

The Thief's Story



RUSKIN BOND

THE THIEF'S STORY

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Name : Ruskin Bond

Birth date: born on 19 May 1934 in India

Birth place: Kasauli, British India

Career: Short stories, novels, essays, poems, travelogues, children's story writer

Works: Blue Umbrella, A Flight of Pigeons, Funny Side Up, Susanna's Seven Husbands, A Flight of Pigeons, The Room on the Roof, The Night Train at Deoli etc.

Awards: Sahitya Academy Award(1992), Padma shri(1999), Padma Bhushan(2014)

INTRODUCTION

"The Thief's Story: deals with the reformatory power of trust. A young thief's conscience is awakened by his employer's complete trust in him. It is the positive impact of the faith that Anil has in Hari Singh that leads to the victory of virtue over vice.

SUMMARY

- Anil was a young writer. He was living his life very carelessly.
- He was writing for the magazines and earning the money to run his life.
- One day Anil was watching the wrestling match.
- Hari best knew how to make an unknown person a friend.

- He used an old formula to flatter the person. Hari stayed with Anil.
- Anil promised him that he would teach him how to write and add numbers.
- Hari Singh made up his mind that he would catch the Lucknow Express.
- Hari Singh reached the railway station, Lucknow Express was about to go.



- He also taught him how to cook tasty food.
- Hari Singh was going to buy daily needs and had a profit of one rupee daily.
- Anil knew it but he did not mind it. Both were living together happily.
- One day he saw Anil had brought a bundle of notes.
- He saw him put them under the mattress. As Hari saw the bundle of notes, his evil spirit awakened in his mind and he decided to rob Anil that night.
- After having dinner, Anil slept peacefully.
- Hari could not sleep, he woke up. He crept to the bed and slipped his hand under the mattress.
- He found the notes and ran away on the road.
- Suddenly the good spirit called him. The inner voice told him not to betray the faith of Anil.
- The train was moving but Hari did not dare to catch it.
- He was remembering the innocent face of Anil. When Hari Singh thought about what Anil would think about him.
- There was conflict in the mind of Hari Singh. He did not want to lose faith of Anil. Because he knew that Anil was a simple man.
- Moreover Anil was teaching him how to write and add numbers which could change his life.



- He could become a respected person in the society.
- He left the railway station.
- He came to the maidan and sat on the bench.
- Just then heavy rain started. It was the month of November. Cold wind started blowing.
- His shirt and pyjamas stuck to his body because they were wet due to the rain.
- Suddenly he remembered his notes. He searched for it and found that all the notes were wet.
- He reached home and stealthily went into the room where Anil was sleeping.
- He crept again and secretly put back money under the mattress.
- The next day Anil woke up, prepared tea for Hari and himself. He handed over fifty rupees note to Hari and told him that he would be regularly paid now.
- Hari took the note and found that it was still wet.

- He understood that Anil knew about last night's episode.

GLOSSARY

Trusts-	relies on (विश्वास करना);
Betray-	deceive, dupe (धोखा देना);
Fairly-	enough (काफी);
Lean-	weak and thin (कमजोर);
Purpose-	objective (उद्देश्य);
Of late-	for some days (कुछ दिनों से);
confidence-	trust (विश्वास);
wrestler-	to strive by grappling (कुश्ती लड़ना);
flattery-	false praise (चापलूसी);
modestly-	humbly (भद्रतापूर्वक);
lied-	to tell a lie (झूट बोलना);
ahead-	forward (आगे);
introduction-	formal presentation (परिचय);
grunting-	roaring (गुर्राना);
casually-	purposelessly (बिना किसी उद्देश्य के);
appealing-	attractive (आकर्षक)
Perhaps-	probably (शायद);
meal-	cooked food (पका हुआ भोजन);

