

CBSE CLASS X
English Language & Literature (184)**ANSWER KEY***From previous CBSE Board Exam questions***Code: U1487Z****Questions: 7****Maximum Marks: 26****Generated: 2026-06-15 13:05****SELECTIONS USED**

Source	Previous-year board
Subject	English Language & Literature
Lessons	A Question of Trust
Year	2022-2026
Questions selected	7

Composition — Types: 5 Short · 2 literature_long

Q1.**[3]**

What does 'a gentlemanly agreement' mean? Why does Horace get angry at this phrase?

Previously asked in: 2023 2/5/1 Q9 (b)

♦ A Question of Trust

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Model Answer

A 'gentlemanly agreement' means an informal, unwritten agreement based on trust and honour between two parties, with no legal backing.

Horace gets angry at this phrase because he realises he has been completely deceived. He had trusted the young woman and opened the safe for her, believing she was the lady of the house. Later, when he is caught by the real police, he understands she was herself a thief who tricked him using a false 'gentlemanly agreement' — while he kept his word, she did not. He feels cheated and humiliated.

Source: A Question of Trust, Chapter 4

Explanation

- The question has two parts — define the phrase (1 mark) and explain Horace's anger (2 marks). Balance accordingly.
- The irony is key: Horace, a thief himself, was robbed of his trust by another thief who invoked the idea of honour. Examiners look for this irony in your answer.
- Avoid retelling the whole story — focus only on what the phrase means and why it angers Horace.

Q2.

[6]

Horace ends up in prison only to regret that a man should not trust anyone blindly without finding out the truth. Do you think his own foolishness was responsible for his arrest? Give a reasoned answer.

(A Question of Trust)

Previously asked in: 2025 2/1/1 Q11(a)

♦ A Question of Trust

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Model Answer

Yes, Horace Danby's own foolishness was largely responsible for his arrest. He was an intelligent, meticulous planner — yet he made critical errors in judgement.

1. Blind trust without verification: Horace never questioned whether the young woman was actually the lady of the house. He simply assumed she was, because she spoke confidently and Sherry (the dog) recognised her.

2. Removed his gloves: Eager to please her and hoping she would let him go, Horace took off his gloves to give her his cigarette lighter. This left his fingerprints all over the room — the key evidence against him.

3. Allowed emotions to override reason: His desperate fear of prison made him easy to manipulate. The woman cleverly used his vulnerability to get the safe opened.

4. A criminal trusting another criminal: Ironically, a thief trusted a stranger completely, violating the very caution that had kept him free for years.

His arrest was not unjust — his greed, gullibility, and carelessness brought it upon himself.

Source: *A Question of Trust*, Chapter 4

Explanation

Examiners expect you to:

- Take a clear stance (yes/no) at the start.
- Give **3–4 specific reasons** from the story with brief evidence.
- Use story details (gloves, dog, fingerprints) — not vague statements.
- Avoid retelling the plot; focus on **analysis of Horace's mistakes**.
- Keep it within ~130 words — crisp points score better than padding.

Q3.

[3]

Why does Horace Danby consider himself an honest man despite being a thief? How does this self-perception affect his decision in the story? (A Question of Trust)

Previously asked in: 2026 2/5/1 Q9 (ii)

♦ A Question of Trust

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Model Answer

Horace Danby considers himself honest because he steals only once a year, plans carefully, harms no one physically, and uses the money solely to buy rare books — not for greed or personal luxury in the usual sense. He justifies his thefts by reasoning that he only steals from the wealthy.

This self-perception makes him dangerously gullible. When the young woman in red claims to be the lady of the house, Horace readily believes her and even opens the safe for her — because he wants to see himself as helpful and trustworthy, not as a real criminal. This misplaced self-image leads directly to his arrest and imprisonment.

Source: *A Question of Trust*, Chapter 4

Explanation

- The question has two parts: (1) **why** he sees himself as honest, and (2) **how** this self-perception affects his decision. Address both clearly.
- Key textbook evidence: he steals only to buy books (not out of greed), steals only once a year, and claims to steal only from the wealthy.
- The effect: his desire to appear reasonable and non-threatening makes him trust the woman and open the safe — the very act that traps him.
- Examiners look for the **irony**: his false sense of honour is exactly what the real thief exploits.

Q4.

[3]

Comment on the use of irony and humour in the story.

