

# CHAPTER - 13

## THE BROWNING VERSION

### QUESTIONS FROM TEXTBOOK SOLVED

**Question 1. Comment on the attitude shown by Taplow towards Crocker-Harris.**

**Answer:** Taplow is respectful towards Mr. Crocker-Harris and likes him for his principles. He criticises him for being a feelingless person yet regards him an extraordinary master. He is mortally afraid of him and dare not cut the extra work even on the last day of the term.

**Question 2. Does Frank seem to encourage Taplow's comments on Crocker-Harris?**

**Answer:** Yes, Frank seems to encourage Taplow's comments on Crocker-Harris. He shows appreciation for Taplow's imitation of Mr Crocker-Harris and asks him to repeat it. On smother occasion, Frank tells Taplow not to keep a good joke (narrated in the style of Mr Crocker Harris) to himself but to tell it to others. ,

**Question 3. What do you gather about Crocker-Harris from the play?**

**Answer:** Mr Crocker-Harris appears as a stem master who is a man of principles and stickler to the rules. He believes in fair assessment of his students and is not swayed by . emotions, as the man is hardly human. He is not a sadist, but strict in performance of his duties. Even on his last day at school, when he is over-busy in his own affairs, he does not neglect his duty towards his students.

#### Talking About the Text

**Discuss with your partners.**

**Question 1. Talking about teachers among friends.**

**Answer:** Commenting on their teachers is something that most students do. Students are quite intelligent and keen observers. Teachers are their role models and the students judge their performance not only on the basis of their mastery over the subject hut also by their method of teaching, communication skills, interaction with students and their general nature and behaviour. Teachers must not feel offended to learn the nick name their dear students have showered upon them. Teachers may sometimes think that the boys don't understand anything, but this is wrong. Talking about teachers among friends is a favourite pastime of students. They appreciate their virtues and condemn their shortcomings. Even strict persons

win the love and admiration of students if they are men of principles.

**Question 2. The manner you adopt when you talk about a teacher to other teachers.**

**Answer:** We should be respectful and polite when we talk about a teacher to other teachers. Normal courtesy requires that we should add "Mr' "Miss' or "Mrs' before the name of the teacher and use his/her full name. A teacher should never be mentioned by the nick name he/she has been given. In other words, our approach should be quite formal. The dignity of a teacher should not be lowered before another, even if the person being talked about lacks some qualities you like most. Our remarks should never be derogatory or rude. It is bad manners to run down our teachers and specially so if it is done in the presence of other teachers. We are judged by our actions as well as words. The other teachers may form a very low and unfavourable opinion about us on the basis of a lapse on our part. Hence we must be extra cautions during our interactions with our teachers.

**Question 3. Reading plays is more interesting than studying science.**

**Answer:** Science is based on the study of some facts, concepts, principles and their application. It demands cool reasoning and concentration of mind to solve numerical problems and to balance complicated equations. One has to be alert, regular, systematic and punctual. If we miss one class, we miss the link. On the other hand, reading plays provides us more amusement. Most of the plays contain a beautiful plot and a number of characters with diverse traits. Their actions, reactions and interactions provide a lot of fun and laughter and make the reading of the play quite interesting. Witty i dialogues, irony of situations and intricacies of plots make the plays full of humanity and quite absorbing. We never feel bored while reading a play. Every dialogue or action unfolds something new and we eagerly wait for what is to follow next. The study of science proves dull and cold as compared to the interesting reading of plays.

**C. Working with Words**

**A sadist is a person who gets pleasure out of giving pain to others.**

**Given below are some dictionary definitions of certain kinds of persons. Find out the words that fit these descriptions:**

**1. A person who considers it very important that things should be correct or genuine eg. in the use of language or in the arts: P...**

**A person who believes that war and violence are wrong and will not fight in a war: P...**

**A person who believes that nothing really exists: N...**

**A person who is always hopeful and expects the best in all things: O...**

**A person who follows generally accepted norms of behaviour: C ....**

**A person who believes that material possessions are all that matter in life: M...**

**Answer:** 1. purist 2. pacifist 3. nihilist

4. optimist 5. conformist 6. materialist

**II. Notice the following words in the text. Guess the meaning from the context.**

➤ <i>remove</i>	➤ <i>kept in</i>	➤ <i>sadist</i>
➤ <i>slackers</i>	➤ <i>got carried away</i>	➤ <i>shrivelled up</i>
➤ <i>muck</i>	➤ <i>cut</i>	

