

Little Things Are Big

Jesus Colon



SCAN FOR
MULTIMEDIA

About the Author

Jesus Colon (1901–1974) arrived in New York City from his birthplace, Cayey, Puerto Rico, in 1918. Puerto Ricans had been made American citizens earlier that year. Colon's earliest education came from listening to people hired to inform and entertain the cigar rollers at a factory behind his family's hotel. He went on to write for several papers in New York and Puerto Rico, publishing over 400 pieces in his lifetime.

BACKGROUND

While Jesus Colon migrated to New York City much earlier, many Puerto Ricans arrived in the late 1940s. This selection, which describes events that take place around 1956, highlights some of the difficulties faced by Puerto Ricans in mainland United States society.

NOTES

- ¹ **I**t was very late at night on the eve of Memorial Day. She came into the subway at the 34th Street Pennsylvania Station. I am still trying to remember how she managed to push herself in with a baby on her right arm, a valise¹ in her left hand, and two children, a boy and a girl about three and five years old, trailing after her. She was a nice looking white lady in her early twenties.
- ² At Nevins Street, Brooklyn, we saw her preparing to get off at the next station—Atlantic Avenue—which happened to be the place where I too had to get off. Just as it was a problem for her to get on, it was going to be a problem for her to get off the subway with two small children to be taken care of, a baby on her right arm, and a medium-sized valise in her left hand.
- ³ And there I was, also preparing to get off at Atlantic Avenue, with no bundles to take care of—not even the customary book under my arm without which I feel that I am not completely dressed.

1. **valise** (vuh LEES) *n.* small suitcase.

- 4 As the train was entering the Atlantic Avenue station, some white man stood up from his seat and helped her out, placing the children on the long, deserted platform. There were only two adult persons on the long platform sometime after midnight on the eve of last Memorial Day.
- 5 I could perceive the steep, long concrete stairs going down to the Long Island Railroad or into the street. Should I offer my help as the American white man did at the subway door, placing the two children outside the subway car? Should I take care of the girl and the boy, take them by their hands until they reached the end of the steep long concrete stairs of the Atlantic Avenue station?
- 6 Courtesy is a characteristic of the Puerto Rican. And here I was—a Puerto Rican—hours past midnight, a valise, two white children, and a white lady with a baby on her arm palpably² needing somebody to help her at least until she descended the long concrete stairs.
- 7 But how could I, a black and a Puerto Rican, approach this white lady who very likely might have preconceived prejudices against blacks and everybody with foreign accents, in a deserted subway station very late at night?
- 8 What would she say? What would be the first reaction of this white American woman, perhaps coming from a small town with a valise, two children, and a baby on her right arm? Would she say: Yes, of course, you may help me. Or would she think that I was just trying to get too familiar? Or would she think worse than that perhaps? What would I do if she let out a scream as I went toward her to offer my help?
- 9 Was I misjudging her? So many slanders are written every day in the daily press against the blacks and Puerto Ricans. I hesitated for a long, long minute. The ancestral manners that the most illiterate Puerto Rican passes on from father to son were struggling inside me. Here was I, way past midnight, face to face with a situation that could very well explode into an outburst of prejudices and chauvinistic³ conditioning of the “divide and rule” policy of present day society.
- 10 It was a long minute. I passed on by her as if I saw nothing. As if I was insensitive to her need. Like a rude animal walking on two legs, I just moved on, half running by the long subway platform, leaving the children and the valise and her with the baby on her arm. I took the steps of the long concrete stairs in twos until I reached the street above and the cold air slapped my warm face.
- 11 This is what racism and prejudice and chauvinism and official artificial divisions can do to people and to a nation!

2. **palpably** (PAL puh blee) *adv.* obviously.

3. **chauvinistic** (shoh vuh NIHS tihk) *adj.* prejudiced and favoring a particular group.

- 12 Perhaps the lady was not prejudiced after all. Or not prejudiced enough to scream at the coming of a black man toward her in a solitary subway station a few hours past midnight.
- 13 If you were not that prejudiced, I failed you, dear lady. I know that there is a chance in a million that you will read these lines. I am willing to take that millionth chance. If you were not that prejudiced, I failed you, lady, I failed you, children. I failed myself to myself.
- 14 I buried my courtesy early on Memorial Day morning. But here is a promise that I make to myself here and now: if I am ever faced with an occasion like that again, I am going to offer my help regardless of how the offer is going to be received.
- 15 Then I will have my courtesy with me again. 🍀

Profile: Malala Yousafzai

BBC



About the Author

The British Broadcasting Corporation, or **BBC**, is a public broadcasting network in Great Britain. Established as a private company in 1922, it was turned into a public organization in 1927. While the BBC answers to Parliament, it operates independently, led by a board of trustees appointed by the British monarchy. Today the BBC produces radio, television, and online news and entertainment.

