

The Ionian Mission Study Guide

The Ionian Mission by Patrick O'Brian

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Plot Summary

The year is 1813 and Britain is at war with France. Stephen Maturin, physician and secret intel

ligence agent, joins Captain Jack Aubrey aboard HMS Worcester, a ship of the line traveling to the British naval blockade of the French fleet in Toulon. Maturin arrives late which frustrates Aubrey's desires to vacate a troublesome financial situation in England. Worcester sails south, picking up various travelers on the way, and encounters a French warship which flees after the first broadside is fired. Arriving off Toulon, Worcester joins the British fleet commanded by Admiral Thornton and over the next weeks and months Aubrey's ship performs tedious but wearing blockade duty with the offshore squadron. During this time the tedium is broken only by Maturin's abortive involvement in a failed political intrigue and the arrival of William Babbington, commanding Dryad, an old shipmate and friend. Also during the blockade period HMS Surprise, commanded by Francis Latham, joins the fleet. Aubrey sends letters home commenting on his low spirits and divisions among the crew. Worcester is next detached to deliver political messengers to a specific port. The trip nearly becomes eventful when a French squadron is found sheltering in a neutral harbor. Aubrey has been commanded to scrupulously regard neutrality and thus cannot fire first. He attempts to frighten the French commander into firing first but to no avail, and Worcester sails back to Toulon blockade without having fired in anger. The crew divisions deepen as some newcomers begin to accuse Aubrey of cowardice. After more weeks of blockade a storm brews up and the British fleet is driven off station and then pursues the French fleet which has escaped during the heavy weather. Driven as hard as possible, the British fleet nearly catches the French fleet but in the end fails to engage them. During one brief firefight Latham is killed. During the heavy weather pursuit Worcester's spine is broken. Aubrey returns his failing ship to port and is ordered to take command of Surprise. Handpicking the best of Worcester's crew, Aubrey transports Maturin and Professor Graham to the Ionian sea where he calls upon three separate political figures, courting each to join with Britain and attack French interests. Graham anticipates the four-part negotiation will take months to conclude but Aubrey selects one of the Ionian leaders on a gut feeling. Their die being cast, the British send for guns, powder, and supplies to deliver to their new ally in the fight against France. However, one of the other local actors, Mustapha, moves to seize the transports precipitating a local crisis. Aubrey moves instantly to intervene and catches Mustapha's two-ship fleet at sea. A chase ensues as Aubrey maneuvers to gain the advantage against Mustapha's massive cannon. Aubrey first captures Mustapha's smaller ship and then crosses its deck to board and capture the larger ship—an action reminiscent of his hero Lord Horatio Nelson. Having seized victory, Aubrey stands on the awash deck of Mustapha's sinking ship and takes account of his officers to find they have all survived the action.



Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

Stephen Maturin, natural scientist and physician, contemplates upon his current life situation. He is married to a beautiful woman devoted to society yet he is a reserved and introverted man of routine physical appearance. His wife hosts brilliant dinner parties while he lives apart from her by choice, allowing him to keep odd hours and strange habits. The year is 1813 and the place is England embroiled in the years-long Napoleonic conflict. Maturin works as a secret intelligence agent for the Royal Naval intelligence service and his work usually keeps him away from home for prolonged periods. Maturin has usually been employed at sea and has spent several years pursuing nautical adventure and political intrigue. He also reflects upon his forthcoming mission aboard HMS Worcester, to be captained by his particular friend and constant partner Jack Aubrey. Aubrey has taken a command which is deemed undesirable and beneath his professional station in order to be out of the country for personal reasons—Aubrey is deeply in debt and firmly twisted up into wide reaching financial improprieties not of his own making. An undesirable posting is still preferable to debtor's prison. Maturin's evening is then passed at a social gathering in honor of his imminent departure. He takes a private coach of a friend from his wife's home to the dock at Spithead.

Meanwhile Aubrey frets aboard Worcester, eager to depart but waiting for Maturin to arrive. Aubrey ruminates about his own sorry state of financial affairs ashore and yearns to be on the open sea. The minutes and indeed hours tick by and finally Worcester is ordered to proceed to sea by the port admiral. As Aubrey orders the departure Maturin finally arrives and a hasty transfer—involving Maturin's partial submersion in the sea—is completed. Maturin's tardy boarding has earned him the antagonism of all the officers of the ship. Indeed, Maturin's unpunctuality has also put off Aubrey who avoids him for some time. Pullings, the senior lieutenant, and Mowett, the second lieutenant, chastise Maturin for arriving in such an unseamanlike way. Maturin later overhears Pullings discussing Worcester—the ship is known as one of the "forty thieves", a group of ships built at the same time in the same shipyard and subject to much graft and corner-cutting in the process. The ship is notoriously leaky and many fear her to be basically unsound. In any event she is old. The talk then turns to the mission—largely unknown but widely assumed to be blockade duty in the Mediterranean. On the outbound voyage Worcester will convey several parsons to their destinations. Parsons are feared to bring ill luck on any ship.

Chapter 1 Analysis

The initial chapter introduces both Maturin and Aubrey, the principle protagonists of the novel. Much of the chapter is devoted to a type of introductory work that is meant to take the reader from the closing events of a previous novel into the present events of



the current novel. Because the characters reappear in several novels prior to the current novel they are introduced only briefly—further characterization takes place later in the novel. The marital peculiarities of Maturin and his wife Diana do not play any further role in the current novel but are examined in later novels in the series. Likewise, Aubrey's family members do not appear in the current novel even though he occasionally thinks about them and even writes letters to them. The departure of Worcester begins a grand tour of the Mediterranean that spans the current novel and the next novel in the series; it also places the action and setting of the current novel firmly aboard ship where it will remain throughout the narrative. That Aubrey thinks of his Mediterranean cruise as a 'parenthesis' in his career is a meta-fictional reference to the opening/closing pairing of the current novel and the subsequent novel in the series which indeed form a two-book parenthesis in Aubrey's narrative development.

As Worcester is rendered useless due to combat and weather later in the novel, the early discussion of her character as one of the "forty thieves" is significant. She widely is known to be of inferior materials and shoddy craftsmanship. This, coupled with her age, makes her loss less significant than would be the case were a new and tight ship of her class be lost. Indeed, that Aubrey and his crew accomplish so much with her is rather a marvel. In addition to Aubrey and Maturin, the chapter also introduces Pullings and Mowett, the first and second lieutenants respectively. These two officers have served with Aubrey and Maturin for many years and their relative roles are well established. Both Pullings and Mowett are highly capable and natural leaders of men. With two such subordinate officers Aubrey is freed of much of the tedium of daily shipboard organization and instead can focus on his overall mission which becomes somewhat complex in the following months.



