

Battleground Study Guide

Battleground by W. E. B. Griffin

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Plot Summary

Battleground, by W. E. B. Griffin, is the fourth novel in a series called The Corps, referring to the Marine Corps of the United States of America. This novel concentrates on the actions of several fictional characters as they are brought together in the South Pacific battleground of World War II from June to August of 1942. The main character is Captain Fleming Pickering, who holds a unique status in the Navy during this war, having been a Marine in WWI. Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox has assigned Pickering the job of gathering the truth about what is happening in the war so he can compare that to the reports from the field he is receiving from his admirals.

This novel of the series concerns the sequence of events for each character covering the short months between the Midway Island fight and the battleground of Guadalcanal, showing the disparity between the American and Japanese forces, the struggles of individuals in these situations, the loyalty of men to their country, and their personal loves and lives.

In June of 1942, Bill Dunn, a Marine naval aviator, is in the battle over Midway, and is later questioned about his actions, with the inference he may have behaved incorrectly. While in the hospital he begins an affair with a nurse named Mary Agnes. Pickering is in Australia, a close friend and confidant of McArthur. Pickering is receiving clandestine messages from his secretary and other contacts he has begun to gather around him, including Pluto Hon, a brilliant cryptologist. Marine Intelligence back in DC is responsible for assisting Pickering with formation of Special Detachment 14, which is in support of the Coastwatchers Establishment. Coastwatchers are men who were left on some of the South Pacific islands to watch the skies and the seas for Japanese movement.

John Moore is a young man in Officers Candidate School who has no idea his world is about to be turned upside down. At the demand of Marine Intelligence, he is pulled out of school, given the rank of Sergeant, and provided with orders to proceed to Australia after a short visit home to Philadelphia. Moore is not told of his ultimate assignment and is required to just trust the men in command. While on his short leave to his home, he meets and falls in love with an older woman named Barbara. Also, Moore learns that his father has been using money from Moore's trust fund. As Moore continues his journey, he thinks of making a life with Barbara. Meanwhile, Barbara is realizing she is foolish to plan a life with a younger man, and when her husband comes to her asking for a reconciliation, she accepts his offer.

A special fighter group named VVF-229 is being formed under the command of Col. Dawkins, on Oahu. This group will be critical for the defense of Guadalcanal, but at the moment only has one member, Bill Dunn. Captain Charles Galloway is en route to Marine Headquarters in Hawaii to be the leader of the group, and he is traveling with his girlfriend, Caroline. The two are very much in love. When Galloway arrives, he enlists the assistance of his old friend Steve Oblensky, who is a miracle worker with all



types of motors, and the men begin test flying the aircraft and repairing the motors while they are waiting for the rest of their fighter group to arrive.

Meanwhile, Moore joins Pickering's team in Australia. Although he was originally conscripted to work with the Coastwatchers, Moore is considered more appropriate for Hon's cryptology efforts. Moore speaks Japanese fluently, and more importantly, lived in Japan long enough to absorb the culture. The other member of Pickering's elite team is Sgt. Banning, a Marine.

VMF-229 gets additional members: Jim Ward (Caroline's brother) and David Schneider. These two aviators are very opposite in character, with Jim being easygoing and friendly, and David being a by-the-book man with no humor. Dunn has tired of Mary Agnes, so when she shows interest in Schneider, Dunn encourages her to move on.

As these teams come into play on this battleground of the South Pacific, there is much concern about the petty rivalries between the USA armed forces, especially between the Marines and the Navy. This war has a much bigger emphasis on the role of aviators, but the Navy is resisting loss of any of its power. It is easy to see how the role of Pickering will play a major factor in pulling together the decision makers to win the war.

Major Jake Dillon, a longtime friend and contact of Captain Pickering, is being sent to Guadalcanal to make a documentary and promotional film for the Marines. Major Dillon also serves as a courier for some of Pickering's team and has strong network of contacts himself.

As the forces come together and the Japanese forces are headed to Guadalcanal to take it back from the Marines, Pickering decides to place himself in the heat of the battle so he can best report back to Knox. While there, Pickering is suddenly placed in command of the intelligence gathering for the forces there. Almost as soon as Knox hears of this, he demands a Navy ship get Pickering out of there. Pickering boards the USS Gregory, which is soon strafed by the enemy, and Pickering must command the ship when her captain is killed in the battle.

VMF-229 is ready to be sent out, and soon all eighteen pilots are placed in the path of the oncoming Japanese airplanes. Dunn emerges with enough kills to rate Ace status, but his achievement is overshadowed by the loss of Galloway, whose aircraft was seen to enter the ocean after being hit.

Before anyone can truly mourn Galloway, word comes that he has been picked up by a PT-109 and is coming back to take over VMF-229.



Chapter One

Chapter One Summary

Chapter 1 opens on June 4, 1942, on Midway Island. America and her allied countries are in a war against the Japanese, and the battleground is the Pacific Ocean. William Charles "Bill" Dunn is a Marine aviator stationed at Midway, and today he makes his first flight against Japanese forces. He is very frightened, especially since it is common knowledge among his commanders and his fellow aviators that the enemy's force is strong and their aircraft is far superior to those provided by the United States for its men. T

he aircraft Lt. Dunn was provided for this fateful day was a Wildcat, and he knew this was the best performing aircraft against the Japanese Zeroes, although Dunn is not sure why he was chosen for such an honor. Midway Island is located in the South Pacific and had no military importance as an American possession until Pan American Airways built an small airfield there in 1936 to use as a refueling point for its Hawaiian and Philippine flights. In 1939, as tensions among nations grew before World War II, the Navy established a base to service aircraft and submarines.

Midway was considered second in importance only to Pearl Harbor, and this assessment was proven correct when the Japanese included Midway Island in its Pearl Harbor attack on December 7, 1941. Although the 1941 attack did minimal damage, it was apparent that further attacks would be staged, so the Navy and Marine Corps began building up the American presence on Midway. Today, Lt. Dunn will be meeting an attack force, and he and his fellow Marine Naval Aviators would be outmanned and outgunned. The type of aircraft sent up against the Japanese that day was a mixture of Buffaloes and Wildcats. Dunn's commander, Major Parks, is also flying a Wildcat, and Dunn plans to stay close to the commander in the flight.

As he dresses for this important day, Bill looks at the photos of his parents and of Sue-Ann, the young woman he has allowed the other guys to think of as his sweetheart. In truth, Sue-Ann is just a friend, who is probably writing several young men from their town. Bill thinks briefly of the only time he ever had sex, with a prostitute in Birmingham. Major Parks is also preparing for the battle ahead. He compares the young men under his command with the British fighter pilots who fought the Battle of Britain, a battle he had studied intensely. He acknowledges those brave young men were not much different in age from the men he had under him, but the British were defending their homes while these American boys were thousands of miles from their loved ones. Still, Parks had a gut feeling that Bill Dunn would turn out to be the best fighter of all his men.

When dressed, Bill goes to the Officer's Mess for coffee. His stomach will not allow him to have breakfast. He walks out to the flight line and he and his plane chief begin warming up the Wildcat. Major Parks finds him there and gives Bill a pep talk before the battle begins. The elaborate start up procedure is described in detail, and Bill Dunn



notices when he climbs into his cockpit that his plane chief has stenciled on Dunn's name and rank on the Wildcat, along with the name of the plane chief. The men and their aircraft set to the air to meet the enemy. When the Americans encounter the Japanese, Dunn is shocked at how many there are and is shocked by the formation being flown. The older Japanese aircraft are on top, with the Zeroes on the bottom, as if the Japanese did not expect the Americans to launch against them. As the battle begins, Dunn realizes he has not lowered his goggles, and very soon his windshield has been shot out. His pants are wet and he sees that he is bleeding. The remainder of the battle becomes a blur to Dunn.

Dunn wakes up in a hospital bed. The lieutenant from Naval Intelligence is sitting by his bed and needs to ask some questions about the battle. Dunn remembers nothing after having his windshield shot out, and is amazed to learn that witnesses saw him shoot down two Japanese aircraft, leave the battle, fly back to base, and make a wheels-up landing. He learns that he had forgotten to close the canopy as well as use his goggles. Only four of the nineteen aircraft sent by the American forces made it back, and his commander Major Parks was one of the casualties. Dunn realizes that the Lieutenant, and some of the other survivors, believed Dunn displayed cowardice when he left the battle too early, even though he was credited with a couple of kills. Dunn asks if he can return to his squadron and is advised there is no squadron left. He is being sent to Pearl Harbor to recuperate from his wounds, with no flying for at least three weeks.

Chapter One Analysis

One of the main characters for this novel is introduced here, just as he enters the heat of the battle for the first time in his life. He is portrayed with stark reality, and the author reveals Lt. Bill Dunn to be a man who is small in stature, but large in courage and determination. The setting of an air and sea battle in the South Pacific creates a sense of danger in the very first chapter, not just from America's enemies, but also from the lack of reliable equipment for the troops.



Chapter Two

Chapter Two Summary

Chapter two opens in Melbourne, Australia, on June 8, 1942. Captain Fleming Pickering of the US Naval Reserves is resting in his suite at the Menzies Hotel. This hotel is serving as Headquarters for General Douglas MacArthur, who is the Supreme Commander of the southwest Pacific Ocean area. Captain Fleming Pickering holds unique status in the Navy. He is a World War I veteran who started a successful international shipping business afterward. He made many important friends and is now on a special assignment, handpicked by the Secretary of the Navy. Pickering carries top secret clearance and important papers, allowing him to be privy to any Navy or Marine missions, and providing him access to any flights, transportation, or services required for Pickering to accomplish his mission. His mission is to keep Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox "in the know" with an unvarnished version of the status of the Navy's personnel, equipment and behavior. Pickering has come to see that this special status engendered some hostile resentment towards the Navy establishment, with the exception of MacArthur himself.

