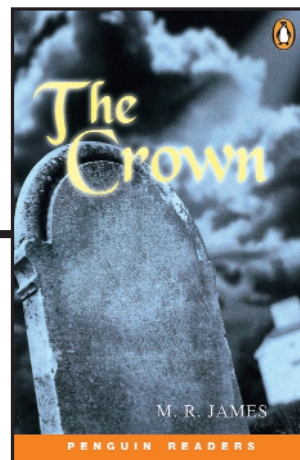


Penguin Readers Factsheets

Teacher's Notes

The Crown

by M. R. James



Level 1 The Crown

Summary

The Crown is a classic English ghost story. It is April in Seaburgh – a small English seaside town. There is a magic crown under the ground in this town. It is very important. The crown protects England – and William Agers protects the crown.

Paxton is on holiday in Seaburgh. He learns the story of the magic crown and he is very interested. One night he looks for the crown on a hill near the sea. He finds it and takes it. He sees a shadow behind him and runs quickly back to the hotel. Maybe the shadow is William Agers. But Paxton knows that William Agers is dead!

Now Paxton is afraid. He wants to take the crown and put it back in the ground. But he needs help. He meets two men at his hotel and he asks them for help. Together, the three men hide the crown in the ground again.

The next day Paxton's new friends follow him to the beach. They see two people's footprints in the sand – Paxton's footprints and some strange, long footprints as well. The friends are afraid. They follow the footprints along the beach. At last they find Paxton. He is lying on the sand and he is dead. The ghost of William Agers protected the crown – and it protects the crown today too. The story ends with a strong warning: 'Don't go to the small town of Seaburgh.'

About M. R. James

M. R. James was born in 1862 in a small town in Kent in the south of England. He loved old books, history and language from an early age. Later, he studied and taught these things at Cambridge University. His ghost and horror stories are famous because they are clever and frightening. His great knowledge of history gives his stories a lot of detail – and the places and characters seem very real. M. R. James died in 1936.

Background and themes

Ghosts and magic: Not everything around us can be easily explained or controlled. We should learn when to accept things that we don't really understand.

Secrecy and mystery: There is a lot of incomplete information in the story. We don't know Paxton's full name. We never learn the name of the story's narrator. We don't know exactly how Paxton is killed... This makes the story mysterious and exciting.

Respect and trust: Paxton asks two strangers to trust and respect him – but he is not willing to respect the wishes of the people of Seaburgh.

Communicative activities

The following teacher-led activities cover the same sections of text as the exercises at the back of the reader.

CHAPTER 1

Before reading

- Students read the Introduction on page iii. They write a few sentences to answer the questions in paragraph 3, ('Where does the shadow come from? What does it want from Paxton? What is the crown, and why is it important for England?'). Encourage students to imagine the story. Later, when students have read the book, they can look back at these answers and compare their expectations with the real story.

After reading

- Students work in pairs. Ask them to think about Paxton's story. Do they believe it? Why/why not?

CHAPTERS 2 AND 3

Before reading

- 1 In pairs, students look at the pictures of Paxton on pages 13 and 15. What is he doing? Where is he? What time of day is it? How does he feel?
- 2 In pairs, students look at the picture on page 25. Who are the people in the picture? What are they saying? Students write the dialogue of the two (standing) men. Some pairs read their dialogue to the rest of the class.

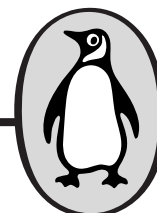
After reading

- Have a classroom discussion: Does the story make you afraid? Why/why not? Do you believe in ghosts? How do you feel about the ending of the story?

Extra words

There are twenty extra words, in addition to the 300 headwords, used in each Penguin Readers Level 1 title. The extra words used in this title are:

afraid beach believe church crown danger far
footprints gravestone ground help hill last magic
protect put shadow shout spade wind



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Student's activities

ACTIVITIES BEFORE READING THE BOOK

- Look at the front cover of the book. What do you see? Where is this picture? What is the story about? Talk to other students.

ACTIVITIES WHILE READING THE BOOK

Chapter 1

- 1 Write the correct part of the verb 'to be' in the sentences below. Do not look at the book.

Please listen to my story. It started on a dark, dark night in Seaburgh. Seaburgh _____ a small English town near the sea. The beach _____ good and long, but the sea _____ usually very cold.

I _____ in Seaburgh with my friend, Henry Long. We _____ in the hotel one evening and suddenly, there _____ a noise at the door. A young man came in.

'What _____ wrong?' I asked. '_____ you OK?'

'No. I _____ afraid,' he said, and he started his story.

- 2 Answer the questions:
 - (a) Is Paxton ill? What is wrong with him?
 - (b) Is Paxton staying in the same hotel as the two friends?
 - (c) Does Paxton believe the story of the three crowns?
 - (d) Why isn't William Agers talking now?
 - (e) Who has the crown now?

Chapter 2

- 1 Eight of the words in the paragraph below are not right. Correct them. Do not look at the book.

I had a lot of answers. How old was the crown? Was it light or happy? Paxton put the crown black in the back bag. He went to the floor, but then she stopped.

'Wait! Go before me and cook in your room,' he said.

'But why?' Long said. 'We're the only visitors in this hospital!'

- 2 How does Paxton take the crown? Put these sentences in the right order, from 1 to 7:
 - (a) Paxton took his spade to the hill and looked for the crown.
 - (b) The Agers's book was open at William Agers's name.
 - (c) Paxton ate some food and went back to his room.
 - (d) Paxton took the crown from the ground.
 - (e) Paxton noticed a shadow in the trees for the first time.
 - (f) Paxton put the crown in his bag.
 - (g) Paxton ran back to the hotel.

Chapter 3

- 1 Who says these sentences? Who are they speaking to?
 - (a) 'Did you sleep well?'
 - (b) 'I want to stay in the the hotel this morning.'
 - (c) 'He went to the beach. He wanted to see you and Mr Long.'
 - (d) 'Was it a person? Perhaps it was an animal.'
 - (e) 'I don't understand.'
 - (f) 'Why were you on the beach? What did you see?'
- 2 Are the sentences right or wrong?
 - (a) The three men go for a walk in the morning.
 - (b) Paxton is at the hotel at three o'clock.
 - (c) Mr Long and his friend shout to Paxton from the front of the hotel.
 - (d) William Agers's dead body is on the beach.
 - (e) Paxton's dead body is on the beach.
 - (f) William Agers is dead. But he protected the crown with magic.

ACTIVITIES AFTER READING THE BOOK

- 1 On Paxton's last day he writes some letters in the morning. Who does he write to? Think of three different people. Now, choose one person and write Paxton's letter to this person.
- 2 Work in pairs.

Student A: You are a policeman in Seaburgh. There is a dead man on the beach. Listen to Henry Long's story and ask him some more questions.

Student B: You are Henry Long. You find a dead man on the beach. It is Paxton. Tell your story to the policeman and answer his questions.
- 3 When are you afraid? Write a list of five things. Then tell some other students about your list. Do you have the same things on your list?