Chapters 2 and 3

Chapters 2 and 3 Summary

Worcester sails to Plymouth where Aubrey works to gain a full complement of crew and to complete his paperwork burden. The crew is filled out by various conscriptions of prisoners, lunatics, and unfortunate sailors attempting to return home. During one such process one man named Yeats complains bitterly that his fortunes will be ruined by impressments. Realizing that he has absolutely no nautical skill, Maturin feels the impressments unjust and contrives to discharge the man as medically unfit. Several lengthy conversations then ensue over the following days wherein the officers discuss the makeup of the crew, the personalities of other officers, and the probably mission of the ship. There is much dismay at the prospects of conveying a group of parsons for any distance. On one occasion Maturin and Aubrey have a discussion about a composer named Bach. Aubrey also frets about the political improprieties of his father, General Aubrey, the difficulties of provisioning the ship, and the difficulties of manning the ship. He also tours the ship and inspects every department with care. Worcester finally puts to sea and begins to run to the Mediterranean.

In order to properly train his gunnery crews Aubrey has expended a personal fortune to purchase powder—the Royal Navy does not provide adequate practice powder. Aubrey has purchased a vast quantity of powder intended originally for use in fireworks. The powder functions well but much hilarity ensues as the cannons discharge great goutts of green, red, and yellow sparks instead of the normal black powder explosion. One day a French ship is raised and closed; she is the 74-gun *Jemmapes*, roughly equivalent of Worcester in armament. The two ships close and Aubrey orders a broadside discharge which fills the air with brilliant pyrotechnic display. The French ship is alarmed at what she perceives as a presumed new secret weapon, and thus she turns tail and runs away to port. Aubrey deeply is disappointed by the combat failure. The encounter has barely started but even so Pullings reports that Maturin has been seriously injured.

Chapter 3 discloses that Maturin's injury is serious—a falling block of wood has struck him on the head, opening his scalp to a remarkable degree. It requires much stitching and he is unconscious throughout. He is tended by the assistant surgeons but proves a fractious patient. The injury leads to a systemic infection and for several weeks he is incapacitated. During this time Maturin visits often with Professor Graham, a Scottish man attached to the British Government as a political advisor. Graham is older and graying, and is described as positive, energetic, and humorless. Graham is very widely read, highly educated, talented in several languages, and possessed of a nearly perfect memory. Graham's area of specialty is in the politics of the Ionian region. While Maturin instructs Graham in nautical topics, Graham attempts to recruit Maturin to the British intelligence service—both men's attempts are inept, humorous, and ineffective. Also during Maturin's convalescence most of the parsons aboard are discharged to their various destinations—only Nathaniel Martin remains. Maturin is happy to discover in Martin a fellow naturalist and the two men spend much time watching birds. Martin is



quite enthusiastic about life in the Royal Navy and disregards Maturin's attempts to temper the enthusiasm with reality. During this period it also develops that the Worcester's third lieutenant, Somers, is rather unskilled. Somers is routinely drunk, often nearly insubordinate, and quite egotistical. Aubrey could overlook all of this if only Somers were fully competent—but he is not. Worcester finally arrives at Toulon and joins the blockading force. Aubrey repairs aboard the flagship and meets with Admiral Thornton. Aubrey finds Thornton aged, ill, and perilously worn. After receiving his orders and delivering welcome mail from home, Aubrey returns to Worcester and begins the tedious and tiring task of joining the fleet blockading the French fleet at Toulon.

Chapters 2 and 3 Analysis

Much of the early chapter concerns Aubrey's work in fitting out the ship for duty. The Royal Navy at this time historically was short of supplies and crew. Aubrey raids various ships and sources for crew, impressing several men. He uses a variety of methods to provision the ship including personal expenditures to assure adequate gunpowder supplies. The Royal Navy provided sufficient powder for combat but insufficient powder for routine training. Aubrey therefore buys private stores of powder and ends up with bargain-priced powder that has been mixed with various components to yield brilliant colors. This fireworks powder works well enough but is spectacular in explosion. Much of this material is familiar in tone and context to similar material presented in other novels of the series. The rather cryptic and peculiar discussion about music held between Maturin and Aubrey is typical of the playful nature of the narrative. Aubrey has purchased some sheet music from a composer, and refers to him as the son of 'London Bach', a probable reference to Johann Christian Bach, son of the famous composer, though historically 'London Bach' did not have a son. Presumably, Aubrey has purchased historically significant—and now forgotten—music for a song. The chapter concludes with the flight of the French ship, a blow that causes Aubrey problems that continue to mount through later chapters. Structurally, the chapter bridges the introductory Chapter One, based ashore, and the remainder of the novel that is based aboard ship.

Chapter Three concludes the transition from the ship's sailing to her duty station on the Toulon blockade. During this period of the war, British control of the seas was strong but the French still maintained significant fleets, one of which was based at Toulon. Though the French fleet was not strong enough to challenge the British fleet, it was strong enough to seriously harm British commerce and interests around the globe. Britain therefore pursues a policy of keeping the French fleets blockaded in port. Blockade duty was routine but difficult and put much strain on officers, crew, and especially equipment. The blockade fleet is commanded by Admiral Thornton with Admiral Harte second in command—Aubrey has cuckolded Harte in a prior novel in the series. Another commander, Admiral Mitchell, appears in Chapter 4. Thornton is well-known as an energetic sailor and his much-diminished appearance shocks Aubrey. The chapter also deals with Maturin's recovery and some of the problems that Aubrey has during his command. The "parenthesis" (p. 94) in Aubrey's career is mentioned in a meta-fictional

way to represent the current and subsequent novels in the series, which form a duet of novels dealing with the Mediterranean mission.



Chapters 4 and 5

Chapters 4 and 5 Summary

Aubrey's longtime friend and confidant Heneage Dundas commands HMS Excellent, a ship also attached to the blockading squadron. Although Thornton disapproves of ship-visiting, nevertheless Aubrey and Dundas have occasion to visit. They hold a prolonged conversation and discuss the nature and rationale of the blockade, the state of Thornton's health, and regional politics. This conversation is mirrored by a length conversation held between Maturin and Thornton where Thornton advises Maturin at considerable length about the regional political situation. Thornton puts a special emphasis on the Ionian region and acquaints Maturin with several political leaders in the region. Several days later the inshore squadron's commander, Admiral Mitchell, arrives on station and hosts Aubrey aboard for yet another lengthy discussion of the fleet's situation, British interests in the region, and Thornton's health. During Worcester's blockade duty Aubrey is called upon to sit in a court martial where various defaulters are presented and sentenced. Martin then accompanies the various men during their flogging and finds that his zeal for the naval life is much diminished. A storm then brews up and forces Worcester and other ships to leave the blockading station.

