Vikram’s English Academy (ICSE)

**Question Bank: A Shot in the Dark**

1. **How did Philip Sletherby feel in the railway carriage?**

**Ans:** Philip Sletherby had a pleasant feeling of starting off on an agreeable and profitable trip.

1. **Where was Philip going?**

Ans: He was bound for Brill Manor which was the country residence of his new acquaintance, Mrs Saltpen-Jago.

1. **Mention Mrs. Saltpen Jago’s in Philip’s life.**

**Ans:** Mrs. Saltpen-Jago was of a considerable importance and influence in the county of Chalkshire. The county was held for the Government in the present Parliament by a gentleman who did not intend to seek re-election and Sletherby was under serious consideration by the party managers as his possible successor. Saltpen’s influence was something which he couldn’t leave out of consideration.

1. **Mention two reasons for Philip’s happiness**

**Ans:**  Philip Sletherby had been delighted to meet Honoria at a small and friendly luncheon-party. He was also very gratified when she had asked him down toher country house for the following Friday-to-Tuesday.

1. **What would happen if he is able to impress Honoria?**

**Ans:** If Philip is able to impress Honoria, he might count on the nomination as an assured thing.

1. **How would things turn out if Philip fails to find favour in her eyes?**

**Ans:** If Philip fails to find favour in Honoria’s eyes, the local leaders would probably cool off in their early enthusiasm for him.

1. **Why has the writer said that it was an almost empty railway carriage?**

**Ans:** The writer described the railway carriage to be almost empty as there was a passenger in the carriage besides Philip.

1. **What information does Philip share with his club acquaintance? What was the acquaintance’s opinion of Mrs. Saltpen Jago?**

**Ans:** Philip shares with his club acquaintance that he was going to stay with Mrs. Saltpen Jago for the weekend. The acquaintance also said that she has the reputation of being an excellent hostess and she would be useful to Philip for his parliamentary project.

1. **What happened when he scarcely glanced at a couple of pages?**

**Ans:** When he had scarcely glanced at a couple of pages, he heard a smothered curse and it led him to glance hastily at the only other occupant of the carriage.

1. **How is the other occupant described in the first instance?**

**Ans:** In the first instance, Philip’s travelling companion is described as a young man of twenty two years old with dark hair, fresh complexion and the blend of smartness and disarray that is typical of a rambler.

1. **What was the young man doing?**

**Ans:** The young man was searching furiously and ineffectually for some elusive or non-existent object; from time to time he dug a six penny coin out of a waistcoat pocket and stared at it ruefully then recommenced futile searching operations.

1. **Which were the different things that were turned out? How did he react?**

**Ans:** A cigarette case, matchbox, key, silver pencil case and railway ticket were different things that were turned out beside him. But none of these articles seemed to afford him any satisfaction. So, he cursed louder than before.

1. **In what way was Philip’s second reaction different from the first one?**

**Ans:** The very first time when Philip heard a curse, he glanced hastily at the young man. However, the second time the young man’s vigorous pantomime did not draw forth any remark form Sletherby and he resumed to scrutinise the magazine.

1. **What reasons does the young man give for being away and not meeting his mother?**

**Ans:** The young man says that he hasn’t seen his mother for six months at least and he was away yachting last time when she was in Town.

1. **Why does the young man say that it was an awfully lucky co-incidence to meet Philip?**

**Ans:** The young man says that it was a very lucky co-incidence to meet Philip as Philip knew his mother and he had done some awfully awkward thing.

1. **Explain: ‘the awfully awkward thing’. Mention the reason.**

**Ans:** The young man had left behind his coin-purse after sealing a letter. The coin purse had four quid inside it. The coin purse also happened to have his crest on it. Thus he whipped it out to stamp the seal with and he left his coin purse on the table.

1. **How much money did the young man ask from Philip? Why?**

**Ans:** The young man asked for two pound ten or three for preference from Philip. The young man had left his coin-purse behind. He had some loose change in his pocket but after he paid for a taxi and his ticket, he had got only six pence left. He was going for three days’ fishing where he didn’t know anybody. According to him, his weekend bill, tips and cab to and from the station and his ticket on to Brill, would mount to two or three quid.

1. **Was Philip willing to give the money?**

**Ans:** No, Philip was not willing to give the money. He said that he can manage giving but it was after a moment’s hesitation.

1. **Why was it lucky for the young man to meet Philip?**

**Ans:** It was lucky for the young man to meet Philip as he expected some help that would pull him out of a hole.

1. **Which two lessons does the young man deduce from that experience?**

**Ans:** First lesson being that he should not leave his purse lying anywhere when it ought to be in his pocket. Second is not to convert things to purposes for which they weren’t intended.

1. **What was Sletherby’s observation regarding the crest? Did it alarm him? Justify.**

**Ans:** The young man said that his crest was a demi-lion holding a cross-crosslet in its paw. Whereas, when Mrs. Saltpen had written to him giving him a list of trains, the notepaper had a running greyhound. Yes, that did alarm him as there was a tinge of coldness in his voice.

1. **How does the young man justify about the difference in the crests?**

**Ans:** The young man justifies by saying that the running greyhound is the Jago crest and demi-lion is the Saltpen crest. He further adds that they have a right to use both but since he was a Saltpen uses the demi-lion.

