

# Curry Favor | The Shawshank Redemption

## Vocabulary Breakdown

### Hollywood English Club

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Andy Dufresne. A hot roof. Cold beer. And one of the most quietly triumphant moments in cinema. This lesson pulls apart the rich language of the beer scene from *The Shawshank Redemption*.

#### 1. "Came to Pass"

■ "Came to pass" is a formal or biblical way of saying something happened or occurred.

✓ You will hear this in literature, scripture, and formal narratives. Red uses it to give the story a mythic, storybook quality.

► *"And it came to pass that the long winter finally ended and the town began to breathe again."*

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#### 2. "Convict Crew"

■ A convict crew is a group of prisoners assigned to perform labour together.

✓ Common in prison dramas. The word convict carries weight — these are people serving sentences, not volunteers.

► *"A convict crew spent the summer repairing the roads outside the prison walls."*

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#### 3. "Tarred"

■ Tarred means covered with tar — a thick, black, sticky substance used to seal and waterproof surfaces like roofs.

✓ Also used in the phrase "tarred with the same brush" — meaning unfairly associated with the same fault as someone else.

► *"They tarred the roof in the summer heat, the smell rising off it in waves."*

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#### 4. "Wound Up"

■ "Wound up" means ended up in a particular situation — usually one that was not planned.

✓ Informal and natural. "I wound up staying until midnight" means I did not plan it but that is what happened.

► *"He wound up running the whole department after his boss resigned without warning."*

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## 5. "Bohemia-Style Beer"

■ Bohemia is a region of the Czech Republic famous for its brewing tradition. Bohemia-style beer is a crisp, cold lager.

✓ Red describes the beer this way to add atmosphere and specificity. It elevates the moment — this is not just any beer.

▶ *"He poured a Bohemia-style lager and set it on the table without a word."*

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## 6. "Courtesy of"

■ "Courtesy of" means provided by, thanks to, or as a gift from someone.

✓ Often used to credit the person responsible for something positive. "Courtesy of Andy" means Andy made it happen.

▶ *"The free tickets were courtesy of a friend who works at the venue."*

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## 7. "Screw" (Slang)

■ In prison slang, a screw is a prison guard or officer.

✓ A term prisoners use — rarely flattering. Reflects the adversarial relationship between inmates and guards.

▶ *"The screws were watching from the corner, arms crossed, saying nothing."*

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## 8. "Walked a Turn"

■ To walk a turn means to pace back and forth — to move deliberately and slowly, often while thinking or watching.

✓ An older, literary phrase. Red uses it to describe how the guards behaved while the prisoners drank.

▶ *"The foreman walked a slow turn around the perimeter of the site, checking every section."*

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## 9. "Colossal Prick"

■ A colossal prick is an extremely unpleasant, self-important, or contemptible person.

✓ Strong language. Colossal means enormous — so this is not just a mild insult. Red uses it to describe Hadley before his transformation in Andy's hands.

▶ *"By all accounts, the new supervisor was a colossal prick who made everyone's life miserable."*

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## 10. "Magnanimous"

■ Magnanimous means generous, noble, and willing to forgive — especially from a position of power.

✓ A formal and impressive word. Red uses it ironically — Hadley is not actually magnanimous, but he accepts Andy's help and lets the men drink.

▶ *"The winning side was magnanimous in victory, congratulating the other team with genuine warmth."*

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## 11. "Lord of All Creation"

- "Lord of all creation" means the supreme ruler or master of everything that exists.
  - ✓ Red uses it metaphorically to describe how the prisoners felt in that moment — free, human, and powerful, even if just briefly.
    - ▶ *"Sitting on the hill watching the sunset, he felt for a moment like the lord of all creation."*
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## 12. "Hunker"

- To hunker means to squat down or crouch low, often to take shelter or rest in an informal way.
  - ✓ Also used figuratively: "hunker down" means to prepare for difficulty by staying put and enduring.
    - ▶ *"They hunkered in the shade of the wall and waited for the heat to pass."*
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## 13. Idiom Spotlight: "Curry Favor"