In Chapter 5, Worcester returns to blockade duty. Life aboard continues week after week and month after month. One day a huge flock of quail flies overhead, driven by strong winds, and many thousands seek a temporary rest aboard Worcester. Most of the hands view them as free poultry which much agitates Martin who believes the men are preying upon the quail under unfair circumstances. Martin appeals to Maturin who eventually informs Pullings that the quail may have eaten poisonous seeds and should probably not be eaten by the crew. Pullings orders the crew to stop gathering quail and Martin is somewhat relieved. Meanwhile Somers becomes increasingly belligerent and during one drunken episode his is insubordinate to Aubrey—within a few days an exchange is arranged and Somers departs the ship while Rowan arrives. Other fleet changes consume the rest of the chapter—Surprise, under Captain Francis Latham, arrives. The appearance of 'his' old ship lightens Aubrey's mood considerably. Later Dryad, under Captain Babbington, arrives. Babbington, a protégé of Aubrey, is friendly with Pullings, Maturin, and others and there is much talk about old times. Finally, Maturin is called away to Spain to pursue various political intrigues for which he uniquely is qualified. His departure leaves Aubrey feeling isolated.

Chapters 4 and 5 Analysis

All of Chapters 4 and 5 transpires while Worcester participates in the blockade of Toulon. During this period Aubrey is under the direct command of Thornton. Worcester spends its time sailing back and forth in a perfect line and keeping lookout for a French fleet that never appears. The duty is boring, tedious, and especially wearing on the ship. Aside from a few storms which blow the ships away, the blockade is maintained. The



crew becomes somewhat sullen and even one of the officers—Somers, becomes increasingly insubordinate with the daily tedium. Conversations are prolonged events that convey much background information via dialogue but aside from a few such discussions nothing much actually happens during the weeks on blockade—the quail flocks being a notable exception. Various ships come and go, but still Worcester sails back and forth in blockade. When Surprise arrives, Aubrey speculates that she one day might be sold (p. 145)—foreshadowing of events described in subsequent novels. In the current novel Surprise is commanded by Francis Latham, a capable but nearly anonymous captain who dies during the latter portion of the novel. Likewise, the arrival of Dryad—or more precisely, the arrival of Babbington—cheers Aubrey. Much of Aubrey's and Dundas' conversation concerns the isolation of command—thus, Aubrey's dejected nature after Maturin departs is fully explained. Note that Chapter 4 uses the structural technique of exposition by dialogue—here, three separate and lengthy conversations take place: Aubrey and Dundas, then Aubrey and Mitchell, and finally Maturin and Thornton. Added to the conversation between Aubrey and Thornton that concluded Chapter 3, the extended conversations provide a complete backdrop of the political situation in the region. In short, the Ionian states are perceived as a weak defense in the perimeter of Napoleonic Europe and British interests have an opportunity to gain sway if the political situation can be handled correctly.



Chapters 6 and 7

Chapters 6 and 7 Summary

Aubrey remains discontent in command and writes several letters home. He develops a persistent cold during the period. An old shipmate, Awkward Davis, rejoins Aubrey's command. Aubrey had once rescued Davis from drowning and Davis therefore views Aubrey's companionship as something of a guaranteed privilege. Davis is not much of a sailor but is fierce in combat. Eventually Aubrey's monotonous blockade duty is interrupted by different orders, delivered by Harte. Aubrey is to proceed to Barka and there deliver a political delegation. Harte emphasizes that the delicate political situation in the region requires Aubrey to scrupulously observe the neutrality of various minor regions. Aubrey proceeds with *Dryad* and *Polyphemus*, a lightly armed transport. They deliver the politicians and then *Dryad* encounters, and escapes from, a French squadron composed of a 74-gun ship and a 36-gun consort. The French ships are anchored in a neutral harbor. Aubrey immediately proceeds to enter the harbor. He tells his men that no matter what they must not fire first—to do so would violate the port's neutrality. But he is confident the French will fire as soon as they can. A lengthy series of nautical maneuvers places the British fleet alongside the anchored French fleet and the ships then sail back and forth. Aubrey hopes to provoke the French commander into opening fire but the determination to avoid violating the port's neutrality is as strong with the French as it is with the English. No shots are fired and after a few hours a thoroughly disappointed Aubrey orders his thoroughly disappointed crew to take *Worcester* back out of the harbor.

In Chapter 7, Aubrey returns to Toulon and is greeted by an angry Thornton who threatens a court martial. Aubrey coolly retorts that his orders prohibited him from violating neutrality. With great foresight, Aubrey has received written orders from Harte to such effect, essentially diffusing Thornton's anger. Meanwhile the crew of *Worcester* suffers a collapse of morale and many of the men show the unmistakable signs of fighting. After several more days of blockade, Aubrey takes *Worcester* to Mahon where they are to rendezvous with Maturin. In Mahon Aubrey learns that Maturin has not arrived and goes in search of Mercedes, a long-ago lover. He finds her still beautiful and receptive but his attempted affair is brought short by Maturin's sudden appearance with recent political news. Aubrey immediately departs and *Worcester* conveys Maturin to a clandestine political meeting on the coast. Maturin goes ashore and then moves through a series of blunders caused by others' amateurish activities. In the dark, Maturin accidentally meets up with Graham, also traveling to the same rendezvous from a different direction. Graham has been lightly wounded, the rendezvous has fallen apart, and hostile soldiers begin combing the area. Maturin therefore takes Graham and the two men escape back to *Worcester*, the entire political rendezvous proving nothing more than a farce.



Chapters 6 and 7 Analysis

Chapter 6 details a signal failure of the military prowess of Aubrey while Chapter 7 details a signal failure of the political prowess of Maturin. Both men engage in a promising situation only to find it evaporate into fiasco. For Aubrey, the situation involves cornering a French squadron in a neutral port—a French squadron that will not initiate combat. Aubrey therefore sails away dejected rather than violating the port's neutrality. This action has severe repercussions amongst his crew—the faction of old-timers maintaining he was following orders vs. the faction of new-comers asserting he is cowardly. Aside from crew troubles, Aubrey himself is disgusted at leaving a French squadron alone. Maturin's mission is far more subtle and complex, but involves attending a meeting of rebellious elements in the region to plan a local rebellion against French interests. The rendezvous is arranged poorly and Maturin's attendance is abortive—the coastal guard is alerted and numerous political types go skulking around in the dark. Maturin in effect rescues Graham. The rendezvous does not happen and the political possibilities are ruined. This period of the novel finds both men much disappointed and depressed in spirits. They now face only a return to the seemingly endless blockade. Indeed, the so-called parenthesis in Aubrey's career has now become a lengthy period devoid of noteworthy events. Unusual for Aubrey, such service was probably the norm for British captains during this period, many of whom were involved in the vital but boring process of blockade. During the last chapters occasional comments regarding Worcester's seaworthiness continue to support the theme that the ship is past its safely useful life.



