

The Night the 8 Down Stopped

Classroom materials for the book

This pack goes with the book on the Kakori train action of 9 August 1925. It gives you a lesson plan, four worksheets (one for each act of the book), a lesson on how we know what we know, a timeline activity and a 12-question quiz. Every worksheet has an answer page for you. Student pages have no answers on them, so you can copy them as they are.

What is in the pack

Page 2	One-page lesson plan for a 40-minute class.
Pages 3 to 10	Worksheets 1 to 4, two pages each. Each has true or false, an ordering or matching task, four short questions and a “source detective” box.
Pages 11 to 15	The lesson “Who fired the shot? How do we know?”: teacher notes, then three student sheets.
Page 16	Timeline activity.
Page 17	Quiz.
Pages 18 onward	Answers: worksheets, timeline and quiz. Keep these.

How to use it with the book

The book has four acts and an epilogue. Read one act, then give out its worksheet. Each worksheet lists the chapters it covers. The book is written in plain sentences, and the worksheets keep to the same level. It is a serious subject, so we suggest it for upper primary and middle school (roughly ages 10 to 14). You know your class best.

The book marks every place where its sources disagree with a blue box, “Where the sources differ”. The “source detective” box on each worksheet turns one of those boxes into a question. Answers to these stay open: the book itself says the matter is not settled.

A note on the subject

This history includes a robbery, the death of a passenger, trials and hangings. The book states what happened and does not praise killing. Ahmad Ali, who died, is a person in the story and not a footnote. The young men are shown as people who made choices, some of which people still argue about. Pupils may have strong feelings. Let them say what they think, and keep asking for reasons. Facts in this pack come from the book, and where the book says its sources disagree, so does the pack.

Words to teach before you start

Dacoity	Robbery by a gang of five or more people. Section 396 was the law for dacoity with murder.
Conspiracy	A secret plan by a group to do something against the law.
Absconder	A wanted man who cannot be found.
Appeal	A request to a higher court to change a decision.
Memorandum	A formal written request.
Viceroy	The head of the British government in India. In 1927 this was Lord Irwin.

One act, one worksheet

Use it for	Any one act. Repeat it four times over four lessons.
You need	The book (printed or on screen), the worksheet for the act, pencils.
Pupils will	tell what happened in the act in order; say what is known and what is only “said to be”; use one source phrase (“the court history says”) correctly.

The lesson

5 min	Open	Read the first lines of the act aloud, or play its audio. Ask one question: what do you think happens next?
10 min	Read	Pupils read the act's chapters, or one chapter each in groups. In the interactive edition they can listen as they read.
10 min	Work	Worksheet parts A and B alone. Early finishers start the “source detective” box.
10 min	Talk	Take two of the “think and write” questions. Ask for reasons. Say once: there is no wrong view if it rests on the facts in the book.
5 min	Close	Exit question: name one thing the book is sure of and one thing it says may not be true.

Act by act

Act	Chapters	Question to start with
One: The Plan	1 to 3	Why would a man argue against a plan, and then join it?
Two: The Night	4 to 8	How can one night be told in so many ways?
Three: The Hunt	9 to 11	What does a police report tell us, and what can it get wrong?
Four and Epilogue	12 to 17	Why did people who disagreed on everything sign one plea?

Help for different pupils

Need more support	Read the act aloud together. Do part A as a class and let pairs finish the rest. Allow the audio.
Ready for more	Do all of the “source detective” box. Ask them to write a one-paragraph answer using the phrases “says”, “names” and “does not say”.
Reading in Hindi	The book has a full Hindi edition. Pupils can read the chapter in Hindi and answer in either language. These worksheets are in English.

After the lesson

Pick one question the pupils could not answer. Ask where a historian would look to find the answer. This leads straight into the lesson “How do we know?”.

Act One: The Plan

Shahjahanpur, before 9 August 1925

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

A. True or false

Circle one. For each false sentence, write the right fact on the line below the table.

1	Ram Prasad signed his poems with the name Bismil.	True / False
2	Ram Prasad's father was happy when he joined an English school.	True / False
3	Ashfaqulla Khan was the youngest child in his family.	True / False
4	Ashfaq argued against the train plan, then stayed with his friends.	True / False
5	The group met on 8 August 1925 in Shahjahanpur to decide on the plan.	True / False
6	The group needed money for guns, leaflets and travel.	True / False

B. Order of events

Put these in order. Write 1 to 5.

