to know that his friend is a criminal, he does not want to arrest him himself. He has sent another policeman to arrest Bob. For him duty is more important than friendship.

Q.7: 'After Twenty Years' would the story lend itself to the theme of friendship versus justice? Provide sufficient reasons for your answer.

Ans.: "After Twenty Years" by O. Henry is an interesting story. The story entitled 'After Twenty years' is about two best friends who had to part ways. They return to keep an appointment they had made twenty years ago. Meeting Jimmy Wells: A 38-year old Bob is waiting at the door of a hardware store in New York to meet his friend Jimmy Wells. A policeman is on patrol duty. He asks Bob why he is standing there. Bob tells the cop that he (Bob) is waiting to meet his friend. After Twenty Years Bob says that before parting they had made a promise to meet at the same place at the same time on the same date after twenty years. Bob tells the policeman that he (Bob) has kept his promise. Bob is sure that Jimmy Wells will surely come and meet him. After listening to the story, the cop walks away.

Twenty minutes later, a tall man in plain clothes comes to meet Bob. Bob thinks him Jimmy Wells, but realizes that the man is not his friend. Actually, the man is a police officer in plain clothes. He gives Bob a letter from Jimmy. Bob learns from the letter that the police officer whom he had met earlier was Jimmy, his old friend.

Jimmy Wells identifies Bob as the most wanted criminal in New York. But he does not want to arrest his intimate friend so he sends another police officer to do the work. Conclusion: For Jimmy Wells duty is more important than friendship.

II. Choose the correct answer from the options given below.

1. What did the policeman look like?

- a. uniformed and frail and short
- b. uniformed and well-built
- c. dressed in ordinary clothes and frail and short
- d. dressed in ordinary clothes and well-built

Ans.: b. uniformed and well-built

2. What did Bob and Jimmy agree to do twenty years after their dinner together?

- a. to move to the west
- b. to return to New York
- c. To meet at the restaurant and see how they have fared
- d. to meet at the restaurant and discuss a partnership

Ans.: c. To meet at the restaurant and see how they have fared

3. What did the policeman on the beat constantly do?

- a. twirl his stick
- b. interrogates people on his beat
- c. smoke a cigar
- d. unlocks doors

Ans.: a. twirl his stick

4. The story implies that 'Silky' Bob is a

- a. restaurant owner
- b. frequent traveller to the west
- c. criminal
- d. policeman

Ans.: c. criminal

5. What was striking about 'Silky' Bob?

- a. He had a scar on his face near his eyebrow.

- b. He had a Roman nose
- c. He carried a diamond -studded watch
- d. both (a) and (c) above

Ans.: d. both (a) and (c) above

6. What did 'Silky' Bob realize about the man he took to be his friend when they stopped outside the drug store?

- a. The man had large teeth
- b. His nose was different
- c. He was not Jimmy Wells
- d. both (b) and (c) above

Ans.: d. both (b) and (c) above

7. Why did 'Silky' Bob wait outside the restaurant?

- a. he wanted to smoke
- b. he was waiting for an old friend
- c. he had committed a crime
- d. he liked watching strangers on the road

Ans.: b. he was waiting for an old friend

8. Who was 'Jimmy Wells' in the story?

- a. The first policeman
- b. Bob's alias
- c. The plain clothes man
- d. no one

Ans.: a. The first policeman

9. According to Bob, his friend Jimmy Wells was.....

- a. the best policeman in the world
- b. the truest friend in the world
- c. the epitome of good manners
- d. the most violent man in town

Ans.: b. the truest friend in the world

10. Why does the Bob describes Jimmy Wells as a 'plodder'?

- a. he doesn't think Jimmy is smart
- b. he thinks Jimmy has a limp
- c. he thinks Jimmy is mentally unstable
- d. Jimmy walks very slowly and heavily

Ans.: a. he doesn't think Jimmy is smart

The Bet

Anton Chekhov

Anton Pavlovich Chekhov (1860-1904) was a Russian playwright and short-story writer who is considered to be one of the greatest writers of all time. He wrote essentially about human loneliness and frustration and about the stagnant life in the Russia that he knew. He shows a sense of sympathy towards his characters and tries his best to present life in the raw, where people battle with loneliness, frustration and agony all alone.

The Bet is a short story which is written in 1889 by Anton Chekhov about a banker and a young lawyer who make a bet which each other following a conversation about whether the death penalty is better or worse than life in prison. The banker wagers that the lawyer (Young man) cannot remain in solitary confinement for a period of fifteen years.