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BACKGROUND

The Nobel Peace Prize is a prestigious award granted to those who have done the most to benefit humankind and promote peace. The 2014 Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to Malala Yousafzai for her work to promote the right of all children to an education. She received the prize when she was 17, making her the youngest Nobel Laureate.

- 1 **I**t has only been five years since Pakistani schoolgirl Malala Yousafzai wrote an anonymous diary about life under Taliban¹ rule in northwest Pakistan.
- 2 Since then she has been shot in the head by the militants, and has become the youngest person ever to win the Nobel Peace Prize.
- 3 Accepting the award in Oslo² on December 10, she said she was “humbled” and proud to be the first Pashtun³ and the first Pakistani to win the prize. She also joked that she was probably the first winner who still fought with her younger brothers.

1. **Taliban** (TAL uh ban) ultraconservative political and religious faction that emerged in Afghanistan.

2. **Oslo** (OZ loh) capital city of Norway.

3. **Pashtun** (push TOON) member of the Pashtun ethnic group, who are native to Pakistan and Afghanistan.

NOTES

- 4 Malala Yousafzai first came to public attention through that heartfelt diary, published on BBC Urdu,⁴ which chronicled her desire to remain in education and for girls to have the chance to be educated.
- 5 When she was shot in the head in October 2012 by a Taliban gunman, she was already well known in Pakistan, but that one shocking act catapulted her to international fame.
- 6 She survived the dramatic assault, in which a militant boarded her school bus in Pakistan's northwestern Swat valley and opened fire, wounding two of her school friends as well.
- 7 The story of her recovery—from delicate surgery at a Pakistani military hospital to further operations and rehabilitation in the UK, and afterwards as she took her campaign global—has been closely tracked by the world's media.
- 8 She was discharged from hospital in January 2013 and her life now is unimaginably different to anything she may have envisaged when she was an anonymous voice chronicling the fears of schoolgirls under the shadow of the Taliban.
- 9 She was named one of *TIME* magazine's most influential people in 2013, put forward for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2013, won the European Parliament's Sakharov prize for Freedom of Thought and her autobiography *I Am Malala* was released last year, and reversioned⁵ for younger audiences.
- 10 Malala was only 11 years old when her anonymous diary captivated audiences. She wrote under a pseudonym—Gul Makai, the name of a heroine from a Pashtun folk tale.
- 11 Militants destroyed scores of girls schools in the time the Taliban wielded power over the valley. They had an implacable attitude to female education and this was Malala's primary concern.
- 12 In January 2009, as the school was closing for winter holiday she wrote: "The girls were not too excited about vacations because they knew if the Taliban implemented their edict [banning girls' education] they would not be able to come to school again. I am of the view that the school will one day reopen but while leaving I looked at the building as if I would not come here again."
- 13 She documented the anxiety she and her friends felt as they saw students dropping away from class for fear of being targeted by militants, and as the girls began to attend school in plain clothes not uniform, so as not to draw attention to themselves.
- 14 Eventually, Malala and her family, like many thousands of other Swat residents, fled the valley when a government military operation attempted to clear the region of militancy.

4. **Urdu** (OOR doo) official language of Pakistan.

5. **reversioned** v. remade in an updated or changed form.

Passionate Campaigner

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- 15 Malala consistently received support and encouragement in her activism from her parents. The idea for the blog was even that of her father Ziauddin, who ran a local private school.
- 16 One teacher from Swat said that her father “encouraged Malala to speak freely and learn everything she could.”
- 17 And her identity as the girl blogger from Swat eventually became known as she became more vocal on the subject of the right of girls to education. It is a subject she never ceased to be passionate about even after she returned home once the militants had been run out of Swat.
- 18 In 2009 a documentary film was even made about her. Many more honors followed: in 2011 she was nominated for the International Children’s Peace Prize by The KidsRights Foundation and in 2012 the Pakistani government awarded her the National Peace Award—subsequently renamed the National Malala Peace Prize—for those under 18 years old.
- 19 She even confronted then U.S. special envoy to the region, Richard Holbrooke, urging him to do something about the state of affairs for women who want an education.
- 20 When she finally returned to Swat, Malala took advantage of the improved security and went back to school. Malala and her family were the subject of threats and it was on October 9, 2012, that these were borne out.
- 21 The Taliban said that they targeted her for “promoting secular⁶ education” and threatened to attack her again.

