

My Cousin's Lesson

CCSSR1: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

My cousin Jerome is one of the smartest people I know, but sometimes he makes mistakes. Like the time he went to the store and took a shirt. His friend dared him to do it. He did it quickly and he thought no one had seen him do it. But he was wrong.

The store manager called the police. They came right away. Jerome was 17. They said, "Do you know what you've done? You've got yourself a record. That will stay with you all your life."

Jerome asked the store manager to let him go. He apologized. He said, "I really didn't mean to do it. I'm sorry. I wanted to get a present, and I didn't have enough money."

The manager said, "We have had too many thefts. We can't let you go. Then everyone else will think they can just take things. We need people to know you can't do that."

So the police took him to the station. They fingerprinted him. They told him he could make one phone call. He called me. He said, "I don't want to tell my mother. She will be so mad."

I told him I had to tell his mother, that I could not help. I was 21. So I could have gone there. I could have helped him out. But he really had to tell his mother. He started crying on the phone. But I didn't let it go. I said I would call his mother.

I did call her. I told her what had happened. She and I went to the police station together. We talked with the police officer who had arrested him. We asked what the next steps should be.

The police officer said that they could ask a judge to let him have a suspended sentence. That means that Jerome would not have to go to jail. "Don't let this happen again," the judge said. "You have the rest of your life. You don't want to spend it here. I don't want to see you again."

Jerome has been very careful ever since that day. I'm sorry he had to learn this lesson the hard way.

What is a lesson people can learn from this story?

Underline the parts of the story that show that is the lesson you can learn.