	Ram Prasad is declared an absconder, a wanted man who cannot be found.
	Ram Prasad makes a vow to fight British rule.
	The HRA is named at a meeting in Cawnpore.
	Ram Prasad prints the leaflet "A Message to Countrymen".
	The group meets in Shahjahanpur to decide on the train plan.

C. Match

Write the letter of the right meaning in the box.

Word or name	What it is
1 HRA	A. A secret group Ram Prasad started
2 Mera Janm	B. Hindustan Republican Association, the secret group
3 Arya Samaj	C. A poetry gathering
4 Mushaira	D. A poem by Ram Prasad, "My Birth"
5 Matrivedi	E. A Hindu reform movement

D. Think and write

1. The story says the river escape comes from later retellings and has no police report. How should a historian treat a story like that?

2. The plate-sharing story comes from a biography written long after. Why does the book still tell it, and what does it say about how it is told?

3. Ashfaq argued against the plan and then went along. Is that loyalty or something else? Explain your view.

4. What did the group hope to get from robbing a train?

SOURCE DETECTIVE

The plate story. A biography says Ram and Ashfaq ate from the same dish, and that Ashfaq called his friend “Ram”. The biography was written many years later. No letter or diary from the time proves it.

Is this story proved, or told later? Why does the book still include it?

Act Two: The Night

Near Kakori, 9 August 1925

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

A. True or false

Circle one. For each false sentence, write the right fact on the line below the table.

1	The train was the Number 8 Down, going from Shahjahanpur to Lucknow.	True / False
2	The men on the train told passengers to stay inside.	True / False
3	Ahmad Ali was a train guard.	True / False
4	About ten men took part in the action.	True / False
5	Chandrashekhar Azad was arrested a few days later.	True / False
6	Roshan Singh was sentenced for the Bamrauli robbery.	True / False
7	Kakori was the first of the four robberies in the case.	True / False
8	Bismil decided, after two robberies of rich men's homes, to take only government money.	True / False

B. Order of events

Put the steps of the action in the order the book gives them. Write 1 to 5.

	The men shout to the passengers to stay inside.
	Someone pulls the emergency chain.
	The men break open the metal box with a hammer.
	The guard is held down and the driver is pushed down from the engine.
	Some of the men climb into the guard's van.

C. Match

Write the letter of the right meaning in the box.

Word or name	What it is
1 Bamrauli	A. The special judge
2 Bichpuri	B. Robbery of 25 December 1924 in Pilibhit
3 Dwarkapur	C. A lawyer who was a passenger on the train
4 Ahmad Ali	D. Robbery of March 1925 in Pilibhit
5 Hamilton	E. Robbery of May 1925 in Pratapgarh

D. Think and write

1. Passengers were told to stay inside and promised they were safe. Why do you think the group wanted to say that?

2. The man named as the one who fired got fourteen years; Lahiri, named as a leader, was sentenced to die. Does that seem fair? What do you need to know to decide?

3. How can a man be sentenced in the Kakori case and not have been at Kakori?

4. Three villagers died in the robberies before the train. Why is it right to remember them too?

SOURCE DETECTIVE

The money. The High Court's history says 4,553 rupees, 3 annas, 6 pies. The police report says 4,601 rupees, 15 annas, 6 pies. English Wikipedia says about 8,000 rupees.

Which figure would you use in a school essay? What would you write so the reader is not misled?

Act Three: The Hunt

1925 to 1927

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

A. True or false

Circle one. For each false sentence, write the right fact on the line below the table.

1	The first police report was written on 11 August 1925.	True / False
2	The report was written in Hindi.	True / False
3	The report said 20 to 25 unknown men took part.	True / False
4	Ashfaq hid in Daltonganj and told people he was from a farming family in Mathura.	True / False
5	A friend in Delhi helped Ashfaq leave India.	True / False
6	The first trial was held in Lucknow before a special judge, Mr Hamilton.	True / False
7	Ashfaq was tried together with the main group.	True / False
8	The judge gave his decision on 6 April 1927.	True / False

B. Match

Write the letter of the right meaning in the box.