Chapters 8 and 9

Chapters 8 and 9 Summary

Worcester continues to perform blockade duty. The ship takes a constant pounding in harsh weather sailing and the crew becomes very worn by constant attention to the sails necessitated by sailing in a precise line of battle where every ship has unique sailing characteristics. The boredom and tedium continue and are telling on the crew's morale which continues to sink. Then a major storm system develops and when the blockading squadron is blown off station the French fleet attempts a breakout. The British fleet immediately gives chase and a prolonged nautical evolution takes place. The French fleet is capably handled and eludes engagement with the British fleet though after several hours of hard sailing in heavy weather the British fleet remains in sight. Finally the French admiral decides discretion to be the better part of valor and the French fleet turns around and heads back for Toulon, the storm still raging. Thornton is nearly desperate for a general engagement and so directs all of his ships to sail independently, as rapidly as possible, in an attempt to force a general engagement. Surprise, an excellent sailor, briefly engages the French rear during which a lucky French shot kills Surprise's commander. Meanwhile Aubrey drives Worcester hard and nearly manages to engage the lagging French ship. However, a series of horrible rending waves drive into Worcester and shatter her internal structure. The British abandon the chase and the French escape back into port. Aubrey takes heroic measures to keep Worcester from sinking, including frapping the hull with cable and fothering the bottom.

In Chapter 9 the French fleet returns to Toulon and the British fleet regroups at an assembly point off Toulon. Worcester is surveyed in better weather and is determined to be unfit for sea duty. Thornton, completely demoralized, leaves the station for home turning command over to Harte. Harte instructs Aubrey to surrender Worcester from the service and take command of Surprise. Aubrey is allowed to hand-pick his crew for Surprise out of Worcester. Aubrey is then instructed to take on board Graham and proceed to the Ionian Sea. There, several local political figures are willing to revolt against French control in exchange for British support. The political situation is fractured and complex and Graham is expected to render invaluable service. Aubrey is informed that he will be dealing with three local potentates—Ismail Bey, Mustapha, and Sciahan Bey—all of whom have local aspirations of control, all of whom hate one another, and all of whom will ally with Britain in exchange for British cannon and powder. Aubrey is to consult Graham and select one of the three, thus of necessity estranging the other two. Aubrey must make the best selection based on an understanding of mutual support and exchange. The intricate political situation and ever-shifting alliances in the area make success unlikely and thus Harte has selected his enemy Aubrey for the command. Just as Surprise prepares to sail Babbington arrives in Dryad and Aubrey is scandalized to see Babbington's ship loaded with young women parading the decks—he assumes Babbington has brought on board a harem of prostitutes. However he soon learns the many young women have been rescued and are being returned to port. Surprise,



Dryad, and the armed transport Polyphemus then sail for the Ionian Sea. During the voyage Surprise's officers host an organized poetry competition.

Chapters 8 and 9 Analysis

Chapters 8 and 9 transition the narrative from blockade duty aboard Worcester to the Ionian mission aboard Surprise. The mission from whence the novel derives its title. The near-loss of Worcester has been heavily foreshadowed and that Aubrey has derived as much hard service from her as he has is remarkable. The ship literally begins to come apart at the seams during a heavy weather chase. Aubrey keeps her together by frapping the hull (winding large cable tightly around and around the hull) and fothering the bottom (wrapping tarred sailcloth, somewhat waterproof, around the leaky hull). The ship limps onto station looking unsightly but still afloat. Aubrey's fortunes are good, however, because Surprise suddenly is in need of a commander and he is transferred to his favorite ship. Harte's selection of Aubrey for the detached service is malicious—the political situation is so complicated and the various alliances are so untrustworthy and ephemeral that Aubrey virtually is guaranteed to fail. Harte also allows Aubrey to hand-pick his crew and wide latitude in operations, intending to allow Aubrey every advantage to precede failure. The novel has spent a great deal of time developing the Ionian political situation but in brief there are three local rulers who desire to dominate each other but need British help to do so; in exchange each of them is willing to aid the British against the French. Quite obviously, the assistance against the French is not a priority for any of them and duplicity is rather expected. Graham is supposed to be able to navigate these types of situations and is sent as an advisor, but the buck stops with Aubrey. The poetry competition presented in Chapter 9 is interesting and, as stated in the novel's introductory historical note, most of the verse presented is taken nearly verbatim from actual naval officer amateur verse, predominantly unpublished and definitely unknown. Once again Aubrey demonstrates his canny sense of leadership by contriving to announce that all of the participants have 'won' the competition.



Chapters 10 and 11

Chapters 10 and 11 Summary

Aubrey first calls upon Mesenteron and meets with Ismail Bey who he finds indecisive, aged, and unimpressive. To Aubrey, Ismail Bey appears to lack the militaristic characteristics needed for decisive victory. Graham is more positive about Ismail Bey. Aubrey then proceeds to Karia and meets Mustapha. Mustapha is loud, boisterous, and a sailor. Aubrey takes an instant liking to the strong tyrant and believes Mustapha has the qualities needed to seize victory. Graham is more reserved about Mustapha. Mustapha also has a squadron of two warships, including the Torgud, a heavily-armed and formidable ship. Aubrey also learns that Ismail Bey and Mustapha hate each other personally, whereas both men begrudgingly respect Sciahan Bey. Aubrey then proceeds to Marga and tries to meet Sciahan Bey. Instead, Sciahan Bey is said to be indisposed and Father Andros, an English-speaking priest, represents Sciahan Bey. Andros and Aubrey meet for several days and Andros provides an extensive tour of the area, noting tactical and strategic advantages and generally constructing a logical argument that Britain would best be served by Sciahan Bey. Aubrey, all but committed to Mustapha, eventually comes to feel that Andros is correct. Graham too is positive but strongly opines that the negotiations will be complex and drawn out, and that British interests will best be served by extensive negotiation before any decision is made. However, when Aubrey finally meets Sciahan Bey he is impressed by a capable and canny man and immediately concludes the negotiations with a contract between Britain and Sciahan Bey.

Chapter 11 finds Graham deeply agitated and estranged by Aubrey's impetuous decision. Nevertheless it has been made. Aubrey and his crews begin to fortify Marga and improve a road leading inland which will be used during the attack on the French. Graham departs for the interior to gather support. Meanwhile Aubrey summons distant British transports that are laden with cannon and powder. However, adverse winds long delay their voyage and the political situation ashore begins to crumble as news of Ismail Bey's and Mustapha's rejection reaches their respective courts. Much political intrigue follows, of which Aubrey remains ignorant. Mustapha is spurred into open rebellion by the news and crafty manipulation by others, and he moves quickly and seizes the British transport ships with their guns and powder. While Aubrey begins to worry about the non-appearance of the British fleets a breathless Graham arrives from the interior with the news of Mustapha's actions. Aubrey immediately departs and locates Mustapha's squadron. Aubrey demands Mustapha's immediate surrender and Mustapha refuses. A lengthy series of naval evolutions ensues while Surprise gets the upper hand against Mustapha's two ships, Torgud and Kitabi. Torgud mounts thirty-two guns including two monstrous thirty-six pounders, Kitabi mounts twenty guns. This squadron is opposed only by Surprise with twenty-eight guns. Graham assumes Aubrey will retire but of course he does not. Lengthy exchange leaves Torgud much damaged by accurate and rapid British firing, while Torgud's massive guns do some damage. As Surprise closes to board Torgud Kitabi intervenes. Aubrey leads his men aboard Kitabi in a fierce and



successful boarding action. Then in an event reminiscent of Admiral Horatio Nelson's achievement at the Battle of Cape St. Vincent, Aubrey leads his crew across the Kitabi and onto the Torgud which is also captured after a fierce fight. Aubrey briefly fears Pullings has been killed and is relieved to discover he is alive though wounded. Aubrey is victorious even as Torgud begins to sink.

