

The Yellow Admiral Study Guide

The Yellow Admiral by Patrick O'Brian

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Contents

The Yellow Admiral Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	3
Chapter 1.....	4
Chapter 2, pgs. 24-51.....	6
Chapter 3, pgs. 52-65.....	7
Chapter 3, pgs. 65-81.....	8
Chapter 4, pgs. 82-94.....	9
Chapter 4, pgs. 95-107.....	10
Chapter 5, pgs. 108-125.....	11
Chapter 5, pgs. 125 - 139.....	12
Chapter 6, pgs. 140-167.....	13
Chapter 7, pgs. 168 - 180.....	15
Chapter 8, pgs. 181-194.....	16
Chapter 8, pgs. 194 - 207.....	17
Chapter 9, pgs. 208 - 232.....	18
Chapter 10, pgs. 233-248.....	19
Chapter 10, pgs. 248 - 262.....	20
Characters.....	21
Objects/Places.....	24
Themes.....	26
Style.....	28
Quotes.....	30
Topics for Discussion.....	32



Plot Summary

The Yellow Admiral by Patrick O'Brien is a novel that is set in nineteenth century England and is about an impoverished member of the Parliament and his floundering in the navy. The novel takes place on both land and sea since England is in the middle of a war with Napoleon's France.

The two main characters of the novel are Captain Jack Aubrey and Dr. Stephen Maturin. Jack Aubrey is married to Sophie and is the lord of Woolcombe. He is opposing a neighbor named Griffiths on the issue of inclosure. This is where certain lands of the manor are given over to food production. Aubrey's naval superior, Admiral Stranraer, who is also Griffith's uncle, favors inclosure. When Aubrey helps defeat the position in committee, this brings him into conflict with Stranraer who creates problems for him at the Admiralty. This affects his career advancement opportunities endangering his dream of having his own flag.

The other main character is Dr. Stephen Maturin. He is a naval surgeon who serves on Aubrey's ship. He is also an intelligence agent who reports to Sir Joseph Blaine at the Admiralty. Maturin uses his position as the ship's surgeon as a cover for his intelligence work. The ship puts him ashore at various places where he can make and meet contacts. He learns some important information that provides useful to Blaine.

Aubrey does not have much luck on or off land. He has an affair with a Canadian woman and fathers a child which his wife finds out about. He captures a French ship laden with treasure but is charged with leaving his post allowing two French ships to slip through. When the peace comes in 1814, Jack is worried about his career.

Maturin and Blaine come to his rescue. Through his intelligence contacts with the Chileans, Maturin learns that they want to develop a navy. Blaine works out a plan where Jack is loaned to his Hydrographic Department for the South American assignment. He will be given command of a private ship. When his assignment is complete, he will return to England and be reinstated on the Admiralty lists and in line for a flag. This basically saves Aubrey's career, even though he is dubious about the plan at first.

Aubrey's journey begins with a trip to Madeira and Funchal. He and Stephen take their families with. They meet the Chileans in Funchal. They are to go on to South America and their families will return to England. Before this can happen, he is ordered to take command of all British ships in Funchal and proceed to the Straits of Gibraltar to prevent the passage of Napoleon who has escaped from Elba.

The book is relatively fast to read and will hold the reader's interest.



Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

The Yellow Admiral by Patrick O'Brien is a novel that is set in nineteenth century England and is about an impoverished member of the Parliament and his floundering in the navy. The novel takes place on both land and sea since England is in the middle of a war with Napoleon's France.

Sir Joseph Blaine enters his office at the Admiralty. Mr. Needham appears. He tells Blaine that Dr. Stephen Maturin is missing. Maturin is the adviser on Spanish affairs. Maturin and his wife had taken part in an expedition with the Duke of Habachtsthal. When Habachtsthal kills himself, Mrs. Maturin tries to transfer his money to England. The money is embargoed in Corunna, Spain where the authorities waited for someone to try to collect it. Blaine asks Needham to obtain more information about the situation.

Blaine thinks about Stephen Maturin as he walks home. He shares many interests with him and is fond of his wife Diana but feels she made him unhappy. As he is walking, he meets Stephen. Blaine tells him how he was denounced in Spain by a man named Dutourd and how his treasure was impounded.

Stephen tells him how he misplaced the receipt for the gold and how they were visiting Diana's daughter, Brigid. They were traveling from Laredo to Segovia.

After talking, the men go out for a walk. The Maturins are going to stay with the Aubreys until they straighten out their finances and buy their own house.

Captain Aubrey and his wife Sophie are having breakfast. Aubrey is reading the Gazette which provides news of ranking and promotions of those in the sea travel business. Aubrey is rising through the ranks but not as quickly as he wants to. Both of them are reading their mail. Sophie says they will have to sell their Ashgrove property to cover their debts. They read letters from their daughters Charlotte and Fanny and then a letter saying that the Maturin group will be arriving that day. Stephen is Sophie's cousin. Sophie begins to prepare for their arrival.

When the guests arrive, they all have tea and talk.

Chapter 1 Analysis

This chapter introduces the various characters and begins to explain their relationships. From the discussion Blaine has with Needham, it is learned that Stephen Maturin is in some kind of trouble. He apparently has trouble in Spain when he tries to remove gold from the country. Blaine learns more of the story when he meets Stephen Maturin while walking home.

Both the Maturins and the Aubreys have financial problems. Stephen is the cousin of Sophie Aubrey and the Maturin group will be staying with the Aubreys until they straighten out their financial problems and buy a house. As a result of litigation, the Ashgrove residence will be sold to cover their debts.