Word or name		What it is
1	Section 396	A. Tried with Ashfaq, sentenced to life
2	Daltonganj	B. The law for robbery by a gang in which someone is killed
3	Jagat Narain	C. Lawyers who stood up for accused men who had nobody
4	C. B. Gupta and H. N. Misra	D. The town where Ashfaq worked as a clerk
5	Bakshi	E. The famous lawyer hired by the government

C. Think and write

1. The report says 20 to 25 unknown robbers. There were about ten. What does that tell you about early police reports?

2. Ashfaq's boss loved Urdu poetry and raised his salary. What does this tell you about the double life he led?

3. The chapter lists many numbers that old records give differently. Pick one and explain how you would try to settle it.

4. Why were the accused put on trial for a plot as well as for the robberies?

SOURCE DETECTIVE

The trial begins. One book says the trial began on 4 January 1926. English Wikipedia says 1 May 1926. The court history says the trial lasted “about 8 months”. The judgment came on 6 April 1927.

Count the months from each start date to the judgment. What do you notice about “about 8 months”?

Act Four and Epilogue: The Last Days

December 1927 and after

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

A. True or false

Circle one. For each false sentence, write the right fact on the line below the table.

1	The memorandum to the Viceroy was signed by 78 members of the Central Legislature.	True / False
2	Muhammad Ali Jinnah and Madan Mohan Malaviya both put their names to it.	True / False
3	The Viceroy, Lord Irwin, agreed to spare the four men.	True / False
4	Rajendra Lahiri was hanged on 17 December 1927, two days before the others.	True / False
5	Bismil wrote his life story on scraps of paper in Gorakhpur jail.	True / False
6	Bismil was hanged in Faizabad.	True / False
7	Ashfaqulla Khan was 27 years old when he was hanged.	True / False
8	The 2006 film Rang De Basanti is a record of exactly what happened.	True / False

B. Match

Write the letter of the right meaning in the box.

Word or name		What it is
1 Gorakhpur		A. Wrote the memorandum to the Viceroy
2 Faizabad		B. Bismil was hanged here
3 Allahabad		C. Rajendra Lahiri was hanged here
4 Gonda		D. Ashfaqulla Khan was hanged here
5 Malaviya		E. Roshan Singh was hanged here

C. Think and write

1. Malaviya and Jinnah belonged to different parties and faiths, yet both signed. What does that show?

2. What reason is given for the hanging being moved, and why does the story say it cannot be proven?

3. The story says to keep two columns: what many sources say, and what only one source says. Try this on one passage.

4. Bismil wrote about his mistakes and doubts as well as his brave deeds. Why does that make his book more believable?

5. Why is a film “not history”, according to the story, and why can it still be useful?

SOURCE DETECTIVE

Roshan Singh's letter. One version of his last letter is dated 13 December 1927. A fuller version is dated 6 December. Both say he will be hanged within a week. Nobody has seen the originals.

Which date fits “within a week” better? Can we be sure? Explain.

LESSON • TEACHER NOTES

Who fired the shot? How do we know?

Time: 45 minutes. **Needs:** the student pages (3 sheets, one per pupil or pair). The pupils do not need the book open, though they may have read Chapter 5 before.

What the pupils learn: a source is where we learn something from. Sources can agree, differ, or say nothing. A careful writer reports what each source says and marks how sure we can be.

Running the lesson

5 min	Hook	Read the opening of Chapter 5 aloud. Ask: who fired the shot? Take guesses without comment, then say: “Let us find out what we can know.”
10 min	Steps 1 and 2	Pupils read the five cards and fill in the table in pairs. Walk round. Point out that card E is about Lahiri, not about the shot.
10 min	Steps 3 and 4	Share answers. Draw out the independence question: two sources saying the same thing are not two proofs if the second copied the first. The chapters do not say whether the Hindi account and Wikipedia share a source, so pupils should say what they would check.
10 min	Step 5	Pupils label the claims. Ask for a reason each time. The label matters less than the reason.
10 min	Step 6 and exit ticket	Pupils write their careful sentence. Two or three read theirs aloud. Collect the exit tickets.

