

ENGLISH

CHAPTER 4: A QUESTION OF TRUST



A QUESTION OF TRUST

~Summary~

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Horace Danby: A Businessman and an Unusual Thief

Horace Danby had a good reputation in society. He was about fifty years old and unmarried. He ran a business of making locks and had two helpers. But Horace was not totally honest. He loved rare and expensive books. Horace robbed a safe every year to finance his expensive hobby. He was now going for committing a robbery.

Horace Plans a Theft

For two weeks Horace had studied the country house at Shotover Grange, whose owners normally lived in London. He wanted to burgle (enter illegally for a crime) the jewellery lying in the safe in this house. Horace entered the house when the servants were away. He had an allergy to flowers called hay fever. He started sneezing. Then he heard a lady's voice. She told him a cure for the sneeze.

Horace Meets a Young and Pretty Lady

Then a young and pretty lady appeared in the doorway. She was young and pretty. His first thought was to run, as the lady told him that she would telephone the police. Horace told her to let him go and forget she ever saw him.

Lady's Condition for Horace's Freedom

The lady put one condition for letting Horace go. She told him that she had promised her husband to take her jewels to the bank. She had, however, left the jewels in the safe, as she wanted to wear the jewels in a party that night. She came down to get them, but had forgotten the number combination to open the safe. So she needed his help to break open the safe. So Horace opened the safe for her and handed her the jewels to get his freedom.

Horace Got Arrested

After two days a policeman arrested him for the jewel robbery at Shotover Grange. Horace's fingerprints were found all over the room. He had opened the safe without using his gloves. He told the police that the lady of the house had told him to open the safe. But the actual lady was a sixty-year-old woman. She said that Horace's story was nonsense. Then Horace realised that the pretty young woman was also a jewel thief who had used his skill to steal the jewels.

Horace is now assistant librarian in prison. He often thinks of the charming and clever young lady. She was in the same profession as him. She had simply tricked him. So he gets angry when anyone talks about "honour among thieves."

Conclusion of A Question of Trust

In the chapter – A Question of Trust focuses on the message for students that we should not trust anyone blindly without finding out the truth about that person.

NCERT SOLUTION

Questions (Page No. 20)

(READ AND FIND OUT)

Question 1: What does Horace Danby like to collect?

Answer: Horace Danby loved to collect rare and expensive books.

Question 2: Why does he steal every year?

Answer: Horace robbed a safe every year so that he could buy the rare and expensive books that he was fond of collecting. Each year he planned carefully just what he would do, stole enough to last for twelve months, and secretly bought the books he loved through an agent.

Questions (Page No. 22)

(READ AND FIND OUT)

Question 1: Who is speaking to Horace Danby?

Answer: A lady standing in the doorway spoke to Horace Danby. She was young and pretty and wore a red dress. She walked to the fireplace and straightened the ornaments kept there. She said she had arrived there just in time, otherwise Horace would have robbed all the jewels from the safe. She asked him to break the safe for her and she would let him go without informing the police. Thus, it was quite evident that she only pretended to be one of the family members living at Shotover Grange.

Question 2: Who is the real culprit in the story?

Answer: The real culprit in the story was the young woman who pretended to be a family member living at Shotover Grange. She tricked Horace Danby to believe her and managed to convince him to open the safe for her, in return she would let him go without informing the police. Thereafter, she took away all the jewels that were kept in the safe.

Questions (Page No. 25)

(THINK ABOUT IT)

Question 1: Did you begin to suspect, before the end of the story, that the lady was not the person Horace Danby took her to be? If so, at what point did you realise this, and how?

Answer: Yes, we began to suspect before the story ended that the lady was the actual culprit who tricked Horace Danby to believe her. We have noticed that she was unusually calm when she saw Horace trying to break the lock of the safe. This seemed weird because if she had been a family member of Shotover Grange, then she would have raised a theft alarm immediately. On the contrary, she approached Horace from the doorway and asked him to take out all the jewels from the safe on the condition that she would not inform the police and let him walk out freely. All these events seemed suspicious and it was highly unlikely that she was a family member of the house and had forgotten the number combination to open the safe. Therefore, it was evident and quite clear that she was just using Horace to break open the safe for her. Long before the story ended, we could come to the conclusion that the lady was the real culprit and definitely not the one whom Horace had believed her to be.

Question 2: What are the subtle ways in which the lady manages to deceive Horace Danby into thinking she is the lady of the house? Why doesn't Horace suspect that something is wrong?

Answer: The young woman's confident walk, the way she touched up her make-up, her familiarity with the dog Sherry and the easy way in which she picked a cigarette from the right place are some of the subtle ways in which she managed to deceive Horace Danby to believe that she was the lady of the house. Horace was frightened and could not think properly, as a result he didn't suspect that she was trying to trick him to break open the safe for her.

Question 3: "Horace Danby was good and respectable — but not completely honest". Why do you think this description is apt for Horace? Why can't he be categorised as a typical thief?

Answer: Horace was a robber who would steal once in a year to buy rare and expensive books. He wasn't a regular thief who robbed to meet ends meet. He made locks and had two helpers who helped him in his successful business. Nonetheless, a crime however small or big it may be, no matter how it is done, calls for punishment. Therefore, an act of theft is also a crime, no matter how well-behaved a thief is, he is bound to face punishment. Horace was one of this kind and he couldn't be categorized as a typical thief or a regular offender like other thieves who robbed to feed themselves or their families. Horace's motive behind a yearly robbery was merely to steal a big safe with proper planning that would last him for twelve months so that he could secretly buy the books he loved through an agent.

Question 4: Horace Danby was a meticulous planner but still he faltered. Where did he go wrong and why?

Answer: Horace Danby failed to execute his robbery properly even though he had enough information about the house at Shotover Grange, its rooms, location of valuable items, its electric wiring, its paths and its garden. But he did not have much information about the real occupants of the house. Although he exhibited smartness in knowing the dog's actual name, he failed to get

proper information about the occupants of the house. Hence, when the young lady caught him red-handed while trying to break the lock of the safe, he was too frightened and could not understand that the woman tricked him to believe her. When the lady assured to let him freely without informing the police, Horace's clever mind gave way to carelessness and he opened the safe without wearing gloves, thereby leaving his fingerprints all over the place.

Questions (Page No. 25)

(TALK ABOUT IT)

Question 1: Do you think Horace Danby was unfairly punished, or that he deserved what he got?

Answer: Yes, Horace Danby deserved to be punished. After all a crime is a crime, no matter whether it is committed for one's own selfish interest or to benefit someone else.

Question 2: Do intentions justify actions? Would you, like Horace Danby, do something wrong if you thought your ends justified the means? Do you think that there are situations in which it is excusable to act less than honestly?

Answer: There is an old and time-testing adage which says, "The ends do not justify the means". Nobody should harm others to satisfy their own selfish interests. However, we know that the world doesn't function on idealism alone. There are several examples of trickery where dishonest people trick others for quick gains. Such acts should be condemned and dealt with severity.