

Hector Hugh Munro

Vocabulary:

Sr. No.	Word	Meaning
1	Deserted	Empty, because all the people have left
2	Retreating	To move backwards; to go to a safe or private place
3	Scarcely	Only just; almost not
4	Judicially	Connected with a court of law, a judge or a legal judgment
5	Outrageously	Behave in a very angry or shocked manner.
6	Shrouded	To cover or hide something
7	Quest	A long search for something that is difficult to find
8	Blurted	To utter suddenly
9	Circumstances	The facts and events that affect what happens in a particular situation
10	Peering	To look closely or carefully at somebody/ something, for example because you cannot see very well

Questions & Answers

Dusk written by Hector Hugh Munro who is also known by the pen name 'Saki'. "Dusk" is another of Saki's darkly unexpected stories. The protagonist, Gortsby, spends the duration of the story watching individuals running about at dusk. His error in judgement causes a young man to get the better of him with his story of misery.

Dusk Questions & Answers:

Q 1. What was the atmosphere at Hyde Park?

Ans: The whole atmosphere at Hyde Park was full of sadness (dusky). It was an early March evening at around 6:30 and there was not completely dark due to moonlight and street lamps. Though there was an emptiness over the road and sidewalk, even some people were moving here and there while others were sitting on the benches and chairs in the Park. Their faces were hardly visible in the twilight. According to Gortsby, it was the time of dejected and disappointed people who would come to such a place to enjoy their solitariness.

Q 2. Where did Norman Gortsby sit? How does the narrator describe the dusk in and around the park?

Ans: Norman Gortsby sat on a bench in the almost deserted park. It was some thirty minutes past six on an early March evening, and dusk had fallen heavily over the scene mitigated by some faint moonlight and many street lamps.

Q 3. How does Norman Gortsby view 'Dusk'?

Ans: Norman Gortsby views dusk as the hour of the defeated. The people who had fought and lost came out at this time so that their shabby clothes, bowed shoulders and unhappy eyes might pass unnoticed and unrecognized by those who were successful.

Q 4. Draw a profile of the person who first sat near Gortsby on the bench?

Ans: It was an elderly gentleman who first sat near Gortsby on the bench. The man seemed to have lost interest in life. He looked dejected and disappointed but refused to admit this fact. He was not wearing entirely shabby clothes but one could not call them fine too. Even his physical appearance did not seem deceptive. It seemed that no one cared him; perhaps he was in the dusk of his life.

Q 5. How did the young man present himself as genuine in his tale?

Ans: The young man was agitated as he sat on the bench to gain Gortsby's attention. He frankly stated that he had done the silliest thing in his life. His reference to the mix up in hotel bookings is often a genuine problem faced by travellers. He's stepping out to buy an essential item such as a bar of soap lent further credence to the story. Thus, by blaming himself and behaving frankly, he presented himself as a genuine person.

Q 6. Why had the young man have to book a room in an unknown hotel?

Ans: The young man had to book a room in an unknown hotel because the Patagonian Hotel he had come to lodge had been pulled down and a cinema theatre run upon its site.

Q 7. What predicament was the young man in?

Ans: The young man had come to London with the intention of staying at the Patagonian Hotel but on arrival, he discovered that it had been razed. He checked into another hotel and stepped out to buy a bar of soap. It seemed that he had forgotten to pack soap and hated using hotel soap. When he turned to go back, he didn't remember the name of the

hotel and its location. He had just two pence left with him and had no friends or connections in London to lend him money.

Q 8. What kind of help is the young man looking for?

Ans: The young man is looking for monetary help as he has no money and felt lost in the city.

Q 9. Why did Gortsby think that the man was careless?

Ans: Gortsby thought that the young man was careless because the man had lost the way to his hotel, didn't remember the street name or the name of the hotel, and kept the cake of soap in a place unfamiliar to him.

Q 10. What was the 'weak point' in the man's story?

Ans: The weakest point in the story of the man was that he could not produce the soap bought by him, to prove to Mr. Gortsby that his story was genuine.

Q 11. Did Gortsby believe the young man's story? Why?

Ans: Gortsby didn't believe the young man's story. However, he wanted to see how far the young man would act or talk to prove his point and get some sympathy or money. So, he casually narrated an incident where he and a friend had lost their way in a foreign capital but somehow managed to go back to their hotel by remembering that it was near a canal.

Q 12: What did Gortsby conclude on finding the soap by the bench?

Ans: Gortsby linked the young stranger's story and the bar of soap together and concluded that the soap had fallen out of the youth's overcoat pocket when he had flung himself down on the bench.

Q 13. How did the young man fool Gortsby?

Answer: Gortsby realised that the young man was out to extract money from him, and hence refused the young man a loan. However, after the young man left hurriedly, Gortsby found a bar of soap lying next to the bench and thought that it was the young man's. He ran and caught up with the young man, apologised and gave him the soap and one pound (one sovereign). The young man who looked hostile suddenly looked surprised, friendly and thankful. He hastily took the money and Gortsby's address and fled the scene. When

Gortsby walked past the park bench, the elderly gentleman was searching for his bar of soap. It was then that Gortsby realised that he had been fooled by the young man.

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Q 14. Describe in short, the various thoughts and feelings of Norman Gortsby from the beginning to the end of the story 'Dusk'.

Ans: Norman Gortsby didn't have a positive opinion of the general public or himself. His mood matched the dusk or the settling darkness. He saw honest, hardworking people walking past him as 'the defeated'. He made conclusions about the old gentleman sitting next to him without knowing anything about him. He disbelieved the young stranger's story but took pleasure to prove him wrong.

On finding the soap, he is elated that the young man was telling the truth but feels guilty that he didn't help him. He hastens to hand over the soap and money to the young man. He chides himself for judging the young man too quickly but realises that he has been fooled when the old gentleman comes back looking for the soap.

Q 15. Do you think 'Dusk' is an appropriate title for the story?

Ans: Yes, 'Dusk' is an appropriate title for the story. Dusk is that part of the day when the light is dim and murky. It is the time of the day when all living things are hurrying to go back home or find a safe place before nightfall or darkness. For Norman, Dusk is "the hour of the defeated" and it provides cover to those who are hiding their shabby clothes, bowed shoulders and unhappy eyes which means dusk offers the shadowing required to hide their failures.

At the end of the story, it is seen that Norman has fallen victim to one of the successes which prove Norman to be one of the people of dusk. The title 'Dusk' not only describes the part of the setting but it also describes the figurative partial darkness of Norman's trust in mankind. So, it is an appropriate title.

Q 16. Why do you think the young man built a story around a bar of soap?

Ans: The young man was a master at spinning tales to extract money from people. The reason why the young man built a story around a bar of soap could be as follows: It is quite common for people to have preferences for everyday items of use like shampoos, towels, soaps, etc. A bar of soap is a very normal and common reason for people to go shopping.