Answers

Step 2 table. A: shot after leaving the carriage; names no one; does not say accident. B: shot by Gupta; names Gupta; accident. C: Gupta fired in haste after being handed a Mauser; names Gupta; “excitement and haste”, which pupils may read as accident. D: accidental shot; names no one; accident. E: about Lahiri, not about the shooter; no; no.

Step 3. Agree: a lawyer named Ahmad Ali left his carriage, was shot, and died. Gap: the court history does not say who fired. On the independence question, good answers say they would look for the earlier source each one used.

Step 4. No. The chapters say the sources do not explain why the sentences differed. A good answer asks for the full judgment, the evidence heard, and the law the judge applied to a leader and to the man who fired. Do not let pupils fill the gap with a guess and call it a fact.

Step 5 suggested labels

Claim	Suggested label and reason
A lawyer named Ahmad Ali was shot after he left his carriage.	Well supported. Several sources say it, including the court history.
The shot was fired by accident.	Probably true. English Wikipedia, the Hindi account and the newspaper all say so. The court history is silent.

Manmathnath Gupta fired the shot.	Said by two sources (English Wikipedia and the Hindi account). The court history does not name anyone. Report it as “named by”, not as proved.
Rajendra Lahiri fired the shot.	Not supported. No source here says it. The judge held him responsible as a leader, which is a different claim.
The exact words shouted to the passengers are known.	Not known. Two books give the warning in different words. They agree that passengers were told to stay inside.

Step 6 model sentence

English Wikipedia says the bullet that killed Ahmad Ali was fired by accident by Manmathnath Gupta. The Allahabad High Court's history says only that Ahmad Ali was shot after he left his carriage.

Handling this with a class

Gupta was a real person who was sentenced to fourteen years. Ask pupils to say “is named by” and not “did it”. The aim is the habit of checking, not a verdict. Ahmad Ali was a real man who died. Keep him in view as a person, not only as an event.

Who fired the shot? How do we know?

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

On the night of 9 August 1925, a lawyer named Ahmad Ali was shot and killed near Kakori. Different sources tell this part of the story in different ways. Your job is to read like a historian: say what each source says, and nothing more.

Step 1. Read the five sources

A The court history

Written by the Allahabad High Court about the Lucknow courts and this case.

Ahmad Ali, a lawyer, got out of his carriage even though he had been warned. He was shot and died. The history does not say whose bullet it was.

B English Wikipedia

An online encyclopedia, written by volunteers.

The bullet was fired by one of the young men, Manmathnath Gupta, by accident. Gupta was later sentenced to fourteen years in prison.

C A Hindi account

A Hindi telling of the story that gives more detail.

Someone handed Gupta a Mauser pistol so that his friend could use both hands to break open the safe with a hammer. Gupta fired a shot out of excitement and haste. The bullet hit Ahmad Ali, and he died on the spot.

D A newspaper report

The Hindustan Times, writing in 2024 about the old police report.

Calls the shot an accidental one. It does not name anyone.

E The judge's words, as a book prints them

Judge Hamilton's judgment of 6 April 1927, quoted in a National Book Trust book. The book's author, not the judge, chose which words to print.

About Rajendra Lahiri: he was one of the leaders of the plot, and as a leader he was “responsible for the death of Ahmed Ali”.

Step 2. Fill in the table

Source	What it says happened to Ahmad Ali	Names who fired?	Says accident?
A			
B			
C			
D			
E			

Step 3. Look across the sources

1. What do all the sources agree on?

2. Where is the gap? Which source says less than the others, and about what?

3. Two sources name Gupta. Does that make it certain? Think about this: do we know if they got their information from the same place? What would you want to check?

Step 4. The sentences

4. Gupta, named as the man who fired, was sentenced to fourteen years. Lahiri, named as a leader, was sentenced to death. Do the sources explain why? Write what you would need to find out before you could say whether this was fair.

Step 5. How sure can we be?

Choose one label for each claim: **Well supported**, **Probably true**, **Said by some sources**, **Not known**, **Not supported**. Give your reason in a few words.

Claim	Label	Reason
A lawyer named Ahmad Ali was shot after he left his carriage.		
The shot was fired by accident.		
Manmathnath Gupta fired the shot.		
Rajendra Lahiri fired the shot.		
The exact words shouted to the passengers are known.		

