



# The Case of Copied Question Papers

based on a story by Arthur Conan Doyle

## Pre-reading Task

1. If you find a rough copy of the question paper that you are going to take the next day, will you—
  - (i) inform the teacher?
  - (ii) inform other students about the questions?
  - (iii) not disclose it to anyone, but learn all the answers yourself?
2. If you see that your partner is copying the answers from his notebook while taking an examination, will you—
  - (i) ask for his help in doing your paper also?
  - (ii) urge him not to do so?
  - (iii) not bother yourself?
  - (iv) inform the invigilator?
3. If you have committed a very serious mistake, will you—
  - (i) try to hide your mistake?
  - (ii) confess it boldly?
  - (iii) not be concerned about it?

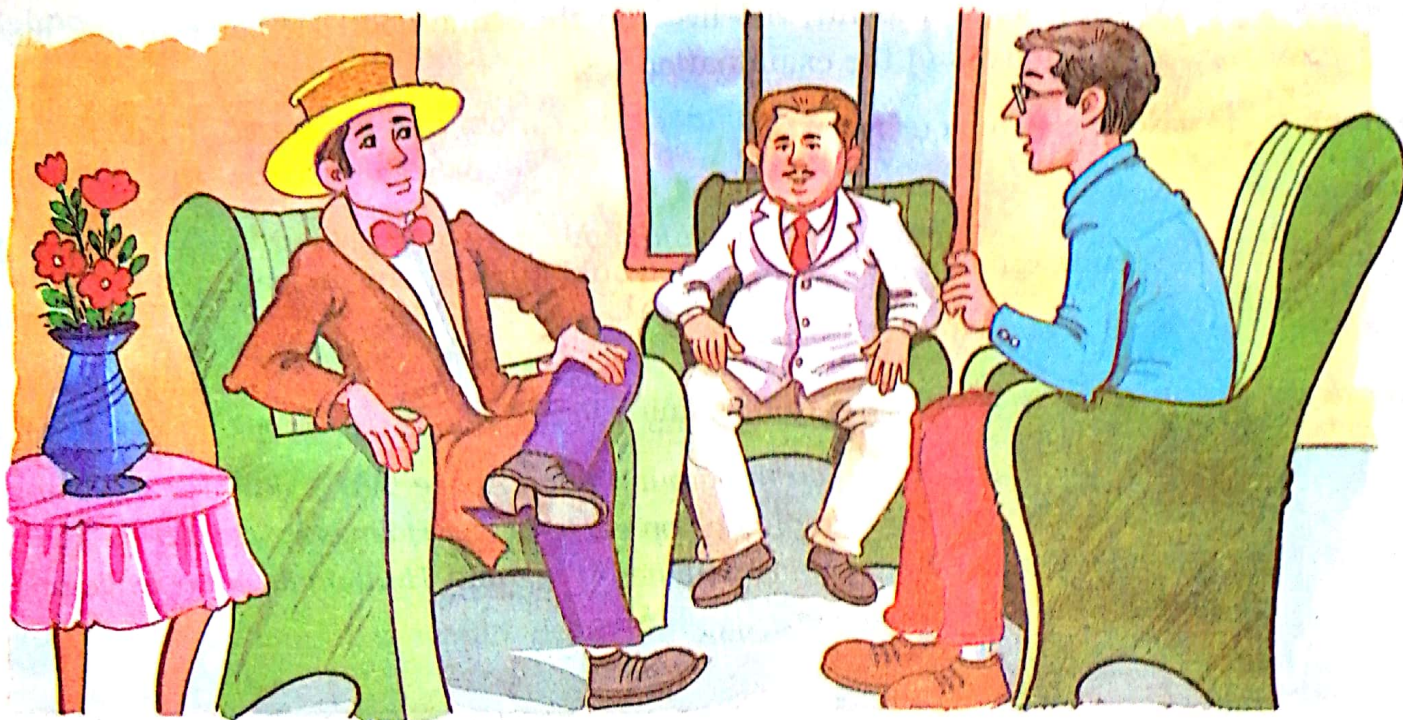
**Now read the play. Your teacher will assign you roles to perform the play.**

It was in the year 1895. We were residing close to a library to make some researches in early English Charters. One evening we received a visit from a person whom we knew, Hilton Soames. He was a tall man of a nervous and excitable temperament. It was clear that he was extremely agitated over something.

**Soames** : Mr Holmes, can you spare me a few hours of your valuable time? We have had a very painful incident at the college.

