

A Question of Trust

Answers to NCERT Questions

READ AND FIND OUT

1. What does Horace Danby like to collect?

Ans: Horace Danby likes to collect rare and expensive books.

2. Why does he steal every year?

Ans: He stole every year, so that he could buy the rare and expensive books that he loved to collect. Each year he planned carefully, so as to steal enough to last twelve months.

3. Who is speaking to Horace Danby?

Ans: A lady standing in the doorway is speaking to Horace Danby. She was young and pretty and was dressed in red. She said she had come just in time, or else her family would have been robbed by Horace. Thus, she pretended to be one of the members of the family living at Shotover Grange.

4. Who is the real culprit in the story?

Ans: The real culprit in the story is the woman who pretended to be a member of the family living at Shotover Grange. She tricked Horace Danby into believing her, and cleverly took away all the jewels that were kept in the safe.

THINK ABOUT IT

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?

Ans: Yes, we begin to suspect before the end of the story that the lady was not the person Horace Danby took her to be. She was unusually calm on seeing Horace. This seemed strange. When she did not call the police, and instead asked Horace to take out all the jewels from the safe, even if it meant breaking it open, it seems suspicious. Moreover, it seemed highly unlikely that she would forget the number combination to open the safe. Therefore, it was evident before the story ended, that the lady was not the person Horace had taken her to be.

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?

Ans: Her confident walk, her familiarity with the dog Sherry, her act of touching up her make-up and the ease with which she picks a cigarette from the right place are enough to deceive anybody. Horace was too frightened to think properly, so he didn't suspect anything.

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?

Ans: Horace's habits were not typical of a thief. He was fond of books. He used to steal only once in a year, so he was never stealing more than his needs. However, an act of theft is still a crime, no matter how well a thief behaves, so this description is apt for Horace. He can't be categorised as a typical thief because he is not a regular offender like other thieves.

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

Ans: Horace Danby failed to get enough information about the real occupants of the house. He seems to be too occupied with collecting information about the house map, wiring and location of valuable items. Although he was smart enough to know the dog's actual name, he overlooked getting information about the occupants of the house. When he landed in trouble with the appearance of the young lady, his clever mind gave way to carelessness, leading him to open the safe without wearing gloves.

TALK ABOUT IT

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

Ans: Horace Danby deserved what he got. A crime is a crime, no matter if it is committed for your own benefit or for somebody else's benefited.

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?

Ans: "Ends do not justify means", is a very old and time-tested saying. For their own benefit, nobody should harm others. But this world doesn't function on idealism. There are many examples of people tricking people for quick gains. These acts should be deplored and dealt with severely.

Additional Questions

Short Answer Questions (30-40 words)

1. How did Horace know all the details of the house?

Ans: Horace had been studying the house for the past two weeks. Moreover, a magazine article had described this house, giving a plan of all the rooms and a picture of the room. There were also the details of the safe hidden behind the safe.

2. How did Horace fulfil his desire of reading books after he was arrested?

Ans: After Horace was arrested, he became the assistant librarian in the prison and fulfilled his desire of reading books.

3. Though Horace planned everything meticulously, why did he fail?

Ans: Though Horace planned everything meticulously, he failed because of the smart lady. She posed herself to be the owner of the house and convinced him to open the safe as she had not the password of the safe. Horace got trapped in her plot.

4. How did the flowers cause him trouble?

Ans: Horace Danby had an allergy for flowers, especially during pollen season. When flowers are nearby, he starts sneezing. The only cure for it was to stay away from those path of flowers.

5. What was Horace Danby's hobby? How did he manage to fulfil his hobby?

Ans: Horace's only hobby was to read expensive and rare books. He used to rob a safe every year in order to arrange money for his hobby. He used to get those books from an agent.