Step 6. Write one careful sentence

Write one or two sentences about who fired the shot, for a school history page. Rules: name your source. Use words like “says” or “names”. Do not add anything the source does not say.

Exit ticket. One thing the sources agree on: _____

One thing they do not: _____

ACTIVITY

Put the story in order

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

These sixteen events are in the wrong order. Number them from 1 (earliest) to 16 (latest). Then write the dates you can find in the book on the line after each one. Two of the events have dates that the sources disagree on. Mark those with a star.

	The trial begins in Lucknow. The sources disagree on the date.	
	The group meets in Shahjahanpur to decide on the train plan.	
	Rajendra Lahiri is hanged at Gonda, two days early.	
	Nine men are arrested in one day, among them Roshan Singh.	
	The group is named the Hindustan Republican Association, at a meeting in Cawnpore.	
	The judge gives his judgment: three sentenced to death, fifteen to prison.	
	Two more house robberies, Bichpuri and Dwarkapur. A person dies at each.	
	The final appeal goes to the Privy Council and the King-Emperor. It is refused.	
	The police report is written in Urdu at Kakori police station.	
	Bismil, Roshan Singh and Ashfaqulla Khan are hanged.	
	Lahiri is arrested in Calcutta at a secret bomb factory.	
	The Bamrauli robbery in Pilibhit. A wrestler who stood up to the robbers is killed.	
	Ashfaqulla is arrested in Delhi after more than a year on the run.	
	The Number 8 Down is stopped near Kakori. Ahmad Ali is killed.	
	The Chief Court keeps the death sentences. The sources disagree on the day.	
	Bismil is arrested at Shahjahanpur.	

QUIZ

Twelve questions

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Circle the letter of the best answer.

1. What was the number of the train that was stopped near Kakori?
A. 8 Down **B.** 12 Up **C.** Number 3
2. Whose Mauser pistol was handed to Manmathnath Gupta?
A. Bismil's **B.** Ashfaqulla Khan's **C.** Azad's
3. What were the passengers told?
A. To get off and run **B.** To stay inside, because only government money was wanted **C.** To give up their luggage
4. What was Ahmad Ali's job?
A. Train guard **B.** Policeman **C.** Lawyer
5. Which of the four hanged men, according to two sources, was not on the train?
A. Roshan Singh **B.** Lahiri **C.** Bismil
6. For which robbery was Roshan Singh sentenced?
A. Kakori **B.** Bamrauli **C.** Dwarkapur
7. In what language was the first police report written?
A. English **B.** Hindi **C.** Urdu
8. Who was the government's lawyer in the trial?
A. Pandit Jagat Narain **B.** C. B. Gupta **C.** Govind Ballabh Pant
9. How many members of the Central Legislature signed the memorandum to the Viceroy?
A. 18 **B.** 78 **C.** 108
10. Which of the four was hanged first, on 17 December 1927?
A. Rajendra Lahiri **B.** Roshan Singh **C.** Ashfaqulla Khan
11. What job did Ashfaqulla do while hiding in Daltonganj?
A. Teacher **B.** Clerk **C.** Farmer
12. On what did Bismil write his life story in Gorakhpur jail?
A. Scraps of paper **B.** A bound diary **C.** A typewriter

Score: _____ / 12

WORKSHEET 1 OF 4 • CHAPTERS 1 TO 3

Act One: The Plan

Shahjahanpur, before 9 August 1925

A. True or false

1	Ram Prasad signed his poems with the name Bismil.	True
2	Ram Prasad's father was happy when he joined an English school.	False
3	Ashfaqulla Khan was the youngest child in his family.	True
4	Ashfaq argued against the train plan, then stayed with his friends.	True
5	The group met on 8 August 1925 in Shahjahanpur to decide on the plan.	True
6	The group needed money for guns, leaflets and travel.	True

Corrections: 2. His father did not like the idea.

B. Order of events

Put these in order. Write 1 to 5.

3	Ram Prasad is declared an absconder, a wanted man who cannot be found.
1	Ram Prasad makes a vow to fight British rule.
4	The HRA is named at a meeting in Cawnpore.
2	Ram Prasad prints the leaflet "A Message to Countrymen".
5	The group meets in Shahjahanpur to decide on the train plan.