Pickering's reverie is interrupted by a knock on the door and the entrance of a young man who is wearing the uniform of a full commander. The commander is carrying a briefcase attached to his wrist by a chain and handcuff. The commander refuses to identify himself, which at first irritates Pickering, and the commander then asks for Pickering's identification papers. When Pickering presents them, the commander then hands Pickering an envelope and says cryptically that he looks forward to meeting him again for the first time. When Pickering sees that the message is from the Administrative Assistant to Knox, he realizes the commander is justified in his actions, and the young man leaves the suite.

The communication is from Ellen Feller, his personal administrative assistant, now stationed in Pearl Harbor and working as a Japanese linguist with the cryptographic office. Utilizing the commander as a courier is explained as being a safe method for transmitting top secret information between Ellen and Pickering. The transmission gives details on the recent battle surrounding Midway Island and a stark description of the mistakes of the American forces during this encounter. Much of the Japanese strategy and progress is known because the Americans have cracked many of the Japanese codes. Pickering decides to meet with MacArthur and share this intelligence with him. He learns that a briefing with MacArthur is scheduled soon, and Pickering heads to that meeting.

There are over thirty other men waiting to begin the meeting, and they are all checked against a list held by the aide-de-camp, as this is considered a top secret gathering. MacArthur enters, asks Pickering to sit at his side, and begins. Pickering listens to the briefing by Colonel Willoughby, silently comparing it to the information he has from his own sources. As Willoughby is speaking, MacArthur whispers to Pickering that he is



invited for dinner and bridge that night, with the foursome being made up with Lt. Hon, one of the cryptographers. Pickering takes this opportunity to pass MacArthur the documents he received that morning. MacArthur reads them over and stands up in the meeting, announcing that he and Pickering must leave. They go to MacArthur's private office and MacArthur calls his stenographer to begin dictating a cable to Admiral Nimitz, based upon the information contained in the Pickering documents.

As Pickering leaves MacArthur's office, he is amazed to see that the Supreme Commander has spent three hours ensuring that his messages to Nimitz contained the appropriate sentiment and encouragement. Pickering offers to take the message for Nimitz, and another one dictated earlier to Marshall to Lt. Hon's office.

Lt. Hon is a First Lieutenant in the US Army Reserve, in the Signal Corps. His nickname is Pluto. He was called into the service from his job as a mathematician at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and now has a top secret rating as high as Captain Pickering. Besides being fluent in the Japanese language, Hon is also well versed in Japanese culture. Hon translates all encrypted messages to and from Pickering and MacArthur, and the two men have become close friends. When Pickering arrives at Hon's office, they discuss the evening ahead of them, knowing MacArthur is an excellent bridge player, as is his wife. Pickering hands the documents he was given earlier in the day to Hon for burning. Then Pickering gives Hon the messages for Nimitz and Marshall. Since the message to Marshall was dictated before Pickering arrived in MacArthur's office, this is his first glance at what MacArthur has said to the Chief of Staff. When he reads the document outlining a proposed attack against the Japanese near Papua New Guinea, Pickering realizes why the message to Nimitz was so important.

Chapter Two Analysis

The author uses this chapter to take the reader from the men on the front line to lives and thoughts of the men who send troops to battle. General McArthur is not a fictional character, but the characters of Pickering and Hon are the author's creations. Pickering is the main character in this novel, and the fact his documentation is considered by McArthur as more reliable than that of his own staff is an indication of Pickering's reliability, integrity, and power. Hon's intelligence and code-cracking skills show him to be a valuable ally for Pickering in his search for truth. The American military is presented as a group of men and branches of service who are not working together because of their own agendas, thus creating a danger for the men and women who are on the battlegrounds of this war.



Chapter Three

Chapter Three Summary

Chapter three begins in Washington, DC, on June 15, 1942. Sgt. Rutterman and Captain Sessions of Marine Corps Intelligence are discussing Rutterman's discovery of the perfect soldier to assist Special Detachment 14. This soldier is currently in the Officer's Candidate School, the men acknowledging that extracting him, and keeping him in the Marine Corps will be difficult as soon as his unique skills are better known. Sessions and Rutterman want the man specifically to serve in the support for the Coastwatcher Establishment. The Coastwatcher Establishment is the name given for the loosely organized team of Australians who were left behind in the various islands invaded by the Japanese in the Southwest Pacific at the beginning of the War. These civilians were provided with radios and binoculars and provide valuable information regarding the enemy ship movement, aircraft routes and intercepting messages.

Unfortunately, the US Navy did not appreciate their efforts, and the Secretary of War assigned their protection and support to Marine Corps Intelligence, and more specifically, to a Major Banning. Rutterman and Sessions take their case to their commander, Lt. Col Rickabee, who makes a few phone calls and then sends them to Parris Island to pull the soldier out of officer school, give him sergeant stripes, and send him to Major Banning in Australia immediately, before another branch of the service gets him.

At Parris Island, South Carolina, the same day, Major Humphrey at the 2nd Marine Battalion Headquarters, receives a call from a Major from Marine Intelligence advising him that one of their students has attracted the attention of some people of power with the Marine Corps and it would be best if Humphrey cooperates fully. The student is John Marston Moore, and Sessions' plane is due to arrive in thirty minutes. Major Humphrey requests that Moore's file be sent to him and soon understands the interest in the young man. Moore was born in Japan, to Methodist missionaries from America. After a brief time in Pennsylvania, he rejoined his parents in Japan and attended the University of Tokyo. His degree was in Oriental Languages. Captain Sessions arrives at Humphrey's office soon after Humphrey finishes reading the file, and after verifying the identity of Sessions, Humphrey orders Moore to the office.

Sessions addresses Moore in Japanese to confirm the young man's abilities. He then asks Humphrey for private time with Moore, and tells the young soldier he needs why he came to see him. Accepting an assignment without any knowledge of his destination or what will be required of him is difficult to Moore, whose limited experience with the Marines has been just a few weeks of boot camp. However, Moore realizes that Sessions is an intelligent man who has come from DC for the purpose of this conversation, and it must be important. The hardest part is giving up his chance of becoming an officer for this assignment, but he accepts the offered rank of Sergeant. Sessions gives him five days leave, and tells Humphrey that the circumstances of



Moore's departure from the platoon are not to be discussed with anyone. Sessions then tells Moore he is instructed to go to the guest house for the night and not to leave for any reason.

The next morning Moore examines himself in the mirror, and likes the way he looks in the new uniform. A Sergeant Major comes to his room to accompany him to breakfast, and the two men encounter Captain Sessions in the hallway. As the three men have breakfast, the Sergeant Major lets Sessions know he is handling this duty himself because of Sessions' association with a man called Killer McCoy, of the China Marines. Sgt. Moore watches the interaction between the two men and realizes Sessions is a man who has earned the respect of other Marines.

Chapter Three Analysis

Other military men who are well versed in the need for circumvention of protocol in order to accomplish goals for their service are introduced in this chapter. Sessions, Ruckabee and Rutterman are good men whose loyalty to the Marine Corps allows them to think ahead of their service competitors, for instance, by getting the expertise of John Moore for the Marines no matter what is fair or procedural. Moore is another young man whose life will be irrevocably changed by the war, like Lt. Dunn, and the reader begins to see that these characters are coming from all walks of life, all educational backgrounds, and their destiny will be to fight the enemy together on a distant battleground, and on many levels. The necessity for personnel who know the language and the culture of the enemy is critical, and it appears there are not many people in the military or the United States who can fill that role.



Chapter 4-5

Chapter 4-5 Summary

Chapter four opens with the unnamed Sergeant Major driving Sessions and Moore to their private plane for the trip to Washington DC. Moore enjoys the airplane ride but is mildly apprehensive about his father's reaction to this change in career plans. Moore's family is descended from a wealthy Pennsylvania family and his father likes to travel in a style well above the usual missionary to the Orient. Moore does not have much respect for his father. When the plane lands, Rutterman meets Sessions and Moore and puts Moore on a train to his family.

On the same day, in Wellington, New Zealand, at the First Marine Division HQ, the Division Commander and his Deputy Commander General Harris receive word that their operation will soon be visited by Major Jake Dillon, who will be working on the Marine public relations, as he is an ex-Hollywood press agent. They are surprised to see Dillon has been afforded Top Secret clearance. When the men arrive, General Harris is astounded to find the group has obtained rooms at the local hotel rather than request tents. When Harris and Dillon meet, Harris realizes Dillon has some rather unusual connections and is probably going to be involved in much more than public relations.

On Buka in the Solomon Islands on the same day, Jacob Reeves is a member of the Coastwatchers. He has recently been joined by two Marines, Lt. Howard and Sgt. Koffler. These men live near a village of Buka natives and hide their operations from the Japanese, who occupy the island. These men have enlisted the aid of some of the villagers, giving them the ranks of Petty Officer, and follow a routine of patrols, and twice a day contact with their HQ in Australia.

As chapter five begins, Sgt. John Moore is on the train towards his home and sees a beautiful older woman in the club car where he is seated. He spends most of his journey watching her covertly and sometimes openly staring at her. She gets off the train in Philadelphia, and she waves to him when she sees him staring after her. He waves back. When he reaches the US Navy Yard in Philadelphia, he is provided with his travel documents, his personnel records and traveling funds. The staff sergeant and captain who work with him are surprised to see Moore's high security rating and give him advice on how to work around the tender egos of the top brass who will be displaced because of Moore's special status. Moore finally has a chance to read his official orders and finds that he is assigned to Special Detachment 14; however, he has no clue as to where he is being sent or for what reason.