6. How did the lady spoil his plan?

Ans: The lady posed as the owner of the house in front of Horace. Horace got scared and believed her. She asked him to open the safe as she had forgotten the password. Horace opened the safe and handed over the jewels to her. Hence, Horace's plan of robbing the safe was spoiled.

7. Why did the lady report to the police though she promised that she would not report to the police?

Ans: The lady was very clever and shrewd. She promised Horace that she would not report to the police, if he would help her in getting the jewels from the safe. Horace broke the safe and helped her. But she didn't keep her promise as she was also a thief and did not want to get into trouble.

8. How did Horace enter Shotover Grange?

Ans: Horace had seen the housekeeper hang the key in the hook outside the kitchen door. He came out from behind the garden wall. He put on his gloves, took the key and opened the door of the kitchen and entered Shotover Grange.

9. Who is the real culprit in this story, the lady or Horace? How did he/she manage to rob the safe without leaving a single fingerprint?

Ans: In this story, the real culprit is the young lady. She managed to trick Horace for breaking the safe for her. She did not even touch the safe herself. She managed to get all the jewels. She had to do no physical exercise for this. In this way, she managed to rob the safe without leaving a single fingerprint.

10. What do you think is the meaning of the phrase 'honour among thieves'?

Ans: The phrase 'honour among thieves' means that the thieves also have their code of conduct. One thief is honest to the other thief. They never betray one another.

11. Which of the two lacked honour?

Ans: Among the two, the young lady lacked honour. She came face to face with a thief, still, she tricked 'him. But Horace did not know that she was a thief. She got all the jewels. She went free, but the poor Horace was arrested. It was against the profession of thieves.

12. Describe Horace Danby.

Ans: Horace Danby was a good and respectable citizen. He was about fifty years old, but he was unmarried. He was a locksmith and was very successful in his business. He was usually very well and healthy except for attacks of hay fever. But he was not completely honest.

13. How did Horace Danby manage to get rare and expensive books?

Ans: Horace Danby loved rare and expensive books. He bought them secretly through an agent. But for this, he had to rob a safe every year because he had not enough money to buy these books. In this way, he managed to get these rare and expensive books.

14. What did the young lady ask Horace to do for her?

Ans: The young lady told Horace that she had come there to take the jewels from the safe. She said that she had to wear them that night at a party. She made an excuse of forgetting the number to open the safe. So she compelled Horace to break open the safe for her, if not, she would tell the police everything about him.

15. What story did Horace tell the police when he was arrested?

Ans: He told the police that he had not stolen any jewels. He said that he broke open the safe for the young wife of the owner of the house. But the wife was herself an old lady of about sixty with grey-hair. So, none believed his story.

16. Why is Horace Danby described as good and respectable but not completely honest?

Ans: Horace Danby was a good person. He made locks. He was very successful in his business. He had engaged two helpers in his business. But he was not completely honest because he robbed a safe every year.

17. Why did he rob every year? Was he a typical thief? If so, why?

Ans: Horace loved reading rare and expensive books. So he robbed a safe every year to buy these books. He was a typical thief because he robbed only one safe every year.

18. Describe how Horace Danby planned his work?

Ans: Horace Danby studied the house at Shotover Grange for two weeks. He studied its rooms, its electric wiring, its paths and its garden. He was sure that the family was in London. The two servants had gone to the movies and they would not come back before four hours. He came out from behind the garden wall and entered the house.

19. He was a very successful thief. What went wrong when he attempted to rob Shotover Grange?

Ans: Danby was a very successful thief. He always used gloves while breaking a safe. He never left any fingerprints behind. This time, when he started his work, he felt a little tickle in his nose. It was because of a big flower pot lying on the table. He was repeatedly sneezing. This happened wrong with him.

20. What advice did the lady give Horace regarding his hay fever? Was she really interested in his health?

Ans: The lady told Horace that he could get rid of the disease, if he found out which plant had given him the disease. She advised him that he should see a doctor. Actually, she was not interested in his health. She was just trying to be friendly and sympathetic.