**Answer:**

- **remove** : a form/class or division (in a school)
- **slackers** : persons who are lazy and avoid work
- **muck** : **dirt/mud** : something very unpleasant
- **kept in** : made to study in classroom after school hours

- **got carried away** : got very excited; lost control of feelings
- **cut**: miss class
- **sadist**: a person who gets pleasure out of giving pain to others.
- **shrivelled up** : squeezed up

## **MORE QUESTIONS SOLVED**

### **A. Short Answer Type Questions**

**Question 1. What do you learn about Tap low from the initial conversation between him and Mr Frank?**

**Answer:** Tap low is a boy of sixteen. He is still in the lower fifth. He can't specialise until the next term if he gets his form/division all right. Since his master, Mr Crocker-Harris has not told him the result, he will have to wait till the next day to learn his fate.

**Question 2. "You know that he's like, sir" says Tap low. What leads him to say so? What light does this throw on the man talked about?**

**Answer:** Taplow does not know if he has got his form. It is because, his master, Mr Crocker-Harris does not tell them the results like the other masters. He is a bit different. When Frank says that a rule says that form results should only be announced by a headmaster on the last day of term, Tap low says that none else except Mr Crocker- Harris pays attention to it. This shows that the man is a stickler to the rules.

**Question 3. Which course of study does Tap low prefer and why?**

**Answer:** Tap low prefers science to literature. He finds it a good deal more exciting than his play which he considers quite unpleasant.

**Question 4. How does Tap low react to Mr Frank's query? 'And you considered view is that the Agamemnon is muck?'**

**Answer:** Tap low modifies his stand. He says that he doesn't think the play is a muck. It has a good plot in fact, a wife murdering her husband and all that. His opinion is based on the way it is taught to them—just a lot of Greek words strung together and fifty lines if one gets them wrong. Thus Tap low draws a fine distinction between the study of science and literature.

**Question 5. For whom is Tap low waiting and why? How does he feel?**

**Answer:** Tap low is waiting for his master, Mr Crocker-Harris. He has come in to do extra work on the last day of term because he missed a day last week when he was ill. Since the weather is quite fine, he feels quite unhappy to be confined in a room. He might as well be playing golf.

**Question 6. How according to Tap low Mr Crocker-Harris is unlike other masters?**

**Answer:** Other masters would certainly give a chap, a form after his taking extra work, but Mr Crocker-Harris is unlike them. When Taplow asked him about his form, he told the boy that he had given him exactly what he deserved : no less; and certainly no more. Taplow is afraid that he might have marked him down, rather than up for taking extra work.

**Question 7. How does Tap low react to Frank's suggestion, "Why don't you cut? You could still play golf before lock-up"?**

**Answer:** Tap low is really shocked at this suggestion. He reacts strongly and says that he couldn't cut Mr. Crocker-Harris. It has never been done during his stay there. If he did so, nobody could predict the consequences. Perhaps he would follow Tap low home or do some such extraordinary thing.

**Question 8. Why do you think, Frank envies Mr Crocker-Harris? What possible reasons make**

**him so unique?**

**Answer:** Frank envies Mr Crocker-Harris for the effect he seems to have on the boys in the form. They all seem scared to death of him. He wants to know what he does: whether he beats them all or does something else which is awe inspiring. Taplow informs Mr Frank that Mr Crocker-Harris is not a sadist.

**Question 9. How according to Taplow does Mr Crocker-Harris differ from other masters in his reactions towards others?**

**Answer:** Mr Crocker-Harris is not a sadist like some other masters. He does not get pleasure out of giving pain. If he were a sadist, he would not be so frightening. It would show he has some feelings, but he hasn't any. He's all dry like a nut. He seems to hate people to like him, but other masters like being liked.

**Question 10. What leads Mr Frank to comment "I'm sure you're exaggerating"?**

**Answer:** Taplow says that Mr Crocker-Harris seems to hate people to like him. Yet, in spite of everything, Taplow does rather like him. He can't help him. He thinks that sometimes Mr Crocker-Harris notices it and that seems to shrivel him up even more. This observation of Taplow seems far-fetched. So Mr Frank remarks that he is exaggerating.

