***THE MIDNIGHT VISITOR ------- BY ROBERT ARTHUR***

***Summary***

The story is about a witty secret agent named Ausable. He was with a writer named Fowler throughout the evening as Fowler was interested in spending time with a secret agent but when he spends time with Ausable he realizes that he is exactly the opposite of what he had imagined and that he was a bore. Ausable then told Fowler that he had been thinking wrong and that soon he would be looking at a report that would change the country’s future.

Then Ausable takes Fowler to his room and when they entered the room a guy with a gun named Max was standing in the room. He asked them to be comfortable until the reports about the missiles arrived in 30 minutes as he was there to steal the reports. This was the first adventure out of many that Fowler had expected when he had thought of meeting a secret agent.

While they were talking, Ausable started with a story about how a guy had entered from the balcony last month below his room. While this talk was going on, a sudden knock was heard at the door. Ausable said that it must be the police as he wanted them to check on him after sometime because he wanted to make the reports that were coming in extra secure. Max, pointing his gun towards them, said that he would be waiting in the balcony and that Ausable should send away the police otherwise he would shoot them and even take the risk of being caught by the police. As the doorknob is turned, Max jumps out of the window and a loud scream is heard.

The door opens and a waiter comes in and says that he has brought the wine that Mr. Ausable had ordered. He keeps the bottle, tray and glasses on the table and leaves. Fowler is surprised and asks him about the police to which Ausable replied that there was no police. Then Fowler asked what about the person who was waiting in the balcony outside the window to which Ausable replied that the person would not return and that there was no balcony there.

This shows the quick wit of Ausable as he took advantage of the situation and made Max nervous due to which he jumped out of the window without thinking and looking down. He had jumped from the top floor of the hotel and would have possibly died. This is how Ausable outwitted Max and saved himself from a very dangerous situation.

***Textbook Page No 14***

***1. How is Ausable different from other secret agents? How does he deal with Max? ( CBSE 2011, 2013, 2015)***

Ausable was different from other secret agents in more ways than one. He had a small room in the musty corridor of a gloomy French hotel. It was on the sixth and top floor and it was scarcely the setting for a romantic adventure. He was extremely fat. Inspite of living in Paris for over twenty years, he spoke French and German only passably and had an American accent. Instead of getting messages slipped into his hands by dark-eyed beauties, he got only a telephone call making an appointment. In these ways, he was different from the conventional notion (belisf) of a secret agent.

He dealt with Max cleverly by inventing some stories and convincing Max to act on them, so that he could get rid of Max permanently.

***2.Who is Fowler and what is his first authentic thrill of the day?***

Fowler was a writer and he had come to meet Ausable.

Fowler’s first authentic thrill of the day came when he saw a man in Ausable’s room pointing a pistol towards Ausable and himself.

***Textbook Page No 15:***

***1.How has Max got in?***

Max had got into the room with a passkey or a master key.

***2.How does Ausable say he got in?***

Ausable said that he thought Max had got into the room through the balcony. He said that it was the second time in a month that somebody had got into his room this way.

***Textbook Page No 18:***

**1. How does Ausable manage to make Max believe that there is a balcony attached to his room? Look back at his detailed description of it. What makes it a convincing story?**

Ausable created a convincing story about the presence of a balcony. He said that twice in a month somebody had entered his room through the balcony. On being questioned by Max about the balcony, he replied with extreme irritation that it was not his balcony. This reaction, which looked natural, played a part in convincing Max. He further told Max explanatorily that his room was earlier a part of a larger unit and the adjoining room was the one which had the balcony. He said that it extended under his window. His manner of description and speaking convinced Max that there was indeed a balcony under his window.

**2. Looking back at the story, when do you think Ausable thought up his plan for getting rid of Max? Do you think he had worked out his plan in detail right from the beginning? Or did he make up a plan taking advantage of events as they happened?**

**Ans:** No, I don’t think that he had worked out his plan in detail earlier. He took advantage of events as they happened. Ausable made up a story of the balcony outside the room and as there was a knock on the door, he said it would be the police. All these made Max desperate. He became restless and without seeing below jumped out of the window.

**EXTRA QUES AND ANS**

***Q1. Describe Fowler’s reaction after entering Ausable’s hotel room? (CBSE 2014)***

Ans. Initially, Ausable got a shock to see Max in his room. But he just kept himself calm and did not try anything fishy as Max also had a pistol with him. He used his presence of mind to invent stories to fool Max.

