

## **Question Answers:**

### **The Day the Dam Broke**

#### **Q1. How accurate is the title of Thurber's essay?**

Ans. The title of the Thurber's essay; "The Day the Dam Broke" is quite accurate, the sudden fear, running, weeping, shouting, vacating the houses, shops, movie theatre, offices and even living rooms of the soldiers, clearly show that really the dam had broken and so the people were running to the east side to save their lives. Actually, the fear caused due to great spring floods of twenty years ago as there was thirty feet of water in Columbus City.

#### **Qno:02: \* What can we gather about grandfather's age, physique, and mental condition?**

Ans: From the description given in the essay, the exact age of the grandfather hasn't been mentioned. However, we can gather that he is an old but strong and steady person. He was more than six feet tall and weighed about one hundred and seventy pounds. He wasn't mentally sound and was always haunted by imaginary fears.

#### **\*Qno:03: \* How does the panic appear to have started?**

Ans: The main cause of the panic was not known. The author is not certain how the panic started. A man started running when the city business was in full swing, feeling he was late for an appointment with his wife. Whatever it was, he ran towards the east. Somebody else, perhaps a newsboy, began to run. He was followed by a fat gentleman. The fear of a broken dam was put into words by an old lady or a small boy—nobody knows who—but within ten minutes, everybody on High Street was running.

#### **\*Qno:04: \* How did Thurber's mother cope with the situation?**

Ans: Thurber's mother, being a sensible lady and a caring mother, behaved sensibly and didn't panic. Most of the people were in such a panic that they didn't even turn off their stoves, but Thurber's mother, unlike all, turned out all the fires and took a dozen eggs and two loaves of bread to meet the hunger. She also planned to take refuge on the rooftop of Memorial Hall, not far from her house, but she was dragged along with the crowd towards the east.

**\*Qno:05: \* What caused the lieutenant Colonel of Infantry to lead the fleeing company of three hundred persons?**

Ans: James Thurber makes a mockery of army officers and their lack of decision-making in case of an emergency. A drowsy lieutenant Colonel, when he heard the cries of a child “go east,” started running without even knowing the actual cause. When other people saw the Colonel running like that, they took it seriously and began to run along with him. In this way, he was soon leading a fleeing company of three hundred persons.

**\*Qno:06: \* How long did the panic last, and how was order restored?**

Ans: The panic lasted for only two hours when militiamen riding in motor lorries announced over megaphones that the dam had not broken and there was no reason for panic.

**\*Qno:07: \* How did the panic start in the cinema on High Street?**

Ans: An elderly man sitting next to Aunt Taylor got up to find out what the noise was. A woman, without knowing the actual cause, started shouting “fire” as her inner fear of being burned up in the theatre always haunted her. This started panic inside the cinema, and everybody rushed out of the theatre and started running with the mob.

**\*Qno:08: \* Why did Dr. Mallory think that the floodwaters were about to engulf him?**

Ans: Dr. Mallory mistook the noise of the skates as that of rushing water. He started running fast to save his life but fell down. He kept lying flat on his face because he was quite sure that floodwater had reached him closely and was about to engulf him until the situation became clear.

**\*Qno:09: \* How did Thurber obtain the description of the events in the cinema and the experience of Dr. Mallory?**

Ans: Thurber got all this information from his aunt, who was in the cinema and met Dr. Mallory on the way during the mess.

**\*Qno:10: \* Why did the citizens of Columbus not care to talk about the events of 12 March 1913?**

Ans: The citizens of Columbus didn't care to talk about these events because they felt embarrassed by their foolish behaviour and blind following.

**\*Qno:11: \* Explain "We all were safe as kittens under a coke stove" referring to the essay?**

Ans: Literally, it is suggested that the space under a cook stove is a safe place for kittens to prevent them from dogs, etc. In the case of the 1913 rumour of a flood, the people were safe because the dam was secure. So this idiom can rightly depict the meaning according to the situation.

**\*Qno:12: \* Explain "Thurber's sardonic but affectionate view in 'The Day the Dam Broke'"?**

Ans: "The Day the Dam Broke" is an extremely amusing and humorous essay, satirizing the behaviour of the people and mob psychology. A person in panic is unable to rationalize and starts following blindly, irrespective of how versed and experienced they are.