

Class X - English

A Question of Trust

CBSE NOTES

A Question of Trust - Practice Worksheet

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Practice Questions

1. What does Horace Danby like to collect and why does he steal every year?

Hint: Consider Horace's motivations and how they reflect his character traits.

Solution: Horace Danby has a passion for collecting rare and expensive books, which drives him to commit a robbery every year. He plans meticulously to steal enough money to sustain his book-buying habit for twelve months. His love for books is so intense that he risks his freedom to acquire them, showcasing his complex character as someone who is not entirely honest but has a refined taste. This habit started fifteen years ago after his first prison sentence, where he was exposed to the prison library. His annual thefts are carefully planned to avoid detection, reflecting his intelligence and careful nature. However, his actions are morally questionable, as he justifies his thefts by targeting only the wealthy. This duality in his character makes him an interesting study in moral ambiguity.

2. How does the lady deceive Horace Danby into thinking she is the lady of the house?

Hint: Analyze the lady's actions and words that build her credibility in Horace's eyes.

Solution: The lady deceives Horace Danby through her confident demeanor, knowledge of the house, and interaction with the dog, Sherry. She speaks with authority and familiarity about the house, making Horace believe she is the owner. Her ability to command the dog and her casual mention of forgetting the safe's combination further convince Horace of her identity. She also dresses and behaves in a manner consistent with the lady of the house, showing no signs of nervousness or deceit. Horace, focused on his task and relieved at her apparent amusement, fails to question her identity. This oversight is his downfall, as her clever manipulation leads him to leave fingerprints, ensuring his capture. The story illustrates how appearances can be deceiving and the importance of vigilance.

3. Why is the description 'Horace Danby was good and respectable — but not completely honest' apt for him?

Hint: Reflect on Horace's public persona versus his private actions.

Solution: This description captures the duality of Horace Danby's character. On the surface, he is a successful locksmith with a good reputation, living a respectable life with a housekeeper concerned for his health. However, his annual thefts reveal a dishonest streak driven by his passion for rare books. Unlike typical thieves, Horace does not steal out of malice or greed but to fulfill a specific, almost noble, desire for knowledge and beauty. This complexity makes him a sympathetic character, challenging simple moral judgments. His meticulous planning and avoidance of violence further distinguish him from common criminals, highlighting his unique moral code. Thus, the description aptly summarizes his contradictory nature.

4. Where did Horace Danby go wrong in his meticulous planning?

Hint: Consider the consequences of Horace's assumptions and actions during the robbery.

Solution: Horace Danby's mistake was his overconfidence and failure to verify the identity of the lady he encountered. Despite his careful planning and study of the house, he did not anticipate meeting anyone inside. When he did, his relief at her apparent friendliness clouded his judgment. He neglected to consider that she might be deceiving him, a critical oversight for someone in his line of work. Additionally, his decision to remove his gloves to light her cigarette left fingerprints, directly leading to his arrest. This error underscores the importance of attention to detail and the dangers of complacency, even for the most careful planners.

5. Do you think Horace Danby was unfairly punished, or that he deserved what he got?

Hint: Weigh Horace's intentions against the legal and moral implications of his actions.

Solution: Horace Danby's punishment can be seen as both deserved and overly harsh. On one hand, he knowingly broke the law for personal gain, regardless of his noble intentions towards book collecting. Society's laws are designed to protect property, and his actions undermined that principle. On the other hand, his crime was non-violent and motivated by a love for literature, which may elicit sympathy. The lady who tricked him also committed a crime but faced no consequences, highlighting a moral ambiguity in the story. Ultimately, while Horace's punishment serves as a deterrent against theft, it also raises questions about justice and redemption for those with complex motives.

6. How does the story illustrate the saying 'There is honour among thieves'?

Hint: Analyze the dynamics between Horace and the lady to understand the saying's relevance.

Solution: The story ironically subverts the saying 'There is honour among thieves' through the interaction between Horace Danby and the lady. Horace, believing in a code of conduct among criminals, trusts the lady when she claims to be the house's owner. However, she betrays this trust by ensuring his arrest, proving that in their world, trust can be a vulnerability. Horace's anger at the mention of the saying reflects his disillusionment and the harsh reality that deceit is common among criminals. This lesson serves as a cautionary tale about the dangers of misplaced trust and the absence of honour in criminal dealings.

7. What role does Sherry, the dog, play in the story?

Hint: Consider how Sherry's actions influence Horace's perceptions.

Solution: Sherry, the dog, plays a pivotal role in reinforcing the lady's deception. His friendly behavior towards her convinces Horace of her legitimacy, as animals often react negatively to strangers. This detail adds credibility to her claim of being the house's owner, making Horace more susceptible to her manipulation. Sherry's presence also adds a layer of domestic normalcy to the scene, further disarming Horace's suspicions. Thus, the dog unwittingly becomes an accomplice to the lady's scheme, highlighting how even innocent elements can contribute to deception.

8. How does Horace Danby's hay fever contribute to the story's plot?

Hint: Reflect on the consequences of Horace's physical reactions in the story.

Solution: Horace Danby's hay fever serves as a minor yet significant plot device. It humanizes him, making him more relatable and sympathetic to the reader. His sneezing due to the flowers in the house not only adds realism but also leads to his interaction with the lady. When he admits to having hay fever, it inadvertently confirms his presence and identity, aiding in his eventual capture. This detail underscores how personal vulnerabilities can lead to one's downfall, even in carefully planned endeavors.

9. What moral lessons can be derived from 'A Question of Trust'?

Hint: Consider the outcomes for both Horace and the lady to derive the story's morals.

Solution: 'A Question of Trust' offers several moral lessons, including the dangers of deceit, the consequences of dishonesty, and the complexity of human nature. It shows how trust can be exploited and how good intentions do not justify wrongful actions. The story also highlights the importance of vigilance and the potential for redemption, as Horace reflects on his actions in prison. These lessons encourage readers to consider the ethical dimensions of their actions and the importance of integrity, even in the face of personal desires.

10. How does the setting contribute to the story's tension and outcome?

Hint: Analyze how the physical environment influences the plot's progression.

Solution: The setting of 'A Question of Trust'—a wealthy house with a poorly secured safe—creates a perfect scenario for Horace's robbery. The detailed description of the house's layout and the safe's location adds realism and tension, as readers can visualize Horace's careful planning. The unexpected presence of the lady introduces a twist, turning the setting into a trap for Horace. The domestic details, like the dog and the flowers, make the scene more immersive and heighten the irony of Horace's capture. Thus, the setting is not just a backdrop but an active element in the story's development and climax.

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