strey-	wandering (आवारा);	crept up-	to move slowly (पेट के बल रेगना);
be off-	run away (भाग जाना);	unlined-	plain (बिना झुर्रियों के);
patted-	stroked (थपथपाया);	marks-	spots (निशान);
never mind-	don't worry (घबराओ मत);	scars-	spots of wound (घाव के निशान);
grateful-	obliged (आभारी);	slid-	glided (सरक गया);
achieve-	obtain (प्राप्त करना);	startled-	surprised (हैरान);
pleasant-	full of happiness (मधुर / सुखद);	crawled-	moved slowly (धीरे से सरकना);
profit-	gain (लाभ)	waist-	the part of the human body below the ribs and above the hips (कमर);
Fits and starts-	seldom (कभी -कभी);		
queer-	strange (विचित्र);		
publisher-	one who gets books printed (प्रकाशक);	Page: 11	
tuck-	to press in (छुपाकर रखना);	Dashed-	pushed (अंधाधुन्द दौड़ना);
mattress-	quilts (गद्दे);	straight-carriages-	direct (सीधे);
opportunity-	chance (अवसर);		train compartments (रेल के डिब्बे);
trusting-	reliable (विश्वसनीय);	hesibited-	held back (हिचकिचाना);
rob-	to plunder (ठगना);	deserted-	lonely (सुनसान);
afford-	to bear (सहन करना);	curious-	anxious (उत्सुक);
beam-	ray (किरढ़);	career-	profession (व्यवसाय);
considering-	thinking over (विचार करना);	acceptance-	approval (स्वीकृति);
situation-	condition (स्थिति);	chilly-	cold (ठंडी);

drizzle-	mild rain (बूँदा-बांदी);
discomfort-	uneasiness (बेचैनी)
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Shelter-	refuge (शरण / आश्रय);
damp-	wet (गीला);
probably-	perhaps (शायद);
excitement-	stimulation (उत्तेजना);
matter-	affair (मामला);
hurried-	to hasten (जल्दी-से);
nervous-	uneasy (घबराना);
undetected-	undiscovered (बिना पता चले);
quietly-	calmly (शांति से);
remained-	to continue (रहना);
still-	even now (अभी-भी);
edge-	outer limit (सिरा या किनारा);
stretched-	extended (फैलाया);
sank-	to decline (डूबा);
spirits-	courage (साहस);
effort-	attempt (प्रयास)

CHARACTER SKETCH

Anil

Anil is a tall and slim young man of twenty five. He is “easy-going”, simple and kind hearted and can be won over very easily. Hari Singh’s ‘appealing smile’ softens him and he agrees to keep him as his domestic servant. He is helpful by nature and he teaches Hari Singh to cook and to write his name. Anil is a freelance writer and earns money by ‘fits and starts.’ However, he is not very possessive about his earnings. Whenever he gets a cheque, he celebrates with his friends and spends away everything. He is very credulous and trusting and gives the key to his room to Hari Singh, a boy he knows only casually. He is forgiving too and that is why he does not express his knowledge about the theft. In short, Anil is honest, large-hearted, affectionate and helpful by nature.

Hari Singh

Hari Singh (not his real name), a lad of fifteen, is an experienced and successful thief. He has acquired a lot of knowledge about human behaviour through his sharp observation. He knows how to impress people and rightly says “a little flattery helps.” His assessment of Anil being ‘easy-going, kind and simple ...’ is also correct. He knows when to smile appealingly to win over people like Anil. He is good at face-reading and his analysis about the greedy, the poor and the

rich man's reaction on being robbed is astonishingly accurate. However, his habit of deliberation leads to his transformation. In the end, after he robs his benefactor Anil, he feels guilty and puts back the stolen money. He pledges to learn reading and writing in order to lead an honourable life.

TITLE

The title "The Thief's Story" is a very apt one because the story is a first person account of Hari Singh, a juvenile thief. The narrator is the thief himself. The story is a candid admission of a thief of how he tried to dupe his unsuspecting and benevolent employer but could not, because his conscience prevailed upon him not to do so. We need to remember that this story by Ruskin Bond has another narrative, that of Hari, the protagonist, in the main narrative by the author. Moreover, since it is the thief that undergoes a change of heart and shuns his evil ways and becomes a good man, the title accentuates this fact and makes the whole narrative a very effective one.

OBJECTIVE QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. What was the name of the shop above which Anil lived?
 - (a) Laddu Sweet Shop
 - (b) Rasgulla Sweet Shop
 - (c) Jamun Sweet Shop
 - (d) Jumna Sweet Shop

Ans. (d)

2. Who does "I" refer to in the story?
 - A) Hari
 - B) Anil
 - C) a greedy man
 - D) none of the above

Ans. (A)

3. How much money did he steal?
 - (a) 500
 - (b) 600
 - (c) 700
 - (d) 800

Ans. (b)

4. Who is easier to rob?
 - (a) a careless man
 - (b) a greedy man
 - (c) a trusting man
 - (d) Anil

Ans. (b)