Chapter 2, pgs. 24-51

Chapter 2, pgs. 24-51 Summary

Jack and Stephen decide to hunt the next morning. Jack shows Stephen the library and justice rooms. Jack serves as a magistrate for the manor. As they look over the guns, they discuss finances and the fact that they are both experiencing financial difficulties. Stephen's fortune was seized in Spain and Jack's problems stem from litigation due to the seizure of slave ships. Both men have their pay from the service.

Jack shows Stephen around the grounds as they hunt. They talk about the inclosures whose purpose is to increase the supply of corn. Jack explains how he will oppose them in a parliamentary committee. Inclosure is where the common land is divided up among people. Jack does on to explain his functions as lord of the manor.

The children find Jack and Stephen to tell them that a letter has been delivered so they return to the house.

Captain Dundas and Philip arrive on Thursday. The men discuss nautical matters. Mr. Cholmondeley, the owner of the house and carriage arrives. He is going to Ireland and is leaving the horse and carriage with them. Diana likes to drive the carriage so they ride around a lot.

Chapter 2, pgs. 24-51 Analysis

This chapter reveals more about the positions of both Aubrey and Maturin. Both men are in the service of the navy and draw salaries. Both are having financial difficulties. Maturin's problems are due to the seizure of his gold in Spain. Aubrey's are due to the litigation stemming from his seizure of slave ships.

Aubrey is lord of the manor of the estate. Maturin takes the time to learn about inclosure from him and how he feels about it. He also learns about Aubrey's functions as lord of the manor.



Chapter 3, pgs. 52-65

Chapter 3, pgs. 52-65 Summary

The mail arrives during breakfast and there is a letter for Captain Dundas bearing the black Admiralty wax. He says it is from his brother who is a First Lord. Dundas comments that he should have a ship better than the Berenice.

After breakfast, Stephen goes to the coach house to talk with Bonden. They discuss fighting and boxing matches. Bonden explains what is involved in organizing a boxing match in addition to the rules and the various techniques involved. Bonden is an experienced boxer and very knowledgeable about the sport.

Captain Griffiths asks Aubrey if there is any news from the squadron and Aubrey says no. Griffiths says he won't be attending the fight on Wednesday since he will be attending a committee meeting.

Aubrey tells Maturin that inclosure involves a great deal of money. When Stephen asks if the amount is enough for men to take extreme measures, Jack says yes. He asks about Lord Stranraer, the owner of the property and Jack says he doesn't know.

While the men are out, the women sew and talk. Orders arrive for Aubrey. Diana says he is away in London and accepts the packet, telling Sophie that Jack would be very upset to miss the committee meeting. They send Clarissa to tell Jack not to come home.

Chapter 3, pgs. 52-65 Analysis

Stephen Maturin is the kind of man who lies to learn about things and is not shy about asking questions. He questions Bonden about the sport of boxing, since there is an upcoming boxing event that everyone is talking about.

Diana takes it upon herself to lie to the messenger who arrives with orders for Jack. She knows that he wants to attend the committee meeting but she shouldn't have made the decision for him. He had the right to make his own decision and she deprived him of that right.



Chapter 3, pgs. 65-81

Chapter 3, pgs. 65-81 Summary

There is a big crowd to view the fight. The two fighters, Bonden and Evans, begin to fight without shaking hands. The crowd shouted out their encouragements. The fight is held at the Dripping Pan. Griffiths, Stephen and Jack are a part of the crowd. Both Bonden and Evans are bloodied during the fight. Evans scores a knock out.

Jack and Stephen make plans to carry Bonden home. Stephen asks Dundas if the fight was fair and he says he believes so. While they are walking home, they meet Clarissa, who tells Jack that he has to take the carriage to Wooton. Jack thinks her for the information. He prefers to attend the committee meeting. Stephen suggests that Lord Stranraer sent orders for them to return to their ship so Jack would purposely miss the meeting.

The committee rejects the petition for inclosure. They stop at a village pub after the meeting. Jack is happy about the outcome.

The villagers cheered Jack as he rode into Woolhampton. His family also greeted him. Sophie gives him the orders packet and he says he and Stephen will leave for Torbay the next day. Diane says she will drive them and they leave before daybreak. They arrive at the inn in time for a second breakfast.

Chapter 3, pgs. 65-81 Analysis

Jack is happy that the women delayed in giving him the orders. He wanted to attend the inclosure meeting to fight the petition and he is successful in his fight. If he had received his order and reported to his ship. He would have missed the meeting and the petition might have passed. He is not angry at the women for what they did.



Chapter 4, pgs. 82-94

Chapter 4, pgs. 82-94 Summary

The next morning, they leave the inn and continue the journey and reach the coast. At Feathers, they ask for directions to an inn for Diana. The man Stephen asks is Hardwicke Courteney who recognizes him from his lecture. They leave the horse and carriage at her house and go to the inn.

Jack and Stephen sail to Ushant on the Ringle. On board, they eat and talk. After eating breakfast, they walk the quarterdeck. They sail through Fromveur Passage. They are heading for the Goolet de Brest which is a channel into the harbor. They meet the ship Bellona and the ships signal one another.

Chapter 4, pgs. 82-94 Analysis

The men complete the journey to the coast and board a ship heading toward Ushant. Along the way, they meet a man who recognizes Maturin from one of his lectures and comments that it is not good for an intelligence man to be recognized. The fact that Maturin works in intelligence has been alluded to at several places in the book. At the beginning of the book, he is referred to as an advisor on Spanish affairs. There is no information given however about the exact nature of his work.



Chapter 4, pgs. 95-107

Chapter 4, pgs. 95-107 Summary

During the transfer to the Bellona, the men, who are all experienced seamen, are concerned with proper procedure. Before they leave, Stephen checks Bonden's wounds received in the fight. The men transfer to the Bellona with all of the ceremony involved. There is more ceremony involved with Jack's arrival than with the others since Jack is a captain. Stephen is greeted by Mr. Sherman, who wants to talk to him and they discuss medical procedures for the treatment of wounds.