John Moore spends time with his parents and senses a change in the way his father is treating him. His father is a well known religious figure who travels extensively and extravagantly to the Orient and works for a group called the Missions.



One afternoon while he is in Philadelphia, John has some time to spend before meeting with his Uncle Bill for dinner, and he sees the woman from the train. He follows her and she enters the Bellevue-Stratford Hotel, going to the bar. She takes a seat in a booth and Moore goes to the bar. She sees him and recognizes him. This time they have a conversation, and she alludes to seeing him again sometime.

Moore meets his Uncle Bill at the Union League for dinner. Uncle Bill tells John his father has been keeping some valuable information from him. John's father is managing John's inheritance, which is a considerable amount of money, without following the terms of the trust fund. John is twenty-two and should have been given part of the money a year previous. Uncle Bill gets drunk at the dinner, and John leaves him at the club, knowing the stewards will care for him. Puzzled by his father's behavior, John walks through the streets and finds himself back at the bar where he saw the beautiful woman. To his delight, she is still there, and alone. Her name is Barbara Ward, and she takes him to her apartment where they spend the next several days in bed. At some point, John speaks to his father, and tells him he is going to the family lawyer to discuss the management of his trust fund.

Chapter 4-5 Analysis

This chapter jumps around a bit between characters and locations, alerting the reader to pay close attention as new characters are introduced while fleshing out the character of John Moore. There is evidence here of this novel being part of a series of books about the same branch of service, as these new characters, such as Jake Dillon, appear as if the reader has already made their acquaintance. A quick background is provided, however, the reader is left believing not enough has been told.

Moore is a young man who is more than willing to defy society by becoming the lover of an older woman. Moore is maturing quickly with a secret military assignment, falling in love, and discovering that his own father has been cheating him of his inheritance.

By detailing the life of a team of Coastwatchers, the author strengthens the theme of an unorganized military that is unable to properly supply or protect these men. Through this vignette of the ragged team on Buka, the author also introduces his theme of intense dedication and loyalty to a cause. Although these men are constantly in danger, their clothes are in tatters, and their hope for rescue or relief is dim, they are staying at their posts.



Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

Chapter six opens on June 19, 1942, at the Marine Air Group HQ, in Ewa, Oahu Island, Hawaii. Lt. Colonel Clyde Dawkins is in charge of investigating rumors regarding Lt. Bill Dunn's behavior in the fight over Midway Island. The question is whether Dunn left the fight before or after his windscreen was blown out and he was injured. Lt. Col. Dawkins has decided to transfer Dunn into a new division called VMF-229, which currently consists of Captain Charles Galloway and now Dunn. Galloway is infamous for an incident immediately after the attack on Pearl Harbor. Immediately after the bombing at Pearl Harbor, the Navy brass declared that none of the airplanes on the field at Pearl were fit to fly. Galloway and another officer not only got one to fly, they were able to locate the aircraft carrier *Sarasota* and land on it. Because this action had made the Navy commanders look ridiculous, Galloway was demoted and sent stateside. Dawkins secretly admired Galloway and had engineered Galloway's re-entry into the active forces in the South Pacific.

Dawkins goes to the hospital room to see Lt. Dunn and presents him with the Purple Heart for his injuries. Dawkins tells Dunn to ignore the rumors, and to concentrate on his new assignment with VMF-229. After the Lt. Col. leaves, Dunn is visited by a beautiful nurse named Mary Agnes O'Malley, who gives him a sponge bath, removes his sutures, and arouses him. Mary Agnes asks Dunn to come to her apartment that evening, as soon as he is discharged from the hospital.

Back in Philadelphia, Barbara Ward is thinking about the young man she has taken as a lover, John Moore. She realizes she will probably never see him again. As a married woman who is separated from her husband, her future is cloudy. Taking up with a young soldier was irresistible, but, as Barbara reasons, not wise. As she is thinking about her situation, her estranged husband comes to the apartment and asks her to take him back. She agrees. Since John Moore has already left for his secret assignment, she has no way of telling him.

Captain Galloway and his lover, Caroline Ward McNamara, a divorcee, have been traveling across the country together, with no regard for what anyone would think of such a improper situation. When they arrive, Caroline had arranged, through a little white lie at the front desk, for them to get a large suite at the hotel. Galloway is a bit uncomfortable with the ploy, but happy to be with the woman he loves for the brief time before he goes back to the war. The two have allowed anyone who saw them, including the staff at the Andrew Foster, to believe they were man and wife. As they prepare for dinner that evening, enjoying their luxurious suite, a man comes to their door carrying champagne, compliments of the Andrew Foster Hotel, in recognition for Galloway's service. Captain Galloway is embarrassed and tells the man they used a trick to get the suite, but the man waves the apology away. It is Andrew Foster himself, and he asks



Galloway to give his grandson, Malcolm Pickering, his regards if Galloway should encounter Malcolm in his travels in the South Pacific.

Chapter 6 Analysis

Society was very different in the years just before World War II than it is in modern times, and in many ways, the structure and adherence to protocol in the military reflects that old school thinking. Proper men and women did not have sex before marriage, and soldiers were expected to follow orders without question. Galloway obviously is a man who cares little for authority or what other people think of his life, making his own way, forging ahead with confidence. Another glimpse of this period's strict rules of behavior is Barbara's conversation with herself, when she feels shame for taking a young lover, and for being divorced, even though she was very happy with John and he wanted a future with her.

The author uses the relationship between Galloway and Caroline, and the one between Moore and Barbara, to highlight the sense of urgency in the early days of the war. America had been plunged into this violent war, and its citizens and government had to learn about change and adaptation quickly, or be defeated

Courage in battle is one of these standards that will not change or be viewed differently, no matter what society views are prevalent. For this reason, Dunn becomes very defensive and reserved. The Purple Heart is not something he is proud of, but Dunn manages to escape his sorrows in the arms of a very willing nurse.



Chapters 7-8

Chapters 7-8 Summary

In chapter seven, John Moore is on his way to his assignment and has arrived in San Diego. His entire trip has been consumed with thoughts of Barbara, their time together, and their possible future. He is met by Gunnery Sgt. Zimmerman, who takes him to his new quarters, and Moore is surprised to find he is being billeted on a sailboat at the San Diego Yacht Club. Moore also discovers that he will be reporting to Lt. McCoy, whose reputation as "Killer McCoy" has reached Moore's ears many times in the past. The sailboat has several occupants, including McCoy's girlfriend Ernestine.

That afternoon, Lt. McCoy comes home to the yacht, and Moore is finally told what his assignment will encompass. During the conversation, Moore asks Lt. McCoy if he is "Killer McCoy", and soon realizes this is not a subject McCoy wants to cover. McCoy and Moore converse in Japanese during the evening as well, and Moore understands why so many military men admire McCoy.

On June 25, 1942, Moore boards a seaplane headed to Pearl Harbor. As he settles in for the ride, Moore thinks of how happy McCoy and Ernie are, dreams of a time when he and Barbara will live together.

It is June 27, 1942, at the Marine Headquarters on Oahu Island, and Captain Galloway is meeting his commanding officer, Lt. Colonel Dawkins. Galloway is receiving a briefing concerning his new command, VMF-229, and learns that there are men on the way, but at this point, he has few pilots and equipment. There is a heated discussion between the two men about whether or not the Marine Corps is setting Galloway up for failure, and Dawkins and Galloway come to a good understanding about the goals of VMF-229. Galloway asks that Tech Sgt Steve Oblensky be assigned to him, and Dawkins reluctantly agrees.

Chapter eight opens with Galloway retrieving his 1933 Ford Coupe that he left in Sgt. Oblensky's care while Galloway was in the States. Galloway advises Oblensky of his new assignment with VMF-229 and the dire condition of the squadron and its equipment. Oblensky tells Galloway that he and Nurse Flo Kocharski have secretly married and are living together, which is against Marine Corps and Navy regulations. Oblensky also tells Galloway that Galloway's ex-girlfriend Mary Agnes is now sleeping with William Dunn. When the subject of Dunn comes up, Oblensky tells Galloway that the scuttlebutt is Moore was accused of cowardice during Midway but escaped charges. Galloway tells Oblensky that this rumor is to go no further.

That evening, Galloway finds Dunn and Mary Agnes in the officers' club and joins them for a drink. Dunn advises Galloway there are more pilots on the way, one of them being Lt. David Schneider. Galloway remembers working with Schneider before, and it is not a pleasant thought to know this man will now be under his command. Dunn has an equal



opinion of Schneider as a pompous elitist. Galloway says that the important point to remember about Schneider is that he is an excellent pilot, and anyway, Dunn and Galloway both now outrank him.

It is June 28, 1942, in Australia, and Captain Fleming Pickering is at his quarters, a huge estate owned by a friend. He receives a call that one of his Special Detachment 14 officers has arrived and needs to be picked up, and instead of assigning someone else to do the chore, Pickering goes down to the base himself, driving a Jaguar drophead coupe. The officer to be retrieved is Sergeant John Moore, who is very surprised to find his commanding officer personally transporting him.

Chapters 7-8 Analysis

The team of VMF-229 is growing, with Galloway in command. The unique friendship and mutual respect of Oblensky and Galloway is shown through their disregard for rank when speaking to one another, and with the confidential information they trust one another with; an example would be Oblensky telling Galloway of the rumors about Dunn, then Oblensky accepting the order that the rumors will go no further.

