
C1 • ADVANCED

Crowley Castle

Full version reader.

Crowley Castle

Fiction · C1 · Advanced · Apex English Graded Readers

Full version content extracted from EPUB.

How to use this reader

Read each chapter once without stopping, and don't worry about every word. Then read it again slowly and underline the language you want to keep. Use the **Ask the teacher** page at the end for your notes, doubts and favourite lines, and bring them to your next Apex class.

Contents

1. CHAPTER ONE
2. CHAPTER TWO
3. CHAPTER THREE
4. CHAPTER FOUR

CHAPTER 1

CHAPTER ONE

The Residents of Crowley Castle

Crowley Castle is nothing more than an ancient ruin on a hill in Sussex nowadays, but in the middle of the eighteenth century, it was the home of Sir Mark Crowley, the last baronet of that name. You can still see how grand it must have been, for some of the walls still stand, although the roof, windows, and doors went long ago. Next to the castle are an old church and a churchyard, where you can see the graves of the Crowley's who are buried there. You can see, for instance, the grave of Lady Amelia Crowley, Sir Mark's wife, who died in 1756, leaving Sir Mark with a lovely little daughter but no male heirs.

The little girl, Theresa, would inherit her mother's fortune, but most of her father's fortune would be inherited by her cousin, Marmaduke Brownlow. Duke, as he was known, was the only son of Sir Mark's sister, but both she and her husband had died and so Duke lived with his Uncle Mark. He was about seven or eight years older than Theresa, and everybody expected that when they were old enough, they would marry.

Theresa had a French nurse called Victorine, who had looked after her mother and now looked after Theresa, almost as if she were Theresa's mother now. She made all the important decisions about Theresa and was constantly with her, making sure that Theresa got everything that she wanted. She loved the child dearly and risked her own life

to nurse Theresa when the child was sick with an infection. Sir Mark was a good-natured but rather lazy man, and he allowed Victorine to choose Theresa's tutors.

The parson's wife, Mrs Hawtrey, who was a distant relative of Sir Mark and whose daughter, Bessy, had lessons together with Theresa, was sometimes consulted about the choice of tutors, but she was too afraid of Victorine to oppose her. Bessy was the same age as Theresa, but she was a much gentler, quieter girl than her classmate. They shared their lessons with Duke, who seemed like a young man to them, while they seemed like children to him.

When the girls were about fifteen years old, Bessy and Theresa quarreled, and Duke, believing that Theresa had been unfair, told her that the quarrel was her fault. Theresa was surprised.

"How can it be my fault? Bessy comes here for lessons, but she doesn't pay for them, so she should try to remember the lessons for me. If she doesn't want to do that, she can stay away because all she will ever be is a maid!"

As soon as she had said it, she was sorry because she could see that Duke thought it was mean. He told her how disappointed he was, and Theresa became so upset that she went to her room in tears.

Victorine found her there and asked what was bothering her.

"It was only something that Duke said, that is all."

"Duke should not say anything to you that you do not want to hear because he is not your husband yet!"

This was the first time that Theresa had heard of the plan that her father had for her. She didn't say anything to Victorine, but walked to the parsonage and apologized to Bessy for being so mean. A few moments later, the girls were friends again; and when Duke next saw them, he was surprised and could only think to himself that women were very strange and that he would never understand them.

Duke was a fine young man by this time and was just finishing his studies at Oxford. Theresa would look at him from time to time, wondering whether she would marry him or not and continually changing her mind about it. He was about to go on a grand tour of Europe, which most young gentlemen did in those days, usually staying away for three years.

Before going on the tour, Duke spoke to Sir Mark about marrying Theresa when he returned, but Sir Mark thought it would be better not to say anything to Theresa about it yet so that she would not worry too much about Duke in his absence. Duke sadly agreed and set out for London the next day, leaving two very disappointed girls behind him. Theresa was angry that he was going, but Bessy was simply sad, and Duke noticed the difference.

