

O. Henry's
The Gift of the
Magi

and other stories

Student Learning Materials

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A RETRIEVED INFORMATION

PRE-READING ACTIVITY 1: CROSSWORD PUZZLE

“A Retrieved Reformation” is a story about James (Jimmy) Valentine. After Jimmy is released from prison, he continues to travel around the country breaking into bank safes. Eventually Jimmy decides to settle down in Elmore, to marry the banker’s daughter, and to become the respectable owner of a shoe shop, ending his career of safe-breaking. Before you start reading the story, it is important to learn some key vocabulary words.

PART 1: LEARN THE WORDS

Part 1: Learn the Words

Directions:

1. First read the following sentences and guess the meaning of underlined words:
 - a. The banker worked in his bank and made a lot of money.
 - b. The police arrested the thief and put him in prison.
 - c. Jimmy’s reformation happened when he decided to give up crime and to marry and become a respectable shop owner.
 - d. To protect your money and valuables, you should keep them in a safe.
 - e. The burglar was good at safe-breaking and could open almost any safe.
 - f. The driver could fix his broken car using special tools.
 - g. John and Anna got married and had a nice wedding in Las Vegas.
2. Write the definition of each word in the second column, **Definition**. If you do not know the word, look it up in a dictionary. An example is provided.

Word	Definition
banker	<i>A person who owns a bank or has an important job in a bank.</i>
prison	
reformation	
safe	
safe-breaking	
tool	
wedding	

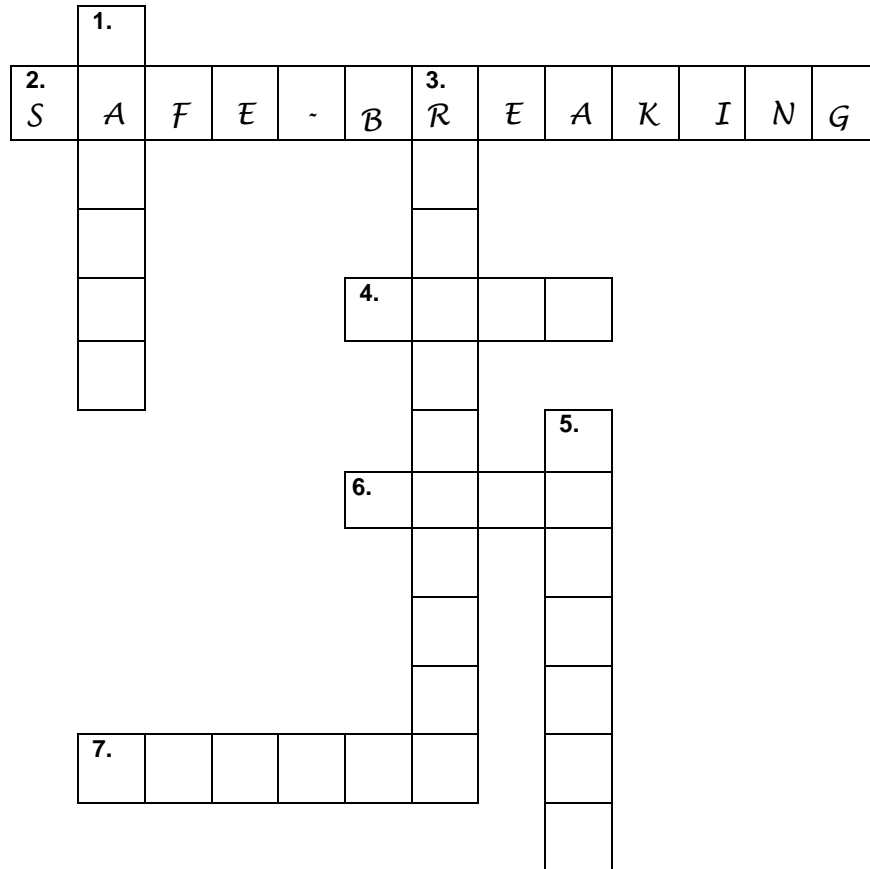
PART 2: CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Directions:

1. Now that you have learned some of the keywords, complete the crossword puzzle on the next page.
2. Use the *Across* and *Down* clues to help you choose the correct word from the **Word Bank**. Fill in the puzzle with the words. Write one letter in each box. For example, the answer for 2 Across (SAFE-BREAKING) has been filled in.