Mary Agnes and Flo Kocharski serve as foils in this chapter: Mary Agnes is a nurse who gives a little extra in her sponge baths, thinks only of movie stars, and sleeps around. Flo is a nurse who is dedicated to her profession, her country and her man.

Dawkins and Galloway establish their expectations of each other, and the independence and stubbornness of Galloway is highlighted in the exchange. Oblensky is introduced as Galloway's faithful sidekick who can repair anything with a motor. Pickering's easy command of the men is demonstrated by his willingness to pick up Moore from the airport, something he could easily have assigned to someone of lower rank.

Pickering's wealth and connections are continually and subtly noted throughout this chapter, with his expensive vehicle, name dropping and the mansion he has been loaned for his Australian headquarters.

The author moves the reader abruptly, from one setting to the next, with military style dates and time, and reminds the reader of military protocol by using each person's military rank and grade in almost every reference to their action or speech. This serves to remind the reader it is an epic story of war and those who serve the United States.



Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

Chapter nine opens the evening of Moore's arrival in Australia. Once Pickering has set Moore up at the local hotel, he returns to his estate and meets with Major Banning and Pluto Hon. The men review Moore's service record and decide although Moore is valuable, he will not be suitable as a Coastwatcher. Pluto however, sees that Moore would be better used on his team, translating and understanding the messages intercepted by the Japanese forces at Headquarters. Pluto calls Moore on the phone and does a quick assessment of his abilities, then asks Pickering if Moore can be transferred to work with him in crypto. Pickering agrees.

After deciding Moore's assignment, the men begun discussing the situation with Guadalcanal. It is easy to see from the maps and by analyzing the information they have from spies and intercepted messages that a Japanese airfield built on that island could turn the course of the war even further in favor of the Japanese. The Coastwatchers have a critical role in providing information to the Allies in this regard.

The men discuss the animosity between the US Army and the US Navy, and how this conflict could cause the Allies to lose the war. Pickering was chosen especially to circumvent both of the commands and keep the services focused on the real enemy. The key issue right now is that the Navy wants to take the island of Tillage first, then gradually move to Rafael; the Army contends that Rafael should be the first island taken. Hon tells Pickering and Banning that the First Marines will be attacking Guadalcanal.

The next morning, June 29, 1942, at the First Marine Division HQ in Wellington, New Zealand, the officers are advised that they will be attacking the Solomon Islands on August 1st. Strategy is discussed, and the atmosphere is grim because the men are all aware of how little ground intelligence is available for this area, and how deficient their supplies and equipment is for such an undertaking.

Back in Melbourne, Major Banning picks Sgt. Moore up from his hotel. As they are driving along, Banning tells Moore that Moore's orders have changed, and although he is still assigned to Special Detachment 14, he will be in the intelligence division, working with Pluto Hon. Banning tells Moore he is to live at The Elms, Pickering's residence, to avoid any questions from other Marine or Navy personnel regarding his work. Moore understands that his work is highly confidential and even he will not know the extent of what he is translating.

At the 1st Marine Division HQ, General Harris allows Major Dillon to be admitted to his office. Major Jack Dillon has been assigned by MacArthur to work with the First Marine Division on their public relations, and to make a film of their battles. General Harris does not approve of such a waste of time, and lets Dillon know that immediately. Dillon tells



Harris about the existence of Pickering, and that some of Dillon's intelligence comes from Pickering. Harris is no fool, and he accepts that Dillon and Pickering could be very useful to him in the coming weeks, and could save the lives of some of his Marines with this intelligence.

Chapter 9 Analysis

All of the groundwork of the previous chapters, establishing Pickering as a man with a long reaching network of connections, authority from the highest level, and the ease of commanding everything from an international company to a small band of fighting men, shows the results. Pickering brings his reliable cohorts into the picture, and they make decisions regarding the future of the World War. Privy to intelligence ignored or unknown by the chiefs of staff, these men see the "big picture" that the longtime rivalries between the Army, the Navy and the Marines are already causing.

It is a grim reality, because not only are there competing factions within the war effort, there is a urgent and critical shortage of everything needed to wage a war with any success. In these early days, the Allies have few victories to their name, and are attempting to pull together a winning strategy. Pickering and his men see no other alternative than to insert themselves into the major conflicts and keep each other abreast of the outcomes.

This section of the book continues to support the theme of a massive military might bogged down with petty jealousies, misdirected loyalties and the strength of a few good men to pull it all together.



Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary

On July 1, 1942, John Moore is at The Elms, writing a letter to Barbara. He is trying to let her know that although their time together was mostly sexual, he is in love with her and wants a future with together. He wishes he could tell her the details of his life in Australia, but that is forbidden; in fact, he is not yet sure what his assignment will be. As he is writing, he receives an order to pick up some more Elms guests at the airport. Moore quickly finishes his letter to Barbara, abandoning the love poem and just writing that he loves her more than life itself.

Major Banning had taken Moore to meet Pluto Hon and to move his things to The Elms. The security where Hon and Moore work is the highest Moore could ever imagine. Hon gives Moore a translation to do, and Hon is surprised to see how quickly Moore not only translates but also deciphers the hidden meaning behind the message. This interpretation is something only someone with a strong background in Japanese culture would catch. Hon realizes that Moore is more valuable than originally thought, and also too intelligent to be restricted to just translations. Hon decides to extend Moore's responsibilities, but strictly forbids Moore to speak to anyone about this extension of work.

Back at Headquarters, Pickering visits Hon in his office and Hon tells him what a valuable asset Moore has turned out to be. Pickering decides that only he, Hon, and Banning need know about this change in plans, because Pearl Harbor would not approve of an additional person knowing this much about the plans of the Allies. This workaround of protocol is a strict violation of military rules, and each man involved could face court martial and prison if it gets out.

After Moore returns from the airport with Colonel Goettge and Major Dillon, he is met by Banning, who takes Moore to a listening room and instructs him to be there that evening when the Goettge, Pickering, and Dillon meet. Banning reminds Moore of his role as an intelligence team member and the penalties of speaking about anything he hears.

The conversation between these men reveals that First Division is indeed going to invade several islands in the Solomons, and the invading commanders have very little intelligence to assist them. Five more people join the party, and Moore is surprised to see two women in the group. One of the new arrivals is Commander Feldt, who commands the Coastwatchers. Feldt becomes quiet drunk as the evening wears on. Major Banning asks Feldt for a dozen Coastwatchers to be assigned to the First Marine Division, and after several bitter remarks about the US Navy, Feldt agrees.

Chapter 10 Analysis

The action and references in this chapter highlight how different the world was in the early days of WWII, not only in the eyes of society, but in communications and intelligence gathering. In the world before satellites, cell phones and computers, this war was waged with eyewitnesses of plane and ship movement, intercepted telegraph and radio messages, rumors, slide rules, paper and pencils. Even radar was a new invention, and not all ships or planes were equipped. There were no jet engines, no ICBMs or B-52 bombers; there were small single engine, single manned airplanes, and for an island to be conquered, men and machines and supplies had to be brought by ship, not helicopters or giant cargo planes.

The reiteration of these common everyday items for the troops, such as a rare cold Coke, a breeze through a window that does not have an air conditioner in it, and the blatant lack of knowledge of world events brings a clear sense of place and time for the reader.



Chapters 11-2

Chapters 11-2 Summary

Chapter eleven begins the next morning, at the Elms, with Moore waiting outside for orders of the day. Lt. Donnelly sends Daphne, one of the women who had been at the dinner the previous night, to fetch Moore, and gives him a message to Major Banning, committing it to his memory. The message concerns the Japanese equipment based at Lunga Point. Hon tells Moore what the message really means, and it is not good news for the men planning to invade Guadalcanal. Hon tells Moore that MacArthur thinks invading Guadalcanal is a bad idea. Pickering and Banning came into the room, and Moore delivers his message. Just as Moore is leaving the office, Banning hands him his mail. There is a letter from Barbara.

Barbara tells Moore she has reconciled with her husband and she asks that Moore never write to her or try to contact her again. Moore lights the letter with his cigarette lighter and then begins to cry.

On July 5, 1942, at Wellington, New Zealand, Major Dillon is contemplating the movie he is going to make about the Marine invasion of the Solomon Islands. He wants to use an ordinary enlisted Marine and take him from training to life in New Zealand to the invasion. He is at the Quay, where the ships are being loaded for the invasion. There are numerous problems with this loading, including the order of load, the Wellington dock workers, and the lack of supplies.

At Ewa, VMF 229, Captain Galloway is exhausted from test flying the new airplanes assigned to the Division. He takes a break and gets a Coke, and the phone rings. It is Pearl Harbor, advising him that two more of his officers have arrived and someone needs to come get them. Galloway decides to take his personal car to retrieve the officers, since there is no one else to send and nothing to send them in. The two officers are 1st Lt. James G. Ward, and 1st Lt. David Schneider. Galloway gives them a briefing as he drives them back to the Division hanger.

When they arrive at the hanger, Oblensky is there, working on a Wildcat. Oblensky tells Galloway that there are problems with the guns, and he can fix them if he can trade an auxiliary generator with one of the Gunny Sgts. At another battalion, Galloway approves of the trade, and sees that one of the new officers is shocked at this disregard of regulations. As Galloway turns to leave, Oblensky reminds him of his dinner plans for the night. Galloway has been invited to have dinner with Oblensky and his wife Flo.

In chapter twelve, Lt. Schneider and Lt. Ward discuss the actions of Galloway, and Ward reprimands Schneider for his lack of understanding about how things work in the time of war. Ward tells Schneider he is out of line, and if he was not ready to accept Galloway as his commander, he should not have volunteered to serve in VMF-229.



