

CLASS: 10 SUB: ENGLISH

THE MIDNIGHT VISITOR

READING MATERIAL

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Robert Arthur Jr. was an American writer of mystery and speculative fiction. His fame rests on 'The Mysterious Traveller' radio series and his 'Three Investigators' series of novels. His stories were published in many magazines between 1930 and 1940. He also wrote mystery books for children. He was twice honoured by the 'Mystery Writers of America' with his writing partner Edgar. He died in 1969 in Philadelphia.

INTRODUCTION

Ausable is a secret agent. He is expecting to get an important paper. Max, an intruder, enters his room. He wants to get that paper from Ausable. He has a pistol in his hand. Ausable, being quite normal, plays upon a trick on Max and gets him killed without any fighting and shooting.

CENTRAL IDEA OF THE LESSON

The theme of the Story 'The Midnight Visitor' is a very thrilling account of a secret agent Ausable's one particular episode. Ausable didn't fit any description of a secret agent. He didn't live up to the romantic picture of a secret agent that we read in books or see in films.

He was rather fat and sloppy. He lived in a very small room on the sixth floor. However, Ausable was gifted with a rare presence of mind. He was quick of action. His fertile brain could invent and cook up stories and situations that would confuse and unnerve his rivals. He cooked up the story of the balcony below the window of his room and the arrival of the police. He outwitted and outsmarted his rival and enemy secret agent, Max, who had come to take away a very important paper concerning some new missiles. Through his presence of mind, Ausable was able to get rid of his rival, Max.

DETAILED SUMMARY

Ausable was a secret agent. He was staying in a French hotel. A young and romantic writer named Fowler came to meet him. Fowler was disappointed to see Ausable. He was a sloppy fat fellow.

His room was at the top and sixth floor of that musty and gloomy hotel. When they both entered the room and Ausable switched on the lights, they found that a man was standing in the centre of the room. He had a pistol in his hand. It was the first thrill of the day for Fowler. The name of the man with a gun was Max. He said that he had come there to snatch the report from Ausable which he was expecting to receive. Ausable remained silent and cool. He seemed to be angry with the management of the hotel. He cocked-up a story about the balcony. He told him that there was a balcony just below the window of his room and last month too an unknown person had entered the room through that balcony. Max told Ausable that he had used a master key to enter the door. He wished that he should have entered through the balcony way. It would have been much easier. There was still half an hour for the report to arrive.

There was a sudden knocking at the door. Ausable smiled. He said it must be the police because he himself had called them for the protection of such an important report. Max was nervous. He jumped through the window to the balcony. But there was no balcony as Ausable had told. He fell down to the ground from the sixth floor and was killed. Then the door opened. The waiter entered the room with a tray a bottle of wine and two glasses. Ausable had ordered for them. The waiter left. Fowler did not know anything about the balcony. He feared that Max would return soon. But Ausable told him the fact that he would never return. Thus, Fowler was much impressed by his cleverness and presence of mind.

DETAILED SUMMARY

1. FOWLER MEETS SECRET AGENT AUSABLE:

Fowler was a young romantic writer. He came to meet a secret agent, Ausable, in his office. Actually, he had come to necessary material for his book on secret agents. Like all people, Fowler had also formed quite a romantic picture of the secret agent as represented in books and films. Ausable didn't fit any description of a secret agent Fowler had ever read or imagined. Fowler felt let down. Ausable's office was in a small room, on the sixth and top floor. He was a sloppy fat man. He had an American accent. Ausable himself felt that Fowler was disappointed after meeting him

2. IMPORTANT PAPER IN AUSABLE'S CUSTODY:

Ausable told Fowler that he had a very important 'paper' in his custody. Someday that paper might well affect the course of history. Then, Ausable switched on the light. Fowler had his first authentic thrill of the day. He saw a man with a small automatic pistol in his hand.

Max Enters with a Pistol: Ausable was stunned to see Max in his room with a P' pistol He had thought he was in Berlin. Max was slender, crafty and had the face of a fox. There was nothing menacing about Max except his pistol. Max demanded the important report concerning some new missiles that were in the custody of Ausable. He wanted to take it from Ausable.

4. AUSABLE COOKS UP A STORY ABOUT BALCONY:

On the spur of the moment, Ausable cooked up a story. He told Fowler and Max that his balcony below the window had become a big nuisance. It was the second time in a month that somebody had got into his room from there. Max showed his ignorance about the balcony and told that he entered through a passkey. Ausable told Max that the balcony actually belonged to the other apartment. It extended under his window.

5. KNOCKING AT THE DOOR:

Max was standing erect not far from Ausable. He was waving his pistol with a commanding gesture. Soon, he heard a knocking at the door. Ausable cooked up another story at once. He told Max that it should be the police. He had a very important paper with him. It needed a little extra protection. He had told the police to check on him to make sure that everything was all right. Fowler jumped aside. Max bit his lip nervously. Ausable threatened Max that the police would enter soon as the door was unlocked. They would not hesitate to shoot.

6. NERVOUS MAX JUMPS OUT OF THE WINDOW:

Max was nervous. He asked Ausable to send the police away or he would not hesitate to shoot. The knocking at the door became louder. Max kept his body twisted and pointed his gun at Ausable and Fowler. He put another leg over the windowsill. Then in desperation, he jumped out. As he dropped, he screamed once, shrilly.

7. WAITER APPEARS:

The door opened and a waiter stood there with a tray, a bottle and two glasses. Actually, it was not the police but it was the waiter whom Ausable had already ordered. Fowler was still white-faced. He asked about the man who jumped out on the balcony. Ausable assured Fowler that Max would not return as there was no balcony below the window.

MAIN POINTS OF THE STORY

1. Fowler was a young and romantic writer.
2. He wanted to meet Ausable because he wanted to write a book on detectives.
3. Ausable was a detective in Paris who was fat and sloppy and hardly looked like a secret agent.
4. When Ausable switched on the light, he found Max standing with a pistol in his hand in the room.
5. Max had come to take a particularly important report concerning missiles forcibly from Ausable.
6. Ausable cooked up a false story to entrap crafty Max.
7. He told Max that the balcony below his window had become a big nuisance. It was the second time in a month that somebody got into his room through the balcony.
8. He also made Max panicky by telling him that the knockings at the door were of the police, whom he had already informed.
9. When Max became panicky, he came to the window and jumped out of it. A loud cry was heard and in this way, Ausable got rid of his crafty enemy.
10. Later on, it was found that the knockings at the door were made by the hotel waiter, who entered the room with a bottle of water and two glasses as ordered by Ausable

CHARACTER SKETCH

1. AUSABLE:

He is a different kind of secret agent. Generally, secret agents that are described in detective books and shown in films are very smart and gun-friendly. Wine and dark-eyed beauties are associated with them. However, Ausable doesn't present such a romantic picture. He is very fat and sloppy. Physically, he may be fat but mentally he is very agile and quick-witted. He knows all the tricks of his trade. He is very quick to react and can cook up stories that may help in all kinds of situations. He convinces even the crafty Max that there is a balcony below the window of his room.

2. MAX:

Max is a secret agent and a rival and enemy of Ausable. He is slender, a little less than tall. He appears crafty and has a countenance of a fox. There is nothing especially menacing about him except his pistol. He enters Ausable's room to take away a very important paper concerning some new missiles.

3.Fowler:

Fowler is a young and romantic writer. He wants to write a book on detectives. Fowler forms a very romantic and grand picture of a secret agent in his mind. He finds Ausable not cracking pistols or surrounded by dark-eyed beauties like James Bond. He feels let down after meeting Ausable.