**Holmes** : Oh really!

**Soames** : I must explain to you Mr Holmes, tomorrow is the first day of the examination for scholarship.



Today about three o'clock the proofs of this paper arrived from the printers. I had to read them carefully as the text must be absolutely correct. At 4.30, however, I left to take tea in a friend's room. My task was not yet complete, so I left the proofs upon my desk. I was absent for more than an hour. When I returned, I was amazed to see a key hanging in the door. This duplicate key belonged to my servant Bannister. He is an honest man. I thought he might have entered my room to ask for tea. Then he might have carelessly left the key in the door.

**Holmes** : Please continue.

**Soames** : The moment I looked at my table I was aware that someone had reached my papers. The proofs were in three long slips. I had kept them together. Now I found that one of them was lying on the floor. One was on the side table near the window and the third was where I had left it.

**Holmes** : Very interesting!

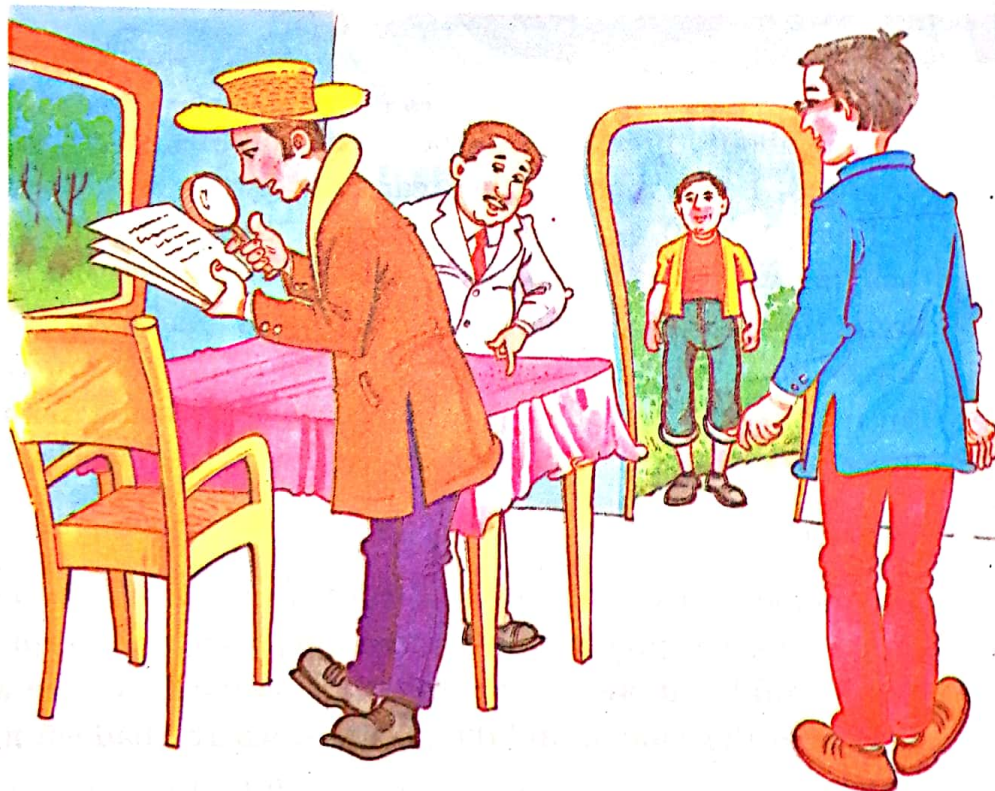
**Soames** : A large sum of scholarship money is at stake. A wrong man might gain advantage over other fellows. When I talked to Bannister about this, he nearly fainted and collapsed in a chair. Do help me, Mr Holmes. Either I must find the culprit or the examination must be postponed.

**Holmes** : I shall be happy to help you. Did anyone visit you in your room when you were reading the papers?



- Soames** : Yes, Steve, a student, who lives on the same floor. He came to ask me something about the examination.
- Watson** : None else in your room?
- Soames** : No.
- Holmes** : Then it appears that Steve alone could know about the papers.
- Soames** : So it seems to me.
- Holmes** : Let's go to your house and examine it.

*The tutor's room was on the ground floor. Above that lived three students, Steve, Gilchrist and Ralph, one on each storey. Holmes examined the room and looked at the open window near the table. He thought for a while and then looked at the paper.*



- Holmes** : Let me see the three papers. There are no fingerprints. Ah, there are some pencil shreds.
- Watson** : Now let's see the table. There are some grains of sawdust on it.
- Holmes** : Mr Soames, now, will you please call Bannister in?  
[Bannister, the old servant, comes in.]