Fifteen years ago, a party was thrown at a banker's home, where many intellectuals such as journalists and lawyers attended. During that party, the group in attendance had many lively discussions, ultimately turning to the topic of capital punishment. The banker and other men discussed whether life in prison or capital punishment is more moral or humane. The guest found capital punishment immoral, whereas the banker thought it is morally preferable and more merciful. The lawyer believes that any life is better than none, and that life cannot be taken away by the government, since life cannot be given back if the government realizes that it made a mistake. The banker bet the lawyer two million rubles that he wouldn't last five years in prison. The lawyer increased the length, declaring that he would spend not five but 15 years in confinement. If he could last to the sentence, the lawyer would receive two millions for winning the bet.

The banker made an agreement. The lawyer was to live in a lodge in the banker's garden without going outside or seeing anyone. He can have any item that he desires. He could have a musical instrument, books, wine and cigarettes. And he could write letters but not receive them. If he stayed in the lodge for 15 years, the banker would give him 2 millions. In the first year he suffers from loneliness and depression. He plays the piano and rejects wine and tobacco. As the years progress, he gives in and spends much of his time drunk or asleep.

In the second year of his imprisonment, he reads only classics. By the fifth year, he has stopped playing music, refuses to read and talks to himself in anger. He writes letters but tears them up, often weeping, and often drinks and smokes.

Next, he studies philosophy and languages, becoming an expert on several. He writes a letter to his jailer in six different languages, asking him to show his words to experts. If no mistakes are found in the letters, the banker should fire a gun in the garden. His wish is fulfilled when

the banker orders shots to be fired. The lawyer reads every genre as the years pass. He makes his way from the lighter reading of the early years to the dense text of the Gospels and Shakespeare. Then he reads the New Testament and finally, in the last two years reads randomly, selecting everything from Byron or Shakespeare to the natural sciences, literature, medical textbooks, chemistry, philosophy and theology.

The banker is only hours away from setting the young man free and paying him 2 millions. But the banker has lost most of his wealth, if he fulfills the bet, he will be bankrupt. So, the banker resolves to kill the lawyer. He goes to investigate how the young man is doing. He finds that his prisoner is asleep at his desk, looking much older than he ever imagined him to be. After observing him for a few seconds, the banker notices a letter on the table.

The banker reads a letter. The lawyer explains that isolation has changed him. He has learnt a staggering amount from all that he has read, he has travelled all over the world, seen beautiful things, been with beautiful women, learnt about the wonders of nature and become immensely clever. He finds all of that meaningless because it is temporary. He renounces the two million rubles and declares that he will leave five hours early so as to lose the bet.

The banker cries and kisses the sleeping lawyer on the head. The next morning, the watchman informs him that the young man has escaped. The banker goes to the garden wing to confirm the departure. He takes the note to avoid unnecessary rumors and locks it in his safe.

GLOSSARY

capital punishment: the killing of a person by the State as punishment for a crime

humane: having or showing compassion; tolerant, sympathetic and forgiving

wagers: risk against someone else's on the basis of the outcome of an unpredictable event; bet

solitary confinement: a form of imprisonment in which the inmate lives in a single cell with no meaningful contact with other people

stake: to risk, to gamble

staggering: deeply shocking, astonishing

Gospel: the record of Jesus's life and teaching in the Christian Bible

natural science: a branch of science that deals with the physical world

Byron: George Gordon Byron (1788-1824)

bankruptcy: a state of financial failure in which one is unable to repay one's debts

despise: to feel contempt or deep disgust for something or someone

departure: the action of leaving

deceptive: to make somebody believe something that is not true

disgust: unpleasant

illusory: based on illusion; not real

mirage: the illusory appearance of water in the desert

renounce: to give up

contempt: the feeling that person or a thing is worthless or underserving of consideration

Comprehension

Answer each of the following questions in about 150 words.

1. What was the discussion at the party given by the banker? What were some of the views expressed at this discussion?

Ans. A party was thrown at a banker's home, where many intellectuals such as journalists and lawyers attended. During that party, the group in attendance had many lively discussions, ultimately turning to the topic of capital punishment. The banker and other men discussed whether life in prison or capital punishment is more moral or humane. The guest found capital punishment immoral, whereas the banker thought it is morally preferable and more merciful, and a young man believes that any life imprisonment is the better option, due to its preservation of life. The lawyer believes that any life is better than none, and that life cannot be taken away by the government, since life cannot be given back if the government realizes that it made a mistake.