Word Bank

SAFE-BREAKING	PRISON	REFORMATION
BANKER	SAFE	TOOL
WEDDING		



Across

- 2. Stealing money from the safe in the bank
- 4. An object that is used to do a job or activity
- 6. A strong metal box made to keep money and jewels secure
- 7. A place where people who have broken the law are kept for a certain length of time

Down

- 1. A person who owns a bank or who has an important job in a bank
- 3. The process in which a person corrects previous faults and improves behavior
- 5. A ceremony at which two people are married to each other

PRE-READING ACTIVITY 2: PREDICTION WITH IMAGES

“A Retrieved Reformation” is a story about a criminal, Jimmy Valentine, who changes (or reforms) his life. Before reading the story, think about the different themes that make the story easier to read and to understand. This activity will help you to think about some of the main themes in “A Retrieved Reformation”.

Directions:

- 1. Review the words in the **Word Bank**. Look up any words you do not know in a dictionary.
- 2. Look at the four pictures on the next page.
- 3. Write the words from the **Word Bank** in the speech bubble next to the corresponding picture. One example has already been completed.

Word Bank

cop	criminal	bank robber	shoe	arresting criminals
bank	policeman	shoe store	money	stealing money

1. Criminal 2. Bank Robber



1. 2.



1. 2.



1. 2.



WHILE-READING ACTIVITY 1: WHAT'S NEXT?

“A Retrieved Reformation” tells the story of how Jimmy Valentine changes his life after he gets out of the prison. He stops breaking into bank safes and becomes the owner of a shoe store. To understand the story, it is important to be able to summarize what you have read. It is also helpful to think about what will happen next. This activity will help you check your reading comprehension, your understanding of this story, and make predicts about what will happen next.

Directions:

1. As you read the story, follow the directions provided below.
2. When you see the stop sign, stop reading. Mark the sentence that is the best summary.
3. Predict what will happen next in the story.



*Stop reading at the bottom of **page 47**.*

Summary #1: After reading the first two pages, pause and review what has happened in the story. Which statement best summarizes what has happened so far?

Jimmy goes home directly after he gets out of the prison.

Jimmy eats a good dinner and takes a train ride to a small town after he gets out of the prison.

Prediction #1: What will Jimmy do next?

He will go back to his old life of crime, safe-breaking.

He will find a new job.



Continue reading.



*Stop reading at the top of **page 50** when you see the following paragraph:*

Yes, Elmore needed a good shoe-shop. There was no shop that sold just shoes. Shoes were sold in the big shops that sold everything. All business in Elmore was good. He hoped Mr. Spencer would decide to stay in Elmore. It was a pleasant town to live in and the people were friendly.

Prediction Check #1: Did your first prediction match what happened in the story?

Yes, my prediction matched the story.

No, my prediction didn't match the story.

Summary #2: Again pause and recap what happened in the story. Which statement best summarizes what has happened so far?

___ Jimmy finds a new job working for banks and traveling from one place to another.

___ Jimmy breaks into bank safes and makes a lot of money.

Prediction #2: Now make a new prediction. What will happen next?

___ Jimmy will continue breaking into bank safes.

___ Jimmy will adopt a new name and live a new life in Elmore.



Continue reading.



*Stop reading toward the bottom of **page 52** when you see the following paragraph:*

“There isn’t a man nearer than the city who can open that door,” said Mr. Adams, in a shaking voice. “My God! Spencer, what shall we do? That child-she can’t live long in there. There isn’t enough air. And the fear will kill her.”

Prediction Check #2: Did your second prediction match what happened in the story?

___ Yes, my prediction matched the story.

___ No, my prediction didn’t match the story.

Prediction #3: What will Jimmy do when he hears that the little girl is locked in the safe?