Back at School

- 22 The bullet hit Malala’s left brow and instead of penetrating her skull it traveled underneath the skin, the length of the side of her head and into her shoulder.
- 23 Amid the outpouring of global support she was flown to the UK and at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in the city of Birmingham she received specialist treatment and had a titanium plate fitted as well as a cochlear implant in her skull to help her hear.
- 24 She began attending Edgbaston High School in March and her father has been given a job with the Pakistani consulate⁷ in Birmingham for three years.
- 25 But she has continued her campaign and taken it around the world.

6. **secular** (SEHK yuh luhr) *adj.* not religious.

7. **consulate** (KON suh liht) *n.* building where the representative of a country lives in another country.

- 26 A fund set up in her name helps children in education around the world. Among other trips, she has traveled to Nigeria, meeting President Goodluck Jonathan to press for action to free the 200 girls held by Boko Haram Islamist militants.
- 27 It is all a far cry from the girl who wrote in her diary only four years ago: "Today, I also read my diary written for the BBC in Urdu. My mother liked my pen name Gul Makai. I also like the name because my real name means 'grief stricken.'" ❧

Noor Inayat Khan

from Women Heroes of WWII

Kathryn J. Atwood



About the Author



Kathryn J. Atwood has written several historical books about heroic women. She also blogs on subjects such as the history of World War I and World War II, as well as the history of pop music. She has contributed to the *Midwest Book Review*, *Women's Independent Press*, and many other publications.

BACKGROUND

In Nazi-occupied regions, local Resistance movements fought to protect victims of the occupying forces, and at the same time, damage or weaken the Nazis by any means possible. The British, Americans, and Soviets allied themselves to these movements by providing equipment and support.

- 1 **N**oor Inayat Khan, the daughter of an Indian-born father and an American mother, was born in Moscow, the capital city of Imperial Russia, on New Year's Day, 1914. It was fitting that Noor should have been born within steps of the Kremlin, a building that had been built for the royal tsars of Russia. Her great-great-great-grandfather was the royal Tipu Sultan, called the Tiger of Mysore, a Muslim ruler who had fought bravely for his lands and people.
- 2 Noor grew up in France, just a few miles from Paris, where she lived in a house called Fazal Manzil, or the House of Blessings. There she learned music, art, and poetry. She also learned a great deal about Sufism, the religious and meditative philosophy that her father and his friends followed.
- 3 After graduating from the University of Sorbonne, Noor began to write and illustrate children's stories. She was planning to create an illustrated children's newspaper, which would be called

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Bel Age—"the Beautiful Age"—when Hitler's tanks rolled into Poland on September 1, 1939, and the whole world changed.

- 4 Noor abhorred Hitler's anti-Semitic¹ ideals and was determined to hinder him in some way. She joined the British Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF), an organization that provided support to the Royal Air Force (RAF). It was here that she was trained as a radio operator, communicating through a special type of radio by Morse code. After a while, Noor realized that she would not be content until she could be more directly involved in the battle against Hitler. What she didn't realize was that she had already been noticed by an organization that was waging a very different type of war.
- 5 The Special Operations Executive, or the SOE, was a Resistance organization that sent its agents into many different Nazi-occupied countries to fight a secret but deadly war. There was always a need for a radio operator among the agents; that is, someone to transmit messages via Morse code from France to London. Noor was an excellent candidate for this type of work since she had already been trained in radio transmission. And because she was a native French speaker, she was perfect for work for the F (French)-Section of the SOE, the section that worked directly with Resistance workers in Nazi-occupied France.
- 6 Although Noor's skills were impressive, some of her SOE instructors had serious doubts about her personality. She seemed very fragile, and she miserably failed her fake Gestapo² interrogation in which she was woken in the middle of the night, splashed with cold water, and roughly questioned. She didn't seem strong enough to withstand a real interrogation. What would happen if she was caught by actual Gestapo agents? Would she break under torture and give out important information?
- 7 Despite Noor's apparent fragility, others in the SOE were certain she would be a good agent. And even those who doubted her knew that there was a desperate need for more radio operators in France. They really had no choice but to send her in. So Noor became the first female radio operator to be sent into Nazi-occupied France.
- 8 She chose to work out of Paris, a dangerous place for any member of the Resistance but especially for those doing radio work. Teams of Germans, many of them dressed in plain clothes, were using a device called a listening machine to locate and capture radio operators. The German teams worked out of vans that were disguised as laundry vans, bakers' vans—anything to hide who they really were. Because the radio operators traveled from place to place to avoid being detected by the listening

1. **anti-Semitic** (AN tee suh MIHT ihk) hatred and prejudice against the Jewish people.

