

The Thief's Story

Summary: This story has been written by Ruskin Bond. The story has a simple plot with important message. There is a small time thief who befriends a struggling author; in the plans of making a steal. Anil; the struggling author is a good fellow who wants to teach Hari Singh how to read and write. Gradually, Anil develops trust in Hari Singh. But Hari Singh has been waiting for the right moment to make a killing by doing what he is best at. After stealing money from Anil, Hari Singh tries to go away forever. But some inner voice stops him from doing so. He returns to Anil because he wants to live a life of respect. Anil does not show that he knew about the incident and accepts Hari Singh with open arms. Thus, a well intentioned person tries to reform a teenager who had diverted from the correct path.

Question 1: What are Hari Singh's reactions to the prospect of receiving an education? Do they change over time? What makes him return to Anil?

Answer: Hari Singh's reactions to the prospect of receiving an education change over time. When he started living with Anil he wanted to be literate so that he could become a more cunning cheat. Later on there is a change in his heart. He wants to earn respect in life. Probably he is influenced by the calm in Anil's life. Although, both of them depend on irregular sources of income, but Anil seems to be more satisfied. Hari Singh develops a desire to be part of the civilized society.

Question 2: Why does not Anil hand the thief over to the police? Do you think most people would have done so? In what ways is Anil different from such employers?

Answer: The wetness of notes must have given the idea of Hari Singh's act to Anil. But Anil is pleased with the fact that Hari returned whatever he had stolen. This must have given him a hope for Hari Singh's desire to change. That is why he did not hand over Hari to police. People like Anil are hard to find. Most people would have reacted in predictable ways by thrashing Hari Singh and calling police. Anil is different

because he wants his servant to become literate. He wants his servant to lead a respectable life in future.

Question 3: Do you think people like Anil and Hari Singh are found only in fiction, or are there such people in real life?

Answer: Both Anil and Hari Singh are rare in society. Especially the changed Hari Singh after he decides to go back to Anil is difficult to find.

Question 4: Do you think it a significant detail in the story that Anil is a struggling writer? Does this explain his behaviour in any way?

Answer: Hari Singh's observation about Anil getting irregular income and Anil's statement about his sale of a book to a publisher indicates that he is a struggling writer. He lives life according to the flow of money he gets at a given time. When he gets the money he enjoys eating out with his friends. When he is having less money then he even doesn't accept paying salary to Hari Singh.

Question 5: Have you met anyone like Hari Singh? Can you think and imagine the circumstances that can turn a fifteen-year-old boy into a thief?

Answer: I have met several people who help needy people and help them specially in becoming literate. Fifteenth year is a very dangerous phase of life as it is teenage. A deep scar on mind or a deep sense of greed can make criminal out of ordinary boys and girls. There is a chance of Hari Singh getting a sound rebuke from his parents for asking some costly thing. Or there is equal chance of Hari Singh spoiling his consumption pattern beyond his means.

Question 6: Where is the story set? Which language or languages are spoken in these places? Do you think the characters in the story spoke to each other in English?

Answer: The story is set in Uttar Pradesh somewhere near Lucknow. The town is having an important railway station as express trains have stoppage over there. The presence of sweet shop indicates towards presence of a decent market. The description of hotels near railway station indicates that it is an important centre where people come from far off places for business related activities.