



Class: X- QUESTION BANK -A QUESTION OF TRUST (2023-24)
ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

SUMMARY-

A Question of Trust was written by Victor Canning. This story is about a thief, Horace Danby who was a good citizen. He was an unmarried fifty-year-old man who used to work as a locksmith. He was a successful businessman too and had two helpers to assist him. Although he was a respectable man, he was not completely honest. He had a liking for rare and fancy books and would purchase them by any means. To pursue his expensive hobby, he would rob a safe once every year and purchased the expensive books covertly through an agent. He would chalk out a well-devised plan before making any burglary attempt. This time he had his eyes on a house at Shotover Grange and he carefully studied its rooms, electric wiring, its paths and the garden for two weeks.

The family of that house was in London. One fine afternoon, the two caretakers of the house had gone to watch a movie. Horace realized this was the best time to execute his act. He came out from behind a wall of the garden and entered the house with all his tools packed in his bag. He had picked a key from the hook on the kitchen door. He quickly wore his gloves to avoid leaving fingerprints behind. He took the key from the hook and opened the door. He saw the dog, Sherry that wagged its tail when it saw Horace.

Danby knew the safe was hidden behind a poor painting in the drawing room. There was a beautiful vase full of flowers kept on the table. He was allergic to the fragrance of flowers. He tickled his nose and kept sneezing repeatedly. He took out his tools and cut the burglar alarm. As he sneezed again loudly due to the fragrance of the flowers, he heard the voice of a young lady standing on the doorway behind him. The lady was dressed in red and pretended to be the house owner's wife and she managed to convince Horace to believe her. She said that she had come there without notice to collect her jewels as she wanted to wear those at a party that night.

Danby was frightened that the lady might hand him over to the police so he requested her to let him go. She told him that she would allow him to leave only if he opened the safe for her as she left all the jewels in it. She mentioned that she had forgotten the safe's number combination and didn't know how to unlock it. Danby offered to help her and opened the safe without his gloves on. The young

lady immediately took out all the jewels. Horace Danby left the house and went home happily assuming that he had escaped imprisonment. For the first two days, he kept his promise to the young lady. However, a policeman arrested him on the third day for the burglary of jewels at Shotover Grange.

Horace Danby's fingerprints were found all over the robbed place. Later, he confessed to committing the crime and that he had opened the safe for the young lady in the house, but didn't steal the jewels inside. In reality, it so happened that the lady was also a thief and she convinced Horace to break open the safe for her. When he told this story to the police, no one believed him since the owner's wife was a sixty-year-old woman, not the one Danby mentioned in his statement. In no time, the police arrested him and he was put behind the bars for the robbery case. He became the assistant librarian in the prison. He often thought of the charming, cunning young lady who was also a thief like him and tricked him to believe her. Henceforth, whenever anyone mentioned 'honour among thieves', he would get very angry and upset.

CHARACTER SKETCH

Horace Danby: Horace Danby was about fifty years old and unmarried. Everyone thought him a good and honest citizen. He was otherwise very well and happy except for attacks of hay fever in summer. He made locks and was fairly successful at his business. Horace Danby was good and respectable but not completely honest. He used to rob a safe every year. He used to do so because he needed money to buy books. He had a passion for buying rare and costly books. He would rob only the rich person. He never hurt anyone and carried no weapon with him. He was not very aggressive and didn't want to go to prison.

The Lady in Red: The lady in red is gifted with a rare personality. She is full of confidence. She acts like a perfect actress presenting herself as the lady of the house. Even the dog was rubbing against her in a friendly manner. In a very subtle way, she told Horace that she wanted to wear the jewels in the safe to a party that night. She made him open the safe without gloves. Horace willingly hands over the jewels and she decamps with them.

EXTRACT BASED QUESTIONS:

1.He loved rare, expensive books. So, he robbed a safe every year. 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.

(a)who does 'he' refer to here?

He refers to Horace Danby

(b)What does he love to collect?

He loved to collect rare and expensive books.

(c) What did he steal every year?

He stole a safe every year.

(d) Find a word from the extract which means the same as 'covertly'.
secretly.

2. Now, walking in the bright July sunshine, he felt sure that this year's robbery was going to be as successful as all the others. For two weeks he had been studying the house at Shotover Grange, looking at its rooms, its electric wiring, its paths and its garden.

(a) Who does 'he' refer to here?

He refers to Horace Danby

(b) Why did he choose 'Shotover Grange'?

It contained fifteen thousand pounds worth of jewels.

(c) Why had he been studying the house at Shotover Grange?