2. Narrate briefly the different stages that the lawyer went through in his solitude.

Ans. In the first year he suffers from loneliness and depression. He plays the piano and rejects wine and tobacco. As the years progress, he gives in and spends much of his time drunk or asleep. In the second year of his imprisonment, he reads only classics. By the fifth year, he has stopped playing music, refuses to read and talks to himself in anger. He writes letters but tears them up, often weeping, and often drinks and smokes. Next, he studies philosophy and languages, becoming an expert on several. He writes a letter to his jailer in six different languages, asking him to show his words to experts. If no mistakes are found in the letters, the banker should fire a gun in the garden. His wish is fulfilled when the banker orders shots to be fired. The lawyer reads every genre as the years pass. He makes his way from the lighter reading of the early years to the dense text of the Gospels and Shakespeare. Then he reads the New Testament and finally, in the last two years reads randomly, selecting everything from Byron or Shakespeare to the natural sciences, literature, medical textbooks, chemistry, philosophy and theology.

3. What were the thoughts and intentions of the banker on the eve of the end of the lawyer's confinement? Did he follow through with his plan?

Ans. No, he did not follow through with his plan. He lost most of his wealth in gambling. The banker is only hours away from setting the lawyer free and paying him 2 millions. But the banker has lost most of his wealth, if he fulfills the bet, he will be bankrupt. So, the banker

resolves to kill the lawyer. He goes to investigate how the young man is doing. He finds that his prisoner is asleep at his desk, looking much older than he ever imagined him to be.

4. Comment on the ending of the story in the light of the character of the young man and point out the pathos of the tale.

Ans. The lawyer read a lot during his imprisonment and reading of philosophical and religious books gave him wisdom. He realized the futility of money. It was as illusory and deceptive as mirage. The lawyer resolves to break the agreement by leaving the place five hours before the time fixed, thus showing that he does not care for money any more.

5. Why did the young man finally renounce his right over the money which was his by right? Why did the banker finally feel contempt for his own behaviour?

Ans. During the term of his 15 years of solitary confinement the young man undergoes much change. He develops a deep disgust for all that humans value i.e. the materialistic. Instead, he seeks spiritual delight. He writes of his disgust in the letter he leaves his prison before the time fixed. He states that he is going to renounce the prize money to prove to the readers of the letter that he truly does despise all that the human value. Thus, he renounces the money both to prove his disgust and stay away from anything material that might hamper his quest for the spiritual heaven. This leads to the banker's realization of his own baseness in the light of the lawyer's own nature. Thus, he feels contempt for himself.

6. Write a detailed character sketch of the banker. Is there any change in his character at any point in the story?

Ans. The banker is a greedy businessman who uses his power and wealth to manipulate others. Initially he freely risks two million rubles in the bet with the lawyer. However, as the story progresses, the banker falls into destitution and considers murdering the lawyer so as not to pay him back. His choices are always financially or materialistically driven. The banker who is selfish and materialistic does not hesitate to think the young lawyer and putting the blame on the watchman. He cannot bear the thought of becoming bankrupt. At this stage, he is delighted to find a note in which the young man has expressed his desire to renounce the two million rubles of which he once dreamed as of Paradise. The lawyer resolves to break the agreement by leaving the place five hours before the time fixed, thus showing that he does not care for money any more. The banker was overwhelmed after reading the notes of the lawyer because he was filled with guilt. He felt contempt for himself. He kissed the prisoner on the head and went back to his house weeping. He felt strangely defeated despite having won the bet.

Choose the correct answer from the options given below:

1. What were the banker's views on the capital punishment.
 - a. It was more moral than imprisonment for life.
 - b. It was immoral.
 - c. Both capital punishment and imprisonment for life were equally immoral.
 - d. He didn't have any strong opinion about it.

Ans. (a)

2. According to the bet between the banker and the lawyer, the latter was supposed to stay in solitary confinement for...
 - a. Fifteen years in own his home.
 - b. Five years in a different country.
 - c. Fifteen years in a lodge in the banker's garden.

- d. Ten years in a prison.

Ans. (c)

- 3. At the end of fifteen years, the banker felt...
 - a. That he would win the bet.
 - b. That it was a nonsensical and meaningless bet.
 - c. That he had proved his point.
 - d. That life imprisonment was better than capital punishment.