2. **Gestapo** (guh STAH poh) Nazi secret police.

teams, they had to carry their radios with them, which was very dangerous: people were often stopped and searched by suspicious Gestapo agents, especially on the busy streets of Paris.

- 9 Many of Noor's new Parisian associates also thought that her shy, naive personality seemed at odds with that of a successful agent. But whatever doubts they may have had about Noor, they soon had more pressing issues to worry about. Ten days after Noor arrived in Paris, their whole circuit (Resistance group) fell apart. Several agents had been arrested, and the information that the Gestapo had found with them included names and, most important, addresses of current French Resistance members. Almost immediately, the Gestapo arrested hundreds of Resistance workers including most of those involved with Noor's circuit. The SOE office in London, which found out about this catastrophe from Noor's radio transmissions, urgently asked her to return to London for her own safety and told her that a plane would be sent right away. She refused, believing that if she left, there wouldn't be a single radio operator left in Paris. All the others had been arrested.
- 10 Officials at the SOE agreed, and when it was relatively safe to resume operations, Noor began to transmit radio messages again. Communication between the French Resistance, and the SOE offices and French leader General Charles de Gaulle, both in London, was absolutely critical at this time. The Allied invasion—D-day—was less than one year away. Between July and October 1943, Noor sent and received messages that helped 30 Allied airmen escape, arranged for four agents to obtain false identity papers, pinpointed exact positions for airplane drops, helped obtain weapons and money for members of the French Resistance, and communicated the exact spot where the Nazis were hiding a supply of torpedoes.
- 11 The Gestapo knew there was a radio operator in Paris, but for months Noor successfully eluded them. They failed to track her down because Noor was careful to transmit from many different locations and because she was a very fast radio operator. She also possessed a keen intuition that alerted her to the dangers of being followed or the overtures of too-friendly strangers. Her fellow agents knew that the Gestapo was closing in on Noor and urged her return to London. But she was still hesitant to leave until the SOE could send a replacement. Once she was assured that this would happen, she would make plans to return to London.
- 12 One day when Noor opened her apartment door, a French man named Pierre Cartaud, who was working for the Gestapo, was there to meet her. A woman the Germans referred to as "Renée" had contacted the Gestapo and agreed to betray a British agent she

knew into their hands if they would pay her 100,000 francs. They agreed.

12 If Cartaud thought it would be easy to arrest this slim, petite woman, he was very wrong. She fought him violently, clawing and biting at his wrists until he was bleeding heavily. Finally, he pulled out a gun and threatened to kill her while he made a phone call, asking for assistance. When help finally came, Cartaud was standing as far away from Noor as possible. She was taken by car to 84 Avenue Fochs, the Gestapo headquarters in Paris.

13 Housed in a cell in the headquarters, Noor was a difficult prisoner. She demanded the privilege of taking a bath and screamed at the guards when they wouldn't allow her to close the door. The Gestapo agent in charge of interrogating Noor thought her request for a bath seemed suspicious, so he went into the bathroom next to hers and looked out the window. There was Noor, walking on the roof, trying to escape. He persuaded her to come in, telling her that a slip off the roof would mean certain death. She complied but was immediately angry with herself for doing so. She then refused, throughout an entire month of questioning, to betray her fellow resistance workers.

14 One day Noor decided to tap a Morse code message on the wall of her cell to see if she would get a response. She discovered that there were two SOE agents also imprisoned at the headquarters, and together they planned a daring escape. They managed to get a screwdriver and passed it between them until they had gotten all the bars of their cells loosened. Eventually they all reached the roof and were ready to let themselves down to the ground using some sheets they had tied together.

15 Suddenly Allied planes flew overhead, and the air-raid siren went off. Whenever that happened, the guards at 84 Avenue Fochs would rush to check that the prisoners were still in their cells. They also flashed searchlights all over the roof where Noor and her fellow spies were lying flat, hoping that no one would see them. Perhaps Noor and the others were not visible, but their cells were found empty. The escapees looked down the road and saw that it was closed off. Gestapo agents were everywhere. Desperate, they made one last attempt by swinging down by the sheets and crashing into a nearby house. The Gestapo burst in and captured them.