Chapters 10 and 11 Analysis

Chapter 10 delivers a lengthy series of political negotiations that do not contribute much to the novel's dramatic conclusion, but do establish the situation is complex and difficult. Aubrey immediately likes Mustapha because they share a common tactical approach—use an overwhelming force and drive directly at the enemy. But Mustapha also appears fairly unreliable for long-term alliances because his ambitions are clearly personal. Aubrey's thought process becomes more clarified, however, with his lengthy discussions with Andros and then Sciahan Bey. While Graham wants a lengthy deliberation to ensure very possible concession is given to Britain, Aubrey does not operate that way and makes an immediate decision that of the three rulers Sciahan Bey offers the best advantage to the British. The novel then presents a fairly technical discussion of the construction of a ropeway to life cannon to a high fortress—a ropeway that is not used in the novel. While this is going on political intrigue embroils the area and Mustapha is incited to direct intervention in his own perceived interests. Graham arrives as a bearer of bad news—Mustapha is in open rebellion to the British cause and has seized the British cannon and powder transports. Aubrey reacts like he always does—he immediately intercepts Mustapha's superior force, attacks it, and destroys it. This signal victory of boarding one enemy ship, crossing the deck, and capturing a second enemy ship is certainly one of Aubrey's more-impressive victories. The narrative discussion of the combat, the sailing, and the discharge of batteries is exciting and has a gritty and realistic texture. The novel ends unfinished, however, as the British transports are still not recovered; the local political situation is very unclear; and Sciahan Bey's forces have not been supplemented. Indeed, the purpose of Aubrey's mission was to attack French interests and this has not been accomplished. However, Aubrey's lengthy period of inaction and failed action decisively ends with his capture of Kitabi and sinking of Torgud. The remaining loose ends are taken up in the opening chapters of the subsequent novel in the series.



Characters

Jack Aubrey

Captain Jack Aubrey is one of two principle protagonists of the novel and shares the spotlight with his particular friend and confidant Stephen Maturin. Aubrey is a larger-than-life character with charisma and dash. He is an unchallenged master in his element of the sea; a legendary captain, a masterful navigator, and a superb tactician. Although he is intelligent he relies more on experience, insight, and a nearly infallible instinct to carry him through the various perils he encounters.

As described in previous novels of the series, Aubrey is a post captain who has become embroiled in financial improprieties ashore. After much wrangling with lawyers, Aubrey accepts a less-desirable posting to HMS Worcester, largely to be out of the country. Aubrey wears his blonde hair in a long queue and dresses as a traditional ship's captain. Aubrey is very athletic, possessed of an almost super-human vigor, great strength, and an incredible constitution. He is also particularly fond of food and drink, and Maturin often cautions him against becoming overly corpulent; his weight fluctuates wildly. Aubrey is handsome and fairly useful, though his good-looks are marred by a variety of scars and combat-related wounds including an ear sliced apart in an old encounter and various scars on his head. Aubrey is usually quite useless on land—for example, he has signed over his fortune to scheming enterprisers—but on military occasions he proves useful enough.

Stephen Maturin y Domanova

Maturin is one of two principle protagonists of the novel and shares the spotlight with his particular friend and confidant Jack Aubrey; the current novel features Maturin more prominently than most. Maturin is a quiet man who much prefers the closeness of a study to the attention of others; his personal expertise lies in the area of medicine and he is also a natural scientist of some repute. He is an unchallenged and undoubted master in his element of medicine and science and his medical opinions are surprisingly modern and always correct, though the present novel features little of Maturin's medical skills. Although possessed of financial means, he cares nothing for the finer things in life and champions political causes that are obviously doomed simply because they are philosophically correct. Maturin, in addition to being a physician and scientist, is a pro bono agent for the secret intelligence network of England.

Maturin is a small, squat man who in many respects is the antithesis of Aubrey. Maturin is much given to introspection, subtle interpretations, and Byzantine analysis of the current situation. He is nearly entirely mental, with little interest in things physical—though capable enough when the time comes. Although he is possessed of a nearly preternatural constitution, Maturin is not notably dexterous or strong, though his physique is rarely a handicap to his desires. Although he can be over-confident of his



abilities, he is nearly always correct in his analysis of situations and people. A notable exception to his typical clarity of vision centers on his love interest, Diana Villiers; Maturin generally is unable to comprehend her complexities and unwilling to admit her rather obvious shortcomings. Like Aubrey, Maturin derives great pleasure from music and is a capable musician.

Tom Pullings

Pullings has served under Aubrey as a lieutenant during previous novels in the series and during the current novel he serves as first lieutenant on first Worcester and then Surprise. He is an enthusiastic and optimistic officer, a devoted supporter of Jack Aubrey, and an extremely capable navigator, seaman, and officer. Because he has no political influence he has little prospect for advancement in rank unless he participates in a decisive battle—explaining in part Pullings' excitement over the prospects of combat. Pullings' entire reliability allows Aubrey much discretion in handling the ship and is a constant comfort to both Aubrey and Maturin. Pullings is always dependable and is an always memorable minor character.

Mowett

Mowett has served under Aubrey as a lieutenant during previous novels in the series and during the current novel he serves as the second lieutenant on first Worcester and then Surprise. He is a literary man much devoted to writing, reciting, and ready poetry. Mowett believes that amateur poetry is admirable and ennobling and he has sought and found publication for some of his pieces. Mowett always has a vague expectation of becoming well known in literary circles, but success tends to elude him as his execution of professional duties comes first in his life. Mowett is a devoted supporter of Aubrey and throughout the novel is a competent and capable, if not inspired, officer. Mowett supports Pullings and the two men form a good team. In the novel Mowett recites some of his poetry, and he is an always memorable minor character.

William Babbington

Babbington is a post captain, and is a smaller man, stunted by various bouts with venereal diseases contracted during an active youth. A capable sailor and captain, Babbington is much infatuated with women and pursues them with a vigor rarely seen among even sailors. He was more-or-less raised aboard ships where Aubrey was the captain and owes much to his senior officer and friend; indeed, Babbington's promotion to his current rank is due in part to Aubrey's influence. Babbington has known Maturin, Pullings, and Mowett for many, many years. Babbington appears with some regularity in the earlier novels in the series, and his appearance in the current novel is a welcome event.



Nathaniel Martin

Martin joins Worcester as a parson seeking conveyance to his final destination. He is one of several parsons coming aboard at once, but is the last to depart. Martin is rather a minor character in the current novel but his introduction into the series is notable—in latter novels he becomes a recurrent and major character. During the current novel Martin and Maturin find much in common with a shared interest in natural history.