Ans. (b)

- 4. Which of the following was the young lawyer not allowed to do during his solitary confinement?
 - a. Have a musical instrument
 - b. Receive letters
 - c. Write letters
 - d. Read books

Ans. (b)

- 5. What happened in the first year of the lawyer's confinement?
 - a. He suffered severely from loneliness and depression.
 - b. He started studying languages.
 - c. He started studying history.
 - d. He stopped playing the piano.

Ans. (a)

- 6. The lawyer refused tobacco in the first year of his confinement because...
 - a. It excited his desires.
 - b. It spoilt the air of his room.
 - c. It made him want to seek company.
 - d. It distracted him from reading.

Ans. (b)

- 7. What kind of books did the lawyer read in the second year of his confinement?
 - a. Novels with a complicated love plot
 - b. Sensational stories
 - c. Classics
 - d. Philosophical books

Ans. (c)

- 8. In order to save himself from bankruptcy, the banker decided to...
 - a. Invest in the stock exchange.
 - b. Call off the bet.
 - c. Escape his house at night.
 - d. Kill the lawyer.

Ans. (d)

- 9. At the end of the lawyer's confinement, he declared that...
 - a. He despised freedom and life and health.
 - b. He had been foolish to stake his freedom for money.
 - c. Books, wine and music were meaningless to him.
 - d. Wisdom is the most important thing in a man's life.

Ans. (d)

- 10. On reading the lawyer's note, the banker felt...
 - a. Angry at himself
 - b. Content with himself.
 - c. Happy at his victory.
 - d. Contempt for himself.

Ans. (b)

The Gold Frame

- R. K Laxman

Rasipuram Krishnaswamy Iyer Laxman (24 October 1921- 26 January 2015) was an Indian cartoonist, illustrator, and humorist. He is widely regarded as India's greatest cartoonist and was best known for his creation **The Common Man**. He was the brother of R.K Narayan.

The Gold Frame is a short story. Where the writer depicts the plight of Datta and tries to bring out the characteristics of Indian middle class. The hypocrisy and false prestige, typical of the middle class, are well exposed in this story. The style of the story is consistent with the theme of humor. It deals with themes of deception, dishonesty, independence, responsibility, and fear. R. K Laxman, in his characteristic simple and dispassionate way and through the richness of detail in characterization and setting, builds the suspense and irony of the story.

The present story starts with Datta. who is the owner of the small shop called 'The Modern Frame Works'. The modern frame works was an extra-large wooden packing case placed in between a drug store and radio repair shop. The story revolves around Datta. who was a lean man with silver-rimmed glasses and the color of seasoned timber. He was a silent and hardworking man. He spoke very little and never entertained to idle gossip but always gave short answers to those who tried to intrude on him. Datta was always seen sitting amidst cardboard pieces, bits of woods, glass sheets, paint tins, boxes of nail, glue bottle etc. Many times, when he lost something like a glass cutter or pencil stub he had to stand up and started shaking his dhoti vigorously to displace the lost object.

In Datta's shop, there was no rich space. Where decorated with a variety of pictures like gods, saints, hockey players, cheap prints of the Mona Lisa, national leaders, wedding couples, Urdu calligraphy the snow-clad Fujiyama and many others were arrangement. One day, a customer came to the shop with a faded picture of an old man. Firstly, Datta ignored him with his habitual indifference and continued to be busy deriving screws into the sides of a frame. The customer announced that he wants the best picture framed.

Datta interrupted and asked the customer what kind of frame he wanted and showed him a variety of pictures which were hanging on the wall. In addition, Datta also asked him whether he would like a cut mount for a plain mount. After checking out all sample, the customer settled on an imported German frame with an oval cut mount. The cost of the whole work was seventeen rupees.

Datta was agreed to get the frame ready in two weeks. But usually, he did not start the work. Because he learnt from his experiences that his customers never came punctually. They give orders to make frame so, Datta make it on given time. But customers do not come months or sometime never turn up at all. Their frames lay unclaimed in a box. So, he decided when a customer comes twice for a frame then he will make sure.

Datta is very passionate about his work and though the work is to be delivered after a fortnight, the customer came to the shop after ten days to inquiry whether the picture was framed. But

the frame was not ready. He understands that the customer is very serious about getting the photo framed. Obviously, the customer respects, admires and praises the old man which make one believe that the man in the photograph must have been an ideal human being.