Captain Galloway is back on the runway, testing the Wildcats. He thinks about the men under his command, and hopes he has made the right decisions about them. His goal is to have the eighteen Wildcats in his Division operational, with trained pilots at the ready. Galloway had already established himself, as he rightly should, as the most experienced and skilled pilot of the Division, and he believed that Dunn was the second best.

While he is waiting to take off, he calms his usual pre-flight nerves by reading a letter just received from his girlfriend Caroline. She has sent him a necklace that has a cross on it, and her letter explains that it is sent to cause him to think of her constantly and to keep him safe.

Meanwhile, Lt. Col. Dawkins is speaking with the newly arrived officers, Ward and Schneider, one at a time. He enjoys talking with Ward, and recognizes the potential on the young man. Dawkins is not aware that Galloway is in love with Ward's sister, Caroline. When Dawkins meets Schneider, he does not feel the same comfort level as he had with Ward. At first Dawkins notices the Annapolis ring worn by Schneider and feels a kinship with the young officer, but when the conversation begins, Dawkins realizes Schneider is arrogant and pompous. When Schneider requests a quick trip to Pearl Harbor to see his uncle the Admiral, Dawkins recognizes that Schneider is not a man to be trusted. Dawkins resolves to talk to Galloway immediately regarding transferring Schneider out of the Division.

When Galloway comes off the flight line that afternoon, Dawkins is waiting for him. First Dawkins questions Galloway regarding the amount of time he is spending in the air, and orders him to cut his hours. Then Dawkins questions Galloway about his decision to accept Schneider as a volunteer for VMF-229. Galloway tells Dawkins he has all eighteen of his aircraft ready for pilots, and Dawkins acknowledges that Galloway has accomplished his goal quickly. When questioned about Schneider, Galloway responds that the young man is a good pilot, and although his personality is miserable, Galloway can handle him.

Ward and Galloway have a private moment and Ward asks him if he received the necklace his sister sent. Galloway shows Ward the necklace hidden beneath his flight jacket. Galloway invites Ward to go to the Oblensky house with him that evening.

When Florence and Steve open the door expecting only Galloway, and find Ward with him, they are at first upset. Their marriage is clandestine, and they are alarmed that Galloway has invited someone else in on the secret. When Galloway explains that Ward is to be trusted because he is Caroline's brother, everyone relaxes. During dinner, Steve asks Galloway about Guadalcanal, and tells him the scuttlebutt is that the Allies are going to invade it within the month. Ward, Galloway and Steve discuss how VMF-229 figures into the invasion, and whether they will be launched from an aircraft carrier or hop islands to get to the invasion.

Admiral Wagon at Pearl Harbor is surprised when his nephew shows up at his quarters, and realizes the young man has used the Admiral's name to gain stature in his new



posting. Knowing that such behavior usually ostracizes officers rather than endearing them, the Admiral cuts the visit short and tells his nephew he will need to find his own way back to his Division that evening. He suggests that Schneider go over to the Officers' Club and try to find a ride.

Chapters 11-2 Analysis

The structure and personality of VMF-229 is beginning to take shape with the arrival of aviators Ward and Schneider. The fact that each of these men already know Galloway speaks to the newness of the naval aviator division of the Marines, and the entry of airplanes into waging war. At this point in history, if a man is an American fighter pilot, he is either in the Navy or the Marines, as there is no division of the military named Air Force yet. Ward is Galloway's girlfriend Caroline's brother, and Schneider used to work with Galloway. Schneider has an uncle who is an admiral in the Navy.

Moore is betrayed by the woman he loves, Galloway receives a necklace from Caroline, and Ward is included in the knowledge of Oblensky and Flo. The author reminds us of how fleeting love and romance is in this time of global war and change, and this makes the characters more real and poignant for the reader.



Chapter 13

Chapter 13 Summary

Chapter 13 Analysis

In keeping with the theme that only men who defy the military protocol are to be admired, David Schneider is not liked by his fellow aviators, nor his commanders. Schneider is a by-the-book man who has difficulty understanding that war is not fought by that book. Pickering's decision to go off to the battleground, leaving his secretary Ellen in charge of his team is a shock to the reader; women characters in this novel have led very minor roles, predominantly as lovers to the main characters. In the ranks of these women characters, Mary Agnes holds the lowest level because she has taken many lovers. It is ironic that Galloway, who is in a sexual and emotional affair without the benefit of marriage vows, is in charge of keeping David Schneider from entering into a similar relationship.

There is a change in character traits as Pickering descends from an armchair general to an active participant in a battle. Although he has been given strict orders not to place himself in a situation that might involve his capture and debriefing by the enemy, Pickering has rationalized his behavior by harking back to Marine lore, and using the power he has to do whatever he wants to do.



Chapter 14

Chapter 14 Summary

Chapter fourteen begins in Washington DC, where Major George Dailey, an officer procurement official for the Marines, is commanded to a meeting that afternoon with Lt Col Rickabee of the Marine HQ staff. Dailey is surprised to find that he is being reactivated for battle in the Pacific Theater, after getting his experience in Germany earlier in the war. Dailey's status as a pilot was rescinded when he was diagnosed with a heart murmur, but more importantly, his reputation was heavily damaged when he fell in love with a German woman. He had been re-assigned to Washington, and now he learns he is being sent to the South Pacific to serve as a backup to Hon and Moore.

The battle for Guadalcanal begins, and the Marines meet little resistance taking the beach and the airfield. The troops, however, are exhausted, and the Navy pulls out of the attack, leaving the Marines with little or no supplies. The Marines know that the Japanese will be launching an attack to push them back into the sea very soon. There is much anger at the Navy, and the Marine troops feel abandoned.

On Buka Island, the Coastwatchers see a large group of Japanese planes in the air, and they quickly radio their headquarters the exact number of planes, type of aircraft, and the direction they are heading. This information is passed on to the aircraft carriers as quickly as possible.

Pickering shows up on the beach of Guadalcanal, a Navy Captain among some very angry Marines. The Sergeant Major accompanying Pickering to the camp of Major Stecker is quickly brought up to speed on the background and experience of Pickering when Stecker greets his World War I friend at the camp. Stecker takes Pickering to meet the rest of the officers, and explains quickly that the Navy Captain is a Marine at heart and is here to help any way he can.

Chapter 14 Analysis

Here the author uses an actual historic event to illustrate the huge division of purpose between the Navy and the Marines. The Marines on Guadalcanal were left on the beach with no food, precious little ammunition and no support from the sea because the Navy commander of the fleet decided that searching for the Japanese fleet in the area took higher priority. This is revealed to be partly due to the packing of the amphibian crafts that did make it to the beach, and again to the old rivalry between the two services.

Another character is added to the rather large mix as Dailey is sent to the South Pacific. His misadventures in Germany are briefly alluded to, and it is difficult to tell if he is another character like Schneider, or if he is a good guy who ran afoul when following his heart. Daily plays a very small role in the ensuing chapters and may have been included

in this one so readers of the continuing series of these books can be reminded about him.



Chapter 15

Chapter 15 Summary

Chapter fifteen begins in Washington, with Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox attending a meeting with Senator Fowler of California. Fowler is a very wealthy man who has his offices at the Foster Lafayette Hotel. Knox likes Fowler and admires him for using his wealth and influence for the good of the country. Fowler had sent for Knox, and when he arrives, he is surprised to meet Pickering's wife, Patricia. Patricia asks Knox where her husband is and what he is doing. She tells Knox she tried to reach her husband through one of the ships she owns and they relayed the message that his whereabouts were unknown and that MacArthur's office claimed not to know Pickering was in the Navy.

Knox trusts Patricia Pickering enough to give her a copy of the latest Top Secret message received from Pickering. Pickering was on board one of the aircraft carriers on the invasion, and his assessment of the battle is detailed and honest. Pickering's message to Knox is clear on one point: unlike the rest of the Navy, he is not going to leave the Marines stranded on Guadalcanal and will be working with General Vandergrift. This is especially alarming to Knox because Pickering has top secret knowledge and it would be a catastrophe for him to be captured by the enemy. Knox tells Patricia Pickering that when he returns to the office, he is going to issue orders to pull Pickering off that island immediately.

Meanwhile Pickering is at Guadalcanal, watching the Marines rebuild the airfield, and he is thinking about the Navy's decision to depart the area with the necessary supplies. Pickering thinks about the amount of land the Marines are defending, and the exact positions of the armament. The Marines have resorted to using the food and equipment left behind by the Japanese workmen who were now on the other side of the island. Pickering is distracted by an aircraft attempting to land on the new airfield. It is a Catalina, and the aviator is a Navy Lieutenant who is proud to be the first person to land there. The Lieutenant has a bag of mail for General Vandergrift. Pickering arranges for the Navy Lt to take two of the most wounded Marines back with him on the plane when he departs.

Back at the hastily constructed HQ tent of Guadalcanal, Pickering takes the information received and puts it onto a map of the area so General Vandergrift can make decisions about the next course of action. Also, Pickering is required to tell Vandergrift, a man he admires, that one of his Intelligence Officers, Captain Goettge, has taken a group of twenty-five men on a patrol of the area. Vandergrift does not understand what Goettge was thinking in this action, and Pickering agrees. Vandergrift advises Pickering that he has orders to send Pickering back to safety as soon as possible, and Vandergrift says that may be several days. Vandergrift tells Pickering to continue what he is doing.