Jack meets with the Admiral and has to explain why he is late. He explains that he was away in London when the orders arrived and departed immediately upon learning of the orders. The Admiral had favored inclosure and told Griffiths. Jack tells him that the petition was defeated.

The admiral tells Jack that his frequent absences have resulted in disciplinary problems aboard the Bellona. He is critical of Aubrey's officers. He tells Aubrey that the Bellona is assigned to the inside squadron and then asks to see Stephen Maturin. Admiral Stranraer had received an elixir from Stephen many years ago. He wants Stephen to tell Mr. Sherman about it because he would like it for the treatment of his pain.

The Admiral then changes the subject to inclosures and how it increase agricultural yields. He wants to know how much influence Maturin has over Aubrey. Stranraer then changes the topic to their coming battle against the French. Farmers must produce enough output to feed the soldiers.

Stephen tells Jack about the discussion.

Chapter 4, pgs. 95-107 Analysis

Aubrey, Maturin and the other men are experienced seamen and are concerned with protocol. When transferring to the Bellona, they insisted that the ceremonial procedure be followed. This meant that Aubrey had to transfer first.

Stephen was correct in his assessment of Stranraer. He is the one who favors inclosure. He feels that it leads to increased agricultural output and revenues. He feels that this is needed to feed the troops. He also asks Stephen how much influence he has over Aubrey although he doesn't suggest that Stephen talk to Jack about the inclosure issues. Stephen is a good friend in telling Jack about the conversation.



Chapter 5, pgs. 108-125

Chapter 5, pgs. 108-125 Summary

The ships are at sea for five days. On the sixth day, they entered the harbor and explored the inlets. Jack has dinner with the other officers and they talk about other battles. Stephen asks to hear the story about first lieutenant William Harding's experiences.

They are sailing through rain and waiting for it to clear. After dinner, the men meet in the Captain's fore-cabin. The next morning, the weather is improved. Stephen is happy at the improved weather conditions because of all of the men in sick bay. As they talk, a battle begins. The men carry the injured men to Stephen.

Chapter 5, pgs. 108-125 Analysis

The Bellona and others reach their destination during bad weather and have to wait for the rain and weather to clear. Jack and the men spend a lot of time talking. Stephen, always curious, asks to hear some of their war stories. He always wants to hear the experiences of others. When the weather clears, the battle begins and Stephen attends to the injured.



Chapter 5, pgs. 125 - 139

Chapter 5, pgs. 125 - 139 Summary

After the battle, they examine the oboe of one of the men. Jack and the men listen to a performance of a cello, viola and fiddle played by the men. An aide reminds Jack of a report he has to write and the concern ends as Jack begins to work on the report.

Two of the men, Geoghegan and Callahan, talk about the dinner that Aubrey and the officers ate. Stephen is walking on the deck when one of the men performing a task, is killed. They sew the dead man into his hammock and bury him at sea.

The Bellona is in the waters near Brest. Jack is on deck with two navigators experienced in the waters of the area. Jack feels he will be able to follow his plan of sailing in the harbor during the day and staying in the straits at night.

The next morning it is foggy. Stephen and Jack talk about Mr. Inigo Bernard, who is from a Barcelona ship building family. He works for one of the Spanish intelligence services. He joins them for breakfast in the great hall.

That night, there is a thick fog. There is total darkness as they try to navigate the Bellona. Stephen goes ashore.

Chapter 5, pgs. 125 - 139 Analysis

The men have to pass the time when they are not in battle. They spend a lot of time talking and playing musical instruments. They have a man aboard named Inigo Bernard who is a member of a Spanish ship building family and Spanish intelligence. He and Stephen have worked together before and they are working together again. Stephen's cover is that of a ship's doctor. In the dark of the night, Stephen is taken to shore. This is part of his intelligence work and is something that has been done many times before



Chapter 6, pgs. 140-167

Chapter 6, pgs. 140-167 Summary

The Bellona returns to the bay at dawn. They record the ship's position. At daybreak, the crew spots a frigate and notifies Jack. Jack has them send a message that he desires to speak to the captain of the other ship. They communicate that they have received no news or letters.

The schoolmaster holds a class in the fore-cabin. He is teaching trigonometry to the younger crew members to help them determine their position on the sea. A few days later, they spot the Ramilles, another ship for their group. Soon, two other ships are spotted. The cutter is the mail ship so the men are pleased. The men read their mail. Jack receives a letter from Sophie saying that she has proof of his infidelity with Amanda Smith. She is telling the Admiral to move out of her Ashgrove house so she can move there with the children. The letter written earlier is of a completely different tone where she tells of bringing her mother to live with them and not to worry about sending her money. Diana is paying rent and there is an income from the farm. Jack realizes that he didn't hide the letters from Amanda.

Captain Fanshawe, on the Ramillies, tells Jack the two French frigates sailed from Brest and are attacking British merchant ships. They managed to slip by the Bellona and he is supposed to reprimand Jack. Jack is supposed to proceed to Ushant and report to the command where he will be assigned to an offshore squadron.

When Jack returns to the Bellona, he gives the orders to set a course to Ushant. On the way to his interview with the Admiral aboard the Charlotte, Jack misses his footing on a gangplank and falls into the water. He tells the group that he knew nothing about the two French frigates that are attacking the merchant ships. He blames it on the heavy fog that they were able to slip by unnoticed. They accept his explanation. Jack asks for and is denied leave for private matters.