1. **Why does Philip ask about Mrs. Saltpen’s resemblance to Bertie? What was the actual reason behind it?**

**Ans:** Philp asks about Mrs. Saltpen’s resemblance to Bertie since they had only corresponded and his introduction was through political friends. He wanted to know if they resemble in feature suppose if she meets him on the platform. The actual reason was to know if Bertie was lying or not. As he later reveals that he had met Mrs. Saltpen at lunch on previous Monday.

1. **Mention the two reasons why Philip doesn’t give money. Explain in detail.**

**Ans:** The two reasons why Philip doesn’t give money are; firstly, the difference in the crests. The young man says that his crest was a demi-lion holding a cross-crosslet in its paw. Whereas, the notepaper that came from Mrs Saltpen had a running greyhound. Secondly, the description of Mrs Saltpen given by the young man was different. The young man says that she has the same dark brown hair and high colour that runs in her family. On the other hand, when Philip met her on last Monday for lunch she was a pronounced blonde.

1. **What comes to light at the end of the story?**

**Ans:** At the end of the story, we come to know that Bertie wasn’t lying. He had mentioned earlier too that he hadn’t met his mom for six months at least and Mrs Saltpen had recently changed her hair tone to blonde.

1. **Does Sletherby give him the money? What does he say instead?**

**Ans:** No, Sletherby doesn’t give any money. He says that he had no intention of lending three pounds or even three shillings. Instead, he says he wasn’t really suspicious initially although he didn’t accept Bertie’s story. Later, the error in the crests put him on his guard in spite of the brilliant explanation Bertie had given.

1. **What did Philip do after becoming alert? What happened next?**

**Ans:** After becoming alert, Philip laid a trap for Bertie and said that he had never met Mrs. Saltpen Jago. As a matter of fact he had met her at lunch on the previous Monday. And he had noticed that she was a pronounced blonde.

1. **What had Philip started dreaming?**

**Ans:** Philip started dreaming about the entertaining story that he got to recount at dinner that evening. He was thinking that his clever little trap will earn him applause as a man of resource and astuteness. He was imagining telling this adventure to an attentive audience.

1. **Who met him on the platform? How were they different from each other?**

**Ans:** He met two people on the platform. He was greeted sedately by a tall footman and noisily by Claude People. Claude was an important lawyer who had apparently travelled by the same train.

1. **Describe the car.**

**Ans:** The car was a sumptuous-looking vehicle which seemed to embody the last word in elegance, comfort and locomotive power. Its graceful lines and symmetrical design masked the fact that it was an enormous wheeled structure that combined the features of a hotel lounge and an engine-room.

1. **Was Sletherby paying attention to the details of the car? Explain why?**

**Ans:** No, Sletherby wasn’t paying any attention to the details of the car. Claude even began running over the chief points of perfection in the fitting and mechanism of the car for Sletherby’s benefit but it was of no use. Sletherby heard not a single word or noted any detail. His eyes were fixed on the door panel that had two crests: a running greyhound and a demi-lion holding in its paw a cross-crosslet.

1. **Did Claude notice that his companion was quiet? Why not? What did he speak about?**

**Ans:** No, Claude didn’t notice that his companion was quiet as his tongue was making up the lost time. Claude spoke about political gossip, personal anecdote, and general observation flowed from him in an uninterrupted stream.

1. **What caught Sletherby’s attention? How did Claude describe Mrs Saltpen to Sletherby?**

**Ans:** Sletherby’s attention was captured by switching his remarks to the personality of their hostess; Mrs. Saltpen. Claude described her to be a brilliant woman, level-headed, a clear thinker, someone who knows exactly when to take up an individual or a cause and when to drop it. She was such an influential woman that he wouldn’t dare to upset her. But she was too restless and she would have no repose.

1. **Explain ‘the change’**

**Ans:** The change here refers to the beautiful dark brown hair that Mrs Saltpen had had about five weeks ago. But one day she electrified everybody by appearing as a brilliant blonde. That quite ruined her good appearance.

1. **Why did Sletherby look ill?**

**Ans:** Sletherby realises that the young man was indeed Mrs. Saltpen’s son and he was worried about his parliamentary project. The first instance was when he saw the two crests fixed on the door panel. Second when Claude described her and said that recently she had changed her colour tone. Claude had also remarked that since she was an influential woman he wouldn’t dare to upset her.

1. **Which parts of story show us that Philip Sletherby thinks highly of himself?**

**Ans:** First when he calls his club acquaintance to tell him about his luncheon-party with Mrs Saltpen Jago. Secondly when he doesn’t offer any help to his companion. Thirdly, when he starts imagining how he would narrate his experience and prove his wit and resource.

1. **Explain the title. How is it suitable?**

**Ans: ‘A shot in the dark’** means an attempt to guess something when you have no information or knowledge about a subject and so you aren’t sure about the answer. Here, Philip doesn’t help Bertie. He thought that Bertie was a rogue and was lying to extract money from him. He didn’t believe that Bertie was Mrs. Saltpen’s young son. Philip promised him to help but later laid a trap. Mrs Saltpen was an influential lady and the goodwill would help him to become the possible successor. This shot in the dark proved to be very costly for him.