Later that night, Jake Dillon wakes Pickering up and brings another officer, Sergeant Sellers, along with him. Sellers is one of only two survivors from Goettge's ill advised



patrol. Goettge and the other men were killed in an ambush at the beach. The men were shot or stabbed with swords. Pickering goes to Vandergrift's tent and finds that Pickering has now been placed in charge of Intelligence for the island. Pickering sends a message to Knox advising him of this turn of events and of the possible capture of another Marine who may have knowledge of intelligence matters. Vandergrift gives orders that no other intelligence officers, including Pickering, are to be placed in harm's way, with any possibility of capture.

Chapter 15 Analysis

Now Pickering is no longer serving in an administrative capacity, he is on the Guadalcanal battleground. His gift of leadership is displayed when he transitions from concern about the wounded, ensuring at least two men are transported back in the mail plane, to his grasp of the big picture of the battlefield. Pickering's unique status in the Navy is highlighted when Knox trusts Patricia enough to share top secret information with her regarding her husband.

The ineptness of some military men is displayed through the Goettge patrol massacre, and again, the lack of proper training, communication and equipment afforded these soldiers in the world war.



Chapter 16

Chapter 16 Summary

In chapter sixteen, Pickering is advised by Vandergrift that he has now been placed in charge of Intelligence for the island. Pickering sends a message to Knox advising him of this turn of events. Vandergrift gives orders that no other intelligence officers, including Pickering, are to be placed in harm's way, with any possibility of capture.

Dailey arrives in Brisbane and meets with General MacArthur. MacArthur interrupts the meeting when Hon arrives with two messages. When Hon goes back to the top secret area, he and Moore try to figure out what the translated messages from earlier in the day represent in terms of how many troops the Japanese are sending to fight the Marines in Guadalcanal. Hon and Moore discuss Ellen, her motivation, and her role. They agree that she is a rather cold woman, but decide to get her input on the intercepts before they move any further.

As Moore is preparing to leave Headquarters, there is a confrontation between Hon and the First Sergeant of the division that Moore is technically assigned to over Moore's assignments. Hon tells the First Sergeant to back off. As Moore goes into the parking lot, he is approached by Colonel Dailey, who asks Moore who the senior Marine is at HQ. Moore tells him it is Major Banning. He agrees to take a message to Banning that Dailey would like to meet him.

At Water Lily Cottage, Ellen Feller is finished with her tennis match and is thinking of her husband with distaste. She has not seen him in some time and does not want a reunion. Her husband prefers young men as lovers to his wife, and Ellen is glad to be away from him, but she is concerned about where he has hidden the jade he smuggled from China.

Ellen decides her decision to sleep with Pickering was a wise move. She is afraid someday the jade smuggling will come to light and she will need a strong, influential man on her side. She is thinking tonight about the young man who shares this cottage with her, John Moore, and how it would be to sleep with him.

Chapter 16 Analysis

Tension on Guadalcanal heightens in this chapter, with Pickering at great risk, and with Hon and Moore trying desperately to intercept enough messages to determine the size of the Japanese force converging on their commander. The thoughts of Ellen Feller are explored, and it is obvious her role in the previous novels was that of Pickering's lover, and of a woman with hidden agendas. Her motives are unclear, and it is an interesting plot twist to learn that the character of Pickering, with his intense loyalty to his country and way of life, is an unfaithful husband. In this chapter are hints of a pending scandal concerning stolen jade from China, but few details emerge.



Chapter 17

Chapter 17 Summary

Chapter seventeen opens with Ellen Feller lying next to John Moore, after they have had sex. Ellen had decided to seduce John because she is concerned about the jade she smuggled out of China. Ellen's protection before was Pickering, but now that Pickering is going to the battle, she needs someone else to protect her.

Back in Washington DC, Captain Pickering's message regarding his elevation to Intelligence Division Officer for the Marines on Guadalcanal is received by Frank Knox. Knox decides to tell Admiral Nimitz to get Pickering off Guadalcanal immediately. There is a discussion in Rickabee's office regarding the replacement of Goettge, Cory and Ringer, all men killed in Goettge's patrol debacle. Dailey is suggested as a replacement, along with John Moore.

On Guadalcanal, Pickering and Vandergrift are watching four Naval destroyers meet the Marine landing craft and offload vital supplies. One of the Naval officers comes to the beach and brings a message from Admiral Nimitz, ordering Pickering to accompany the destroyers off Guadalcanal. Pickering complies.

Back at Water Lily Cottage, John returns home and shows Ellen the orders he and Dailey have received to be sent to Guadalcanal immediately. Ellen realizes that Dailey is being sent because he does not have access to MAGIC documents and intelligence, and Moore is being sent because HQ does not know that Pickering gave Moore access to MAGIC documents before Pickering left for Guadalcanal. Dailey has his orders, is full of his own importance, and Ellen cannot reach Banning in order to save Moore. Moore and Dailey depart.

Chapter 17 Analysis

Moore's character suffers betrayal and deceit from yet another older woman as Ellen entices him into bed. Everything is about to be completely upended, as decisions made by commanders are being enacted without Pickering's input. Moore possesses just as many secrets as Pickering, but is being sent to the frontline because no one but a select few personnel are aware of it. Banning's confrontation with Ellen reveals how intelligent and suspicious he is of her, a forewarning of a future confrontation between these two characters. Dailey's character is more akin to Schneider, as a man who plays only by the rule book and takes too much pride in his rank.



Chapters 18-19

Chapters 18-19 Summary

In chapter eighteen, it is August 1942, and Pickering is aboard the USS Gregory in the Coral Sea. The captain of the ship shows Pickering his orders, to transport Pickering to another island immediately, where he will then be transported to safety. Pickering and the captain are talking on the bridge when a Japanese fighter airplane attacks the ship. Within minutes, the captain and most of the officers are killed and his own arm is wounded. The ship is able to shoot the airplane down, and Pickering finds he is now in charge of the USS Gregory.

Back in Brisbane, at Water Lily Cottage, Ellen and Banning are awaiting the arrival of Pluto Hon. They decide that there is nothing they can do about Moore's departure, and their attention has been diverted to the radio message from the USS Gregory announcing Pickering as the acting commander after the attack. Pluto advises Ellen and Banning he has already sent a message to Pearl Harbor regarding the danger of Moore being captured by the Japanese. Ellen is very upset, but Banning agrees it was the smartest thing to do.

Banning tells Ellen he knows she has seduced Moore, and implies she could have done more to prevent Dailey from taking Moore.

As Dailey and Moore land on Guadalcanal, Dailey is excited about getting into the action and does not understand Moore's reluctance. Major Dillon greets them both and advises them of the present situation on the island. Moore is quickly sent off closer to the front to examine some captured Japanese documents, and Dailey proceeds to take over the intelligence unit. General Vandergrift begins to wonder why Moore was based with Pickering in Brisbane and remembers the subject of MAGIC that Pickering had told him about before leaving the island.

As Moore is reviewing the documents, some other soldiers come in with more equipment, documents and a helmet from a recent fight. Moore realizes that the men are no longer fighting Japanese engineers who were left on the island to build the airstrip, but Japanese officers and an elite fighting force. The Marine Sergeant sends Moore back to the beach where the fight was to look for more information and clues. While leaving the beach after collecting more documents the men are attacked, and Moore is shot in the leg twice. While Moore is in the infirmary being treated, General Vandergrift learns that Moore knows all about MAGIC.

Chapter nineteen opens as Captain Galloway and Jim Ward are landing their Wildcat fighter airplanes at Henderson Field on Guadalcanal, along with several other aircraft. They are part of an attempt to keep the Japanese from taking Guadalcanal back.



Pickering is recovering from his wounds in the Navy Hospital in San Diego, California. Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox comes to visit him, with messages from the President of the US, and from Vandergrift. Pickering learns that MAGIC was endangered when Moore was accidentally sent to Guadalcanal, and that the young man was injured. He and Knox are relieved to learn Moore is safely at the hospital in Pearl Harbor. Before Knox leaves Pickering, he brings in Mrs. Pickering to see her husband.

On Buka, the Coastwatchers Howard and Koffler send the results of their sightings: a fleet of ninety-six different Japanese aircraft have been observed on a course that would eventually take them to Guadalcanal. The Coastwatchers learn they will not be reinforced or relieved for a long time.

At Henderson Field, on Guadalcanal, Col. Dawkins addresses his men. On a map of the area, he shows them where the US Navy is, and where they believe the Japanese Navy is. The US Navy is not going to be of much assistance in defending Guadalcanal as they are seeking the bulk of the Japanese fleet. Dawkins tells the men there is a large contingent of Japanese fighters headed their way, and explains the order of launch by the Americans to confront these fighters.

After the air battle, Dunn is being debriefed by Dawkins. Dunn has become an "Ace", with five aircraft shot down. As Dunn describes the battle, he learns that Galloway has crashed into the sea and is presumed lost, Ward and Schneider returned to the field but were badly injured, and six American aircraft were lost. However, the tally shows that eighteen of the Japanese aircraft were lost in the same battle. As Dunn leaves the briefing, he realizes he is now in charge of VMF-229.

Captain Galloway is floating in the South Pacific, as night approaches. He knows his chances of surviving the night are slim, with sharks prevalent in the area. He thinks of the air fight that brought him to the ocean, and spends his time thinking of Caroline and the memories they made.

The next morning a PT boat discovers Captain Galloway and rescues him. Ward receives a radio message that after recuperation, Galloway will return to take command of VMF-229.

