

Sammy the Social Climber in John Updike's A&P

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Sammy the Social Climber in A & P

Men will go to extreme measures to impress women. This is the case in the story "A & P" written by John Updike. Sammy, who is a cashier at a supermarket, displays a classic example of a man trying to impress a woman. His rash decision to quit his job was a bad decision and will definitely have an adverse effect on him in the future.

[Sammy](#) seems doomed from the very first sentence when he says, "In walks three girls in nothing but bathing suits" (Updike 1026). He notices every little [detail](#) about the girls from the color of their bathing suits to their tan lines. At this time he is checking out "one of these cash-register-watchers," and he is yelled at for ringing up her item twice (Updike 1026). This distraction from his job shows his interest in the girls, especially the one he calls "Queenie."

To Sammy's [delight](#), Queenie and her two friends pick his register to purchase the "Fancy Herring Snacks in Pure Sour Cream" (Updike 1027). When she puts the snacks down on the counter, Sammy notices that her hands are free. While he is wondering where the money is going to come from, she proceeds to pull the dollar bills "out of the hollow at the

center of her nubbled pink top" (Updike 1027). This gesture puts Sammy in total awe of the girl, and this is the turning point, this is when he makes his decision that he should try to impress her. His big chance comes when the store manager, Lengel, makes a visit to Sammy's line.

"Girls, this isn't the beach," is the first thing Lengel says to the girls when he sees them (Updike 1028). Queenie explains that her mother sent her to pick up some herring snacks, implying that since her mother sent her it is perfectly fine for her to be in the store with only a bathing suit on. While Lengel and Queenie are arguing, Sammy visualizes himself at Queenie's house during a party. In his imagination he sees, "her father and the other men were standing around in ice-cream coats and bow ties and the women were in sandals picking up herring snacks on toothpicks off a big glass plate and they were all holding drinks the color of water with olives and sprigs of mint in them" (Updike 1028).

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