

**The Lawyer and the Banker in “The Bet” are similar in that they are both shortsighted but different in that the Lawyer grows in wisdom while the Banker remains materialistic.**

Early in the story after a discussion about the relative cruelty of the death penalty compared to life imprisonment, the Lawyer and the Banker strike a perilous bet in which the Lawyer exclaims, ““If you mean it seriously . . . then I bet I’ll stay not five but fifteen” years in prison in order to win a large sum of money from the Banker. Later that evening, the banker is described as being “spoiled and capricious, [and] beside himself with rapture” because he felt he would surely win the bet, and even if he didn’t, he was so rich he could easily pay the lawyer if he lost. Both characters, in different ways, show their shortsightedness. Clearly the Lawyer shows a certain amount of foolish arrogance by volunteering to stay in prison for 15 years when five years was originally agreed to; he is overconfident since he has not thought through the repercussions of being alone for that long. He might be happy and healthy now, but what will he be like in one year of solitary confinement, let alone 15? Similarly, the banker being “beside himself with rapture” indicates that he is absolutely convinced he will win despite not considering the determination of the Lawyer. He fails to consider how motivating a very large sum of money is, and he should know, being a banker, how volatile financial markets are, but he never foresees the possibility that he may lose all of his money. Neither the Lawyer or the Banker consider the consequences of their actions—the lawyer may lose his mind, and the banker may lose his money. They simply assume that they will win.