**Holmes** : I understand that you left your key in the door.

**Bannister** : Yes Sir. I have done this mistake other times also.

**Holmes** : When did you enter the room?

**Bannister** : It was about 4:30. That is Mr Soames' tea time.

**Holmes** : Did you look at the papers on the table?

**Bannister** : No, Sir, certainly not. I had the tea tray in my hands, so I thought I would take the key later on. Then I forgot.

**Holmes** : That means anyone could go inside the room or could get out of it.

**Bannister** : Yes, Sir.

**Watson** : When Mr Soames told you about the papers, were you very much disturbed?

**Bannister** : Yes, Sir, I nearly fainted.

**Watson** : Where were you standing when you began to feel bad?

**Bannister** : Here, near the door.

**Holmes** : But you sat down in that chair near the window. Why didn't you sit in the chair near the door?

**Bannister** : Just a chance.

**Holmes** : Were you here when your master left to meet me?

**Bannister** : Only for a minute.

**Holmes** : Thank you. That will do. You may go. Mr Soames, have you mentioned about this to the three students living above?

**Soames** : No, Sir, not a word.





**Holmes** : I should like to have a word with them. Is it possible?

*We went up and knocked at Steve's room. He opened the door and Holmes borrowed a pencil from him for making some notes. The same thing happened in Ralph's and Gilchrist's rooms.*

**Holmes** : And now Mr Soames, I wish you goodnight. I will drop in early morning tomorrow with a definite answer.

*(Early morning Holmes came to my room.)*

**Watson** : Have you anything positive to tell to Mr Soames?

**Holmes** : Yes, my dear Watson. I have solved the mystery.

*[We went to Soames' house. He was extremely worried and nervous.]*

**Holmes** : Mr Soames, will you please call Bannister?

*[Bannister entered and Holmes asked him to close the door.]*

**Holmes** : Now Bannister, will you please tell us the truth about yesterday's incident?

**Bannister** : I have told you everything, Sir.

**Holmes** : When you sat down in the chair near the window, were you trying to hide something?

**Bannister** : No, Sir.

**Holmes** : Didn't you let the man who was hiding in the inside room go out?

**Bannister** : There was no man, Sir.

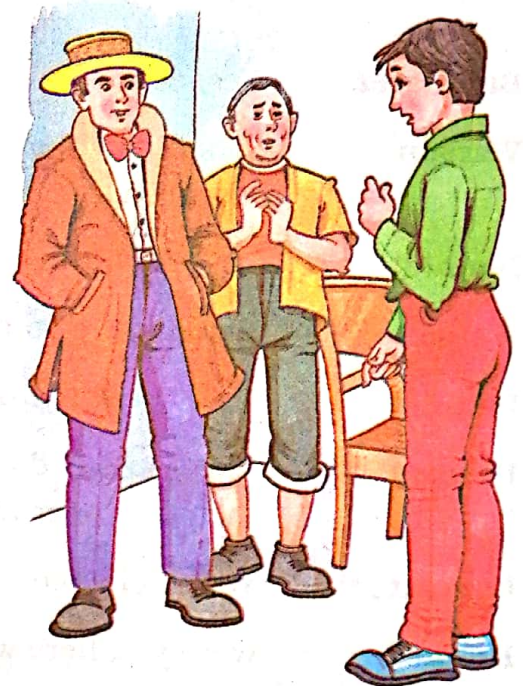
**Holmes** : Mr Soames, kindly call Gilchrist.

*Gilchrist was called and he glanced at each of us.*

**Holmes** : Now Mr Gilchrist, we want to know, why did you commit such an action?

*Gilchrist was shocked and looked at Bannister.*

**Bannister** : No, no, Mr Gilchrist, I never said a word.



**Holmes** : No, but you have now. I tell you the whole story now. Mr Soames' room's window was open, I tried to measure how tall a man would be to see the papers through the window while he passed. Only a six-foot tall man could do it. I found out that Gilchrist was six feet tall and also a long jumper. He was practising the jump. He came back carrying his jumping shoes which had sharp spikes. As he passed your window, he saw the proofs on your table. He entered through the open door and put his shoes on the table and hence the scratches on the table. He put his gloves on the chair near the window and took the proof papers to copy. He wrote very fast and broke his pencil and had to sharpen it again. And these pencil shreds helped me find out the culprit. Looking at the shreds I could make out that the pencil was not of an ordinary size. Its outer colour was dark blue and it had a soft lead. I found the same pencil in Gilchrist's room yesterday. When Mr Soames came back, Gilchrist took his shoes and hid in the inside room but forgot his gloves. Bannister pretended to faint to give Gilchrist a chance to escape. He sat down at the corner chair to hide Gilchrist's gloves.

