



The Crown

M. R. James



Summary

The Crown is a ghost story. There is a magic crown under the ground in Seaburgh. It protects England – and William Agers protects the crown.

Paxton is on holiday in Seaburgh and finds the crown. One night he takes it and then sees a shadow behind him. He runs quickly back to the hotel. Is the shadow William Agers? But Paxton knows that William Agers is dead!

Paxton is afraid. He wants to put the crown back in the ground. Two men at his hotel help him put the crown in the ground again.

The next day Paxton's friends follow him to the beach. They see Paxton's footprints in the sand – and some strange, long footprints too. They follow the footprints and find Paxton dead. The ghost of William Agers protected the crown – and it still protects the crown today.

About the author

M. R. James was born in England in 1862 and died in 1936. He loved old books, history and language. He studied and taught these 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 real.

The original text

The Crown is a classic ghost story, whose original title is *A Warning to the Curious*. It deals with the finding of one of the three crowns of East Anglia, holy relics buried along the Anglian coast to protect the realm against invasion. In his introduction to the *Collected Ghost Stories*, M. R. James explains that Seaburgh is Aldeburgh in Suffolk.

Background and themes

The story highlights some of these themes:

Ghosts and magic: We sometimes have to accept things that we don't really understand.

Secrecy and mystery: There is a lot of incomplete information in the story, which makes the story mysterious and exciting.

Respect and trust: Two strangers trust and respect Paxton, but he doesn't respect the wishes of the people of Seaburgh.

Discussion activities

Chapter 1

Before reading

- Discuss:** Have students talk about crowns.
Who wears a crown? Where can we find crowns? Why is the crown important in this story?
- Research:** Have students find out information about Seaburgh. Is it a real place?

After reading

- Discuss:** Have students talk about the characters. Have students complete a chart with information about the characters. They can complete it as they advance.

Name	What is he like?
Paxton	
Henry Long	
The writer	

Chapter 2

- Read carefully:** What is Agers like? Read the chapter again and collect information about William Agers.

Chapter 3

- Discuss:** Have students discuss Paxton's feelings.

Chapter 4

- Role-play:** Have students role play the situation on the hill.

Chapter 5

- Guess:** Have students predict what is going to happen next.

Chapter 6

- Read carefully:** Have students make a list of the most important words in the story.

Vocabulary activities

For the Word list and vocabulary activities, go to www.penguinreaders.com.