Datta started to work and carefully laid the photograph on a wooden plank on the floor and looked for the pencil stub for marking the measurements as usual it was missing frantically searching, he stood up and shook the folds of his dhoti, but terrible thing happens. Accidentally a tin of enamel paint spills over the photograph of the old man. He tried to rub the paint on the photograph with a cloth but unfortunately half of face and entire turban get erased. The photograph is completely spoiled and Datta does not know what to do now. He got panic-stricken. He was upset about the consequences he was going to face.

Suddenly he comes across a similar photograph and in his mind an idea takes shape. He decided to substitute the damaged photo with another photo which is somehow similar. He brought down the old wooden box in which he had kept all the photographs. Finally, he found one photograph for this purpose and puts it in a dazzling gold frame. Datta hopes that his deception will go unnoticed. Nonetheless, he was anxious and nervous.

At last, the customer came to receive his photograph and asked if the picture has been done. Datta's heart began to race. He held the glittering frame toward the customer and slowly removed the cover. The customer eagerly looks at it. Datta waits with bated breath. Suddenly, the customer shocked and shouted in anger "what have you done?" Datta fears the worst. He thinks that his deception has been noticed. But the customer was asking for a cut mount with a square shape instead of an oval shape. The customer did not find out that picture was different. Before Datta accepts the mistake, the customer continues shouting. His only concern was about the mount and said that 'Now don't deny it! I clearly remember asking for a cut mount with an oval shape. This is square, Look! Datta felt relieve, as he knows that at the most, he might have to change the frame. In this way the writer ends the story with a twist.

Vocabulary:

Hypocrisy: the false assumption of an appearance of virtue or religion

rimmed: the upper or outer edge of an object.

timber: growing trees or their wood.

faded: having lost freshness or depth of color.

frantically: in a nervously hurried or panic stricken way

enamel: a paint that dries to a hard glossy finish.

turban: top hat

substitute: to put or use in the place of another.

deception: the fact or condition of being deceived.

anxious: feeling or showing uncomfortable feelings of uncertainty.

calligraphy: art of writing beautifully

Fujiyama: a sacred mountain in Japan.

incongruity: contradiction

punctuality: the quality or habit of arriving or being ready on time.

vigorously: in a forceful manner.

intrude: cut in.

amidst between

consequences: a condition or occurrence traceable to a cause.

glittering: sparkling

Comprehension

Answer each of the following question in about 150 words.

1. Describe Datta's shop in your own words.

Ans: The name of Datta's shop was 'Modern Frame Works'. It was an extra-large wooden packing case placed in between a drug store and radio repair shop and Its legs were unstable. The shop was so small. There were various things putting to use the photograph frame like cardboard pieces, bits of wood, glass sheets, boxes of nails, glue bottles and paint tins were occupied on the floor. The walls of the small shop were decorated with the photographs of gods, saints, hockey players, cheap prints of the Mona Lisa, national leaders, wedding couples, Urdu calligraphy the snow-clad Fujiyama and many others framed by Datta.

2. Comment on Datta's work habits.

Ans: Datta was a silent and hardworking man. He spoke very little and never entertained to idle gossip but always gave short answers to those who tried to intrude on him. Datta was always seen sitting amidst cardboard pieces, bits of woods, glass sheets, paint tins, boxes of nail, glue bottle etc. Many times, when he lost something like a glass cutter or pencil stub he had to stand up and started shaking his dhoti vigorously to displace the lost object. Datta always busy with work of making a frame. He seldom took the delivery dates seriously because he learnt from his experiences that his customers never came punctually. They give orders to make frame so, Datta make it on given time. But customers do not come months or sometime never turn up at all. Their frames lay unclaimed in a box. So, he decided when a customer comes twice for a frame then he will make sure.

3. What was the disaster that stuck the photograph? What was Datta's reaction to the disaster?

Ans: Datta started to work of making the frame of the old man. He carefully arranged the photograph on a wooder plank on the floor and searched for the pencil stub. To find out, he stood and shook the fold of dhoti and accidently disaster stuck, spiling a tin of white enamel paint onto the photograph of the old man. Immediately, Datta tried to rub the paint with cloth. Thus, half of the face of the old man and entire turban were spoiled. He became nervous and

got panic stricken. He could not understand what to do. After a few hours, one idea stuck in his mind, and he decided to replace the damaged photograph with one old suitable photo which was kept in the unclaimed photographs in an old wooden box.

