

ENGLISH



THE BROWNING VERSION

~Summary~

-by Terence Rattigan

Mr Frank Converses with Taplow

The scene of the play is set in a school. The play opens with a sixteen year old boy, Taplow, who has been detained by his teacher to compensate for his one days' absence. He is waiting for his teacher, Mr Crocker-Harris, who has not yet arrived. Another teacher, Mr Frank, finds Taplow waiting in the room and starts talking with him.

Taplow introduces himself and informs him that he is a student in the lower fifth grade. He feels that he would specialise next term if he got promoted. He also tells Mr Frank that Mr Crocker-Harris does not tell the students their results beforehand like the other teachers. Mr Frank is surprised. He admits that the headmaster announces the results on the last day but that's no criterion. Taplow says that it is only Mr Crocker-Harris who abides by this rule of not telling the students about their results before they are officially announced.

Mr Frank asks Taplow whether he would pursue science if he gets a favourable result. Taplow is elated by the thought. Mr Frank laments sadly that he gets all the poor students. But Taplow says that he is extremely interested in science. Moreover, he would not have to read useless plays like 'The Agamemnon'. Mr Frank is a bit astonished at the thoughts of Taplow about 'The Agamemnon'. Thinking that he has gone too far, Taplow corrects himself, saying that the plot is good, but the way it is taught is terrible.

Discussion About Mr Crocker-Harris

Mr Frank thinks that Taplow sounds a little bitter as he has been detained. Taplow informs him that he is there for extra work. Mr Frank is more than surprised to hear that Taplow is doing extra work on the last day before the end of the term.

Taplow informs him that he had missed a day of school the previous week due to illness and so Mr Crocker-Harris asked him to do extra work in place of that. Mr Frank tries to calm him by telling him that he would certainly get his result the next day for being a good boy. But Taplow feels the other way. He asserts that such rules do not work with Mr Crocker-Harris, as he is not like other teachers who appreciate students who do extra work.

Taplow's Criticism of Mr Crocker-Harris

The day before, Taplow had asked Mr Crocker-Harris about his result. He tells Mr Frank about what happened. He starts copying Mr Crocker-Harris voice. Mr Crocker-Harris had told him that

he had given Taplow what he deserved, no less and no more. Taplow is afraid that Mr Crocker-Harris would have rather marked him down for doing extra work.

According to Taplow, Mr Crocker-Harris is a different kind of teacher. He is too strict and 'hardly human'.

Mr Frank pretends to be unhappy, but encourages Taplow to imitate his teacher once again. Mr Frank asks Taplow at what time he was supposed to meet Mr Crocker-Harris. Taplow informs him that he was called at six-thirty.

Mr Frank points out that Mr Crocker-Harris was already ten minutes late. He suggests that Taplow could go off and play golf. However, Taplow seems shocked at this suggestion and is scared that Mr Crocker-Harris might follow him home. Mr Frank tells Taplow that he envies Mr Crocker-Harris because all the students are scared of him.

Mr Crocker-Harris' Personality

Taplow makes fun of Mr Crocker-Harris by saying that it would have been better if he were a sadist, as it would mean he had some feelings. But he is hard like a nut. He is heartless. He possesses no feelings at all.

Taplow feels that Mr Crocker-Harris is all dried up and hates that people like him. Taplow finds it funny that in spite of all the crankiness, he somehow likes Mr Crocker-Harris.

Taplow recalls an incident when Mr Crocker-Harris made one of his classic jokes. It was in Latin, so nobody laughed. Out of sheer courtesy, Taplow laughed at the joke. This proved to be a bad move by Taplow.

Mr Crocker-Harris complimented him by saying that Taplow's Latin had improved greatly. Mr Crocker-Harris then asked Taplow to explain the joke to the whole class. Just then the door opens and Millie Crocker-Harris enters.

Millie Crocker-Harris Brings Relief to Taplow

Millie Crocker-Harris, Mr Crocker-Harris' wife, is a thin woman in her late thirties. She is smartly dressed, unlike other schoolmaster's wives. She comes in unnoticed. Taplow was still imitating Mr Crocker-Harris when Mr Frank noticed her and broke off suddenly. Taplow gets frantic and asks Mr Frank if Millie Crocker-Harris could have heard their conversation. Mr Frank thinks that she did. Taplow fears that if she tells anything to Mr Crocker-Harris, then he will surely get a bad result.

Millie Crocker-Harris asks Taplow if he was waiting for her husband. She further informs him that her husband is busy at the Bursar's and might get late. She asks him to leave. Taplow is doubtful and says Mr Crocker-Harris had particularly asked him to come.

She advises him to go away for a quarter of an hour and then come back. Taplow is scared and asks what if Mr Crocker-Harris comes back. Millie Crocker-Harris gives him relief by saying that

she'll take the blame. She gives him a prescription and sends him to the chemist to get it filled. Convinced, Taplow accepts the proposal and leaves happily.

Conclusion of the Browning Version

Through the Browning Version summary, the writer wants to say that teachers are not as bad as they seem all they want is good for their students.