Once Duke had gone, Sir Mark was lonely and decided to spend some time in Paris. He remained there for some months and the following year decided to go again, this time taking Theresa and Victorine with him so that Theresa

would also have the experience of living in Europe for a while. He was afraid that Duke might find her too uneducated to be his wife and change his mind about marrying her.

Theresa was overjoyed at the news and kissed her father until she was tired. Then she ran to her room to tell Victorine, and then she ran to the parsonage to tell Bessy. She promised Bessy to bring back some dresses from Paris for her, but Bessy was not very excited by this, which was just as well because the promises were never kept. Sir Mark rented a very good apartment in one of the best streets of Paris, and Victorine was beside herself with joy. Now her young mistress would be seen for the beautiful young woman she was.

They went riding in a handsome carriage behind handsome horses, and Theresa was encouraged to buy whatever clothes she wished and attend whatever operas and plays that were being staged. Sir Mark introduced his daughter to Madame la Duchesse de la Grange, who promised to care for Theresa as if she was her own daughter and took her everywhere. Theresa was admired by all the men she met, particularly by a relative of Madame la Duchesse de la Grange, the Count de la Grange.

He was a handsome man who dressed well; and although Sir Mark heard some rumors about his past, the young man always behaved like a perfect gentleman when he was with Theresa. Victorine was very proud of her young lady and took great care to dress her well and make her look as beautiful as she could whenever she went out, and Theresa

enjoyed the new experience of being popular in a large city. Every night, Victorine listened devotedly to the stories her young mistress told her and asked her to repeat the events that she liked best. Theresa's triumphs were her triumphs as well.

Several French noblemen visited Sir Mark to ask for Theresa's hand in marriage. Alarmed, he wrote to Duke and begged him to come to Paris as soon as he could. However, Duke replied that he still required three months to complete his tour and was eager to see Spain. Sir Mark was annoyed and read the letter to Theresa, who was also annoyed and was kinder to the Count that day than she had been previously. Then, Sir Mark had to go back to England for a few weeks, and he left Theresa, Victorine, and one other servant with Madame la Duchesse de la Grange, and they all stayed in the Duchesse's house.

Of course, the Count was a frequent visitor there, and at every opportunity treated Victorine as if she were Theresa's mother and told her what a wonderful and pretty young mistress she had. He also told her about the large areas of land that he owned and the ancient family to which he belonged, and Victorine soon began to tell Theresa what a wonderful man he was. Victorine, however, did not know that the Count owed far more money than the value of the lands he possessed and that his family had a very bad reputation.

CHAPTER 2

CHAPTER TWO

Marriage, Property, Birth, and Death

The Count continued to be friendly with Victorine and Theresa, and by the time, Sir Mark returned from England he was dismayed to find out that his daughter had secretly married the worthless Count. He said nothing, but his health became poor from that moment, and he soon looked like an old, gray-haired man.

Because Theresa had married him under French law, the Count was able to take all the money that she had inherited from her mother. This made Sir Mark hate France, and he promised that he would never return there. He told his daughter that she was welcome to come and visit him at Crowley Castle, but that her husband must never come with her, for the Count was not welcome under his roof. Sir Mark was also angry with Duke for a few months, because he believed that if Duke had returned to Paris in time, Theresa would not have married the Count.

Duke did eventually go to Paris, but by then Sir Mark had left. Duke heard that many French people felt sorry for the poor English lady that had married the worthless Count, who was spending all her money at the gambling tables. He visited Theresa, who told him she was waiting for her husband to return and take her out. However, the Count did not return, and Duke saw how much this disappointed Theresa.

They talked politely for a while, and then Duke left without meeting the Count. He wanted to visit them again and say goodbye before he left for England, but they did not answer his letters, and in the end he returned to England without seeing them. He did not tell Sir Mark any of this because he knew that it would only make him more miserable.

He helped his uncle by working on the property and visiting the tenants, and he was glad that he could in this way repay the kindness that Sir Mark had always showed him. Duke was busy, but after a while, he found that life in the castle with only Sir Mark as a companion was not as exciting as traveling around Europe, and he was bored. Sometimes he went to visit Mr. Hawtrey in the parsonage, and there, of course, he met Bessy again.