21. Did the young lady expect Horace to be caught after the theft?

Ans: Yes, the young lady expected Horace to be caught after the theft. She thought that it would be very easy to detect Horace with the help of fingerprints.

22. In what way could his arrest have helped her?

Ans: If Horace Danby was arrested for the jewels robbery at Shotover Grange, then she could be safe. She got the jewels but Horace broke the safe for her. Thus, his arrest could have helped her by making her tension free.

23. Did Horace get the jewels from the Grange safe? If not, why did the police arrest him?

Ans: No, Horace did not get the jewels from the Grange safe. But he broke and opened the safe for the wife of the owner of the house without gloves. But in reality, that lady

was a burglar. Thus, there were Horace's fingerprints all over the room. So, the police arrested him for stealing the jewels from the Grange safe.

Long Answer Questions (100-150 words)

1. Horace Danby represents such people who adopt the wrong ways to fulfill their wishes. What values would you like such people to imbibe to reform themselves?

Ans: Horace Danby was a successful businessman. He was a respectable citizen, but had a habit that led him to do robberies. Danby loved rare, expensive books and to get them, he used to rob a safe every year. Every year, he planned carefully just to get what he wanted. Danby adopted wrong ways to fulfil his wishes and hence, later got trapped in a plot by a thief like him. People should imbibe good values. They should learn that hard work is the only key to success. One should work hard to fulfil his desires. I think such people should imbibe the values of honesty, responsibility, hard work, dedication, self-confidence in order to reform themselves.

2. Horace Danby was a respectable man but he could not be called loyal. What do you think could be the reasons for leading a respectable man like him on the path of thievery? Did he feel lack of sense of freedom? Was it not in his nature to accept the differences among people regarding their social status? Discuss.

Ans: Horace Danby's habits were not typical of a thief. He was fond of books. He was a respectable man but his passion for books led him to thievery. He used to steal only once in a year, so he was never stealing more than his needs. He stole only to buy rare books; he loved rare and expensive books. Moreover, Danby used to rob only rich people. It was his nature to accept the difference among people regarding their social status. He was aware that people with high socio-background can help him to fulfil his desire. He found such people easy to rob.

3. Horace promised the young lady that he would follow the path of honesty, if she did not hand him over to the police, but he could not keep his promise for more than days. Did he lack reconciliation? Was it not in his nature to keep his promise? Did he lack the courage to fulfil his needs through an honest living? Discuss.

Ans: The lady manipulated the whole situation as well as Horace, and very skillfully got the jewels without even touching anything. She talked high things like protecting the society from culprits like Horace. Horace promised her that he would follow the path of honesty. He helped her in getting the jewels by breaking the safe without wearing gloves. But after two days, police caught him for stealing the jewels. He could not convince them that he had not taken the jewels and had helped the owner's wife. The condition provoked him to break his promise. Although he honestly felt that he would not rob any more, he could not do so as he had no other choice left.

4. Horace stated that he robbed only those who had a lot of money. Was he really a threat to the society? Did he lack the qualities of a good citizen? Discuss.

Ans: I don't think Horace was a threat to the society. He never threatened anyone and rather stole for a very good reason. He used to rob a safe every year to pursue his hobby of getting rare and expensive books to read. He was not a professional thief. Moreover, he never harmed anyone. He was considered a good and honest citizen by everyone. He was about fifty years old and unmarried. He had all the qualities of a good citizen. He was not a criminal or a typical thief. He did so only to fulfil his need. He was an honest and good man. He believed in the lady's story and gave away all the jewels to her. If he had been a criminal, he would have killed the lady or would have never handed the jewels to her.

5. Horace Danby requested the lady to forget what she saw. Was Horace afraid of being caught? Did he lack the courage to accept his crime publicly? Explain.

