

Question, Answer, Evidence Worksheet—Teacher Guide

“A Retrieved Reformation” by O. Henry
(Answers may vary. These are only examples.)

Question	Answer	Evidence from Text (Quote/Details)	Page #
What leads you to believe that when Jimmy says, “Me? Why, warden, I never was in Springfield in my life!” he is not telling the truth?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He was in jail, which means he was convicted. • The warden doesn’t believe him, and explains how all the convicts claim their innocence. 	“‘Oh, no,’ laughed the warden. ‘Of course not. Let’s see, now. How was it you happened to get sent up on that Springfield job?... It’s always one or the other with you innocent victims .” (sarcasm)	Pg 1 (Top)
What words would you use to describe Jimmy Valentine before going to Elmore?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cool, hard, collected. • Intelligent, intentional, unfazed. • Manipulative, sketchy, scheming. • Selfish, independent, cocky 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “...he proceeded leisurely to the depot...” • “He had expected to stay only about three months, at the longest. When a man with as many friends on the outside as Jimmy Valentine had is received in the “stir” it is hardly worth while to cut his hair.” • “Me?” said Jimmy, in a puzzled tone. “I don’t understand. I’m representing the New York Amalgamated Short Snap Biscuit Cracker and Frazzled Wheat Company.” 	Pg. 1
Why does the author begin the story with Jimmy Valentine working with shoes?	It was symbolic and an example of foreshadowing, since being a shoe salesman was what was going to give him a new life later in the story. Shoes are part of every major turning point in the story.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “He said he had come to Elmore to look for a location to go into business. How was the shoe business, now, in the town?” • “At the end of a year the situation of Mr. Ralph Spencer was this: he had won the respect of the community, <u>his shoe-store was flourishing</u>, and he and Annabel were engaged to be married in two weeks.” • Detail: Near the climax of the story, when Jimmy was getting rid of his tools and said they were “shoe-horns.” 	Pg 3 (Top) Pg 3 (End) Pg 5
Is this short story set in modern times?	No.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The clerk handed him a railroad ticket and the five-dollar bill <u>with which the law expected him to rehabilitate himself into good citizenship and prosperity</u>. The warden gave him a cigar, and shook hands.” • Detail: “Safe-cracking” isn’t done that often anymore; it was more a crime of the past. 	Pg 1 (End)
What is it about Elmore that appeals to Jimmy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annabel Adams • Small town—not going to be noticed by authorities • Small town—a good place to get a new identity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Jimmy Valentine looked into her eyes, forgot what he was, and became another man. She lowered her eyes and coloured slightly. Young men of Jimmy’s style and looks were scarce in Elmore.” • “Jimmy collared a boy that was loafing on the steps of the bank as if he were one of the stockholders, and began to ask him questions about the town, feeding him dimes at intervals.” • “Mr. Spencer thought he would stop over in the town a few days and look over the situation.” 	Pg 3 (Top)

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How do you know that Jimmy has truly changed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He falls in love with and is going to marry a banker’s daughter. • He doesn’t rob the Elmore bank while living in town. • He writes a letter to his friend. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Say, Billy, I've quit the old business--a year ago. I've got a nice store. I'm making an honest living, and I'm going to marry the finest girl on earth two weeks from now. It's the only life, Billy--the straight one.” • Detail: At the end of the story when he sacrifices his future to save Agatha because Annabel pleads with him to try to do so. 	Pg 4
Why does Jimmy ask for the rose Annabel was wearing?	He wants to keep it as a memento of her, since he believes she won’t marry him any more after he reveals who he is/or that he will be taken to jail.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “With that act Ralph D. Spencer passed away and Jimmy Valentine took his place.” (His real identity will be revealed, and Annabel does not know who he really is. Could she or would she love the real him?) • “Jimmy Valentine put on his coat, and walked outside the railings towards the front door. As he went he thought he heard a far-away voice that he once knew call "Ralph!" But he never hesitated.” Doesn’t try to say goodbye to Annabel, just leaves—accepting his fate. 	Pg 5
Is Jimmy Valentine a good person?	Yes. He saves the girl at the end of the story despite the fact that it will be revealed that he is a safe-cracker in front of his old foe, Ben Price.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “With that act Ralph D. Spencer passed away and Jimmy Valentine took his place. ‘Get away from the door, all of you,’ he commanded, shortly.” • “‘Hello, Ben!’ said Jimmy, still with his strange smile. ‘Got around at last, have you? Well, let's go. I don't know that it makes much difference, now.’” 	Pg 5 (Top)
What is the role of Ben Price in this story?	He creates tension for Jimmy all through the text. At the end of the story he provides a way for Jimmy Valentine to have resolution that he will not be chased by the law because he proved his selflessness in saving the girl.	<p>“...Ben Price's collar-button that had been torn from that eminent detective's shirt-band when they had overpowered Jimmy to arrest him.”</p> <p>“And then Ben Price acted rather 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.”</p>	Pg 2 Pg 5
What clues lead you to suspect the surprise ending? Where did you see foreshadowing?	The clues and foreshadowing were woven throughout the text, but started to come together in the last two pages, upon Ben Price’s arrival.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detail: Jimmy falls in love with the banker’s daughter (irony) • Detail: The whole letter to Jimmy’s pal says he would do anything for Annabel. Also, all of his above-board activities in Elmore. • “It was given out that Ben Price had taken up the trail of the elusive cracksman...” • Ben Price: "Going to marry the banker's daughter are you, Jimmy?" said Ben to himself, softly. "Well, I don't know!" • “The Elmore Bank had just put in a new safe and vault.” 	Pg 4 Pg 5