Mrs Hawtrey thought it was a wonderful opportunity for Bessy to meet a rich man and perhaps even marry him. Although she knew about Theresa's unfortunate marriage and how disappointed Sir Mark and Duke were about it, she could see no reason why Duke should remain unmarried for the rest of his life. She thought Bessy would be as good a wife as any other and made sure that Bessy and Duke saw each other frequently.

Gradually, Duke's heart was won by the simple country charms of the parson's daughter. She had loved him for as long as she had known him, simply and purely. A little over a year after Duke's return from Europe, he decided that no girl, apart from perhaps the lost Theresa, could make him happier than Bessy and asked her to marry him.

Meanwhile, very little was heard about Theresa. She wrote letters to Sir Mark, who always sighed and moaned over them but would not tell anybody what she had written. However, even he could not imagine how miserable she had become.

Love had gone out the window long before poverty came in the door. The Count quickly spent all of Theresa's money, as Sir Mark had known he would, and then began to steal her jewels and gamble with them. One evening, she went into her room and found that the diamonds in a frame around a picture of her mother had been taken and the picture ruined. She sat and wept, crying out for her mother and father and all the good things she had lost in her foolish marriage. Victorine found her in her room, sitting on the floor in tears, and she knew what had happened. From that time, she began to watch the Count as a tiger watches its prey.

Then letters came from Bessy and Sir Mark, bringing news of the coming marriage, and Theresa was dismayed. Victorine was only angry. "He should not marry that poor country girl, no matter how pleasant she is! If he really loved you, he should have waited! The Count will not live forever!"

Theresa could not see Victorine's face when she said this, and how evil it looked.

A year went by, and Theresa became more and more miserable, while Duke and Bessy were married and had a little girl. Not long after the baby's birth, Bessy's father

died, which meant that Mrs Hawtrey had to leave the parsonage and find another place to live. Fortunately, the new parson was a bachelor, and he allowed Mrs Hawtrey to stay in the parsonage as a housekeeper. Bessy wanted her mother to live at the castle, but Sir Mark would not allow it because, although he liked Bessy, he did not like her mother and blamed her for the marriage. He longed to see Theresa again and could not help thinking that Bessy was a poor substitute for his beautiful and passionate daughter.

In France, Theresa cried almost every night, although during the day she pretended to be content. She imagined that Bessy and Duke were living happily with Sir Mark and that he never thought about her at all but busied himself with his new granddaughter.

Then, one day, when the Count had lost even more money, she said something to him, which made him very angry, and he punched her. She stood in front of him, white and shaking. The Count laughed at her and left the room. Theresa called Victorine and asked her to bring the other servants to the room. She wanted to show them her bruises so that they could be witnesses when she took her revenge. However, Victorine didn't call the other servants but gave Theresa some medicine which made her sleepy. When she fell asleep, Victorine looked at her bruises for a long time with an evil smile on her face.

She returned to her medicine cupboard and mixed another medicine, but she did not give it to Theresa. She kept it in the cupboard, waiting for an opportunity to give it to the

Count. It was a very long night, but Victorine sat with Theresa and watched her sleep until morning.

Then she heard a noise downstairs and, going out to see what it was, found two servants carrying the Count into the house. He was dead. He had been killed in a sword-fight, and when Victorine saw his dead body she punched it.

"That is what you did to my darling!" she cried. She went to the cupboard, took out the medicine she had made, and poured it onto the wooden floor.

CHAPTER 3

CHAPTER THREE

Sir Mark had not received a letter from Theresa for several weeks when an old carriage arrived at Crowley Castle, carrying Victorine and Theresa. Victorine looked thinner and slightly sickly, while Theresa was dressed in her black widow's clothes, against her true wishes. Nobody knew how much Theresa had suffered since she had left home. She only wore the black dress to give the appearance that her marriage had been happy and prosperous. Everybody was surprised to see them, but Theresa was so tired that she fainted as soon as she walked into the castle. She would not tell anybody how much she had suffered and would not even mention the time that she had spent in Paris.

