

A Question of Trust

Read and Find Out (Page 20)

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.

Read and Find Out (Page 22)

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 into believing 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.

Think about it (Page 25)

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 into believing her. We 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 into breaking 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 make 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 into believing her. When the lady assured him that she would let him freely without informing the police, Horace's clever mind gave way to carelessness. He opened the safe without wearing gloves, thereby leaving his fingerprints all over the place.

Talk about it (Page 25)

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-tested 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 with severity.

