
CBSE Class 10 English Language and Literature
NCERT Solutions
Footprints Chapter 3
The Midnight Visitor

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1. How is Ausable different from other secret agents?

Ans: Ausable is different from other secret agents in more than one way . He has a small room in the musty corridor of a gloomy French hotel. It was the sixth and topmost floor and it was scarcely the setting for a romantic adventure. Ausable was extremely fat. In spite of living in Paris for over twenty years, he spoke French and German moderately 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 of a spy.

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

Ans: Fowler is 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.

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1. How did Max get in?

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

2. How does Ausable say he got in?

Ans: Ausable says 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.

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1. "Ausable did not fit any description of a secret agent Fowler had ever read." What

do secret agents in books and films look like, in your opinion? Discuss in groups or in class some stories or movies featuring spies, detectives and secret agents, and compare their appearance with that of Ausable in this story. (You may mention characters from fiction in languages other than English. In English fiction you may have come across Sherlock Holmes, Hercule Poirot, or Miss Marple. Have you watched any movies featuring James Bond?)

Ans: Secret agents in fiction are projected like ideal men, 'Tall dark and handsome'. They are usually well built and have beautiful women to accompany them. They would always smoke pipe or cigar and do death defying stunts. James Bond is a very famous character by Ian Fleming. Movies based on James Bond show hi-tech gizmos which assist the detective in countering villains. But there are some exceptions as well. There is a character named Feluda which was created by Satyajit Ray, the famous Bangla Filmmaker. Feluda despite being a strongly built man adept in martial arts, relies mostly upon his superb analytical ability and observation skill, mostly referred to as the *Magajastra* or brain-weapon to solve cases instead of using physical strength or weapons.

2. 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?

Ans: Ausable tells Max that someone entered his room through the balcony earlier also. He also told him that he had asked police to give him protection as he had some important papers with him. On listening, Max became nervous and just wanted to escape from police and as a result, without noticing, he jumped out of the window and fell down. Ausable's ability to think quickly and calmly in a situation of panic, makes it convincing.

3. 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 right from the very beginning. He took advantage of the events as they happened. Ausable made a story of the balcony outside the room and as there was a knock at the door at the same time, he told it would be police. All these events threatened Max. He became restless and without seeing, jumped out of the window hurriedly.

Talk about It

1. In this story, Ausable shows great ‘presence of mind’ or the ability to think quickly and act calmly and wisely, in a situation of danger and surprise. Give examples from your own experience, or narrate a story, which shows someone’s presence of mind.

Ans: This story is in reference to the play ‘If I Were You’. Gurrad was captured by a criminal and when he pointed a gun towards him, Gurrad treated the criminal as a guest and trapped him in his confidence. He succeeded in making the criminal to run away as police was behind him. He told the criminal to run through the exit door, which was actually a cupboard door. The criminal exited through the door and was caught in the cupboard.