16 Back inside her cell at 84 Avenue Fochs, Noor scratched a V symbol (for victory) and an RAF symbol on her wall. She was asked to sign a promise that she would never try to escape again. She refused. It was her duty, she said, to try to escape if at all possible. A call was made to Berlin, the German capital: Noor was to be transferred to a high-security prison in Germany called Pforzheim.

- 17 The Pforzheim warden was ordered to keep Noor in solitary confinement, her feet and hands handcuffed and both sets of cuffs chained together. She became quite depressed but tried to encourage herself by meditating and thinking of her father. She and several female prisoners exchanged messages by scratching words onto the bottoms of their food bowls.
- 18 On September 11, 1944, after having been chained at Pforzheim for nearly 10 months, Noor scratched one final message on her bowl: "I am leaving." She was taken from the prison that night and moved to Dachau³ with three other female British agents. They were all shot the next day and their bodies burned so that there would be no trace of them.
- 19 But Noor was not forgotten. France awarded her the Croix de Guerre (Cross of War), and Great Britain awarded her the George Cross, Great Britain's highest award for courage shown somewhere other than on a battlefield. There are also many plaques and memorials in Germany and Great Britain dedicated to Noor and the other SOE agents who lost their lives during the war. Just outside of Fazal Manzil, Noor's happy childhood home, is a plaque dedicated to Noor. And every Bastille Day, July 14, a military band plays outside the house in honor of the artistic, gentle woman who grew up there, a woman who turned out to be one of the most courageous agents of the SOE. 🇬🇧

3. **Dachau** (DAH kow) Nazi concentration camp.

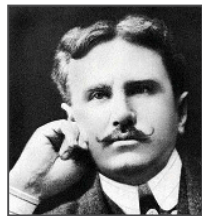
A Retrieved Reformation

O. Henry

About the Author



SCAN FOR
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O. Henry (1862–1910) was the pen name of William Sydney Porter. Known for warm, witty short stories featuring ordinary people, Porter wrote 300 stories all together. In 1896, Porter was jailed for his involvement in a bank scandal and began writing stories in prison. In order to hide the fact that he had been in prison, he adopted the pen name O. Henry. He soon developed into one of America's most celebrated short fiction writers.

BACKGROUND

This story's main character is a thief who breaks into, or "cracks," safes in the early 1900s. At that time, the locks, dials, and levers of most safes were located on the outside. Safecrackers developed special techniques to punch out these parts. Today, safes are built with locks and bolts on the inside, making them harder to "crack."

NOTES

- 1 **A** guard came to the prison shoe-shop, where Jimmy Valentine was assiduously¹ stitching uppers, and escorted him to the front office. There the warden handed Jimmy his pardon, which had been signed that morning by the governor. Jimmy took it in a tired kind of way. He had served nearly ten months of a four-year sentence. 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 worthwhile to cut his hair.
- 2 "Now, Valentine," said the warden, "you'll go out in the morning. Brace up, and make a man of yourself. You're not a bad fellow at heart. Stop cracking safes, and live straight."

1. **assiduously** (uh SIHJ oo uhs lee) *adv.* carefully and busily.