On Monday morning, the Bellona is sailing with some of the other ships. They spot another ship. They identify the frigate as a private French ship named Les Deux Freres. The Bellona and other ships begin to chase the French ship into Falmouth. After raiding the ship, they sail to Cawsand Bay for repairs.

While the ship is in for repairs, Jack plans to go to Woolcombe. When he arrives, Sophie is with her mother and says she never wants to see him again.

Chapter 6, pgs. 140-167 Analysis

The Bellona is patrolling the waters off the coast of Brest. One night in the thick fog, two French ships slip by and begin attacking British merchant ships. Aubrey is blamed for allowing this to happen. He meets with the Admiral but receives no further discipline.



There is a school master on board the ship that conducts classes for the younger seamen when there is time. He educates them in trigonometry so they are able to perform navigation when they have to. This is good to educate them while they are at sea because they will never know when they will need these skills.

Sophie's letter regarding Jack's infidelity has Jack trying to find away to take leave. He travels to Woolcombe while the Bellona is in for repairs. He apparently feels that he can work it out with Sophie. When he arrives, Sophie makes it clear that she never wants to see him again. Instead of trying to reason with her, they have sharp words and he walks out. They will have a difficult time overcoming the incident.



Chapter 7, pgs. 168 - 180

Chapter 7, pgs. 168 - 180 Summary

After the repairs, the Bellona heads for the offshore squadron. Aubrey is told that Admiral Stranraer is ill and told to report to his secretary, Mr. Braddock. Aubrey learns that Maturin, aboard the Ringle, has not yet returned. They think they may have gone to the Downs. Jack is sent back to the inshore squadron where he would resume patrolling under Captain Fanshawe.

When the Ringle appears, Stephen is not on board. He learns from Captain Reade that they did travel to Downs. Stephen went to London to see Sir Joseph at the Admiralty. He says he has important information.

After dinner, they walk to Sir Joseph's house, where they talk over coffee. Stephen tells him about the South Americans he met in France. He tells Blaine that he has written records of their discussion. He thinks that there should be more emphasis on attack and defense by sea in the fight against slavery which is the position of the South Americans.

Stephen asks Blaine about Aubrey's prospects. They discuss Aubrey and Blaine says Stranraer's dispatches haven't been favorable. Blaine knows that the difficulties are due to their differences over the inclosure issue. Blaine says it is possible for him to receive a flag.

They then talk about Don Diego and the kind of information he obtains. His father is a viceroy and created a branch of Spanish intelligence, which he headed. Stephen says he is mainly concerned with naval issues and his contact, Bernard, became an aide to the intelligence chief. Stephen provides Blaine with a list of Diego's contacts, some of whom are Blaine's own people. They decide to bring in a man named Pratt.

That night, they catch a man trying to break into the house.

Chapter 7, pgs. 168 - 180 Analysis

Aubrey learns that Maturin is not on the Ringle when it appears. Stephen has gone to London to consult with Sir Joseph Blaine at the Admiralty. In France, he learns about the South American's plans for combating slavery and thinks that the British should adopt the same posture.

Bernard, who is on the Bellona with Stephen, provided information about Don Diego, the son of a Spanish intelligence chief and how he is obtaining information, some of it from Blaine's own people who owe Diego money. Stephen thought that this information is too important to put in a written report and travels to London to deliver it personally.



Chapter 8, pgs. 181-194

Chapter 8, pgs. 181-194 Summary

Capturing the burglar was an intelligence coup for Blaine. Maturin is given permission to explore the proposals of the South Americans without making any commitments on the part of the British government. In London he stays at the Grapes, where his two god-daughters live with an old friend of his. These are children he rescued during his travels in the Pacific.

Stephen hires a coach to travel to Woolcombe to visit his family. Diana is happy to see him and fills him in on the news regarding Sophie's mother and how the letters from Amanda Smith were found. She tells him about the words exchanged when Aubrey came to see her and how Sophie's been crying ever since. Diana blame's Sophie's mother for the problems. Diana also secured a loan on a large diamond. Stephen says he will repay it and retrieve the diamond since they don't require the money.

Aunt Williams, Sophie's mother is now living in Bath and Diana says that Sophie is more reasonable now.

The other women warmly greet Stephen. They want him to stay for Christmas but he is learning. The next day Philip Aubrey, Jack's brother offers Maturin a ride which he accepts.

Chapter 8, pgs. 181-194 Analysis

Stephen makes the most of his time in England. He visits his two god-daughters in London and then travels to Woobcombe. He learns the news from Diane regarding Aunt Williams, Amanda Smith, and the sharp words between Jack and Sophie. Diana blames Aunt Williams or riling Sophie which led to the scene between her and Jack. Diane finds a house in Bath for Aunt Williams to live in. Without her mother around, Sophie is more reasonable and the women are all talking to her. Diana has to know that Stephen will tell this to Jack. They seem to want Sophie and Jack to solve their problems.



Chapter 8, pgs. 194 - 207

Chapter 8, pgs. 194 - 207 Summary

Stephen and Philip discuss Sophie's mother as they travel. They board the Queen Charlotte together. After Stephen examines Stranraer, the men have wine. They believe that the admiral has a heart problem. Sherman and Stephen discuss medical techniques.

Jack and Stephen talk over dinner. Stephen tells him that he has money again and gives him a letter from Sophie. Jack talks the letter and retires to read it. He returns later for the concert.

The Ramillies is low on food and asks for supplies. Jack and Fanshawe discuss the blockade and the military situation. They have no news of events concerning the war. As a result of their time on land, many of the men are sick and the supply of medicines is low. Stephen visits the patients after dinner.

Jack tells Stephen that his financial picture is improving. His lawyers are winning some of their appeals. Jack tells him how they closed the French frigate and protected a merchant ship. They discuss what will happen after the war's end and how there will be unemployment in the navy. Stephen tells Jack of his discussion with Blaine and the possibility of his receiving a flag.