C. Match

Write the letter of the right meaning in the box.

Word or name		What it is	
1	HRA	B	A. A secret group Ram Prasad started
2	Mera Janm	D	B. Hindustan Republican Association, the secret group
3	Arya Samaj	E	C. A poetry gathering
4	Mushaira	C	D. A poem by Ram Prasad, “My Birth”
5	Matrivedi	A	E. A Hindu reform movement

D. Think and write

1. The story says the river escape comes from later retellings and has no police report. How should a historian treat a story like that?

Treat it as a later retelling. The chapter says the river escape comes from later accounts and no police report of it has been found. A historian reports it as "said to have happened" and does not state it as a fact.

2. The plate-sharing story comes from a biography written long after. Why does the book still tell it, and what does it say about how it is told?

The book tells it because it shows how people remember the friendship. The chapter labels it as a story from a biography written many years later. There is no letter or diary from the time.

3. Ashfaq argued against the plan and then went along. Is that loyalty or something else? Explain your view.

Open answer. Good answers use the facts: he argued against the plan, then joined his friends anyway. Some will call it loyalty, some will say he should have walked away. Accept any view that gives a reason.

4. What did the group hope to get from robbing a train?

Money for guns, for printing leaflets and for travelling from town to town. They thought a train's government money was really India's money.

SOURCE DETECTIVE: THE PLATE STORY.

Told later. A story can be loved and still be marked as a later retelling. The book keeps it because it shows how people remember the friendship, and says plainly where it comes from.

Act Two: The Night

Near Kakori, 9 August 1925

A. True or false

1	The train was the Number 8 Down, going from Shahjahanpur to Lucknow.	True
2	The men on the train told passengers to stay inside.	True
3	Ahmad Ali was a train guard.	False
4	About ten men took part in the action.	True
5	Chandrashekhar Azad was arrested a few days later.	False
6	Roshan Singh was sentenced for the Bamrauli robbery.	True
7	Kakori was the first of the four robberies in the case.	False
8	Bismil decided, after two robberies of rich men's homes, to take only government money.	True

Corrections: 3. Ahmad Ali was a lawyer. 5. Azad was never arrested. 7. Kakori was the fourth, the last.

B. Order of events

Put the steps of the action in the order the book gives them. Write 1 to 5.

3	The men shout to the passengers to stay inside.
1	Someone pulls the emergency chain.
5	The men break open the metal box with a hammer.
2	The guard is held down and the driver is pushed down from the engine.
4	Some of the men climb into the guard's van.

C. Match

Write the letter of the right meaning in the box.

Word or name			What it is
1	Bamrauli	B	A. The special judge
2	Bichpuri	D	B. Robbery of 25 December 1924 in Pilibhit
3	Dwarkapur	E	C. A lawyer who was a passenger on the train
4	Ahmad Ali	C	D. Robbery of March 1925 in Pilibhit
5	Hamilton	A	E. Robbery of May 1925 in Pratapgarh

D. Think and write

1. Passengers were told to stay inside and promised they were safe. Why do you think the group wanted to say that?

So that passengers would stay inside and keep out of the way. The group wanted only the government's money and said so.

2. The man named as the one who fired got fourteen years; Lahiri, named as a leader, was sentenced to die. Does that seem fair? What do you need to know to decide?

Open answer, but it must rest on facts. Gupta, named as the one who fired, got fourteen years. Lahiri, named by the judge as a leader and "responsible for the death", was sentenced to death. The chapter says the sources do not explain why the sentences differed so much, so a careful student says what more is needed (the judgment itself).

3. How can a man be sentenced in the Kakori case and not have been at Kakori?

The Kakori case joined four robberies into one trial. Roshan Singh was tried for the Bamrauli robbery, where a man was killed. Two sources say he was not on the train.

4. Three villagers died in the robberies before the train. Why is it right to remember them too?

They died too. A fair story keeps both in view: the young men's love for their country and the people who lost their lives.

SOURCE DETECTIVE: THE MONEY.

Any careful answer is fine. A good one names the sources and gives the range: "The court history gives 4,553 rupees, the police report 4,601, and one encyclopedia about 8,000. The sources do not agree." Students should not pick one and hide the others.

