



0. UNSETTLING QUESTIONS, HOPEFUL ANSWERS - Story Preface

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4. A LEGAL KIDNAPPING

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Pope Pius IX, who was personally involved in decisions involving Edgardo Mortara, lived in exile—at the Castle of Gaeta from 1848 to 1850—because of a revolution which was taking hold throughout the Italian Peninsula. Agitators wanted to unify the country and to throw-out Papal rule. This image illustrates where Pius IX lived during his time of exile. Online via Wikimedia Commons; click on it for a full-page view.

The king and the pope, the two most powerful men in Italy during the battle for Italian unification and the swirl of events around Edgardo Mortara, lived until 1878. Each of them had a final show of power, one to the other.

Victor Emanuel II died at Quirinal Palace which (until 1870) had been the papal residence for three centuries. Pius IX (who had excommunicated Victor Emanuel and everyone else taking part in wresting the Papal States from church control) authorized a priest to give the king last rites. One month later, Pius was also dead.

And what of the ultimate questions behind the Edgardo Mortara story:

- Is a crime still a crime even if the law says it isn't?
- Does a higher law—a natural law setting forth the rights of people—ultimately control?
- What happens when the rule makers are the rule breakers?
- Will moral outrage help to change the law?

For answers to those questions, we can look at the trial of the Inquisitor, Father Feletti. He was freed only because the law which authorized a crime was the law in effect at the time.

But we can also look at something else. Moral outrage (about Edgardo's kidnapping, about the laws and about church control over every aspect of people's lives) changed not only the law (making such actions illegal) but also the structure of an entire country.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/UNSETTLING-QUESTIONS-HOPEFUL-ANSWERS-Kidnap>

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See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/UNSETTLING-QUESTIONS-HOPEFUL-ANSWERS-Kidnapping-of-Edgardo-Mortara>

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