Chapter 8, pgs. 194 - 207 Analysis

Stephen returns to the fleet with Philip Aubrey, Jack's brother. He talks to Philip about Sophie's mother but not to Jack. As a result of the letters Stephen carried to Jack, Jack is in a better mood. His financial situation is improved.

Stephen talks to Jack about his discussion with Blaine. In spite of Stanraer's negative reports about Jack, it is still possible that Jack will have a naval position after the war and would eventually receive a flag. This is what Jack wants even if he has to work at a land position for a while.



Chapter 9, pgs. 208 - 232

Chapter 9, pgs. 208 - 232 Summary

The blockade continues during Christmas. Their Christmas meal consists of seafood. Jack tells Stephen that he is interested in the proposition of the procedure for his obtaining a flag, as proposed by Blaine.

Stephen performs an operation on Bowden. After the surgery Stephen walks on deck. Jack is on deck also and both men are wet from the spray. They both change into dry clothes for dinner, where the talk centers on ships and shipbuilding. While talking, they hear what is either thunder or gunfire and run up on deck. They identify the sound as gunfire. Jack feels the French are taking advantage of the weather to engage in a sortie. He gives orders for the ship to head to the area. Stephen goes to check on his patients.

At daybreak, they meet the Ringle and talk to Reade. Two of the ships, the Aboukir and Ramillies, are under attack by the French. They help to turn back the French attack. The Aboukir has been damaged enough that it must go to Cawsand Bay for repairs. The other ships must stay and maintain the blockade.

The Queen Charlotte arrives and Stranraer comes aboard. He has come to see Stephen, who immediately examines him. He invites Stephen, Aubrey and other officers to dine with him that evening. At the dinner, they toast an English victory over Napoleon. While they dine, the store ship crew transfers stores of food to the other ships. Mail is also delivered and the men share their news with each other.

Chapter 9, pgs. 208 - 232 Analysis

The ships hold their position on the blockade. There is an encounter with the French and one of the British ships is damaged enough to require repairs at Cawsand Bay.

The dinner conversation reveals that the end of the war is coming. The men talk about what might happen, such as a change of government in France. They consider what their own positions will be without the war. They toast to an English victory.



Chapter 10, pgs. 233-248

Chapter 10, pgs. 233-248 Summary

Napoleon abdicates as a result of the war. The Bellona is one of the last ships to be sent home. The men are anxious to return to England and complain but there is nothing the captain can do about it. After the ship reaches land, Stephen and Jack travel by chaise.

Stephen tells Jack about the letters he received from London. Jack and Stephen will travel to London where Jack will meet the Chileans. There will then be an interview before the committee and Jack will be suspended from the navy, according to Blaine's plan. He will be given command of a private ship. Jack is doubtful about the arrangements and whether he will ever be reinstated.

The men arrive at Black's, a club in London. They go to the library to learn of the news during their absence. They dine at the club, as does Blaine, and then go to Somerset House for the proceedings. They know most of the men there and they talk of their experiences.

Jack and Stephen are staying at the Grapes. They have their meeting with the Chileans. Jack will have command of the Surprise and work in South American waters surveying and charting the coasts. He is to help the Chileans form a navy. When he finishes the assignment, he will be reinstated on the list without loss of seniority. Jack appears before the committee on Monday so they have the weekend to pass.

One Monday morning, Jack is nervous and barely eats. Stephen tries to alleviate his nervousness. Most of the men on the committee are his friends. The committee approves Jack's position. The next day, Jack reports to Sir Joseph at the Admiralty to sign the papers. He then talks to people in the Hydrographic Department. He will leave for Chile within seven months.

Chapter 10, pgs. 233-248 Analysis

Jack has doubts about the deal Blaine has proposed. He wonders if he will be reinstated to the list and ever receive a flag. Working for Blaine means that Jack will be working for intelligence in Chile. He will be on loan to the Hydrograph Department for the length of his assignment. Jack's position is approved and in spite of his earlier doubts, he is happy about it.



Chapter 10, pgs. 248 - 262

Chapter 10, pgs. 248 - 262 Summary

Jack returns home to Woolcombe. He oversees the outfitting of the Surprise for the Chilean venture. Jack and Stephen have to tell the women that they are not home for long. They will soon be leaving for Chile. Sophie understands the reasons for the Chilean assignment. Jack keeps her abreast of the outfitting of the ship.

One day when Jack returns from Portsmouth, he tells Stephen of seeing Lord Keith. The Admiral will be leaving for the Mediterranean in the Royal Sovereign. Jack says he thinks his ship will be ready in February and Stephen says the Chileans will be in Funchal in March. Since this is a peace time assignment, their families will go with and visit in Madeira and Funchal and then return to England.

In February, they board the Surprise and set sail. When they reach Madeira, they show the women and children the sights. They meet the Chileans at the Funchal and see the sights with them.

Jack receives a letter from Lord Keith saying that Napoleon escaped from Elba. He places Jack in charge of all British ships in Funchal and orders him to guard the Straits of Gibraltar to prevent Napoleon's escape through there.

Chapter 10, pgs. 248 - 262 Analysis

Jack oversees the preparation of the Surprise for the Chilean venture. When it is ready, Jack, Stephen and their families sail to Madeira and Funchal. This is a vacation for their families and they take them sightseeing in both places. Before Jack leaves for South America, he receives a letter from Lord Keith at the Admiralty giving him command of all British ships at Funchal and ordering them to the Straits of Gibraltar. Napoleon has escaped from Elba and they are to prevent him from passing through the Straits. Jack has his flag, even it is temporary.