Because he robbed a safe every year and Shotover Grange was his target that year.

(d) Find a word from the extract which means the same as 'thriving'.

Successful

3. Then he heard a voice say from the doorway, "What is it? A cold or hay fever?" Before he could think, Horace said, "Hay fever," and found himself sneezing again.

(a) Whose voice was it?

A lady's voice

(b) Where did Horace meet that person?

At the Shotover Grange

(c) According to the extract, Horace was sneezing due to a _____

(i) Sudden allergy **(ii) prior infection** (iii) long standing disease (iv) nasal pain

(d) In the line- Before he could think, Horace said, "Hay fever," the response was

i) Rehearsed **(ii) spontaneous and natural** (iii) hesitant (iv) rapid and hostile

4. How foolish people are when they own valuable things, Horace thought. A magazine article had described this house, giving a plan of all the rooms and a picture of this room. The writer had even mentioned that the painting hid a safe! But Horace found that the flowers were hindering him in his work. He buried his face in his handkerchief.

(a) What was foolish about people?

They make details of their valuable things public

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(b) How did Horace come to know about Shotover Grange?

Through a magazine article

(c) Where was the safe located?

Behind a painting

(d) Find a word from the extract which is opposite to the word 'facilitate'.

Hinder

SHORT ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS:

1. Where was Horace fifteen years ago?

He was in the prison library fifteen years ago.

2. Why does he steal every year?

Horace 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. Describe the safe at Shotover Grange.

The safe at Shotover Grange was kept in the drawing room behind a poor painting and had jewels worth about fifteen thousand pounds. It had a poorly built burglar alarm, but could be opened only through a specific code.

4. How did flowers hinder Horace in his work?

Flowers hindered Horace in his work because he had hay fever, a disorder affecting the nose and throat, caused by allergy to pollen or dust. Due to this problem, whenever he came close to flowers, he began to sneeze and so he had to cover his face.

5. Why did Horace Danby feel sure of his success in that year's robbery?

Planned the robbery meticulously-studied every detail of the house-chose appropriate time to execute his plan.

6. What was Horace Danby's hobby? How did he manage to fulfill it?

He is fond of collecting rare and expensive books- managed it by breaking open a safe every year.

7. How can you say that Horace Danby was good and respectable but not completely honest?

Had flourishing business of locks-lived a happy life-had two helpers- earned well-was respectable but used to rob a safe every year for sustenance- proves he was not completely honest.

8. How did Horace enter Shotover Grange?

Horace had put on the gloves in order to avoid finger prints-he made the dog calm by calling its name and showing love- took the key from the hook and opened the door.

9. What was Horace Danby suffering from? How did it affect him?

Horace suffered from hay fever- made him sneeze continuously

10. Why was it not difficult for Horace to open the safe?

It was not difficult for Horace to open the safe because he was a perfect and experienced locksmith. He had collected all the information about the safe before entering the house.

11. What advice did the lady give Horace regarding his hay fever?

The lady advised Horace that he could find a cure to the hay fever by trying to find which plant gave the disease.

12. How did Horace manage the small dog when he attempted to rob the house at Shotover Grange?

Horace Danby was an expert thief who planned his mission without any fault. When he tried to rob the house in Grange, he encountered a dog. But Horace Danby calmed the dog by calling him by his name.

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

Horace studied the house at Shotover Grange/ its rooms, electric wiring etc. very carefully/servants had gone to the movies/entered the house with his tool bag to steal about fifteen thousand pounds worth of jewels in the Grange safe/enough money to buy three very interesting books for sale.

14. What story did the lady tell Horace to get the jewels?

The lady told Horace an interesting story. She told that her jewels were lying in the safe which she, needed at once. She also told that she had forgotten the numbers to open the safe.

15. What does the phrase 'honour among the thieves' mean? Why does Horace get angry at this phrase?

Honour among thieves means Thieves don't cheat each other / usually loyal to each other. Horace got angry because the lady thief cheated him was not honest- Horace had a good reputation-The lady outsmarted him-She stole everything

16. Why didn't the dog bark when Horace Danby and the young lady in red entered to commit theft in the house?

Both, Horace Danby and the young lady in red knew all the tricks of their trade. They knew the real nature of dogs and how to be friendly with them. A small dog when made a noise, Horace called out "All right, Sherry," as he passed. Perhaps, the lady in red also knew like Horace that to keep dogs quiet, one must call them by their right names. Their trick worked and Sherry remained quiet.