4. How did Datta 'repair' the damage that had occurred?

Ans: Datta was a hardworking frame maker. Once he stuck in problem, when he spoiled the old man photograph. He tried to rub the paint with cloth. Thus, half of the face of the old man and entire turban were spoiled. He became nervous and got panic stricken. He could not understand what to do. Then, he got an idea to replace the picture of the old man with another similar one. He framed it and made it for the customer. The irony was the customer could not recognize the substitute of the original photograph. In this way, Datta repaired the damaged picture.

5. Was the ending a surprise? Was it humorous? Justify your answer?

Ans: Yes, the ending of the story is surprising. It is humorous too. Datta spoiled the picture given by the customer. Therefore, he decided to fix the original picture with another similar one and prepared to accept his mistake. But when the customer came to receive the old man photograph, he was shocked and started shouting with anger. So, Datta thought that the customer recognized the deception, but the customer only complained about the cut mount and Datta gave him a square shape. Thus, Datta came to know that the replacement of photograph really worked for him. The customer could not catch the original fault but another one. It makes a laugh for the readers that in the confusion of selecting and shaping a photo like the given one by the customer.

6. Write Character analysis of Datta.

Ans: In the story, The Gold Frame, Datta is the main character. Who was frame maker by profession and owning the photo framing shop, called The Modern Frame works. Datta wore silver-rimmed glasses. He was a silent and a hardworking person. He spoke very little and never entertained to idle gossip but always gave short answers to those who tried to intrude on him. Datta always remains busy with his work of frame-making. Datta is a very passionate and experienced person about his work. His work mantra was when a customer comes twice for a frame then he will make sure. Because his customers were never punctual.

7. From the ending of this story, what can you infer about the customer? Write a brief note on the customer.

Ans: The customer is one of the important characters of the story. To whom, the writer portrait with humorous aspect. At the beginning, he was an enthusiasm person but with the progress of the story his enthusiasm decreased when he did not get what he wanted. At the end of the story, the customer has been fooled by replacement of the photograph with another one and he did not find out what he had ordered. In this story, how it is to be dignified with the sarcasm and humorous sentiments of person is presently observed.

Choose the correct answer from the options given below.

1. What did the customer want from Datta?

- a. He wanted to buy a framed photograph.

- b. He wanted Datta to frame a photograph.
- c. He wanted to frame Datta's photograph.
- d. He wanted Datta to photograph a frame.

Ans: (b) He wanted Datta to frame a photograph.

2. What was Datta's experience regarding his customers?

- a. His customers always came punctually.
- b. His customers usually came punctually.
- c. His customer never came punctually.
- d. His customer never collected the frame.

Ans: (c) His customer never come punctually.

3. Which of these adjectives does not apply to Datta?

- a. terse
- b. indolent
- c. industrious
- d. nonchalant

Ans: (b) Indolent

4. what was the customer's attitude towards the man in the photograph?

- a. He respected and admired him.
- b. He feared and respected him.
- c. He loathed and admired him.
- d. He loved and feared him.

Ans: (a) He respected and admired him.

5. How did Datta attempt to restore the picture?

- a. by rubbing the enamel off with a cloth.
- b. by smearing enamel on the picture.
- c. by Shaking it violently.
- d. by looking for a similar picture.

Ans: (a) By rubbing the enamel off with a cloth.

6. What feature of the photograph made Datta think of it as just another photograph of an elderly person of those days?

- a. The studio props.
- b. The moustache and turban
- c. A dark suit and striped tie
- d. The sepia-brown color

Ans: (b) The moustache and turban

7. what did Datta do with unclaimed photographs?

- a. he gave them away to others.
- b. he stored them in a box.
- c. he fed them to cockroaches and silver fish.
- d. he sold them to customers.

Ans: (b) He stored them in a box.

8. How did Datta spend the days preceding the customer's return?

- a. in a drunken stupor
- b. in anxious suspense
- c. in resigned calmness
- d. in his usual casual manner

Ans: (b) In anxious suspense

9. Why did Datta take time to unwrap the photograph?

- a. because he was tired
- b. because he was nervous
- c. because he wanted to create suspense
- d. because he wanted to dazzle his customer

Ans: (d) Because he wanted to dazzle his customer.

10. Why was the customer indignant?

- a. he noticed that the frame was wrong.
- b. he realized the substitution.
- c. he wasn't happy with the mount.
- d. he felt he had been overcharged.

Ans: (a) He noticed that the frame was wrong.