Characters

Jack Aubrey

Jack Aubrey is a seaman. He is married to Sophie. They have a son named George and twins Charlotte and Fanny. Jack has been a seaman all of his life but has not risen through the ranks as quickly as he or Sophie had hoped. Sophie is the cousin of Stephen Maturin. Aubrey had commanded a fourteen gun brig and had been on a crusade against slavery. He owns a manor in Dorset where he also functions as the magistrate and lord of the manor. Like his father before him, he is a Tory. He is also a member of the Royal Society. While he is away at war, Sophie's mother comes to stay with Sophie and finds a letter from Amanda Smith in Canada indicating that Jack has a child by her. Sophie's mother tells everyone in the house and has Sophie in such a riled state that she writes Jack that she is leaving him and that she and the children will live at Ashgrove. When the Bellona is having repairs, Jack goes to see Sophie and they have sharp words and he leave. They eventually reconcile their differences. Since Jack opposed Admiral Stranraer on the issue of inclosures, the Admiral has sent unfavorable reports about Aubrey to the Admiralty. Jack is worried that this will affect his chances for promotion after the war. Blaine offers him a temporary assignment in South America after which time he will be reinstated on the list for a flag. Jack accepts and is given command of a private ship, the Surprise. He, Stephen, and their families sail to Madeira/Funchal as the first step in the assignment, which has to be postponed when Napoleon escapes from Elba. He is given command of all British ships in Funchal and ordered to the Straits of Gibraltar to block Napoleon's passage.

Stephen Maturin

Stephen Maturin is a medical doctor and the advisor on Spanish affairs. He is married to Diana. They have a daughter, Brigid, who is mentally deficient and in the care of Clarissa Oakes. Maturin had served as the surgeon on the ship Bellona with Aubrey in his crusade against slavery. Maturin's fortune was seized in Spain and he and his family live with the Aubreys until they solve their financial difficulties. He still has his income from the service as a naval surgeon. While staying with the Aubreys, Maturin takes the time to learn about different things that he knows little about like boxing, inclosure and the functions of a lord. He has a natural curiosity and likes to learn. Maturin is also a member of the Royal Society and an intelligence agent. He reports to Sir Joseph Blaine. When he is at sea with Aubrey, he is often put on shore at night so he can meet with his contacts. Maturin is involved in a discussion with the South Americans in how to combat slavery. He also has a contact in one of the Spanish intelligence services, Inigo Bernard, who provides him with information about Diego Diaz who is the son of one of the Spanish intelligence chiefs. Some of Diego's sources are Blaine's own men. Maturin maintains a residence at the Grapes in Savoy where his two god-daughters, Sarah and Emily, live with an old friend of his. Maturin helps Jack obtain a temporary post-war position in intelligence. He himself remains in intelligence after the war since he is



supposed to go to Chile with Jack. As they are preparing to leave for South America, they are ordered to the Straits of Gibraltar to prevent the passage of Napoleon who escaped from Elba.

Admiral Stranraer

Admiral Stranraer is a naval admiral and the superior of Jack Aubrey. He lives at Sophie's Ashgrove residence. Since he and Aubrey have opposing views on inclosure, he gives Aubrey a bad reputation at the Admiralty. His ship is the Queen Charlotte.

Sophie

Sophie is the wife of Jack Aubrey. They have a son named George. Her twin daughters, Charlotte and Fanny, are being educated at her sister's girls' school. Sophie lives at Woolcombe, the Aubrey estate.

Sir Joseph Blaine

Sir Joseph Blaine is a top official at the Admiralty in London. He is involved in intelligence and Maturin reports to him. He arranges a temporary assignment for Aubrey to help his post-war career.

Diane

Diane is the wife of Stephen Maturin. They have a daughter Brigid. Due to financial difficulties, they are staying with Diana's cousins, the Aubreys, at Woolcombe.

Inigo Bernard

Inigo Bernard is a member of Spanish intelligence. He is aboard the Bellona and a contact of Stephen Maturin. He provides Maturin with valuable information.

Griffiths

Griffiths is a sailor. He is a nephew of Admiral Stranraer. He has commanded several boats but is not considered a good sailor and was the subject of a mutiny. He is a strong proponent of inclosure.

Diego Diaz

Diego Diaz is the son of one of the Spanish intelligence chiefs. Among his sources are some of Blaine's people.



Clarissa Oakes

Clarissa Oakes is the governess of Brigid and a member of the Maturin household. She lives and travels with them.



Objects/Places

Dorset

Dorset is located in England and is the area where the Aubrey's live.

The Ringle

The Ringle is the ship in which Aubrey and Maturin sail to the coast of France.

Bellona

Bellona is the ship that Aubrey commands.

Shepherd's Market

Shepherd's Market is the London St. James Street residence of Sir Joseph Blaine.

The Grapes

The Grapes is a residence that Maturin maintains in the Liberties of the Savoy in London.

Woolcombe

Woolcombe is the manor home of the Aubrey's.

Brest

Brest is a city on the western coast of France which the English are blockading during the war.

Madeira

Madeira is on an island off the western coast of Portugal.

Funchal

Funchal is on the same island as Madeira off the western coast of Portugal.

The Surprise

The Surprise is a private ship that Jack is given command of for his Chilean assignment.