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

Horace Danby- a meticulous man-makes a wonderful plan-equally wonderful execution-like every criminal he too makes a mistake or two- the mistakes become the cause of his undoing- Mistakes: did not bother to get information about the owner/ opened the safe without wearing gloves-overconfident-trusted the lady.

18. Horace was clever but the lady in red was cleverer. Do you agree with this statement? Justify your answer.

Horace-planned the robbery carefully-studied the target-took the proper tools and his gloves-young lady was clever-she took all the necessary information-posed as the mistress of the house-exploited Horace's fear of being discovered – tricked him into cracking open the safe- handed her the jewels-Horace left his finger prints at the site-picked up cigarette-lit it after removing his gloves- the lady outwitted Horace.

LONG ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS-

1.How was Horace Danby arrested for the robbery of the jewels in a house at Shotover Grange? Do you think his own foolishness was responsible for his arrest? Give a reasoned answer.

Horace Danby never acted recklessly in a hurry while committing a theft. He robbed a safe every year. All his previous thefts had been completely successful. Even to commit a theft in a house at Shotover Grange, he made detailed and fool-proof preparations. However, he proved a novice in comparison to the young lady in red. She, in a very confident and convincing way, made him believe that she was the lady of the house. She made him open the safe without the gloves and handover all the jewels to her. She decamped with the jewels and Horace was arrested.

By noon, a policeman arrested Horace for the jewel robbery at Shotover Grange. He had opened the safe without wearing his gloves. He did believe that he was opening the safe for the lady of the house. He pleaded that the wife of the owner of the house had asked him to open the safe for her. The real lady of the house appeared on the scene. She was not the young lady in red but a grey-haired woman of sixty. She said that Horace's story was nonsense. Only then, Horace came to know that he was outwitted by the lady in red who was also a thief like him.

2. How had Horace planned to loot the house at Shotover Grange?

Horace Danby never committed theft in a hurry. All his previous operations were completely successful. He robbed a safe every year. This money was enough to last for a year. Like all his previous robberies, he also planned his latest robbery in a house at Shotover Grange in all details. For two weeks, he had been studying the house, its rooms, electric wiring, paths and its garden.

He also had definite information that two servants working there had gone to movies. He saw them go. He came out from behind the garden wall. He had packed his tools carefully in a bag on his back. He had seen the housekeeper hang the key to the kitchen door on a hook outside. He put on a pair of gloves, took the key and opened the house. He always put on a pair of gloves before committing a theft. A magazine article had described the house with all the rooms. It also mentioned that a painting hid a safe. He collected all these details and made all preparations to make his latest theft a complete success like the others.

3. How did the lady in red manage to outsmart and out maneuver the other thief, Horace Danby, by robbing the safe without leaving a single fingerprint?

The lady in red was also a thief. So was Horace Danby. But it was the lady in the red who out maneuvered and outwitted Horace. No doubt, Horace did his job quite professionally. He worked hard to find out the necessary details about the location of the house and the position of the key and the safe. But, Horace proved to be a novice in judging the young lady in red. The young lady acted with so much confidence and in such a convincing manner that she could easily pass off as the lady of the house.

Horace Danby became a mere puppet who danced to the tune of the lady. When caught red-handed, he pleaded her to let him go. The young lady exploited his confusion and fear of going to prison fully. She made Horace open the safe. The unsuspecting Horace was made to believe that he was working for the lady of the house. So, he opened the safe without putting on his gloves. He gave the jewels to the lady leaving his fingerprints on the safe. So, he was found out and arrested. Naturally, the young lady in red proved far smarter and out maneuvered Horace Danby.

4. Give a character-sketch of the lady in red highlighting how she outwitted Horace Danby.

We don't get any information regarding the past history of the lady in red as we know about Horace's past. Her whole personality remains wrapped in mystery until the end. Only when the identity of the real lady of the house is unfolded, we come to know that she is a thief. She is the real culprit. The lady in red comes there with the only purpose of committing a theft in the house like Horace. She cleverly decamps with the jewels while Horace is sent to prison.

The lady in red is gifted with a rare personality. She is full of confidence. She acts like a perfect actress presenting herself as the lady of the house. Her gestures, confidence and convincing power are enough to convince Horace. He turns out quite a novice in understanding and judging the lady in red and her motive. She dominates the proceeding. Horace only proves a puppet in her hands. She exploits his fear of going to prison. She makes him open the safe without his gloves. She convinced him that she needs those jewels to wear them to a party that night. Horace willingly hands over the jewels and she decamps with them. Only when the grey-haired, sharp-tongued woman appears as the real lady of the house, we come to know that the lady in red was a professional and crafty thief much smarter than Horace.