Act Three: The Hunt

1925 to 1927

A. True or false

1	The first police report was written on 11 August 1925.	True
2	The report was written in Hindi.	False
3	The report said 20 to 25 unknown men took part.	True
4	Ashfaq hid in Daltonganj and told people he was from a farming family in Mathura.	True
5	A friend in Delhi helped Ashfaq leave India.	False
6	The first trial was held in Lucknow before a special judge, Mr Hamilton.	True
7	Ashfaq was tried together with the main group.	False
8	The judge gave his decision on 6 April 1927.	True

Corrections: 2. The report was written in Urdu, and later translated into Hindi. 5. The friend gave him away to the police. 7. Ashfaq was tried separately, with Sachindra Nath Bakshi.

B. Match

Write the letter of the right meaning in the box.

Word or name		What it is
1 Section 396	B	A. Tried with Ashfaq, sentenced to life
2 Daltonganj	D	B. The law for robbery by a gang in which someone is killed
3 Jagat Narain	E	C. Lawyers who stood up for accused men who had nobody
4 C. B. Gupta and H. N. Misra	C	D. The town where Ashfaq worked as a clerk
5 Bakshi	A	E. The famous lawyer hired by the government

C. Think and write

1. The report says 20 to 25 unknown robbers. There were about ten. What does that tell you about early police reports?

Early reports are written fast, by people who do not yet know the facts. The police wrote “20 to 25 unknown men”, but there were about ten. First reports can be wrong, and they are still useful.

2. Ashfaq's boss loved Urdu poetry and raised his salary. What does this tell you about the double life he led?

By day he was a clerk from Mathura with a false name. In his heart he was still a poet and a revolutionary. His boss loved Urdu poetry and liked his verses, so even in hiding he kept writing. Accept any answer that sees the two lives.

3. The chapter lists many numbers that old records give differently. Pick one and explain how you would try to settle it.

Open answer. A good plan: find the closest source to the event (a court record), compare the two dates, and if nothing settles it, show both. Example: the trial began on 4 January 1926 (National Book Trust book) or 1 May 1926 (English Wikipedia).

4. Why were the accused put on trial for a plot as well as for the robberies?

The police saw that pistols and bullets at several crime scenes looked alike, and that a train hold-up was unusual. They decided it was a plan by a group. The charges were plotting to end British rule, and taking part in robberies in which people were killed.

SOURCE DETECTIVE: THE TRIAL BEGINS.

From 4 January 1926 to 6 April 1927 is about fifteen months. From 1 May 1926 it is almost eleven. Neither is eight. So “about 8 months” may count only the hearings, or it may be loose. The lesson: a number from one source can be off, so check it against others.

Act Four and Epilogue: The Last Days

December 1927 and after

A. True or false

1	The memorandum to the Viceroy was signed by 78 members of the Central Legislature.	True
2	Muhammad Ali Jinnah and Madan Mohan Malaviya both put their names to it.	True
3	The Viceroy, Lord Irwin, agreed to spare the four men.	False
4	Rajendra Lahiri was hanged on 17 December 1927, two days before the others.	True
5	Bismil wrote his life story on scraps of paper in Gorakhpur jail.	True
6	Bismil was hanged in Faizabad.	False
7	Ashfaqulla Khan was 27 years old when he was hanged.	True
8	The 2006 film Rang De Basanti is a record of exactly what happened.	False

Corrections: 3. The Viceroy refused. 6. Bismil was hanged in Gorakhpur; Ashfaq was hanged in Faizabad. 8. A film is a story, not a record.

B. Match

Write the letter of the right meaning in the box.

Word or name		What it is
1 Gorakhpur	B	A. Wrote the memorandum to the Viceroy
2 Faizabad	D	B. Bismil was hanged here
3 Allahabad	E	C. Rajendra Lahiri was hanged here
4 Gonda	C	D. Ashfaqulla Khan was hanged here
5 Malaviya	A	E. Roshan Singh was hanged here

C. Think and write

1. Malaviya and Jinnah belonged to different parties and faiths, yet both signed. What does that show?

Malaviya and Jinnah belonged to different parties and different faiths. On this one matter their names stood on the same page. It shows that people who disagreed about nearly everything could still agree that these young men should not be hanged.