Sir Mark was so happy to have his daughter back in the castle that he wanted her to take her old place as lady of the house and look after the servants. Bessy would have agreed because she did not like looking after the servants. However, Theresa declined, and the servants continued to regard Bessy as their mistress.

Theresa was happy to spend many hours sitting with her father, and as she did so she grew stronger. But when he died in the autumn after her return, she shut herself up in her room, in which she had put black curtains, and allowed nobody to see her except Victorine. It was not until winter was almost over that she came out of her room and began to take an interest in life again.

Now that her mind was no longer occupied with her father, she began to talk to Bessy, but soon she found her boring and preferred to talk to Duke about his travels. Sweet, innocent Bessy was pleased that Duke had somebody to talk to about his interests.

A year later, the local Member of Parliament died, and Theresa persuaded Duke to stand for election. Bessy did not really agree because she knew that Duke would then have to go to London for long periods of time, while she preferred him to stay at the castle. Her little daughter now had a baby brother, and she did not want to take the children to London or leave them at the castle in the care of servants.

When Duke was elected, Theresa advised Bessy to try and take an interest in his new work; and although Bessy tried, she could not do it. She was envious of Theresa, and their friendship grew colder. Bessy's mother, Mrs Hawtrey, did not like Theresa either, blaming her for not allowing her to come and live in the castle. Mrs Hawtrey was wrong, however, since it was Duke that did not want Theresa in the castle, but he did give her a good allowance so that she could travel and live a much more comfortable life.

Duke was becoming a very popular and successful Member of Parliament, and Theresa wanted him to have a house in London, but Bessy was against it. Theresa listened to Duke and Bessy talk about it, but said nothing. She went to her room and spoke to Victorine instead, saying how terrible it was that Duke did not have a wife who would help him to become even more successful.

"Duke could become a very important and powerful person if he had the right kind of wife," she complained. "Bessy does not understand him and is preventing him from doing all the things that he could do! She has such a narrow, weak mind!"

Duke made another speech in Parliament and suddenly became quite famous. When he came back to Crowley Castle, Theresa was waiting for him at the door, her eyes bright with love and pride, but Bessy was caring for the baby in her room because the poor child was ill. The servants all gathered in the hall to welcome home their famous master.

"Where is my wife?" asked Duke.

"She is in her room with the baby," said Victorine, "because she thinks he is ill."

The boy really was ill, however; and when Bessy came down to greet her husband, she returned almost immediately to the boy, leaving Theresa to talk to Duke about his speech. That night, Theresa spoke to Victorine and repeated her complaint that she thought Bessy was hindering her husband's career, and Victorine thought she read a deeper meaning in what she heard.

Meanwhile, the boy grew worse, and a few days later, he died. Duke thought that fame had little value compared to a child's life. Theresa was very sad but did not know what to say to Duke because she realized that she cared for him too much. Bessy lay in her bed without speaking or crying, nor eating or drinking, and she ignored everyone who

came to talk to her. The doctor gave her some medicine and advised them to ask Mrs Hawtrey to come as soon as she could, but she was traveling and would take some time to arrive.

The servants sat up with Bessy all night, but she did not sleep. Throughout the whole of the next day, Bessy lay in her bed, still not sleeping, and on the next night Victorine sat up with her. Bessy had not spoken since the death of her son, nor had she eaten or drunk. She simply lay in her bed with a sad look on her face. Victorine gave her some medicine she had made. At midnight, Duke came in, and Victorine told him that Bessy was asleep at last. The doctor came early the next morning and was pleased to see that Bessy was sleeping, but when he looked at her again, he suddenly realized that she was dead.

CHAPTER 4

CHAPTER FOUR

In the next few months, Theresa discovered that she missed Bessy now that she was gone. She was also glad that Duke had to stay in London more often. She didn't want people to think the wrong thing if she and Duke lived in the castle together, and she insisted that Mrs Hawtrey move into the castle for that reason. Old friendships were renewed as autumn and winter passed, and Theresa agreed to become her cousin's wife.