- To curry favor means to try to gain someone's approval or advantage by flattering them or doing things to please them.
  - ✓ Andy uses financial knowledge to curry favor with the guard. The idiom comes from medieval French: grooming a horse, a symbol of cunning.
    - ▶ *"He spent months currying favor with the committee before finally getting his proposal approved."*
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## 14. "Cons"

- Cons is prison slang for convicts — the prisoners themselves.
  - ✓ Short for convicts. Used casually within prison culture. Also means disadvantages in the phrase "pros and cons."
    - ▶ *"The cons filed out in silence, back to their cells as the sun went down."*
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## 15. "Hell" (as Emphasis)

- "Hell" used as an intensifier means extremely or to a very great degree.
- ✓ "Hell of a" is informal American English meaning very impressive or very difficult. "That was one hell of a day" means an exceptionally intense day.
  - ▶ *"It was one hell of a climb, but the view from the top made it worth every step."*

# The Shawshank Redemption: Curry Favor

## Student Worksheet

### Part 1: Vocabulary Match

Match each word or phrase with its correct definition. Write the letter on the line.

WORDS / PHRASES	DEFINITIONS
_____ 1. curry favor	a) Generous and forgiving, especially toward those who don't deserve it
_____ 2. magnanimous	b) Prison slang for a guard
_____ 3. wound up	c) To crouch down low or sit in a sheltered position
_____ 4. screw	d) To try to gain someone's approval through flattery or favors
_____ 5. hunker	e) Ended up in an unexpected situation
_____ 6. courtesy of	f) Feeling powerful, important, and on top of the world
_____ 7. lord of all creation	g) Provided by / thanks to

### Part 2: Fill in the Blanks

Complete each sentence with a word or phrase from the word bank.

#### WORD BANK

curry favor • came to pass • magnanimous • wound up • courtesy of • hunkered • cons

1. The free tickets were \_\_\_\_\_ the hotel — a lovely surprise.
2. He started out studying law but \_\_\_\_\_ working in finance.
3. After years of rivalry, it finally \_\_\_\_\_ that they became friends.
4. She tried to \_\_\_\_\_ the new manager by volunteering for every task.
5. Even after being publicly criticised, the politician was \_\_\_\_\_ and shook hands with his rival.
6. The soldiers \_\_\_\_\_ down in the trenches to avoid enemy fire.
7. The \_\_\_\_\_ were given a rare afternoon off from their duties.

### Part 3: Formal English vs. Slang

This lesson is packed with both formal, literary language and informal prison slang. Rewrite each sentence, replacing the underlined word or phrase with the word in brackets — formal or informal as indicated.

**Example:** "It happened that he escaped." → [formal] → "It **came to pass** that he escaped."

8. "The guard did his rounds before lights out." → [slang] → Replace "guard" with the prison slang term.  
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9. "The drinks were provided by the company." → [formal] → Replace "provided by" with the formal phrase.  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. "After years of hard work, he ended up as CEO." → [informal] → Replace "ended up" with the phrasal verb.  
\_\_\_\_\_
11. "The prisoners crouched down during the riot." → [informal] → Replace "crouched down" with the verb from this lesson.  
\_\_\_\_\_
12. "She was kind and forgiving after the argument." → [formal/elevated] → Replace the underlined section with one word from this lesson.  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Part 4: Multiple Choice

Circle the correct answer.

13. What does "curry favor" mean?
  - a) To cook something special as a gift.
  - b) To try to win someone's approval through flattery or favors.
  - c) To punish someone who breaks the rules.
  - d) To be genuinely kind to someone you admire.
14. Where does the phrase "curry favor" originally come from?
  - e) A scene in The Shawshank Redemption.
  - f) An old French story about a corrupt horse named Fauvel, whose grooming became a metaphor for flattery.
  - g) An old English cooking tradition.
  - h) A medieval king who rewarded people with curry.
15. In the scene, Andy's action is best described as:

- i) Genuine generosity — he just wanted to help the guards.
- j) A calculated risk — using a financial favor to win goodwill and get beers for his fellow prisoners.
- k) An act of rebellion against the prison system.
- l) A mistake that almost got him in serious trouble.