(A Question of Trust)

Previously asked in: 2024 2/5/1 Q9 (ii)

♦ A Question of Trust

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Model Answer

The story is rich in irony and humour. The central irony is that Horace, a careful, meticulous burglar, is himself tricked and robbed by another thief — a woman posing as the lady of the house. He removes his gloves to light her cigarette, leaving fingerprints everywhere, undoing all his careful planning. Humour arises when he politely answers "Hay fever" to the stranger mid-burglary, and in the final irony: the man who feared prison ends up there anyway, now bitterly dismissing the idea of "honour among thieves."

Source: *A Question of Trust*, Chapter 4

Explanation

Examiners look for **two clear points** — one on irony, one on humour — with textual evidence for each. The key ironic moments are: (1) the thief being tricked by a fellow thief, and (2) his fingerprints being his undoing after he was so careful with gloves. The humour lies in the absurd politeness of the hay fever exchange and his belief that he had "persuaded" her. Always end with the final irony about "honour among thieves" — it ties back to the epigraph and scores well.

Q5.

[2]

Describe the feelings of the young lawyer when he came to know the reality of the hack driver.

Previously asked in: 2022 2/1/1 Q6 (vi)

♦ A Question of Trust

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Model Answer

The young lawyer felt embarrassed and foolish when he discovered that the kind, helpful "Bill" he had admired was actually Lutkins, the man he had been searching for all along. He felt cheated and ashamed that he had been easily tricked and had even praised Lutkins to his office colleagues.

Explanation

This question is from *The Hack Driver* (Class 10, First Flight). Note: The source passages provided are from a *different* story (*A Question of Trust* / Horace Danby). Since the question asks about the young lawyer and the hack driver, answer from your knowledge of *The Hack Driver* by Sinclair Lewis. Key examiner expectations: mention his embarrassment/foolishness at being deceived, and that he had spoken highly of "Bill"/Lutkins to others — both points together fetch full 2 marks.

Q6.

[6]

How did the lady in red manage to outsmart and out maneuver the other thief, Horace Danby, by robbing the safe without leaving a single fingerprint? (A Question of Trust)

Previously asked in: 2024 2/1/1 Q11(i)

♦ A Question of Trust

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Model Answer

In *A Question of Trust*, the young lady in red outsmarts Horace Danby through a carefully executed deception, exploiting his fear, weakness, and greed.

Her key tactics were:

1. **Pretending to be the lady of the house** — She entered confidently, called the dog by its name ("Down, Sherry"), and straightened ornaments, all convincing Horace she belonged there.
1. **Using his fear of prison** — She noticed he was desperately afraid of arrest and cleverly used this vulnerability to control him.
1. **A false story about jewels** — She fabricated that she had forgotten the safe's combination and needed her jewels for a party, appealing to his desire to please her.
1. **Making him remove his gloves** — When she asked for a lighter, Horace eagerly took off his gloves to impress her, leaving his fingerprints all over the room.
1. **Leaving no evidence herself** — Being a thief herself, she touched nothing without care, leaving no fingerprints.

Thus, she walked away with the jewels while Horace was arrested, proving the story's irony: a thief was tricked by a cleverer thief.

Source: *A Question of Trust*, Chapter 4

Explanation

Examiners look for **at least 5–6 distinct points** covering her deceptive tactics and Horace's mistakes. Key things to highlight: the dog's name trick, his fear of prison, the fake jewellery story, and the critical **gloves detail** (he removed them — that's why his fingerprints were found). Also mention she left no evidence herself. End with a brief concluding line about the irony. Avoid retelling the entire story; keep it analytical and point-focused.

Q7.

[3]

The unexpected encounter with the voice in the doorway affects Horace's burglary attempt. Elaborate.

(A Question of Trust)

Previously asked in: 2025 2/3/1 Q9 (ii)

♦ A Question of Trust

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Model Answer

When Horace is caught mid-burglary, a young woman dressed in red appears in the doorway. Her calm, firm manner unnerves him. Fearing arrest, Horace abandons his original plan and tries to win her sympathy. She cleverly exploits his desperation by asking him to open the safe, claiming she forgot the combination. Eager to please her, Horace removes his gloves, leaving his fingerprints everywhere. This single encounter causes him to trust a fellow thief, hand over the jewels, and ultimately land in prison.

Source: *A Question of Trust*, "The Young Lady's Deception" and "The Aftermath and Horace's Arrest"

Explanation

The question asks how the encounter **affects** the burglary attempt — focus on the chain of consequences: surprise → fear → manipulation → fatal mistake (removing gloves). Examiners look for: (1) the woman's deceptive identity, (2) Horace's psychological surrender, (3) the glove detail as the key blunder. Keep it crisp — 3 marks means 3 clear points.

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