Chapters 18-19 Analysis

Here is the ending of this novel, along with many beginnings to the next novel. The battlegrounds here are on the USS Gregory, an air battle involving Galloway and Dunn, Moore's intelligence work on the island, and the secret Coastwatcher base on Buka. Each battleground is in preparation for a huge battle, with little knowledge of the size of the enemy's forces. Pickering was once again placed in danger, but survives to be transported safely home to the USA. Moore is still on Guadalcanal, but rescue is coming for him. Moore's intuitive abilities are highlighted, showing the Marines were right to pull him into the fray. Dunn has performed admirably in the battle, but this pride is diminished when his team learns that Galloway went down.



Galloway is in grave danger, adrift in the seas surrounded by sharks, but a PT-109 rescues him.

The story ends with all battlegrounds set forth: actual places where battles are soon to be fought, the battle between the Armed Services, the battles of the heart, and the biggest battle of them all: staying alive in the middle of a world war.



Characters

Captain Fleming Pickering

Captain Fleming Pickering is a tall and distinguished American man in his forties who had retired from the service after the first World War and was brought back into the service in a unique capacity by Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox. Before the war, Pickering is the owner and operator of the Pacific and Far East Shipping Company, but when accepting the assignment from Knox, Pickering leaves his international business and company to the capable hands of his wife of many years, Patricia.

Captain Pickering is now working for the Navy, but considers himself a Marine, as that was his capacity in World War I. Pickering uses his wealth, his vast network of resources and his connections to perform his job for Knox, placing himself in a position to observe, to report, and to make a difference. Pickering is keenly aware that the other Navy officers see him as an alarming breach of protocol, but he is the type of man who considers the goal of winning the war as more important than what others think of him.

Pickering is self confident and does not hesitate to do whatever is necessary, even if it may seem inappropriate for his position. He is greatly admired by the men and women who work for him. In this novel, he is in a critical period of the South Pacific war of 1945 and goes from administrative details to front line command very quickly. His instincts place him in the right places at the right time, no matter what his orders were in the beginning. Pickering narrowly escapes death at the hands of a Japanese pilot strafing his ship, and emerges as the competent commander to bring the ship home to Pearl Harbor.

Pickering is the main character in this novel and represents an admirable character and valuable asset in the Allies efforts to win the war. The character traits assigned to Pickering by the author are a commanding presence, calm reactions to stress and danger, and superior leadership abilities.

Lt. William Dunn

William Charles "Bill" Dunn is a Marine Pilot stationed in the South Pacific during World War II. He is twenty-nine, from Point Clear, Alabama. He is affectionately called "The Runt" in his family because of his small stature. A trip to the Pensacola Air Station when he was a young man introduced him to the possibility of becoming an aviator, which did not require height or weight. He decided to join the Marine Naval Aviators, and the book opens with him about to enter his first air fight. Dunn survives, but there are questions about his courage during the battle. He is injured, and while in the hospital, he begins an affair with a pretty nurse. Dunn returns to duty, joining the newly formed VMF-229 squadron, and works under Captain Galloway. At the end of the story, Dunn has been in the battle over Guadalcanal and has achieved Ace status. Temporarily, he serves as the



commander of VMF-229 until Galloway is rescued from the sea and returns to the squadron.

First Lieutenant Hon Song Do, Signal Corps, US Army Reserve

Pluto Hon has MAGIC clearance and reports directly to Pickering. He is a tall and large Oriental man who is skilled in linguists and breaking secret codes. Hon is a brilliant mathematician, and is trusted by Pickering completely. Hon chooses John Moore to be part of his very exclusive team, and the two men become adept at understanding the intercepts they have and assist in the war effort with this intelligence.

Sgt. John Marston Moore

John Marston Moore is a twenty-two-year-old officer candidate who is in Marine Boot Camp when his linguistic abilities and association with Japanese culture draws the attention of Pickering and his staff. John is pulled from Boot Camp and sent to join Detachment 14 in the South Pacific. He was originally destined for the Coastwatcher Establishment, but when Pickering and Hon realize the depth of his Japanese translating abilities, Moore is kept with Hon. As Moore was making his way to his new assignment, he meets and falls in love with Barbara, an older woman who is separated from her husband. Moore falls in love and is crushed to learn later that Barbara has gone back to her husband. Moore is then seduced by Pickering's secretary and lover, Ellen Feller. Moore's talents as an intelligence worker are increased when he is sent to Guadalcanal and interprets valuable data there regarding the Japanese force on the other side of the island. Moore is sent on a patrol and is wounded, but soon rescued.

Captain Charles M. Galloway

Captain Charles Galloway is a Marine Naval Aviator. Galloway is a man whose reputation for circumventing the orders is well known by Navy and Marine personnel. After the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Navy declared all airplanes on the island disabled; yet Galloway and another aviator repaired one and flew it out of Pearl, landing it on an aircraft carrier. For this action, he was demoted and sent back stateside. Some of the Marine officers realize what an asset Galloway is, and, recognizing he will need close supervision, bring him back to the action in the South Pacific. Galloway is placed in charge of VMF-229, and when that squadron goes to Guadalcanal, his plane is shot down and he is presumed lost. He is, however, rescued a few days later and returns to duty.



T/Sgt Stefan Oblensky

Oblensky is known as "Big Steve" because of his presence and his physical stature. He is forty-six and has considerable skills with machinery. Oblensky is secretly married to Lt. Florence Kocharski of the Navy Nurse Corps, but only a few people are privy to this information because it is against regulations for a marriage like this to exist. Oblensky is devoted to Galloway and jumps at the chance to work with him again

Frank Knox

Frank Knox was the actual Secretary of the Navy during WWII, and in this novel, he has clandestinely assigned a retired officer to work for him.

Mary Agnes O'Malley

Mary Agnes is a Navy nurse and a single girl surrounded by hundreds of handsome athletic service men. She does take advantage of her attractiveness and situation to enjoy a number of young men, including Galloway, Dunn, and Schneider. Mary Agnes is not a heavy thinker and prefers to talk about movie stars and makeup rather than anything to do with the war.

Ellen Feller

Captain Pickering's secretary is also a skilled Japanese linguist. She is a very attractive woman who has a failed marriage and works far away from her husband. She is devious in nature and has seduced Pickering in case she needs him to protect her. There is mention of a jade theft in her past, and she is constantly working to position herself in safety and protection. She seduces Moore just before he is assigned to Guadalcanal.

General McArthur

The Allies Supreme Commander of the Pacific Theater of World War II.

Major Jake Dillon

Major Dillon is working in the Navy as a press agent, but has access to any top secret documents and locations. His background is in Hollywood, where he was friends with some of the major stars of the time, and he is also a friend of Pickering, who suggested him for the role he is playing in the Navy now.



Objects/Places

WWII Fighting Aircraft

The Japanese flew an airplane called The Zero, and the closest the Allies had to battle against it was the Wildcat. Other aircraft used by the Japanese were the Vals, and Katys, nicknamed by the Allied Forces. Allied Forces also had Buffaloes and Spitfires.

Guadalcanal

An island in the South Pacific that became a critical occupation site for both Japanese and Allied Forces.

Jade

A valuable stone, green in color, mined in many countries, but the best samples come from China

Australia

Australia is the Allied country nearest to Japanese shores and to the critical islands of the South Pacific. Australian forces join with the United States, Great Britain and other Allied forces to protect its shores and to provide intelligence regarding Japan's movement

Military rank and protocol

The military is an organization which is based on the principal of a large group of soldiers, seamen, aviators, etc., who respond without question to the orders of a prescribed chain of command. To enforce this system of rank and protocol, strict guidelines are taught to recruits, and those in the forces obey these guidelines out of respect, loyalty, and some fear of court martial.

Coastwatchers

The Coastwatcher Establishment is a loosely organized band of men who were left behind on the islands overrun by the Japanese. These men were reinforced with Allied personnel, but subsist on little equipment besides a radio, and no hope of relief for months at a time. These men were responsible for providing vital information to the Allies regarding troop movements, sightings of Japanese planes, and ship movement.



Special Detachment 14

The secret organization created within the Allied Forces to protect and support the Coastwatchers and to prevent the disagreement between that organization and the US Navy from accomplishing the goals of the Coastwatchers

Eyes Only/Top Secret

This was the term to describe intelligence paperwork and communications that were only for a select few high in the command structures of the services. Such documents and envelopes were stamped with large red print so there would be no question as to their importance or secrecy.

World War II

In the 1940s, almost every country in the world was engulfed in a war begun by the Germans and the Japanese.

PT BOAT

These were hastily constructed, fast moving boats, made from plywood, with the express intention of moving men quickly through the South Pacific, avoiding Japanese air and submarine attack.



Themes

Battlegrounds

The title of the book is *Battleground*, and the story is not just about the physical battlegrounds in World War II, although the reader is supplied with a very real sense of place and time leading up to and during these battles. There are more battlegrounds in everyone's life, and this story places many human battlegrounds with the physical battlegrounds as the backdrop.

There is the battle between the branches of the USA military, Army versus Navy versus Marines. The Secretary of the Navy has so little factual information coming from the front line he must employ devious means to assist him in making the best decisions. Within the Navy and Marines there is a battle between the officers and the enlisted men and between career Navy men and the ones who are brought out of retirement. There is an ongoing battle to establish procedures and processes to provide equipment on the battlefield, food for the men, even transportation to the battlegrounds.

On a more personal side of the characters is the battleground of the heart. Moore falls in love with Barbara, Galloway is in love with Caroline. These are battles against society as well. The author is saying that while the world may be one great battleground in the summer of 1945, it is also the site of many more individual and organizational battles at the same time.

