

The Browning Version

by Terence Rattigan

The play presents a conversation between a lower fifth grade science student, Taplow and Frank, a teacher.

A chance meeting between Taplow and Frank

The scene of the play is set in a school. The play opens with a sixteen year old boy, Taplow who has come to do extra work for his teacher, Crocker-Harris. He is waiting for his teacher, who has not yet arrived. Another teacher, Frank, finds Taplow waiting in the room and strikes a conversation with him.

Taplow awaiting his result

From the conversation between Frank and Taplow, we are informed that Taplow is waiting for his result to be declared on the following day. He is keen to specialise in science provided he gets a favourable result. The uniqueness of Mr. Crocker-Harris is hinted as he does not tell the results like the other teachers do. He follows the rule of the headmaster declaring the results on the last day of the term.

Taplow's views on art and science

Their conversation provides us an insight into the mind of Taplow. He lets Frank know how much he dislikes the play 'Agamemnon'. He is more interested in science. He admits that though the play is not that bad, the way it is taught is terrible- "Just a lot of Greek words strung together and fifty lines if you get them wrong".

The question of the "extra work"

Taplow is doing extra work as he had missed a class a week ago. Frank remarks that Taplow will certainly get his "remove" for doing the extra work. But Taplow feels the other way. He asserts such sort of rules do not work with Mr. Crocker-Harris, as he is not like other teachers who appreciate the students who do extra work.

Taplow's views about Crocker-Harris

As per Taplow, Crocker-Harris is a different kind of teacher. He is too strict and 'hardly human'. Unlike other teachers, he does not tell his students their result before the judgement day. Taplow had asked Harris about his remove and in response Harris told him that he has given Taplow exactly what he deserves- "No less; and certainly no more".

Frank's suggestion to Taplow

After calling Taplow for extra work, Crocker himself is late by ten minutes. Frank points that as Crocker is late, Taplow has a chance to leave and play golf. However, Taplow seems shocked at this suggestion and is scared that Mr. Crocker-Harris might follow him home.

Further contemplation on Crocker-Harris's character

Frank admits envying Mr. Harris for the effect he has on his students. He asks Taplow if Mr. Harris beats them. However, Taplow tells Frank that unlike one or two of the other teachers, Mr. Harris is not a "sadist". He is not a sort of a person who would beat students and vent his frustration. He is hard like a nut. He is heartless. He possesses no feelings at all.

Taplow's unusual liking towards Crocker-Harris

Taplow admits that in spite of all this, he still likes Crocker. The boy narrates an incident when he laughed at a classical joke cracked by Harris, though he had not understood it. It was a gesture from Taplow's side to be polite to him.

Millie Crocker-Harris

At this point, Millie Crocker-Harris enters the room. She was Mr. Crocker-Harris's wife. She suggests Taplow to run away for a quarter of an hour and come back. She advises him to leave as Harris has been at Bursar's and may take quite a time to get back.

The behaviour and attitude of Mrs. Mille Crocker Harris, baffles Taplow. He is not willing to leave for it has been the order of his teacher whom he fears to disobey. Mille assures him that she will take the blame on herself. Proposing an excuse for

his absence, she hands Taplow a prescription asking him to take it to a chemist and get it made up for Harris. Convinced Taplow accepts the proposal and leaves Frank and Mrs. Crocker Harris behind.

CHILDHOOD

– *Markus Natten*

The poem *Childhood* begins with the poet pondering over ‘when’ was it that he lost his childhood. He wonders if it was the time when he crossed the age of eleven or the time when he started realizing that there is no real existence of heaven and hell as they could not be geographically located in maps.

He wonders if he lost his childhood the moment he realised that adults were not all they pretended to be or when he recognised that the adults, who spoke and preached of love, themselves ‘did not act so lovingly’.

The poet asks if he lost his childhood when he realised that he has a mind of his own or that he can choose his own way, guided by his mind now capable of producing thoughts and opinions that are different from other people.

The poet speculates as to ‘where’ his childhood disappeared. Though he is not aware of the day he lost his childhood, he knows that it has gone to some forgotten place, in an infant’s innocent face.