Professor Graham

Professor Graham is a Scottish man attached to the British Government as a political advisor. Graham is older and graying, and is described as positive, energetic, and humorless. Graham is very widely read, highly educated, talented in several languages, and possessed of a nearly perfect memory. Graham's area of specialty is in the politics of the Ionian region. Graham joins Worcester early and travels with her as far as the Mediterranean where he embarks on a series of political missions that are not described in the book. Graham again joins Worcester after accidentally meeting Maturin during a failed onshore political intrigue. Graham thereafter accompanies Aubrey and Maturin aboard *Surprise* to the Ionian states and helps Aubrey engage in political discourse with several leaders. In the event, Aubrey ignores Graham's expertise and makes a snap judgment which leave Graham greatly agitated.

Admiral Thornton

Admiral Thornton is in command of the British fleet blockading Toulon. Aubrey has known Thornton for years and knows him to be a dedicated and energetic officer. Thus, when Aubrey finds Thornton old, ill, and thin, he is much alarmed. Even though Thornton is aged and sick, he executes his duties with exactness and dedication. After a thorough medical examination, Maturin concludes that Thornton is simply working himself too hard. During the novel Thornton demonstrates an excellent grasp of the political and military situation throughout the Mediterranean. Thornton is seconded by Admiral Harte, a self-serving and largely inefficient man, whom Thornton hardly trusts beyond mundane and routine matters. Toward the end of the novel Thornton returns home and command falls thereafter to Harte.

Mustapha

Mustapha is the warlord leader of one of the three Ionian political factions treating for an alliance with Britain. Aubrey visits Mustapha second. Mustapha is a large man, with much red hair and florid skin. He laughs often and loudly and constantly proclaims that he has no hidden agenda. Mustapha's strategy of direct assault without delay endears him to Aubrey who rather despises the Oriental strategy of delay and obfuscation. Mustapha also appears to have the armament and men necessary to carry out a direct assault—in particular, his large ship *Torgud* carries two gigantic Portuguese 38-pounder



cannons mounted athwartship in addition to its more-standard armament. However, Mustapha appears to Graham and Maturin to be something of a blowhard and they do not trust his long-term ambitions. In the end, Aubrey does not select Mustapha for the alliance whereupon Mustapha attempts to take matters into his own hands, capturing the British convoy of guns and powder. When Aubrey's *Surprise* joins battle with Mustapha's *Torgud* the outcome is anything but certain. However, Aubrey leads by inspiration and intelligence while Mustapha leads by fear and domination. After a warm battle Aubrey entirely is victorious.

Sciahan Bey

Sciahan Bey is the leader of one of the three Ionian political factions treating for an alliance with Britain. Aubrey visits Sciahan Bey third. Sciahan Bey is a canny politician who slowly courts Aubrey and Graham using Father Andros, an English-speaking, priest as an initial intermediary. Claiming illness, Sciahan Bey allows Andros to thoroughly familiarize the British with the local tactical situation and even goes so far as to allow them to know his particular weaknesses. By the time Sciahan Bey personally receives Aubrey he was done everything but won the alliance. Within a few hours Aubrey definitively states that Britain will ally with Sciahan Bey—a snap decision that infuriates Graham who believes, probably correctly, that Sciahan Bey has gained the upper hand in the negotiations. Whether or not Aubrey's instincts about Sciahan Bey will prove correct is not revealed in the current novel.



Objects/Places

HMS Worcester

HMS Worcester is the first ship commanded by Aubrey during the current novel. Worcester is known as one of the 'forty thieves', ships constructed with an unusual amount of graft and thus widely known to be of substandard materials and shoddy workmanship. A ship-of-the-line, Worcester is appointed to blockade duty for much of the early novel. Worcester is also a very old ship and the fact that Aubrey gets as much out of her as he does is remarkable. The ship is the principle setting for the first several chapters of the novel.

HMS Surprise

HMS Surprise is a sixth-rate twenty-eight gun British frigate of French build. Originally named *Unité*, she was captured during combat and placed in English service where she has remained for many years. The ship is unofficially known as *Nemesis* for a particularly audacious raid she made on the Spanish in 1797. Jack Aubrey served aboard the ship as a young midshipman. Since that time Surprise has grown old but has received overhaul and remains a fine sailing ship. Aubrey describes her as possessed of a bluff bow and lovely lines, weatherly, stiff, and a fine sea-boat. She is fast enough, roomy, and dry—a particularly nice feature in frigates of the time. The ship measures approximately 107' in length. As a youth, Aubrey had carved his initials into the main cap. The ship is the principle setting for the final chapters of the novel.

Torgud

Torgud is the principle warship of Mustapha, one of the Ionian political agitators courting British cooperation. Torgud is a capable warship and is run by a professional crew who lives in terror of the Brutal Mustapha. This ship has armament typical of a frigate with exception of two gigantic Portuguese 38-pounder cannons mounted athwartships. However, the ship is sort on shot and powder. Aubrey also notes with great distaste that the ship is never cleaned and the decks are fouled with excrement. At the end of the novel Torgud engages Surprise and loses, sinking shortly after Aubrey captures her.

William Timmins' Clock

When Aubrey visits the Admiralty seeking a command he paces in a waiting room and notes the bold face and impressive design of a large clock manufactured by William Timmins of Gosport. The clock symbolizes Aubrey's time running out—he must either vacate England or shortly be placed in debtor's prison for gross financial improprieties, not entirely of his own making.



Flogging

During the period discussed in the novel, navies of the world typically used flogging as punishment for various infringements aboard ship. Neglect of duty, drunkenness, and insubordination were all military infractions that, typically, resulted in a sentence of flogging. Flogging entailed being lashed with a whip on the back and buttocks. Something between 10 and 300 lashes were fairly common punishments, depending upon the character of the ship's captain. During the novel Martin witnesses several floggings and the event drastically diminishes his zeal for the nautical life.

Blockade

Much of the novel transpires while Worcester is on her duty station on the Toulon blockade. During this period of the war, British control of the seas was strong but the French still maintained significant fleets, one of which was based at Toulon. Though the French fleet was not strong enough to challenge the British fleet, it was strong enough to seriously harm British commerce and interests around the globe. Britain therefore pursues a policy of keeping the French fleets blockaded in port. Blockade duty was routine but difficult and put much strain on officers, crew, and especially equipment.

Toulon

Toulon is a town in southern France and during the period of the novel has the largest military harbor on the Mediterranean coast. Within the novel, Toulon in general refers specifically to the military port of Toulon where a large French fleet is blockaded by the British.

Mahon

Mahon, or Port Mahon, is a city on the eastern coast of Minorca. Port Mahon has an excellent harbor. Mahon, along with all of Minorca, was controlled by the British from 1708 to 1783 and from 1798 to 1802. During the period of the novel, Minorca is nominally controlled by Spain but is in fact under British occupation. Aubrey has a long history at Mahon and at least one former lover, Mercedes, still lives there. During the novel Aubrey quickly resupplies Worcester at Mahon before meeting Maturin and traveling East.