Themes

Relationships - Aubreys and Maturins

The relationship between the Aubrey and Maturin families is a theme of the book. They have both a personal relationship and a business relationship. Jack and Stephen work together. Jack is a ship's captain and Stephen is a naval surgeon. Stephen is also an intelligence agent and uses his medical job as his cover. When the ship is patrolling, they often put Maturin on shore where he can make and meet contacts to see what information he can learn that is of interest to England. Since he is a bona fide medical doctor, he also performs those duties on ship. When the Maturins are in Spain, the Duke of Habachtsthal dies and Maturin inherits his fortune. When he tries to move the fortune to England, it is seized by the Spanish. Since the Maturins have financial difficulties now, they move in with the Aubrey's, taking over a wing of the manor. The two families get along well. The older Aubrey twin girls are away at school but the younger son George is about the same age as the Maturin daughter Brigid. Jack and Diane are also cousins and the two families help one another out. They go on outings and when Jack is on loan to the Hydrographic Department and on his way to South America, the families sail with him to vacation at Madeira and Funchal. They see the sights with the Chileans, who Jack and Stephen will be working with. The closeness of the families allows the men to work together as well as live together. When Sophie's mother stays at Woolcombe and causes problems in the Aubrey marriage, Diana helps out by arranging for her to move to Bath.

Relationships - Jack and Stephen

The relationship between Jack and Stephen is another theme of the book. The men work together and live together. They are always there to help one another. When Stephen has financial difficulties, his family moves in with the Aubrey's. The men discuss their problems with each other and offer advice. It is Stephen that suggests that Admiral Stranraer is behind Jack's problems at the Admiralty. Stranraer favors inclosure because of the increased revenues and the increased agricultural output. Jack opposes the issue and successfully helps defeat the petition in parliamentary committee. As a result, Stranraer begins causing trouble for him which causes Jack to worry about his naval career. Stephen, who has watched the situation develop and correctly analyzed it, talks to Sir Joseph Blaine at the Admiralty about Jack's career prospects. Blaine develops a plan that will allow Jack to work in Chile as the commander of a private ship and to help the Chileans develop a navy. When the assignment is completed, Jack will be returned to the Admiralty lists with no loss of seniority and will be in line for the flag that he so desperately wants. Stephen explains the plan to Jack and how it will help save his career. He accompanies Jack to London and helps him prepare for the interviews. He tells him not to worry because most of the committee members and friends of his. Stephen will also be working with the Chileans and wants Jack to have



the assignment, since they work so well together. The two men have a good professional and personal relationship.

Ambition

Ambition is a third theme of the book. Jack Aubrey wants to be an admiral and have his own flag. He is a Member of Parliament and lord of the manor at Woolcombe but he is impoverished. Even though he and Sophie own various properties, Jack more or less relies on his naval salary. As a result of the seizures he made in his battle against slavery, he is involved in various litigations, which his lawyers eventually resolve in a favorable manner. Jack could leave the navy and concentrate on improving his income from his manor and business dealings but he is from a seafaring family and wants a career in the navy. He does not worry about risking his life in battle. His goal is to have his own flag and he is worried about his chances. He and Admiral Stranraer are on opposing sides regarding the issue of inclosure. Jack is successful in helping defeat the petition in parliamentary committee and as a result his admiral cause problems for him in a variety of different ways, including filing bad reports to the Admiralty. This endangers Jack's goal of having his own flag and he worries about the situation. Luckily, his friend Stephen helps him out by talking to Sir Joseph Blaine and working out a plan for a post-war assignment for Jack. Jack hesitates when he hears the plan because he thinks that they will not reinstate him in the navy after completion of the assignment. It is the navy where Jack wants to be. That is where his ambitions lie.

Style

Style

Point of View

The *Yellow Admiral* is written in the third-person point of view with the author, Patrick O'Brien, performing the role of narrator. This allows the author to provide the reader with the necessary details and background information that are necessary to the story of the novel. The use of the third person perspective avoids the limitations of the first person point of view which limits the knowledge of the reader to the knowledge of the storyteller. The use of the third person allows the reader to follow the activities of the different characters. While Aubrey is patrolling in the waters off the coast of Brest, Maturin is in London discussing intelligence matters with Sir Joseph Blaine and helping formulate a plan for Jack's post-war employment. The use of the third person allows the reader to be informed of both of these situations as they happen. This is why the perspective of the third person is most appropriate for a novel of this type. The reader is able to learn the complete action of the novel as it occurs. It allows the author to tell what is happening with different characters and locations.

Setting

The setting of *The Yellow Admiral* is in the nineteenth century and England is in a war with Napoleon's France. The novel opens in London at the Admiralty and then follows Sir Joseph Blaine down St. James Street to his home, Shepherd's Market. Other scenes in London are at the Grapes, where Stephen Maturin maintains a residence where his god-daughters live. There are also scenes at the Black's, which is a club and lectures at the Royal Society. The Aubrey manor is called Woolcombe and is located near Dorset. There are many scenes in the area as the characters go about their daily activities and travel to and from different places. There are scenes on various ships as the English carry on a blockade of the French coast around Brest. Jack and Aubrey are assigned to the *Bellona* and this is the setting for much of the action at sea. There are also scenes on other ships like the *Ringle* and the *Queen Charlotte*. After the war, Aubrey is given command of the *Surprise*, a private ship in which the Aubrey and Maturin families sail to Madeira and Funchal, where they vacation, as the men prepare for their South American assignment.

Language and Meaning

The language of the novel and the meaning of the terms reflect the nineteenth century English setting of the novel. The language of the novel is appropriate to the time period and setting of the novel and because of this, some readers may find the language a little stiff and formal. Terms, like inclosure, refer to the issues of the time. O'Brien explains the meaning of the terms in several places in the novel so the reader can understand



the issues involved and the situation that Aubrey is in. Since a large part of the novel takes place on the sea, there are many terms that pertain to parts of the ship or to the naval jargon of the time. Some of these terms are explained. Others are not. There is a chart at the beginning of the book showing a sketch of a ship and identifying the different parts of the ship which helps the uninformed reader a little. The language and meaning are appropriate to the novel and add to the atmosphere of the story, which the author is successful in creating. This adds to the realism of the characters and setting and the various situations that occur.

