

Student Essay on Society Lost?

Society Lost? by John Updike

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Essay

John Updike's short story "A&P" is a story about a young boy, Sammy. Sammy works in a grocery store where he seems bored out of his mind. One day he sees three girls in bathing suits walk into the store. They cause a bit of uneasiness in the customers who are shopping. These three girls are non-conformists.

Nonconformity is revered in society today because it is the epitome of individuality. But, if a closer look is taken towards nonconformity, it is quickly learned that it contradicts itself. Conformity is what rules the world. It is seen everywhere, even in the microcosms of the world. High school for example is a microcosm teeming with conformity. The preps against the non preps. The preps dictate the school. One side of the cafeteria belongs to them. They drink bottled water, although it is not really bottled water because they fill it up at the water fountain. Everyone wants to be like them. All in all, there is an extremely substantial amount of conformity in a high school.

Examine "A&P." Those three girls represent nonconformists and the other people represent conformists. Nonconformity is defined as individualism, so why are there three nonconformists together? At the end of the story Sammy decides to quit his job and join the girls. It seems that he has escaped conformity. In reality he just joined another form of conformity.

Updike has contradicted himself and so have many people in society who believe they are nonconformists. Somehow, some way people will conform in a shape or category of conformity. What does that mean for society? Is society lost?