**Watson** : Mr Bannister, why did you help Gilchrist?

**Bannister** : I was a butler at their house before working here. When I saw the gloves, I recognised these as Gilchrist's and wanted to save him.

**Holmes** : Is that right, Gilchrist?

**Gilchrist** : Yes, Sir. I have a letter with me. In this, I have written that I would not take the examination.

**Soames** : I am pleased to hear that.

**Holmes** : But why did you change your mind?

**Gilchrist** : There is the man who set me on the right path (Gilchrist pointed to Bannister). He spoke to me as a father and made me understand what I did was wrong. So I changed my mind and decided not to take the paper.

**Holmes** : You are a young man with bright future. For once you have fallen low. Let us see in the future how high you can rise.

So this way, the case was solved and Mr Soames thanked Holmes for his help.



## **I Understanding the Play**

### **A. Answer the following questions in brief:**

1. Why was Soames upset?
2. How did Soames conclude that the papers had been tampered with by someone?
3. Why did Holmes ask all the three students to give him a pencil?
4. How did Bannister help Gilchrist? Why did he do so?
5. Why did Gilchrist decide to skip the examination?

### **B. Read the following extracts and answer the questions that follow:**

1. 'We have had a very painful incident at the college.'
  - (a) Identify the speaker. Whom is he speaking to?
  - (b) What is the painful incident?
  - (c) What does the speaker want from the listener?
2. 'I think he wrote very fast and broke his pencil and had to sharpen it again.'
  - (a) Whom does 'he' refer to in the above line?
  - (b) On what basis does the speaker draw the above conclusion?
  - (c) How does this conclusion lead to the solution of the mystery?
3. 'Why did you commit such an action?'
  - (a) Who is the speaker? Whom is he speaking to?
  - (b) What action has the listener committed? Why?
  - (c) How does he mend his action?

**C. Read the play and fill in the following cluesheet to help Holmes solve the mystery and find out the culprit.**

The characters      \_\_\_\_\_ (detective)      \_\_\_\_\_ (companion)      \_\_\_\_\_ (lecturer)      \_\_\_\_\_ (his servant)

\_\_\_\_\_ student      \_\_\_\_\_ student      \_\_\_\_\_ student

The case

The suspect/suspects (i) \_\_\_\_\_

He was the only person who had seen Mr Soames reading the question papers.

(ii) \_\_\_\_\_

He had the duplicate key.

(iii) \_\_\_\_\_

He stays on the same floor and has access to Mr Soames' room.

The clues (i) \_\_\_\_\_

(ii) \_\_\_\_\_

(iii) key in the door.

(iv) \_\_\_\_\_

(v) \_\_\_\_\_

(vi) scratches of shoe spikes on the table.

The culprit \_\_\_\_\_

tall, saw the question paper on the table, entered the room, noted down the questions, broke his pencil, sharpened the pencil, left the gloves.

Conclusion \_\_\_\_\_



## II HOTS

Why couldn't Soames solve the mystery behind the copied question papers while Holmes could do it in a short time?

## III Life Skills

- A. You have found a pen drive of one of your teachers. It has the question papers for the coming exams. What will you do in such a situation?
- B. 'All' children can be made to see through their mistakes by speaking to them. Discuss with your partner.

## IV Values

Was it right to set Gilchrist free at the end? Should he have been punished or not?

## V Writing Skills

- A. Imagine yourself to be Gilchrist. Write a letter to the Education Officer informing him about your decision of not taking the scholarship paper.
- B. You are the Education Officer of ABC University. It has been brought to your notice that the scholarship paper has been leaked. Write a notice informing all the students about the cancellation of the paper.

### About the Author

Sir Arthur Ignatius Conan Doyle was a British writer and physician, most noted for his fictional stories about the detective Sherlock Holmes, which are generally considered milestones in the field of crime fiction. During his writing career Sir Arthur wrote 21 novels and over 150 short stories. He is also the author of fantasy and science fiction, which includes three novels and two short stories: *The Last World* (1912), *The Poison Belt* (1913) and *The Land of Mist* (1926).