Structure

The structure of the novel is very simple. The action of the novel is divided into ten chapters, all of which are untitled. Each chapter is designated by a chapter number. There is a two page chart at the front of the book showing a sketch of a ship with a chart identifying the various parts of the ship. Since these parts are referred to at different places in the book, it is an easy reference for the reader to use because most of the terms are not defined. There is no Table of Contents, Introduction, Forward or anything else.

The simple structure of the book makes it easy reading. There is not much to slow down the reader in reading the book unless the reader constantly refers to the chart identifying the parts of the ship. This results in constant flipping back and forth between the chart and the pages of the novel. In spite of this, it is the most expedient way of presenting the information. Defining these parts as they are mentioned in the story would interrupt the flow of the story. The simple structure chosen by the author is appropriate to the novel.



Quotes

"He has been much on my mind. A pearl of an agent - totally unmercenary - polyglot - a natural philosopher with innumerable contacts among the learned abroad - a man with a profession that introduced him everywhere - a physician is welcome everywhere - and a Catholic, which is such a recommendation in the Greater part of the world" (Chapter 1, pg. 5.)

"But like you, I am not at all desperate. I too have my service pay, and so long as I am a member they can't arrest me. Lord, Stephen, we have been very much worse off. Shall we see if we can find any rabbits?" (Chapter 2, pg. 28.)

"'But he will never forgive us for lying.'

'No dear,' said Diana. 'Now the first thing we must do is to send a message telling him not to come home but to go straight on to Wooton and take his chaise from there'" (Chapter 3, pg. 64.)

"What I should have said was: do you think Griffiths and his uncle, our commanding officer, worked out this order to rejoice so as to prevent me from attending the committee?" (Chapter 3, pg. 70.)

"'Indeed, sir, that is my name,' Stephen, not quite pleased at being recognized so easily; and through his mind darted the reflection 'Intelligence-agents should have turnip faces, indistinguishable one from another; their height should be the common height; their complexion sallow; their conversation prosy, commonplace, unmemorable'" (Chapter 4, pg. 83-84.)

"From this I believe it may be presumed that you are - how shall I put it? - well assorted, which does Aubrey much honour I am sure: but it must also be presumed that a man of your superior education and shining parts will have acquired a great influence over him" (Chapter 4, pg. 101.)

"For five days, no less, they simply went up and down the fine spacious great bay, admiring the billows and fishing over the side - delightful sailing indeed - and in the evening they played music until supper-time or beyond" (Chapter 5, pg. 108.)

"Even now that Spain was whole-heartedly at war with France once more, their collaboration had its advantages, and the two of them were now engaged on a joint mission; for the French side was by no means a united whole, but contained many people with divided loyalties, to say nothing of double agents" (Chapter 5, pg. 135.)

"I am required to acquaint you that on the night you received a pilot from Ramillies and shaped a course for the Raz de Sein two French frigates sailed from Brest with the wind at north-east and are now attacking British and allied merchantmen with great success. This cannot but be attributed to your negligence in now keeping a good lookout since from all appearance the Frenchmen must have crossed your wake. I am therefore to



reprimand you severely: and you are hereby severely reprimanded" (Chapter 6, pg. 150.)

"They have all been unwise enough to play cards or billiards with don Diego. They all owe him more money, sometimes much more money, than they can easily repay. They all tell him what ministers, what important officials, like you, carry papers home" (Chapter 7, pg. 178.)

"It was indeed the most glorious coup, the completest thing, the other intelligence service gazed at Sir Joseph with admiration, respect, unspeakable envy, and did their very utmost to gather any scraps of credit that might be lying neglected - a vain attempt if ever there was one, for Sir Joseph, though a mile and even a benevolent man in ordinary life, and charitable, was perfectly ruthless in the undeclared civil war that is so usually fought, with all the outward form of politeness, between agencies of this kind, and he gathered every last crumb for his own concerns, his own colleagues and advisers" (Chapter 8, pg. 181.)

"They sat reflecting; and when Jack had filled their glasses yet again he said timidly, 'It would be the most beautiful idea in the world, but for that wretched probability - the probability of a flag'" (Chapter 8, pg. 206 - 207.)

"Many hands beat discreetly on the table, many officers raised their glasses, bowing to Fanshawe and Beveridge; and the Admiral went on, 'It is usually considered unlucky to predict a fortunate outcome of anything whatsoever; but on this occasion I shall be so bold as to foretell a sensible end to this congress at Chatillon, the downfall of Napoleon, the end of this war, and our return to England, home and beauty. Gentleman, the King'" (Chapter 9, pg. 228.)

"The paying-off was over and that was the best thing that could be said about it. Even before Napoleon's abdication the ships of the blockading squadron had been sent home in ones and twos, the Bellona being almost the last; and during all this time those of the crew who had been pressed from merchantmen had grown more and more discontented" (Chapter 10, pg. 233.)

"But, my dear, are you not being unjust to Sophie? She is as strongly opposed to your being yellowed as ever you are, and she very clearly sees that further service and the possibility - probability - of distinction are the very best insurance against it" (Chapter 10, pg. 249.)



Topics for Discussion

Why do both Aubrey and Maturin have financial problems? What is the source of the financial difficulties for each?

What is the significance of the issue of inclosure? What is Aubrey's position on the subject?

What is the reason for the Bellona being sent to the waters near Brest, France? What are the circumstances?

On what issue does Admiral Stranraer oppose Jack Aubrey? What effect does this have on his career?

What does Sir Joseph Blaine propose so Aubrey can continue his naval career after the war?

Why does Maturin travel to London to meet Blaine? What information does he bring him?

How does Stephen obtain a command position after the end of the war?