

Chapter Review

- "A Question of Trust" is by Victor Canning. It is about Horace Danby, a respected lock-maker who steals once a year.
- Horace Danby is fifty-five, makes locks, lives alone with a housekeeper, and loves rare books. To buy these costly books, he robs one safe a year. He plans very carefully.
- This year he plans to rob the safe at Shotover Grange, a house whose owners are away. He prepares his tools, studies the house, and has a cold, so he sneezes.
- At night he breaks in and starts to open the safe. A lady in a red dress comes into the room, and Horace is terrified. She says she is the owner's family and asks him to open the safe as she had forgotten the combination, or else she will call the police.
- He opens the safe, and she takes the jewels. Then she says he can go. Horace goes home and decides this was his last robbery.
- The next day the police arrest him. He had left his fingerprints on the safe since he took off his gloves. He is sent to prison.
- He has to give up his plan of buying his books. The real thief was the lady, who used him. The story is full of irony.

Key Terms

Safe – A strong steel box for valuables.

Fingerprints – Marks left by fingers.

Combination – The set of numbers that opens a safe.

Meticulous – Very careful and detailed.

Culprit – The person guilty of a crime.

Grange – A country house with farm buildings.

Deceive – To make someone believe a falsehood.

Irony – The opposite of what is expected.

Diagrams / Flowcharts

The Story of Horace

Horace steals each year for rare books



Plans to rob Shotover Grange



Lady in red tricks him



He opens safe, she takes jewels



He is caught by fingerprints and jailed

Horace vs the Lady

Horace Danby

- Respected lock-maker
- Careful but nervous
- Steals once a year

The Lady

- Pretends to be the owner
- Calm and clever
- The real thief

About the Author

- Victor Canning (1911-1986) was an English writer of thrillers and crime fiction.

Theme / Message

- Crime does not pay. A person who is respectable but dishonest is still a criminal.
- Don't trust a stranger so easily; a clever trickster can fool us.

Textbook Exercise Questions

Q.1 What does Horace Danby like to collect? Why does he steal every year?

Ans. He collects rare and expensive books. He steals once a year so that he can buy those books secretly through an agent.

Q.2 Who is speaking to Horace Danby? Who is the real culprit?

Ans. A young lady in a red dress. She pretended to be a member of the family. She is the real culprit, who tricked him and took the jewels.

Q.3 Did you suspect before the end that the lady was not who Horace believed?

Ans. Yes. She was too calm when she found him breaking the safe, did not raise an alarm and asked him to open the safe instead. A real family member would have forgotten no combination.

Q.4 How does the lady deceive Horace? Why doesn't he suspect?

Ans. She walks confidently, touches up her make-up, knows the dog Sherry and picks a cigarette from the right place. Horace was too frightened to think.

Q.5 Why is 'good and respectable but not completely honest' apt for Horace?

Ans. He was a respected lock-maker, but he stole every year. He wasn't a regular thief because he didn't steal to feed himself, but a crime is still a crime.

Q.6 Horace was a meticulous planner but still faltered. Where?

Ans. He knew the house but not its real occupants. Fear made him careless; he opened the safe without gloves and left fingerprints.

Q.7 Was Horace unfairly punished?

Ans. No. He deserved it, because a crime is a crime, whatever the reason.

Q.8 Do intentions justify actions?

Ans. No. The ends do not justify the means. Wrong acts for selfish reasons cannot be excused.

Board Exam Questions (Important)

Q.1 Write a character sketch of Horace Danby. (100 words)

Ans. Horace Danby is a fifty-five-year-old lock-maker, respected, quiet and fond of rare books. But he is a thief once a year, and plans it carefully. He is also timid, easily frightened, and rather gullible. His robbery ends in failure, and he goes to jail. His story shows that honesty is more valuable than any book.

Q.2 Why is the story titled 'A Question of Trust'?

Ans. Horace trusted the lady, and she betrayed that trust. Also, he had betrayed the trust of society by stealing. It questions whom we can trust.

Q.3 How did Horace's cold help the police find him? / How was he caught?

Ans. He left fingerprints on the safe because he took off his gloves, and the lady had left none.

Q.4 Value-based: What does the story teach us?

Ans. Crime brings punishment, and we should not trust strangers easily. Honest living gives peace.