___ He will break open the safe and save the little girl’s life.

___ He will do nothing because he does not want people to know about his past.



Continue reading to the end of the story.

Prediction Check #3: Did your third prediction match what happened in the story?

___ Yes, my prediction matched the story.

___ No, my prediction didn’t match the story.

Summary #3: After you finish reading the story, mark the best summary.

___ Jimmy Valentine (Ralph Spencer) saves a life and stays out of prison.

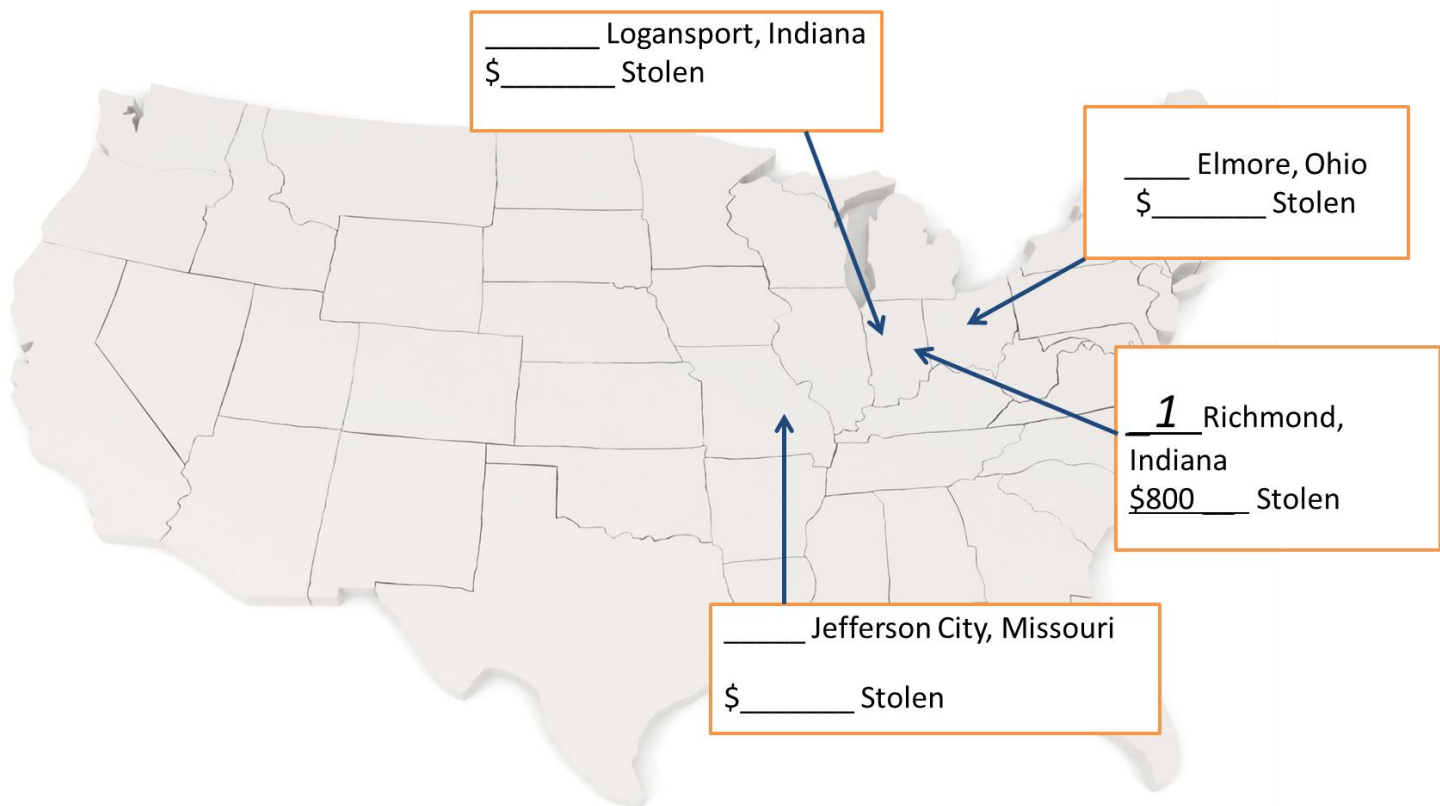
___ Jimmy Valentine (Ralph Spencer) goes back to prison.