- 3 “Me?” said Jimmy, in surprise. “Why, I never cracked a safe in my life.”
- 4 “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? Was it because you wouldn’t prove an alibi for fear of compromising somebody in extremely high-toned society? Or was it simply a case of a mean old jury that had it in for you? It’s always one or the other with you innocent victims.”
- 5 “Me?” said Jimmy, still blankly virtuous. “Why, warden, I never was in Springfield in my life!”
- 6 “Take him back, Cronin,” smiled the warden, “and fix him up with outgoing clothes. Unlock him at seven in the morning, and let him come to the bullpen.² Better think over my advice, Valentine.”
- 7 At a quarter past seven on the next morning Jimmy stood in the warden’s outer office. He had on a suit of the villainously fitting, ready-made clothes and a pair of the stiff, squeaky shoes that the state furnishes to its discharged compulsory guests.
- 8 The clerk handed him a railroad ticket and the five-dollar bill with which the law expected him to rehabilitate himself into good citizenship and prosperity. The warden gave him a cigar, and shook hands. Valentine, 9762, was chronicled on the books “Pardoned by Governor,” and Mr. James Valentine walked out into the sunshine.
- 9 Disregarding the song of the birds, the waving green trees, and the smell of the flowers, Jimmy headed straight for a restaurant. There he tasted the first sweet joys of liberty in the shape of a chicken dinner. From there he proceeded leisurely to the depot and boarded his train. Three hours set him down in a little town near the state line. He went to the café of one Mike Dolan and shook hands with Mike, who was alone behind the bar.
- 10 “Sorry we couldn’t make it sooner, Jimmy, me boy,” said Mike. “But we had that protest from Springfield to buck against, and the governor nearly balked. Feeling all right?”
- 11 “Fine,” said Jimmy. “Got my key?”
- 12 He got his key and went upstairs, unlocking the door of a room at the rear. Everything was just as he had left it. There on the floor was still Ben Price’s collar-button that had been torn from that eminent detective’s shirt-band when they had overpowered Jimmy to arrest him.
- 13 Pulling out from the wall a folding-bed, Jimmy slid back a panel in the wall and dragged out a dust-covered suitcase. He opened this and gazed fondly at the finest set of burglar’s tools in the East. It was a complete set, made of specially tempered steel, the latest

2. **bullpen** *n.* barred room in a jail where prisoners are held while waiting to be moved or released.

designs in drills, punches, braces and bits, jimmies, clamps, and augers,³ with two or three novelties invented by Jimmy himself, in which he took pride. Over nine hundred dollars they had cost him to have made at—, a place where they make such things for the profession.

14 In half an hour, Jimmy went downstairs and through the café. He was now dressed in tasteful and well-fitting clothes, and carried his dusted and cleaned suitcase in his hand.

15 “Got anything on?” asked Mike Dolan, genially.

16 “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.”

17 This statement delighted Mike to such an extent that Jimmy had to take a seltzer-and-milk on the spot. He never touched “hard” drinks.

18 A week after the release of Valentine, 9762, there was a neat job of safe-burglary done in Richmond, Indiana, with no clue to the author. A scant eight hundred dollars was all that was secured. Two weeks after that a patented, improved, burglar-proof safe in Logansport was opened like a cheese to the tune of fifteen hundred dollars, currency; securities and silver untouched. That began to interest the rogue-catchers.⁴ Then an old-fashioned bank-safe in Jefferson City became active and threw out of its crater an eruption of bank-notes amounting to five thousand dollars. The losses were now high enough to bring the matter up into Ben Price’s class of work. By comparing notes, a remarkable similarity in the methods of the burglaries was noticed. Ben Price investigated the scenes of the robberies, and was heard to remark:

19 “That’s Dandy Jim Valentine’s autograph. He’s resumed business. Look at that combination knob—jerked out as easy as pulling up a radish in wet weather. He’s got the only clamps that can do it. And look how clean those tumblers were punched out! Jimmy never has to drill but one hole. Yes, I guess I want Mr. Valentine. He’ll do his bit next time without any short-time or clemency foolishness.”

20 Ben Price knew Jimmy’s habits. He had learned them while working up the Springfield case. Long jumps, quick getaways, no confederates,⁵ and a taste for good society—these ways had helped Mr. Valentine to become noted as a successful dodger of retribution. It was given out that Ben Price had taken up the trail of the elusive cracksman, and other people with burglar-proof safes felt more at ease.

3. **drills . . . augers** (AW guhrz) tools used to bore holes in metal.

4. **rogue-catchers** police.

5. **confederates** (kuhn FEHD uhr ihts) *n.* fellow criminals.

