Chapter 21: A Question of Trust

CONTENTS 3 exercises · 8 questions

21.1	Read and Find Out (Page 21)	2 Q
21.2	Read and Find Out (Page 23)	2 Q
21.3	Think about it	4 Q

Exercise 21.1 — Read and Find Out (Page 21)

Q1 What does Horace Danby like to collect?

SOLUTION

Horace Danby was a maker of locks who lived a seemingly respectable life, but he had one secret passion.

The text says, "He loved rare, expensive books." Each year he stole enough to buy them and "secretly bought the books he loved through an agent."

So the thing he collected was rare and expensive books.

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

Q2 Why does he steal every year?

SOLUTION

Horace Danby robbed a safe once every year, planning each robbery carefully.

He did this to fund his love of books. He "stole enough to last for twelve months" and used the money to buy the rare, expensive books he loved through an agent.

Thus, his yearly theft was a means to pay for his book-collecting habit.

Answer: He steals every year to get money to buy the rare, expensive books he loves.

Exercise 21.2 — Read and Find Out (Page 23)

Q1 Who is speaking to Horace Danby?

SOLUTION

While Horace was breaking into the safe at Shotover Grange, a voice spoke to him from the doorway.

A young woman appeared, "young, quite pretty, and was dressed in red." She pretended to be the wife of the owner of the house.

In reality she was another thief who tricked Horace into opening the safe for her.

Answer: A young woman in red, who pretends to be the lady of the house, is speaking to Horace Danby.

Q2 Who is the real culprit in the story?

SOLUTION

Horace believed the young woman was the wife of the house owner, so he opened the safe and handed her the jewels.

But the true owner's wife was "a gray-haired, sharp-tongued woman of sixty" who said the story was nonsense. The charming young lady was really a thief "in the same profession as he was, and who tricked him."

Therefore the young woman in red is the real culprit who stole the jewels.

Answer: The young woman in red, who was herself a thief and tricked Horace, is the real culprit.

Exercise 21.3 — Think about it

Q1 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?

SOLUTION

Yes, the lady's behaviour gives subtle hints that she is not the real lady of the house.

The suspicion grows when, instead of being alarmed at finding a burglar, she seems "amused at meeting him" and says, "I have always liked the wrong kind of people."

The strongest clue comes when she claims she has forgotten the numbers to open her own safe and needs Horace to break it. A genuine owner would not need a burglar's help to open her own safe. By the end it is confirmed that she too was a thief.

So one realises she is a fraud when she casually asks a burglar to open the safe for her.

Answer: Yes — the clearest clue is when she asks Horace, a burglar, to break open her own safe because she has 'forgotten' the numbers, which no true owner would need.

Q2 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?

SOLUTION

The lady deceives Horace through a confident, natural performance. She behaves as if she owns the place: she walks to the fireplace and "straightened the ornaments there," calls the dog by name ("Down, Sherry"), and says, "Anyone would think I'd been away for a month!"

She speaks with a "quiet, kindly voice, but one with firmness in it," and tells a believable story about leaving her jewels in the safe, promising her husband to bank them, and now needing them for a party.

Horace does not suspect anything because he is desperate to escape being caught. He is grateful that she seems willing to let him go, and his eagerness to

please blinds him to the obvious flaw in her request.

So her calm ownership of the house plus Horace's own fear and relief combine to make her deception work.

Answer: She acts like the owner — straightening ornaments, calling the dog by name, telling a plausible story about her jewels — and Horace, desperate to escape arrest and eager to please, fails to question her.

Q3 "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?

SOLUTION

The description is apt because Horace led a double life. Outwardly he was "a good, honest citizen" — a successful lock-maker with two helpers, cared for by a housekeeper, and everyone thought well of him.

Yet he was "not completely honest" because he robbed a safe once every year to fund his love of books.

He is not a typical thief because he does not steal out of greed or cruelty. He steals only once a year, only "from those who have a lot of money," takes just enough to last twelve months, and does it for a gentle reason — to buy the rare books he loves.

So the mix of respectable living and a single, mild, book-driven crime makes the description fitting.

Answer: He lived as a respectable citizen yet robbed a safe yearly, but only from the rich and only to buy books he loved — so he is not a greedy, typical thief.

Q4 Horace Danby was a meticulous planner but still he faltered. Where did he go wrong and why?

SOLUTION

Horace planned the Shotover Grange robbery with great care — he studied the house for two weeks, wore gloves so as "not to leave any fingerprints," cut the burglar alarm wire, and quietened the dog.

He faltered when he trusted the young woman in red and agreed to open the safe

for her. To please her and win his freedom, "he took off his gloves and gave her his cigarette lighter," and then opened the safe without gloves.

As a result his fingerprints "were all over the room," and he was arrested for the robbery. His mistake was letting his fear of prison and his eagerness to please the woman override his caution.

So he went wrong by removing his gloves and trusting a stranger, undoing all his careful planning.

Answer: He removed his gloves and opened the safe for the young woman, leaving fingerprints all over the room — trusting her out of fear and eagerness to please undid his careful planning.