***Q.2 Why did Max’s face turn black with anger? What did he want Ausable to do? (CBSE 2012)***

Ans. Max’s face turned black with anger because he felt that his plan of extracting the important documents from Ausable was in danger of failing due to the knocking on the door which Ausable identified as the police. He wanted Ausable to send the police away.

***Q.3 Why did Ausable frame the story of the balcony? (CBSE 2012)***

Ans. Ausable framed the story of the balcony to counter the use of the pistol by his rival secret agent Max to threaten him. His rival would have easily taken the important report about the new missiles is Ausable had not concoted (created) the story.

***Q.4 Ausable was a clever secret agent. Do you agree with the statement? Justify your answer. (CBSE 2012)***

Ausable did not look like the conventional image of a secret agent. He was short and very fat. Besides, he spoke French and German which lacked fluency as wellas the right accent; the American accent was quite palpable (noticeable) in his speech. However, Ausable had a very sharp and active mind because he invented two stories- one about a non-existent balcony outside his hotel window and another about the police arriving to give extra security to some important documents he was about to receive. He was an intelligent man and a clever active agent with great presence of mind to create stories in the face of imminent (coming)danger in the form of Max. He fooled Max by a false story and made him jump out of the window only to crash to the ground.

**Q 5. Why did Fowler want to meet Ausable? Why was he disappointed?**Ans: Fowler was a young romantic writer. He loved adventure and thrill. He was always interested in knowing the lives of secret agents. He wanted to meet Ausable who was on a secret assignment. He was a little disappointed when he found nothing mysterious and romantic in Ausable. Ausable, in fact, was a fat, ordinary person.

**Q 6. Who was Henry? What role did he play in Ausable’s plans?**Ans : Henry was a waiter at the French hotel where Ausable had a room. He played a vital role in helping Ausable’s plan as it was Henry’s knock at the door which frightened Max as he mistook it to be a policeman at the door. This confusion forced Max to jump from the window assuming it to be a balcony and hence helping Ausable’s plan to get rid of Max.

**Q 7. Ausable has the ability to think quickly, act calmly and wisely in a situation of danger and surprise. These are some values and skills that save us from danger. How did Ausable use the above skills in the story, ‘The Midnight visitor’?**Ans: Ausable wins over a very critical situation by his sheer presence of mind without using any physical force. He was a quick witted secret agent. He made Max believe that he was scared on finding him inside his room with a pistol in his hand. He befooled him about the balcony, knowing very well that there was no balcony in that room.

He fabricated a story about the arrival of the report and the police. When there was a knock at the door, he convinced Max that it was police. Max got scared and jumped into the non-existent balcony to death. This is how Ausable proved that presence of mind is more powerful than physical force. Ausable had the qualities of being calm, quiet and wise in a dangerous situation. These are the values that one can practise in adversity. Ausable overpowered Max because of these qualities.

**Q 8. What impression do you form of Ausable as a secret agent after reading the story “The Mid night Visitor”?**Ans : Ausable was a determined secret agent. He was dedicated to his work. He was agile in action even though he was a sloppy fat man. He was sane and shrewd. Being calm and cool headed by nature he did not lose his presence of mind when he found Max in his room with a revolver. It was midnight. He cooked up a false story of a balcony existing under the window just to befool the intruder.

Instantly they heard a knock at the door. Ausable remarked that the police had come to check on him and to provide him security. Getting nervous, Max rushed towards the window. He dropped to the balcony and fell down dead. He was patient, fearless, courageous, ready-witted and resourceful.

***Q.5 Read the extracts and answer the questions that follow***:

***A) “ You are disillusioned,” Ausable told him. “But you take cheer, my young friend. Presently you will see a paper, a quite important paper for which several men and women have risked their lives, come to me.” (CBSE 2015)***

a) Who is ‘my young friend’ in the above extract?

Ans. It refers to Fowler, a young romantic writer.

b) What is the ‘important paper’ referred to here?

Ans. It refers to a report regarding some new missiles.

c) Find a word in the extract which means the same as disappointed.

Ans The word is disillusioned

d) What is the opposite of ‘important’?

Ans. The opposite is unimportant.

***B) ‘You can get into it from the empty room two doors down …. And someone did it last month. The management promised to block it off but haven’t .’***

a) Who is speaking these words to whom?

Ans. Ausable is speaking these words to Fowler but he wants Max to hear it.

b) What is ‘it’ in the above extract?

Ans. ‘It’ refers to the non-existent balcony.

c) Find a phrase in the passage which means the same as ’close it up’.

Ans. The phrase is ‘block it off’.

d) The opposite of empty is……

Ans The opposite is’full’.