

The Thief's Story

Read and Find Out (Page 8)

Question 1:

Who does 'I' refer to in this story?

Answer:

In the story, 'I' refers to the narrator of the story Hari Singh, who was a fifteen-year-old experienced thief.

Question 2:

What is he "a fairly successful hand" at?

Answer:

He had "a fairly successful hand" at stealing and robbing people. By this he meant that he was an experienced thief who was very swift and clean in his work while robbing people without getting caught.

Question 3:

What does he get from Anil in return for his work?

Answer:

When Hari approached Anil for work, Anil told him clearly that he could not pay him for it. So, he asked Hari to cook so he can feed him and stay with him. But when he found out that the young boy didn't know how to cook, he taught him to cook and how to write his name. Anil also promised to teach him to write whole sentences and calculate numbers. Besides, Anil also gave money to Hari to buy the daily supplies and the latter would make a rupee profit a day from it.

Read and Find Out (Page 10)

Question 1:

How does the thief think Anil will react to the theft?

Answer:

Hari, the thief thought that on discovering his theft, Anil would be filled with sadness not because of the loss of money but for losing the trust he had in him.

Question 2:

What does he say about the different reactions of people when they are robbed?

Answer:

In his short career as a thief, Hari's experience had made him aware of the different reactions of people when they were robbed. According to him, a greedy man showed fear; the rich men exhibited anger and

a poor man showed acceptance.

Question 3:

Does Anil realise that he has been robbed?

Answer:

Yes, Anil realised that he had been robbed by Hari. Probably, he came to know of it from the damp notes which got wet due to rain in the previous night. However, he didn't express anything and gave a fifty rupee note to Hari and promised to pay him regularly.

Think about it (Page 13)**Question 1:**

What are Hari Singh's reactions to the prospect of receiving an education? Do they change over time? (Hint: Compare, for example, the thought: "I knew that once I could write like an educated man there would be no limit to what I could achieve" with these later thoughts: "Whole sentences, I knew, could one day bring me more than a few hundred rupees. It was a simple matter to steal — and sometimes just as simple to be caught. But to be a really big man, a clever and respected man, was something else.") What makes him return to Anil?

Answer:

Hari was grateful to Anil who taught him how to write his name. He was excited to learn that Anil would teach him to write whole sentences too. He understood that being an educated man will add to his abilities and help him to achieve a social status in life. But when he stole money and left Anil's house, he realised that stealing was an utter crime to indulge himself and he might soon get caught, but being educated was a more fulfilling experience. He comprehended the respect, reputation and possibilities that he would be able to achieve if he becomes educated. Hence, he was feeling guilty for cheating a noble man who gave him food and shelter. Besides, his urge to receive education also compelled him to return to Anil's house.

Question 2:

Why does not Anil hand the thief over to the police? Do you think most people would have done so? In what ways is Anil different from such employers?

Answer:

Unlike others, Anil did not call the police and hand over Hari on theft charges. He was well aware of the theft from the damp notes but he did not thrash him or even mention it in front of Hari. He was happy that Hari had realised his mistake and understood the importance of education in life.

In today's world, it is difficult to find people like Anil. Most people would not react in the same manner as he did. He was very patient and considerate towards Hari as he wanted him to become an educated man and lead his life respectfully.

Anil was different from other such employers because he was very understanding and compassionate by nature. When Hari returned with the money, it gave him the hope that Hari wanted to amend his ways and grow up to become a noble and literate man.

Talk about it (Page 13)

Question 1:

Do you think people like Anil and Hari Singh are found only in fiction, or are there such people in real life?

Answer:

In the real world, people like Anil and Hari Singh rarely exist and are mostly found in fiction stories only. Although there may be an exception sometimes when we may come across people like Anil. From the story, we know that Anil was a kind-hearted and considerate person who was deeply concerned about Hari's education and future. When Hari stole Anil's money, his conscience pricked him and he had a change of mind and realised the importance of education for his future. Hence, finding such kind of imaginary characters is a rare possibility in today's world.

Question 2:

Do you think it a significant detail in the story that Anil is a struggling writer? Does this explain his behaviour in any way?

Answer:

Yes, it is obvious that a significant detail in the story shows Anil was a struggling writer. His lifestyle was simple with irregular income and he always spent money as per his capabilities. He made money by fits and starts. He would borrow one week, lend the next. He kept worrying about his next cheque, but as soon as it arrived he would go out and celebrate with his friends. Hari observed that Anil was unable to pay him a salary because he did not have a regular source of income. However, Hari felt that although Anil earned less, he never ill-treated him and was quite considerate towards him.

Question 3:

Have you met anyone like Hari Singh? Can you think and imagine the circumstances that can turn a fifteen-year-old boy into a thief?

Answer:

No, I haven't met anyone like Hari Singh but such kind of people do exist in the world. Many a time, a fifteen-year-old boy may be forced under unavoidable circumstances to become a robber. Mostly people commit crime to feed themselves or their families, or sometimes to satisfy their urge or addiction, to maintain health or to fulfil their demands to lead a luxurious life and so on and so forth.

Question 4:

Where is the story set? (You can get clues from the names of the persons and places mentioned in it.) Which language or languages are spoken in these places? Do you think the characters in the story spoke to each other in English?

Answer:

The story is set near Lucknow somewhere in Uttar Pradesh. We understand this from the story when it mentions of a railway station for Express train to Lucknow. The presence of sweet shops, mandis and bazaars also indicate it to be a small and decent town. We can assume that characters in the story were not speaking to each other in English but probably in Hindi language.