Ionian Sea

The Ionian Sea is an appendage of the Mediterranean Sea, lying south of the Adriatic Sea between southern Italy and Sicily to the west and by Albania, Greece, and several Greek Islands to the east. During the novel Aubrey travels to the Ionian Sea and visits



several minor principalities along the east coast. The action of the final chapter of the novel occurs in the eastern reaches of the Ionian Sea, which informs the novel's title.

Guns

Warships of the period were armed with heavy guns known as either cannon or carronades. Larger ships carried two or even three decks of guns, and the larger the ship the larger the gun. Shore batteries usually mounted very heavy guns capable of great distance and accuracy. Some ships, such as *Torgud*, are perhaps over-armed with massive guns—though formidable their operation poses problems. Guns during the period were usually rated by the weight of their projectile—thus the *Torgud* is said to have two 36-pounder guns, which would fire a projectile weighing about 36 pounds. During the novel, British guns are used as a carrot in negotiations with various Ionian political leaders to entice them into rebellion against French interests.



Themes

Isolation of Command

Aubrey, the protagonist, commands two ships during the novel—Worcester and Surprise. Both are ships in the Royal Navy and as such are run with a great deal of rigor and a highly formalized command structure. Aubrey, as captain, is responsible for all actions taken by his ship and is responsible to ensure his ship is in fighting order. In order to instill a sense of unbending discipline, Aubrey does not fraternize with his men or officers and instead stands apart as the unapproachable captain. This approach to command was typical for the Royal Navy during the period discussed by the novel. Just as Aubrey does not fraternize with his subordinates, so the Admirals commanding Aubrey do not overmuch fraternize with him. He thus finds himself isolated though surrounded by others. This isolation is echoed by Aubrey's friend Heneage Dundas during their several conversations—both captains are happy to receive each other as social equals within the rigid structure of military discipline. For Aubrey, at least, this utter isolation does have one remarkable outlet—Aubrey usually sails with his particular friend and confidant Stephen Maturin. Maturin's presence thus allows Aubrey to have a personal friend, someone with whom to play cards, have casual conversation, have unguarded meals, and play music. Indeed, Aubrey's friendship with Maturin is a dominant theme in all of the novels of the series. Aubrey uses Maturin as a sounding-board for various ideas and thoughts, confides in him personal fears and problems, and derives advice and comfort from his presence.

Boredom of Blockade

HMS Worcester joins the British blockade of the French fleet at Toulon. During this period of the war, British control of the seas was strong but the French still maintained significant fleets at several major naval bases. Though the French fleet was not strong enough to challenge the British fleet openly, it was strong enough to seriously harm British commerce and interests around the globe. Britain therefore pursues a policy of keeping the French fleets blockaded in port. Blockade duty was routine but difficult and put much strain on officers, crew, and especially equipment.

Most of the novel finds Worcester on-station at the Toulon blockade, and most of the middle portion of the novel deals with the difficulties of prolonged blockade service. Supplies are limited, resupply is difficult, news of the outside world is sporadic at best, and the daily tedium becomes crushing. The prospect of combat is remote, but the wear on the blockading ships and crew due weather are obvious. The crew resorts to various musical productions to dissipate the boredom. Some, such as Somers, turn to heavy drinking. Arguments and fights are common. Aubrey uses a variety of means—most only partially successful—to maintain good order aboard. The boredom of blockade is a dominant theme of most of the novel.



Friendship

The two protagonists of the novel, Jack Aubrey and Stephen Maturin, share the spotlight nearly equally. The two men have enjoyed a prolonged friendship which has developed slowly over the course of seven previous novels. Their mutual confidence has survived conflict, suspicion, and even competition for the attention of a woman, and emerged the stronger for it. Both men haltingly are able to share their innermost fears with the other, and their natures are such that their respective spheres of expertise complement the others' without conflict. Of course, this is limited with respect to Maturin's intelligence work, though Aubrey admits the work is important, finds it distasteful, and ignores it insofar as he can.

The constantly developing nature of their friendship not only drives the tone and texture of the novel, but also generally is responsible for the novel's plot development. For example, the narrative must contrive to place both men on distinct missions that happen to coincide upon a single ship—usually accomplished by having one support the military goals of the other. For example, Aubrey uses Worcester to pick up Maturin at Mahon. Both men take every opportunity to further their friend's career, however, and this constant exchange of graces and friendship runs as a dominant thread throughout the novel—indeed throughout all of the novels of the series—and forms one of the most enjoyable themes present. Such a close male-male friendship, entirely devoid of homoeroticism, is indeed rare in modern fiction. Their friendship is perhaps enabled only by the nature of the environment used as the principle setting—that of a man-of-war on prolonged sea duty.



Style

Style

Point of View

The novel is told from the third-person, limited, point of view. The narrator is reliable, entirely effaced, and unnamed. Jack Aubrey and Stephen Maturin, the main characters, are the protagonists and central figures in all of the scenes in the novel. The narrator divulges some internal thoughts of the two protagonists, but in general not of other characters. The majority of the story is told through action and dialogue; revealed thoughts are infrequent and are used for characterization rather than plot development.

The third-person point of view allows Aubrey and Maturin to be presented in a highly sympathetic manner. For example, the narrative structure portrays Maturin's marital situation as acceptable and manageable rather than ridiculous and pathetic. In this way, the choice of narrative view is appropriate and successful. As both characters are roughly equal in significance, the third-person point of view also allows their textual representations to be roughly equivalent though in the present novel Maturin is rather ascendant at the beginning and Aubrey takes the lead toward the end. Indeed, the structure of the novel and the method of plot development nearly require the use of a third-person point of view. Finally, the frequent appearance of minor characters is allowed through the point of view selected; it is carried throughout all of the novels of the series and is accessible and successful.

Setting

The novel features two primary types of settings. The first and most enjoyable is shipboard in a British warship—first Worcester and latter Surprise. One of the novel's primary achievements is the presentation of shipboard life as something intriguing and even desirable while simultaneously presenting a realistic view of the often horrible hardships endured. The novel's primary setting of shipboard life grounds the narrative but also presents a necessarily transient setting as the ship moves across great distances and through a huge geographical theater.

The second setting presented in the novel is an amalgam of various ports and seaboards during c. 1813, primarily in the Mediterranean. These locales are described in general terms and various citizens are developed as minor characters. The novel presents Spithead, Portsmouth, and Gibraltar as urban locales and also features various nautical places as minor settings. Typically, the action aboard ship is dominated by Aubrey, the action ashore is usually dominated by Maturin.



Language and Meaning

The novel's language is generally simply and accessible. Standard English punctuation is used to indicate dialogue and interior thoughts and descriptive text are easily distinguished. Most of the places, some of the objects, and even some of the events referenced in the narrative are identifiable as real geographical locations or historic events—for example, Gibraltar was a significant British naval base during the time of the novel. It is notable that the novel was originally written and published in England and uses standard English punctuation and spelling styles which may somewhat unfamiliar to American readers.