16. The word "hell" in this lesson is used as:

- m) A reference to the afterlife.
- n) A mild expletive used for emphasis or to express strong feeling.
- o) An insult directed at another character.
- p) A formal expression of surprise.

17. "Came to pass" is best described as:

- q) Modern everyday slang.
- r) A way of saying something failed to happen.
- s) An old-fashioned, formal way of saying 'happened.'
- t) A phrase only used in religious texts.

## Part 5: True or False?

Write T (True) or F (False). If the statement is false, correct it on the line below.

18. A "screw" in this scene means a type of tool used for building.

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

Correction (if false): \_\_\_\_\_

19. "Magnanimous" means being generous and noble, especially in difficult situations.

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

Correction (if false): \_\_\_\_\_

20. The phrase "curry favor" comes from an old English cooking tradition.

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

Correction (if false): \_\_\_\_\_

21. In many countries, license plates are made in prisons.

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

Correction (if false): \_\_\_\_\_

22. A magnanimous person only shows kindness when they will get something in return.

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

Correction (if false): \_\_\_\_\_

23. "Lord of all creation" is used literally to describe a king or religious leader.

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

Correction (if false): \_\_\_\_\_

### Part 6: Would You Say This Here?

This lesson introduced words from very different registers — from elegant literary language (magnanimous, came to pass) to rude prison slang (screw, colossal prick). For each situation, decide which word or phrase would be appropriate and explain why.

Write A (Appropriate) or I (Inappropriate), and give a brief reason.

WORD / PHRASE	SITUATION	A or I?	WHY?
magnanimous	Writing a formal speech about a leader's legacy	_____	_____
screw	A job interview at a prison services company	_____	_____
curry favor	Describing a colleague's behaviour to your manager	_____	_____
came to pass	Casual texting with a friend	_____	_____
lord of all creation	Describing how you felt after winning a competition	_____	_____
colossal prick	A complaint letter to a company	_____	_____

### Part 7: Scene Analysis

Answer in complete sentences.

24. Andy offers financial advice to the head guard in exchange for beers for his fellow prisoners — not for himself. How does this detail change the way we see his act of "currying favor"?

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25. The narrator describes the prisoners sitting on the roof drinking beer and feeling like "lords of all creation." Why is this moment so powerful, given where they are and who they are?

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26. "Curry favor" has its roots in a French story about corruption and flattery. Do you think Andy's action in the scene is truly currying favor, or is it something more admirable? What is the difference?

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### Part 8: Creative Writing Challenge

Think of a situation — real or imagined — where someone had to curry favor with a person in authority to get something they wanted. It could be a student with a teacher, an employee with a boss, a prisoner with a guard, or anything you choose. Write a short scene or paragraph (6–8 sentences) describing what happened. Use at least **FOUR** vocabulary words or phrases from this lesson.

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**Which words/phrases did you use? List them here:**

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### Bonus: Discussion Questions

Think about these and be ready to share your ideas!

- Andy risks his safety to get beers for his fellow prisoners, not for himself. Do you think this makes him a hero, a fool, or something else?
- "Currying favor" has a slightly negative meaning — it implies the kindness is fake. Can you think of situations where currying favor is actually a smart and reasonable strategy?
- The lesson mentions that in many countries, license plates are made by prisoners. What do you think about prisoners being used for labor? Is it fair or exploitative?

- Andy feels like the "lord of all creation" in that brief moment of freedom on the roof. Have you ever had a small moment that felt unexpectedly powerful or free? What happened?

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Great work! Keep learning English with film and TV! ☐