- 21 One afternoon, Jimmy Valentine and his suitcase climbed out of the mail hack⁶ in Elmore, a little town five miles off the railroad down in the blackjack country of Arkansas. Jimmy, looking like an athletic young senior just home from college, went down the board sidewalk toward the hotel.
- 22 A young lady crossed the street, passed him at the corner and entered a door over which was the sign “The Elmore Bank.” Jimmy Valentine looked into her eyes, forgot what he was, and became another man. She lowered her eyes and colored slightly. Young men of Jimmy’s style and looks were scarce in Elmore.
- 23 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. By and by the young lady came out, looking royally unconscious of the young man with the suitcase, and went her way.
- 24 “Isn’t that young lady Miss Polly Simpson?” asked Jimmy, with specious guile.⁷
- 25 “Naw,” said the boy. “She’s Annabel Adams. Her pa owns this bank. What’d you come to Elmore for? Is that a gold watch chain? I’m going to get a bulldog. Got any more dimes?”
- 26 Jimmy went to the Planters’ Hotel, registered as Ralph D. Spencer, and engaged a room. He leaned on the desk and declared his platform⁸ to the clerk. 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? He had thought of the shoe business. Was there an opening?
- 27 The clerk was impressed by the clothes and manner of Jimmy. He, himself, was something of a pattern of fashion to the thinly gilded youth of Elmore, but he now perceived his shortcomings. While trying to figure out Jimmy’s manner of tying his four-in-hand,⁹ he cordially gave information.
- 28 Yes, there ought to be a good opening in the shoe line. There wasn’t an exclusive shoe store in the place. The dry-goods and general stores handled them. Business in all lines was fairly good. Hoped Mr. Spencer would decide to locate in Elmore. He would find it a pleasant town to live in, and the people very sociable.
- 29 Mr. Spencer thought he would stop over in the town a few days and look over the situation. No, the clerk needn’t call the boy. He would carry up his suitcase, himself; it was rather heavy.
- 30 Mr. Ralph Spencer, the phoenix that arose from Jimmy Valentine’s ashes—ashes left by the flame of a sudden and alterative attack of love—remained in Elmore, and prospered. He opened a shoe store and secured a good run of trade.

6. **mail hack** horse and carriage used to deliver mail.

7. **specious guile** (SPEE shuhs) (gyl) crafty, indirect way of obtaining information.

8. **platform** here, statement of his situation.

9. **four-in-hand** necktie.

31 Socially he was also a success, and made many friends. And he accomplished the wish of his heart. He met Miss Annabel Adams, and became more and more captivated by her charms.

32 At the end of a year the situation of Mr. Ralph Spencer was this: he had won the respect of the community, his shoe store was flourishing, and he and Annabel were engaged to be married in two weeks. Mr. Adams, the typical, plodding, country banker, approved of Spencer. Annabel's pride in him almost equaled her affection. He was as much at home in the family of Mr. Adams and that of Annabel's married sister as if he were already a member.

33 One day Jimmy sat down in his room and wrote this letter, which he mailed to the safe address of one of his old friends in St. Louis:

Dear Old Pal:

I want you to be at Sullivan's place, in Little Rock, next Wednesday night, at nine o'clock. I want you to wind up some little matters for me. And, also, I want to make you a present of my kit of tools. I know you'll be glad to get them—you couldn't duplicate the lot for a thousand dollars. 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. I wouldn't touch a dollar of another man's money now for a million. After I get married I'm going to sell out and go West, where there won't be so much danger of having old scores brought up against me. I tell you, Billy, she's an angel. She believes in me; and I wouldn't do another crooked thing for the whole world. Be sure to be at Sully's, for I must see you. I'll bring along the tools with me.

Your old friend,

Jimmy.

34 On the Monday night after Jimmy wrote this letter, Ben Price jogged unobtrusively into Elmore in a livery buggy. He lounged about town in his quiet way until he found out what he wanted to know. From the drugstore across the street from Spencer's shoe store he got a good look at Ralph D. Spencer.

35 "Going to marry the banker's daughter are you, Jimmy?" said Ben to himself, softly. "Well, I don't know!"

36 The next morning Jimmy took breakfast at the Adamses. He was going to Little Rock that day to order his wedding suit and buy something nice for Annabel. That would be the first time he had left town since he came to Elmore. It had been more than a

year now since those last professional “jobs,” and he thought he could safely venture out.

37 After breakfast quite a family party went downtown together—Mr. Adams, Annabel, Jimmy, and Annabel’s married sister with her two little girls, aged five and nine. They came by the hotel where Jimmy still boarded, and he ran up to his room and brought along his suitcase. Then they went on to the bank. There stood Jimmy’s horse and buggy and Dolph Gibson, who was going to drive him over to the railroad station.

38 All went inside the high, carved oak railings into the banking-room—Jimmy included, for Mr. Adams’s future son-in-law was welcome anywhere. The clerks were pleased to be greeted by the good-looking, agreeable young man who was going to marry Miss Annabel. Jimmy set his suitcase down. Annabel, whose heart was bubbling with happiness and lively youth, put on Jimmy’s hat and picked up the suitcase. “Wouldn’t I make a nice drummer?”¹⁰ said Annabel. “My! Ralph, how heavy it is! Feels like it was full of gold bricks.”