Rebels

Battleground is set in the early months of World War II, when America was scrambling to find allies, to produce soldiers and equipment, and to pull everything together. While some factions were not prone to work together, in the end, everyone did what they could to win the war. This established a special bond between the people (majority of them were men) and a close brotherhood between those who have shared a common danger. There may have been petty struggles between people before the battle, but in the midst of fighting for their lives, these men depended on their commanders, their orders and their team members for their survival. Brotherhood is shown in the acceptance of Schneider into the squadron because of his abilities and not his personality. It is displayed when Dawkins brings Galloway back into the fold, when Oblensky shares his secrets with Galloway, and in the behavior of men towards their commander, Pickering. An ideal example of brotherhood is on the island of Guadalcanal, when Pickering, who is a wealthy and powerful man, takes the time to ensure some of the wounded men get taken off the island in the first plane that arrives.



Brotherhood

The heroes of Battleground are men who refuse to obey without question when they believe the orders are unjust. Men like Schneider and Daily are derided for their by-the-book attitude and concern with their own importance.

On the other hand, rebels are the main, and most likable people in this novel. Pickering is a man who enjoys upsetting the protocol in order to achieve the higher goals. Galloway is rewarded, somewhat belatedly, for his heroism during the days after the Pearl Harbor bombing. Oblensky is created as a likable character who uses somewhat illegal methods to procure the equipment needed for his squadron. The author's theme is that rebels are important in battles, and may have been the reason we came out victorious in the war.

Style

Point of View

The point of view in *Battleground* is third party, omniscient. This allows the author to report on all action, all thoughts by all characters, and to provide an objective view. The reader can trust the reports by the narrator to be actual and unbiased. In this way, the author can promote his themes and beliefs, and get his primary messages across to the reader. Information is supplied through dialogue, description of characters, and observations of minor characters; also through copies of telegrams, top secret messages, letters from loved ones, and historical facts. The narrator can be everywhere at once, providing the reader with a brisk pace of story, going from Pickering's private thoughts to a description of the importance of Midway and Guadalcanal in the war effort.

By blending the setting, the defined characters and their traits, and the action with the fast moving plot, the author has the ability to present a well paced, comprehensive and enjoyable adventure novel for the reader.

Setting

With the exception of Moore's short leave time in Philadelphia, the author has chosen all battle related sites for his story. Midway Island, Guadalcanal, training sites in Hawaii, South Carolina, and battle headquarters in Australia. The purpose is to convey a heightened sense of urgency and vitality to the characters who are engulfed in a world war of unknown dangers and fear. By setting the story in the early months of the war and transporting young men from the peace and stability of the United States into the steamy jungles of foreign lands, the author provides a vivid contrast for the reader. Action in Washington DC is concerned with military intelligence, high ranking powerful senators and cabinet members, and the realms of decision makers who will affect the lives of the main characters. The descriptions of the character's surroundings are concise and brief, turning the plot over to the constant action and conversations between the characters.

Language and Meaning

Every chapter in the book begins with a location, and the date and time listed military style, and any movement within the chapter to another location is headed in the same manner. This gives the book the feel of an actual top secret military report that the narrator is sharing with the reader. These headings, coupled with the terse wording and fast pace of the book contributes to a constant sense of urgency and vitality to the chapters. The author deploys a constant use of each military person's rank in the story, even in reporting a long conversation where the speakers' ranks are identified early on. The author does not want the reader to be distracted by a subplot when the main emphasis of this novel concerns military battlegrounds. The author relies heavily on



conversations between his characters and descriptions of military equipment to move the plot along.

Structure

Battleground is 487 pages long, comprising of nineteen chapters. Each chapter is several pages long, and the pace moves quickly, encompassing the actions and thoughts of the major characters and a few minor ones, throughout June, July and August of 1942 during World War II.

The exposition is presented in the first few chapters, where the major characters are introduced and set into action. Captain Pickering's investigative team and their adventures will comprise the main plot of the book, and the corresponding plot concerns Captain Galloway and his VMF-229 squadron. The author uses these characters to show the reader two completely different aspects of the same theater of action in world war. Pickering is in the company of General McArthur and a vital part of the decision making for the battles, and Galloway and his team are the men who follow the orders and fight the battles.

This book is fourth in a series about the Marine Corps in World War II, so more brief explanatory paragraphs are required to provide the backstory on each of the main characters. This is done through dialogue with others, and thoughts of the character.

Complications arise with these main characters in the ensuing chapters. Pickering is meeting resistance from all sides in his attempts to carry out his orders. Galloway was demoted and sent stateside because of an incident in the early days of the war, but is being pulled back into action in the South Pacific. Moore and Dunn are young men who are called into service and thrust into battle almost immediately upon their arrival in the South Pacific. Several subplots are also set into motion, with Ellen Feller arriving to join the team, Hon's upgrading of Moore to a MAGIC team member with full knowledge, and the introduction of a Coastwatcher team on Buka Island, which is in constant danger of discovery.

The crisis of the story arrives with the landing of Marines on Guadalcanal. The Marines are abandoned by the Navy, and are compelled to forage for food and equipment while preparing to defend the island from an approaching Japanese force. Pickering and Moore are in harm's way, and these are men whose capture by the enemy could turn the tide of war even worse against the Allies. Galloway's squadron is sent against huge odds to protect the men on Guadalcanal.

The climax at the end of the story is that Pickering, Moore, and Galloway, though all injured, survive and emerge from their experiences wiser and stronger. They face the coming days of the war prepared to fight again.



Quotes

"And perhaps, he thought, because sometimes when he saw Dunn on the flight line, a spunky little crew-cutted, clean-cut kid who looked more like a cheerleader than a Marine Officer, he reminded him of those young English kids standing beside their Spitfires in an East Anglican field."

Chap. 1, p. 11

"'Pickering,' he said solemnly, 'my heart is so filled with thoughts of the nobility of the profession of arms that words may fail me.'"

Chap. 2, p. 35

"'You're going to have to learn, Galloway, to engage your brain before opening your mouth,' Dawkins said more calmly. 'Just for your information, I was given the option of not giving you VMF-229. I'm giving it to you because you're the best man I have available to take the job.'"

Chap. 7, p. 172

"Moore had just decided that Marine Captain or not, this man was an amiable idiot, when Sessions met his eyes. The eyes were both intelligent and coldly penetrating; not the eyes of a fool."

Chap. 3, p. 57

"'Somebody pretty high up in the corps wants to get you where you're going in a hurry, Sergeant, otherwise wouldn't have a six-A. And they are going to get very pissed off if you had the six-A to somebody who didn't rate it on their own.'"

Chap. 5, p. 101

"'I'm personally acquainted with your new commanding officer, Captain Charley Galloway,' Dawkins went on. 'I will tell him what I know about you and the gossip. And I will tell him that I personally feel you did everything you were supposed to do at Midway, and then, suffering wounds, managed to get your shot-up aircraft back to the field.'"

Chap. 6, p. 127

"'The scuttlebutt I heard was that he and another sergeant put together a Wildcat from wrecks of what was left of December seventh, wrecks that had been written off the books, and that he flew it off without authority to join the Wake Island relief force at sea.'"

Chap. 6, p. 131



"Lieutenant McCoy? He did say 'Lieutenant McCoy', didn't he? He damn sure did! Killer McCoy? Am I really going to meet the legendary Killer McCoy?"

Chap. 7, p. 155

"There was a theory...it was soon to be tested in the crucible of war...that the real value of Annapolis graduates to the country did not derive from their experience manning the ships of the peacetime Navy, but from the fact that they would now serve as the firm skeleton for the flesh and musculature of the enormous Navy that would be required to win the war."

Chap. 12, p. 287

"Jake Dillon was no fool. He had not been a fool when he was a staff sergeant in Shanghai, and he'd learned a good deal more about people during his time in Hollywood."

Chap. 9, p. 221

"And then something like a swung baseball bat hit John Marston Moore twice, once in the calf and once high, almost at the hip joint of his right leg."

Chap. 15. p. 452

"Deeply regret am unable to relieve or reinforce at this time. Cannot overstate importance of what you are doing. Hang in there. Simper Fi. Banning."

Chap. 19, p. 467

Topics for Discussion

What are some of the examples of how inadequate the equipment and intelligence the Marines had, and how did this hinder their efforts in battle? If you were faced with the same shortages and oversights, would you react more like Oblensky or Schneider?

Pickering was enlisted by Knox because Knox could not trust his own staff to tell him the truth. What was the basis of the resentments between the Navy and the Marines? Were these differences justified? How could these animosities be addressed and resolved?

The author has a few female characters in this novel: Mary Agnes, Flo Oblensky, Barbara, Caroline, Patricia Pickering and Ellen Feller. How are they different? How are they alike? Compare especially Caroline and Mary Agnes to Patricia Pickering and Flo Oblensky.

What was the significance of Pickering's great wealth and access to private estates and vehicles from wealthy friends. Does it seem unusual for someone who is basically performing an undercover role to be so attention-getting?

Late in the book, Ellen Feller is reflecting on some stolen jade from China. What is the reason the author inserted this into this novel?

Lt. Dunn and Sgt. Moore are both young men, new to the service, and need to grow up quickly during these two months. Which one is a more important character? Discuss what happened to them from June to August of 1942, and how you believe they will perform in subsequent books.

Imagine yourself as a member of the Coastwatcher team, stranded on an island with friendly villagers, but adjacent to a large contingent of an enemy force. How would you cope?

Explore the relationship between Galloway and Oblensky, between Ward and Schneide, between Moore and Barbara, and between Ellen and Pickering

Discuss Pickering's character in detail, examining his loyalties to country and his team. How do you explain his infidelity?

What storylines in this novel would you pursue in future novels? What part of the previous novels now seem interesting to you in light of information revealed in this one?