5. What did Anil promise him to teach?
 - (a) write his name
 - (b) cook
 - (c) write full sentences
 - (d) all of the above

Ans. (d)

6. What name did he tell Anil?
 - (a) Anil Singh

- (b) Hari Lal
- (c) Hari Singh
- (d) Anil Lal

Ans. (c)

7. How often did he change his name?

- (a) every day
- (b) every week
- (c) every month
- (d) every year

Ans. (c)

9. What was the boy's age?

- (a) 15 (b) 25
- (c) 20 (d) none of the above

Ans. (a)

9. How old was Anil?

- (a) 20 years (b) 21 years
- (c) 22 years (d) 25 years

Ans. (d)

10. How has the narrator described Anil?

- A) simple
- B) kind
- C) easy-going
- D) all of the above

Ans. (D)

11. He changed his name in order to stay ahead of _____

- A) police
- B) employers
- C) none of them
- D) both of them

Ans. (D)

12. How was the meal he cooked the first night?

- A) delicious
- B) mouth-watering
- C) finger-licking good
- D) terrible

Ans. (D)

13. Who was the most trusting person the narrator had ever met ?

- A) Anil
- B) publisher
- C) Anil's friends
- D) none of the above

Ans. (A)

14. What did he do with the money?

- A) ran away with it
- B) threw it
- C) bought a cycle with it
- D) returned it

Ans. (D)

15. Why does Hari return the money?

- A) he wanted to learn to write
- B) he was worried about how Anil would feel
- C) he felt bad
- D) all of the above

Ans. (D)

SHORT QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. Who was Hari Singh? Why did he approach Anil at the wrestling match?

Ans. Hari Singh was a young boy of fifteen, who made his living by stealing and cheating people. He approached Anil at the wrestling match because he seemed to be easy-going, kind and simple enough to be targeted as his next victim.

2. Why did Hari Singh assume a new name every month?

Ans. Hari Singh would steal in order to make his living. This exposed him to the danger of getting caught by the police. So he would assume a new name every month to escape the vigilant eyes of the police and also to fool his former employers.

3. On what conditions did Anil agree to employ Hari Singh?

Or

What did Hari Singh get from Anil in return for work?

Ans. Anil was a poor writer and could not afford to give any wages to Hari Singh. So, he agreed to employ Hari on the condition that he would give him food and a place to stay in return for his services.

4. Why was Hari Singh grateful to Anil for teaching him to write?

Ans. Hari Singh was grateful to Anil for teaching him to write because he knew that with the help of education he would be able to make a lot of money in his line of work as a thief.

5. What was Anil's occupation?

Or

What was Anil's profession? Did he make much money? How do you know?

Ans. Anil was a freelance writer who wrote for magazines. He did not earn regularly and made money by fits and starts. Very often he had to borrow money and was also unable to pay wages to Hari Singh. Besides, he was always worried about his next cheque.

6. Why did Hari Singh conclude that Anil was a trusting person?

Ans. Hari Singh concluded this because Anil gave him a key to his door which facilitated his coming and going. This was done in spite of Anil's knowledge about Hari Singh's habit of stealing money while buying daily necessities for him.

7. Why did Hari Singh find it difficult to rob Anil?

Ans. Hari Singh believed that the thrill of robbing a person lay in the victim's feeling the pinch of it. Since a careless person like Anil did not even notice that he had been robbed, Hari Singh found it difficult to rob him.

8. When and how did Hari Singh steal Anil's money?

Ans. Hari Singh stole Anil's money at night when Anil was fast asleep. He stole it by slipping his hand stealthily under the mattress where the money was hidden. He carried out this theft like a thorough professional.

9. Why did Hari Singh decide to go back to Anil?

Or

Why did Hari Singh finally return to the man he had just robbed?

Ans. Hari Singh decided to return to the man he had just robbed because his conscience pricked him for betraying a simple and kind hearted man like Anil; who had given him food, shelter and education. He realized that by returning to Anil, he would get the opportunity to lead a decent life. This was a more profitable proposition than stealing six hundred rupees.

10. Does Anil realise that he has been robbed? (Textual)

Or

"He knew." What does Hari Singh imply by this observation?

Ans. Yes, Anil does realise that he has been robbed. Hari's observation 'He knew' implies that the theft had been discovered since the notes were still wet from last night's rain. However, Anil's pretended ignorance about the matter was perhaps a chance he had given to Hari Singh to reform himself.