WHILE-READING ACTIVITY 2: MAP THE STOLEN MONEY

In the story “A Retrieved Reformation,” money is stolen from bank safes in different parts of the country. This activity will help you to trace the locations where the money was stolen.

Directions:

1. While reading the story, mark the order in which Jimmy broke into safes in each location after his release from prison.
2. Fill in how much money was stolen from each bank. The first location has been completed as an example.



POST-READING ACTIVITY 1: MAKING A STORY STRUCTURE MAP

Stories typically have certain characteristics: a title, setting, characters, a problem, and events that lead to a solution. The story “A Retrieved Reformation” also has these characteristics. In this activity you will create a story structure map to identify the problem in the story and the events that lead to a solution.

Directions:

1. After you read the story, review the sentences listed below.
2. Complete the rest of the Story Structure Map. Write the sentences below in the correct boxes.
3. Fill in **Problem**, **Events**, and **Solution**.
4. **Title**, **Setting**, **Characters**, and **Events 1** and **6** have been completed as examples.
5. If necessary, refer back to the story to help put the **Events** in the correct order.

- Annabel’s niece gets locked in the safe.
- ~~Jimmy Valentine is released from prison.~~
- Ralph Spencer opens a shoe store.
- Ralph Spencer breaks the safe open with his tools.
- Jimmy gets his safe-opening tools from his friend.
- Ben Price does not arrest Jimmy (Ralph) because he saved the little girl.
- Bank safes all over the country are opened and money is stolen.
- Jimmy Valentine goes to Elmore and becomes Ralph D. Spencer.
- ~~Ralph and Annabel are engaged to be married.~~
- As Jimmy Valentine is trying to start a new life, Ben Price is trying to find and arrest him.

Title:

Setting:

1. *Prison*
2. *Mike Dolan’s restaurant*
3. *Elmore*
4. *Bank*

Characters:

1. *James (Jimmy) Valentine*
2. *Mike Dolan*
3. *Annabel Adams*
4. *Ralph D. Spencer*
5. *Mr. Adams*
6. *Ben Price*
7. *Annabel’s sister*
8. *May*
9. *Agatha*

Problem:



Event 1:



Event 2:



Event 3:



Event 4:



Event 5:



Event 6:

Ralph and Annabel are engaged to be married.



Event 7:

Solution:

POST-READING ACTIVITY 2: CHOOSE A NEW PATH FOR THE MAIN CHARACTER

At the end of the story, Jimmy needs to use his safe-breaking tools to save a little girl's life. Because Jimmy uses his tools to help someone, the cop does not arrest him. But what if the cop decided not to be kind? In this activity you will make new decisions for Jimmy Valentine (Ralph Spencer). Then you can choose different endings for the story.

Directions:

1. Use the words in the **Word Bank** to fill in the chart below.
2. Use the questions in the chart to find the best word for each blank. The first blank has been completed as an example.

Word Bank

shoe-shop	prison	Jimmy Valentine	get married	money	safe-breaking
break	tools	Ralph Spencer	wedding	banker	business

Jimmy Valentine (Ralph Spencer)



Jimmy Valentine goes home and finds his tools after he gets out of prison.

Does he go back to his old job of safe-breaking?

No

Yes

Jimmy chooses to start a new job, opening a shoe-shop and changing his name to _____. Does he go back to prison again?

Jimmy goes back to his old job of _____ and keeps his old name, _____. Does he go back to prison again?

No

Yes

No

Yes

Jimmy meets a nice woman and starts his own shoe-shop _____. They _____ and live happily ever after.

Jimmy has to _____ a safe again to save a girl's life. Then, he is sent back to _____.

Jimmy continues using the _____ to break into safes and returns to a life of _____.

Jimmy continues breaking into safes and taking _____ from the banks. Finally he gets caught and sent to _____ again.