The novel becomes linguistically complex in two primary respects. First, when dealing with nautical events a somewhat complicated specialized language is used which includes references to various parts of sailing craft and sailing techniques which are probably not particularly familiar to modern readers. The technical language is accurate and interesting and a reference to a general sailing encyclopedia will assist in a careful reading and complete understanding of the text. Second, the novel makes frequent reference to various events which occur prior to the novel's opening, proper. In many cases, these events are detailed in a prior novel in the series and readers unfamiliar with these novels may find the references vague or puzzling.

Structure

The 367-page novel is divided into eleven numbered chapters of roughly equal length though some chapters are noticeably longer than others. The narrative is presented in strictly chronological order with each chapter's events occurring after the events in the previous chapter and before the events in the subsequent chapter. Of course references to previous events occur with some frequency and characters from time to time think about future events. Such deviations from the principle timeline are minor and are clearly identifiable as such. Thus, the novel's principle timeline is accessible and easily followed.

The novel is intended to be read as part of a series of novels; specifically as the eighth novel in a series which extends to twenty volumes, with an unfinished but published twenty-first novel available. Nearly all of the principle characters presented in the novel, therefore, are recurring characters with backgrounds and histories developed in prior novels. Similarly, events happening prior to the scope of the current novel are often referenced and indeed form the foundation of the narrative plot, particularly during the first two chapters. This structure may prove somewhat difficult for readers unfamiliar with the prior novels. Nevertheless, basic character glosses and event recaps are provided.

The structure is further complicated by adherence to historical events. In broad terms, the main events in the novel are fictional or fictionalized events which could have occurred, or did occur, in the period of time used as the novel's setting; namely, the war between England and America during the year c. 1813. Thus, the novel's language,

technology, politics, geography, et cetera, are all based upon historically accurate representations. The introductory 'Author's Note' enumerates a few historical sources.



Quotes

Marriage was once represented as a field of battle rather than a bed of roses, and perhaps there are some who may still support this view; but just as Dr Maturin had made a far more unsuitable match than most, so he set about dealing with the situation in a far more compendious, peaceable and efficacious way than the great majority of husbands. (p. 9)

'The skipper is in a hell-fire hurry,' observed Somers to Mowett, as Jack cast a look at Rame Head, looming through the rain on the starboard beam, and stepped purposefully below.

'Wait until you see him at quarters,' said Mowett. (p. 55)

'Surely civilians cannot poach on our ground—on the Commander-in-Chief's preserves?' (p. 99)

'A man-of-war, with little doubt. But you need not be afraid, with all this powerful fleet around you; and in any case, I perceive it has only one row of runs—a frigate,' Yet even as he spoke there seemed something familiar about that distant ship, racing towards them with a broad white bow-wave on either side, and she growing larger every minute. 'Stephen,' said Jack in a low, happy tone, 'she is our dear Surprise.' (p. 145)

He was contemplating one of the clocks, made by Wm Timmins of Gosport and ornamented with a creditable ship of the last age, a ship that still carried a lateen yard on the mizen, when the pattering feet reached the staircase on his right and looking up he saw Mercedes coming down—an unchanged Mercedes. (p. 201)

'If you are sure you really do not find it disagreeable,' said Stephen, instantly feeling in his pockets, 'I believe I may. For me tobacco is the crown of the meal, the best opening to a day, a great enhancer of the quality of life. The crackle and yield of this little paper cylinder,' he said, holding it up, 'gives me a sensual pleasure whose deeper origins I blush to contemplate, while the slow combustion of the whole yields a gratification that I should not readily abandon even if it did me harm, which it does not. Far from it. On the contrary, tobacco purges the mind of its gross humors, sharpens the wits, renders the judicious smoker sprightly and vivacious. And soon I shall need all my sprightliness and vivacity.' (pp. 212-213)

'Aye. Well, I shall do what I can for him, of course; though the correction of verses is a thankless task.' Graham shook his head, whistling in an undertone and reflecting that perhaps being rescued was an expensive amusement[.] (pp. 227-228)

'Such anxiety!' said Stephen, smiling at the recollection. 'Such uneasiness of mind! One might have supposed it was a question of the bubonic plague. I urged them to consider how very little time was really spent in coition, but it had no effect. I spoke of the



eunuch's tranquility and peace of mind, his unimpaired intellectual powers—I cited Narses and Hermias. I urged them to reflect that a marriage of minds was far more significant than mere carnal copulation. I might have saved my breath: one could almost have supposed that seamen lived for the act of love.' (p. 229)

'Now that is what I call a really good basis for literature,' said Jack, when the cloth had been drawn, the King's health drunk, and fresh decanters set upon the table. 'When is the sweepstake to begin?' (p. 269)

Like many large, florid, good-natured men, Jack Aubrey was afflicted with an undue proportion of small pale, meager friends of a shrewish turn. One of his earliest shipmates and closest acquaintances, Heneage Dundas, had already earned himself the name of Vinegar Joe throughout the service; Jack's steward was a confirmed nagger; and at times even Sophie...He was therefore peculiarly sensitive to the quality of shrewishness and even before Stephen opened his mouth Jack knew that he was about to say something disagreeable. (p. 302)

'No doubt,' said Graham, 'but the sea is an uncertain chancy whimsical female lunar element: you advance one mile upon its surface and at the same time the whole body of water has retired a league. I prefer the honest earth, where my advance is absolute, however arduous; and I am no more a seaman than is a Turk or a tib-cat.[]' (p. 342)

It was the usual furious *melée*, with a huge amount of shouting and striving, very little room to move because of both friends and enemies, little in the way of skill in swordsmanship—an enormous pushing, thrusting, lashing out at a venture, quick stabs in the tumult, short-armed blows, kicking: the physical weight of both sides and the moral weight of both sides. (p. 365)



Topics for Discussion

Would you rather serve on Surprise, like Barret Bonden, or Torgud, like Ezekiel Edwards?

Why do the English politicians believe they must select a single Ionian potentate to back against the others rather than simply conquering all of them?

Worcester is referred to as one of the surviving 'forty thieves'—what aspect of the ships in Worcester's class caused them to be so named?

During the novel Nathaniel Martin is introduced as a fairly minor character; he recurs in future novels of the series and becomes a major character in several of them. What aspects of Martin's personality and behavior lend themselves to future inclusion in the structure of the series of novels?

At the end of the novel Aubrey attacks and captures two Turkish ships at once, a feat that is viewed as all but impossible by Professor Graham. Do you think Aubrey is pursuing a desperate venture to compensate for earlier failures? Or does Aubrey correctly judge the situation while Graham does not?

Professor Graham prefers a prolonged negotiation with several Ionian leaders while Aubrey simply selects the one he likes best and announces him an ally. Graham is outraged. Is Aubrey's gut-reaction essentially correct? Or is it a terrible mistake?

For many days the crew of Surprise rigs up a large ropeway ascending through a city. To what end do they hope to use the complicated conveyance? Why is a ropeway the only feasible way to accomplish the task?