Ans: Yes, Horace Danby was afraid of being caught. He lacked the courage to accept his crime publicly. He was not a professional criminal or thief. He was considered a good and honest man by everyone. He was about fifty years old and unmarried. His house was looked after by a housekeeper. He used to rob only one safe every year to pursue his habit of getting rare and expensive books to read. He used to rob only those who were rich. He had a good reputation in the society and hence, did not want anyone to know about his crimes. Although he helped the lady but was caught by the police for the crime he did not commit. He learnt from his mistake.

6. "Horace had some hope because she seemed to be amused at meeting him." Why did Horace feel so? Did he consider the young lady compassionate towards him? Did he find her free from biases? Discuss.

Ans: Horace was a fifty-year-old man who used to rob only to buy rare and expensive books. This time, he decided to rob Shotover Grange. But as soon as he entered the room, a young lady appeared. She posed to be the lady of the house. She was very confident. She talked about high ideals like pro-acting. The society from robbers like conium racked. Then she tried to be polite and nice to him. On hearing her, Horace felt that he had a hope of escaping. He found her a bit compassionate towards him. She was amused at Horace. She acted in quite a subtle manner and showed her sympathy and admiration towards a simple and honest man. He could not judge her ace. She made Horace promise that he would never commit the crime again. Horace was clever and shrewd, and hence later got arrested for stealing the jewels which he did not steal.

7. Write a character sketch of Horace Danby.

Ans: Horace Danby was a good and respectable citizen. He was about fifty years old but he was unmarried. He was a locksmith and was very successful in his business. Despite all these qualities, he was not completely honest. He had been to jail once. So, he hated the thought of going to jail.

He loved rare and expensive books. He broke a safe every year to have enough money to buy books. He was a careful burglar. He planned his work well. He was very careful while robbing a safe. He wore gloves and never left fingerprints on the scene of the crime. Since he was a locksmith, it was very easy for him to break any safe.

Once he was duped by a young lady. That young lady, who pretended to be the owner's wife, was also a thief. He gave all the jewels to the young lady and left his fingerprints all over the room. Thus, he was arrested and sent to prison. Now, he did not like the thought of 'honour among thieves' any more.

8. Describe Horace Danby's encounter with the young lady.

Ans: Horace Danby was going to rob the safe at Shotover Grange. He had cut the wires of the burglar alarm. But the flowers on the table made a tickle in his nose and he was sneezing repeatedly. Just then a young lady dressed in red came in. She spoke friendly to Danby but her sound was firm.

She said that she was the owner's wife. She told him that she had come there to take the jewels from the safe. She had to wear them that night at a party. She made an excuse that she had forgotten the number to open the safe. She told the thief that she would let him go if he opened the safe for her. Danby was taken in. He opened the safe without gloves. He gave all the jewels to the young lady. She went away safely with the jewels, but Danby was arrested for the jewels robbery and sent to prison.

9. What were Horace Danby's plans for his latest robbery?

Ans: Horace was sure that the robbery he was planning for that year was going to be as successful as all the others so far. He had been observing and studying the house at Shotover Grange for two weeks. He had observed everything minutely. That afternoon, when he planned to rob the house, he had seen the two servants, who remained in the Grange, going to the movies. He came out from behind the garden wall. He had packed his tools carefully in a bag on his back. Horace knew that there were about fifteen thousand pounds worth of jewels in the Grange safe and if he sold them one by one, he was sure to get enough money to last him for another year.

Self-Assessment Test

Short Answer Questions

1. Do you think Horace Danby was unfairly punished?
2. How did the lady deceive Horace?
3. What did Horace Danby study about the Shotover Grange house?

4. Why was it very easy for Horace to open the safe?
5. What story did the lady tell Horace to get the jewels?

Long Answer Questions

1. The lady in the red was a more professional thief than Horace Danby. Give a reasoned answer.
2. Describe the scene of theft at Shotover Grange committed by Horace Danby.
3. Why did Horace Danby get angry when anyone talked about 'honour among thieves'?