Mrs Hawtrey was offended and left the castle immediately. The other person to be affected was Victorine, who suddenly became less energetic and began to look and act like an old woman. Theresa went to stay with Duke in London and thought that Victorine would prefer to stay at the castle, but this angered Victorine. She came to London but argued with Theresa.

"You are not grateful for all I have done for you!" cried Victorine. "You do not care about my love for you when I was young and strong or about the secret that we share!"

Theresa went up to her and held her hand. "What do you mean, Victorine? What is the secret that we share?"

"As if you do not know! You know I make my own medicines. I also learned to make poisons, and I learned it for you!"

Theresa's face went white, and she could not move. She stared at Victorine.

"Yes, my darling, I had the poison ready for the Count, but he saved me the trouble. He deserved to die because he punched you."

"Let us not think of those days, Victorine. They have gone now, and we should try to be happy together."

"Yes, and you should be grateful to me because all your happiness is due to the fact that I succeeded the next time!"

Theresa could hardly speak. "What do you mean?" she whispered.

"The doctor wanted her to sleep, and I helped her to do it, and now she is asleep forever so that you can enjoy your life. I did it for you!"

That evening, Theresa told Duke that she wanted to go back to the castle. He was surprised, but when he saw how sad she was, he agreed to let her go. However, he missed her very much and wrote to her often, although her replies seemed dull to him. Theresa lived with Victorine and Bessy's daughter in the castle, but her life was miserable and lonely because of what she knew. She pleaded with Mrs Hawtrey to come and stay with her, and at last, she agreed.

When Duke returned to the castle, he was dismayed to see Theresa looking so tired and sad and could not understand what was wrong. The doctor advised that they should spend a few weeks at the seaside; and although Theresa insisted that there was nothing wrong with her, she finally agreed, and Duke made all the arrangements. However, he

decided that he would not take Victorine and left her at the castle without telling either Theresa or Victorine about his plan.

When Victorine discovered that she had been tricked, she was very angry and became so ill that the servants called the doctor.

Mrs Hawtrey sat by her bed and waited for the doctor, but Victorine, in her anger, told her that she had poisoned Bessy and repeated the story to the doctor when he came.

Theresa had a happy day at the seaside with her husband. He had to return to London briefly the next day and was very sad to leave. On his way to London, he was met by one of his servants from the castle, who told him that Victorine was dying and gave him a note from Mrs Hawtrey asking him to go home immediately. When he arrived, the doctor told him that Victorine insisted on seeing him and getting his forgiveness.

"However," he said, "you should read this confession first. I wrote it down as she said it to me."

Duke read the note three times. "She is mad!" he exclaimed, but his blood ran cold. He went up the stairs to see Victorine, who whispered that the story was true. She had poisoned Bessy so that Theresa could marry him. The effort of waiting for him and speaking to him made Victorine very weak, and a moment later, she died.

Duke had a long conversation with the doctor and then wrote a message to Theresa, asking her to send Bessy's daughter to the castle. Theresa was puzzled by this

strange request but did as she was asked. A few days later, she received a letter from her husband saying that Victorine had died but had not been able to keep her awful secret.

"All I can think of is my poor murdered Bessy and the cruelty of that awful woman. I loved you too, Theresa, but now we are strangers. By the time, you receive this letter, my daughter and I will have left England. I do not know what we will do next, but my agent in London will look after you."

Theresa read the letter and immediately called for a horse so that she could ride to Dover, but when she arrived, all she could see was the distant white sails of the ship carrying her husband and his child away. It broke her heart, and she lies buried in Dover cemetery. After many years, Duke returned to England, but his place in Parliament was no longer reserved, and his daughter's husband sold Crowley Castle to a stranger.

Ask the teacher

Notes, doubts and favourite lines to take to your next class:

© Apex English · alunos.apexenglish.com.br