2. What reason is given for the hanging being moved, and why does the story say it cannot be proven?

The National Book Trust book says the government feared a rescue, and names Azad and Manmathnath Gupta. No government record or official order was seen. Another source gives no reason. So the dates are known and the reason is not proven.

3. The story says to keep two columns: what many sources say, and what only one source says. Try this on one passage.

Open, with an example. Roshan Singh: three sources agree he went to the gallows with the Gita and cried “Vande Mataram”. That goes in the first column. The funeral crowd and the statue in Naini come from one source only (Webdunia). That goes in the second.

4. Bismil wrote about his mistakes and doubts as well as his brave deeds. Why does that make his book more believable?

He wrote about mistakes, doubts and fears, not only brave deeds. A writer who admits faults is easier to believe than one who only praises himself. The chapter says this is what makes the book special.

5. Why is a film “not history”, according to the story, and why can it still be useful?

A film is a story made for a cinema audience, so details can be changed. It can still make people curious, and curiosity is a good place to start.

SOURCE DETECTIVE: ROSHAN SINGH'S LETTER.

13 December fits better, because 19 December is six days later. 6 December is almost two weeks before. We still cannot be sure, because the originals were not seen, and the letters come from a book written in 2009.

ACTIVITY

Put the story in order: key

Rank	Date	Event	Listed as
1	Oct 1924	The group is named the Hindustan Republican Association, at a meeting in Cawnpore.	#5
2	25 Dec 1924	The Bamrauli robbery in Pilibhit. A wrestler who stood up to the robbers is killed.	#12
3	Mar and May 1925	Two more house robberies, Bichpuri and Dwarkapur. A person dies at each.	#7
4	8 Aug 1925	The group meets in Shahjahanpur to decide on the train plan.	#2
5	9 Aug 1925	The Number 8 Down is stopped near Kakori. Ahmad Ali is killed.	#14
6	11 Aug 1925	The police report is written in Urdu at Kakori police station.	#9
7	26 Sep 1925	Nine men are arrested in one day, among them Roshan Singh.	#4
8	26 Oct 1925	Bismil is arrested at Shahjahanpur.	#16
9	10 Nov 1925	Lahiri is arrested in Calcutta at a secret bomb factory.	#11
10	Jan or May 1926 ★	The trial begins in Lucknow. The sources disagree on the date.	#1
11	7 Dec 1926	Ashfaqulla is arrested in Delhi after more than a year on the run.	#13
12	6 Apr 1927	The judge gives his judgment: three sentenced to death, fifteen to prison.	#6
13	Aug 1927 ★	The Chief Court keeps the death sentences. The sources disagree on the day.	#15
14	16 Sep 1927	The final appeal goes to the Privy Council and the King-Emperor. It is refused.	#8
15	17 Dec 1927	Rajendra Lahiri is hanged at Gonda, two days early.	#3
16	19 Dec 1927	Bismil, Roshan Singh and Ashfaqulla Khan are hanged.	#10

★ The sources disagree on the date: the trial began on 4 January 1926 or 1 May 1926; the Chief Court decided on 11 or 22 August 1927. "Listed as" is the number on the pupil sheet.

Quiz answers

#	Question	Answer
1	What was the number of the train that was stopped near Kakori?	A. 8 Down
2	Whose Mauser pistol was handed to Manmathnath Gupta?	B. Ashfaqulla Khan's
3	What were the passengers told?	B. To stay inside, because only government money was wanted
4	What was Ahmad Ali's job?	C. Lawyer
5	Which of the four hanged men, according to two sources, was not on the train?	A. Roshan Singh
6	For which robbery was Roshan Singh sentenced?	B. Bamrauli
7	In what language was the first police report written?	C. Urdu
8	Who was the government's lawyer in the trial?	A. Pandit Jagat Narain
9	How many members of the Central Legislature signed the memorandum to the Viceroy?	B. 78
10	Which of the four was hanged first, on 17 December 1927?	A. Rajendra Lahiri
11	What job did Ashfaqulla do while hiding in Daltonganj?	B. Clerk
12	On what did Bismil write his life story in Gorakhpur jail?	A. Scraps of paper