39 “Lot of nickel-plated shoehorns in there,” said Jimmy, coolly, “that I’m going to return. Thought I’d save express charges by taking them up. I’m getting awfully economical.”

40 The Elmore Bank had just put in a new safe and vault. Mr. Adams was very proud of it, and insisted on an inspection by everyone. The vault was a small one, but it had a new, patented door. It fastened with three solid steel bolts thrown simultaneously with a single handle, and had a time lock. Mr. Adams beamingly explained its workings to Mr. Spencer, who showed a courteous but not too intelligent interest. The two children, May and Agatha, were delighted by the shining metal and funny clock and knobs.

41 While they were thus engaged Ben Price sauntered in and leaned on his elbow, looking casually inside between the railings. He told the teller that he didn’t want anything; he was just waiting for a man he knew.

42 Suddenly there was a scream or two from the women, and a commotion. Unperceived by the elders, May, the nine-year-old girl, in a spirit of play, had shut Agatha in the vault. She had then shot the bolts and turned the knob of the combination as she had seen Mr. Adams do.

43 The old banker sprang to the handle and tugged at it for a moment. “The door can’t be opened,” he groaned. “The clock hasn’t been wound nor the combination set.”

44 Agatha’s mother screamed again, hysterically.

10. **drummer** *n.* traveling salesman.

45 “Hush!” said Mr. Adams, raising his trembling hand. “All be quiet for a moment. Agatha!” he called as loudly as he could. “Listen to me.” During the following silence they could just hear the faint sound of the child wildly shrieking in the dark vault in a panic of terror.

46 “My precious darling!” wailed the mother. “She will die of fright! Open the door! Oh, break it open! Can’t you men do something?”

47 “There isn’t a man nearer than Little Rock who can open that door,” said Mr. Adams, in a shaky voice. “My God! Spencer, what shall we do? That child—she can’t stand it long in there. There isn’t enough air, and besides, she’ll go into convulsions from fright.”

48 Agatha’s mother, frantic now, beat the door of the vault with her hands. Somebody wildly suggested dynamite. Annabel turned to Jimmy, her large eyes full of anguish, but not yet despairing. To a woman nothing seems quite impossible to the powers of the man she worships.

49 “Can’t you do something, Ralph—try, won’t you?”

50 He looked at her with a queer, soft smile on his lips and in his keen eyes.

51 “Annabel,” he said, “give me that rose you are wearing, will you?”

52 Hardly believing that she heard him aright, she unpinning the bud from the bosom of her dress, and placed it in his hand. Jimmy stuffed it into his vest pocket, threw off his coat and pulled up his shirt sleeves. With that act Ralph D. Spencer passed away and Jimmy Valentine took his place.

53 “Get away from the door, all of you,” he commanded, shortly.

54 He set his suitcase on the table, and opened it out flat. From that time on he seemed to be unconscious of the presence of anyone else. He laid out the shining, queer implements swiftly and orderly, whistling softly to himself as he always did when at work. In a deep silence and immovable, the others watched him as if under a spell.

55 In a minute Jimmy’s pet drill was biting smoothly into the steel door. In ten minutes—breaking his own burglarious record—he threw back the bolts and opened the door.

56 Agatha, almost collapsed, but safe, was gathered into her mother’s arms.

57 Jimmy Valentine put on his coat, and walked outside the railings toward the front door. As he went he thought he heard a far-away voice that he once knew call “Ralph!” But he never hesitated.

- 58 At the door a big man stood somewhat in his way.
- 59 "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."
- 60 And then Ben Price acted rather strangely.
- 61 "Guess you're mistaken, Mr. Spencer," he said. "Don't believe I
recognize you. Your buggy's waiting for you, ain't it?"
- 62 And Ben Price turned and strolled down the street. 🐾

NOTES



EVIDENCE LOG

Go to your Evidence Log and record what you learned from the text you read.


Share Your Independent Learning

Prepare to Share

What can cause a sudden change in someone's life?

Even when you read or learn something independently, your understanding continues to grow when you share what you've learned with others. Reflect on the text you explored independently, and write notes about its connections to the unit topic and Essential Question. In your notes, explain why this text belongs in this unit.

Learn From Your Classmates

 **Discuss It** Share your ideas about the text you explored on your own. As you talk with your classmates, jot down ideas that you learn from them.

Reflect

Review your notes, and underline the most important insight you gained from these writing and discussion activities. Explain how this idea adds to your understanding of the topic of turning points.