**Question 11. How does Taplow refute the charge that he is exaggerating?**

**Answer:** Taplow says that the other day Mr Crocker-Harris made one of his classical jokes in the class. Nobody understood it, so no one laughed. At last Taplow laughed because he knew the master had meant it as funny. He did so out of ordinary common politeness. Secondly he felt a bit sorry for him for having made a poor joke. Mr Crocker-Harris did not praise Taplow for it.

**Question 12. How did Mr Crocker-Harris react to Taplow's action of laughing at his joke?**

**Answer:** He noticed that Taplow had laughed at his little joke. He confessed that he was pleased at the progress Taplow had made in his Latin. It was clear from the fact that he had understood so readily what the rest of the form did not. Then he asked Taplow to explain the joke to the rest of the class.

**Question 13. How do Taplow and Frank react to Millie's arrival?**

**Answer:** Frank seems infinitely relieved to see Millie. On the other hand Taplow is nervous. He is unable to control his emotions and whispers to Frank if he thinks she has heard their conversation. He is afraid that if she did so and tells her husband, he'll lose his form.

**Question 14. What does Millie tell Taplow about her husband? What assignment does she offer the young boy?**

**Answer:** She tells Taplow that her husband is at the Bursar's and might be there quite a long time. If she were him, she would go. Taplow remarks that Mr Crocker-Harris had especially asked him to come. She then asks him to run to the chemist and bring medicine according to the prescription. Thus he could do a job for him. She would take the blame if he came before Taplow returned.

## **B. Long Answer Type Questions**

**Question 1. What do you learn about the system of education in old British schools from the play 'The Browning Version'?**

**Answer:** 1° old British schools much stress was laid on the study of classical languages—Latin and Greek. Students of the lower fifth form were made to learn a classic play like the Agamemnon. Since the stress was on the acquisition of language, the students found it disinteresting and very unpleasant. They could specialise only after completing fifth form.

There was a system of punishment. For a simple error one had to repeat fifty lines. Students were also "kept in" or called for 'Extra work'. They were mortally afraid of teachers like Mr Crocker-Harris who would abide by rules and show no human feelings. At the same time, the school had teachers who were sadists and others who would break the rules and tell results to the students. Students like Tap low were afraid of hard masters like Mr Crocker-Harris, still they liked him.

**Question 2. What impression do you form about Mr Crocker-Harris on the basis of reading the play 'The Browning Version'?**

**Answer:** Whatever we learn about Mr Crocker-Harris is through reactions of other characters and their comments on him. Even this method of indirect presentation helps us to gather a fair picture of the strict and stern middle-aged master. He is in a class by himself and is totally unlike the other teachers. He is a man of principles and sticks to the rules. Unlike other teachers, he does not divulge the results of the form to the students, since it is the domain of the headmaster. He is not a sadist. He does not beat the students. Even then the students are mortally afraid of him. It is because he is quite strict and shows no emotion, even of anger. He remains calm and composed. He teaches classical languages Greek and Latin. Even his jokes are classical. Students fail to understand them. He is duty conscious. He is leaving the school at the end of term and is quite busy on the last day in his own affairs, still he asks Tap low to come in for 'extra work'. In short, he impresses us with his fine qualities of head and heart.

**Question 3. "This humorous piece is an extract from a play." What according to you makes this extract humorous?**

**Answer:** The play presents a funny situation. Frank, a young science teacher, finds sixteen year old Tap low waiting for his master Mr Crocker-Harris. This lower fifth form student has been asked to come in to do extra work on the last day of the school. Mr Crocker-Harris is leaving the school for good the next day. Being quite busy in settling his own affairs, he has not yet arrived there. Tap low's fears of adverse remarks about his result make us smile. The interaction between Mr Frank and Tap low is quite amusing. The young science teacher encourages Tap low's comments on Crocker-Harris. The manner in which Tap low imitates his master's voice, manner of speaking and diction are quite amusing. The sudden arrival of Millie Crocker Harris in the midst of an imitation of a joke surprises Frank and makes Tap low nervous. Their reactions are quite amusing. Tap low's unwillingness to leave the place and his fears of consequences in case his master returns before his arrival seem genuine but funny. He feels relieved only when Millie offers to take the blame. All these actions seem exaggerated and funny.