The Bridge on the Drina Study Guide

The Bridge on the Drina by Ivo Andrić

BOOKRAGS

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Plot Summary

The Bridge on the Drina is the chronicle of a beautiful stone structure erected in Ottoman times in Višegrad, Bosnia and surviving unscathed until the opening days of World War I. The novel examines select people across three and a half centuries whose lives revolve around the bridge.

The Bridge on the Drina is a beautiful, white structure spanning a fast-flowing green ribbon of water. Over centuries, the bridge inspires folk tales. The bridge comes about when a kidnapped ten-year-old Christian boy grows up to be Grand Vezir and, recalling the misery of a ferry crossing, commissions a stone bridge. It and a matching caravanserai go up in 1567-71 under two overseers, one cruel and one just. The impalement of a saboteur is depicted graphically. By the late 18th century, the Stone Han grows decrepit, but the bridge withstands even a great flood.

Jumping forward to the 19th century and the Serbian insurrections, the Austrian army occupies Višegrad, throws up a blockhouse on the bridge, and begins beheading suspected Serbian nationalists. The tale of two affluent Muslim families arranging a marriage for beautiful but stubborn Fata ends in tragedy and her suicide enters folklore. So, too, does Alihodja's humiliation as Muslim factions debate whether to resist the Austrians actively or passively. Changes in Višegrad's life are examined in vignettes of Milan Glasičanin, the gambler, the Rusyn soldier Fedun and the beautiful Turkish girl, who turns out to be a Serbian collaborator, and Lotte, who runs a successful hotel and cares for her relatives. Salko Ćorkan is tormented by supposed friends and becomes a legend by dancing across the bridge. More changes come to town as the bridge is repaired, a railroad line skirts it, and the bridge is mined for destruction by the Austrians, should war ensue.

In the summer of 1913, students debate ideologies on the bridge. Among the young intellectuals are Stiković and Glasičanin, rivals for the hand of the lovely schoolmistress Zorka. The summer of 1914 begins with blissful weather and abundant crops but gives way to persecution of the Serbs in retribution for killing Archduke Ferdinand, the bombardment of the bridge and town center, and Višegrad's forced evacuation. Alihodja fails to leave as ordered and is injured when a chunk of the exploded bridge crashes into his store. He dies walking home, convincing himself that God somewhere is creating rather than destroying.

Chapters 1-2

Chapters 1-2 Summary

The town of Višegrad grows up in one of the few areas that the fast-flowing Drina River spreads out to accommodate agriculture. The town is centered on a triangle of land formed by the junction of the smaller Rzav River and then climbs uphill. The road from Sarajevo to Stambul passes through, requiring ferry service until the massive stone bridge, its center splayed out to double the width to serve as the town's cultural meeting place (kapia). On the right side is the stone sofa for seating, backed by a protective parapet, in whose center is an inscription praising the builder.

Once the bridge is built, Višegrad develops at its ends. Generations grow up playing around it and learning its legends—different versions for Christians and Muslims—and go on to flirt, fight, reconcile, sell, bargain, beg, sing, joke, and heed warnings. Weddings and funerals inevitably pause on the kapia. Perhaps from watching the stars from the kapia, the people of Višegrad are easier-going and more carefree than in other towns. It is certain that places and people affect one another and share common destinies.

In 1516, slow, surly Jamak ferries people across the river when he decides it is safe. A ten-year old from Sokolovići, among those collected by the janissaries from Christian settlements boys as "blood tribute" painfully recalls the crossing and, when he has risen to the top of the Ottoman court as Mehmed Pasha Sokolli, serving three sultans, he decides in 1556 to finance the building of a bridge at Višegrad. Little about how the project starts is preserved in the extensive legends surround everything else.

Chapters 1-2 Analysis

Chapter 1 describes the run of the Drina and the rich folklore that has arisen around the magnificent bridge that spans it at Višegrad. The truth behind the legends is provided in Chapter X. Here, newborn twins, Stoja and Ostoja are stolen from their mother and walled up in a pier, but holes are cut so she can nurse them; milk still flows down the walls and is sold to new mothers who cannot lactate. A black Arab lives in a great room beneath the kapia, and for adults, seeing him is fatal; children are immune but suffer nightmares about him. Upstream, there are giant hoof prints left by Šarac, horse of Kraljević Marko (if one believe the Christians' legend) or the winged charger of Djerzelez Alija (for Muslims)—an interesting exercise in comparative folklore, suggesting the religious tensions that fill the novel, and useful for children while fishing.

Further to the left is a tomb on which heaven shines light once a year—that of Radisav, if one is Christian, whose talisman is powerless against silk, with which he is bound and drowned; or of Sheik Turhanija, a dervish and martyr who will rise again to defeat the infidels if need be. Throughout the life cycle, residents of Višegrad center their lives on

the special widened section of the bridge (the kapla), and it becomes the heart of the community. Whether it gives locals the characteristics that visitors ascribe to them is debated, but Andrić concedes that people and places, particularly architecturally significant places, affect one another's fates.

Chapter 2 tells briefly how a young boy kidnapped to Stambul in 1516 remembers the horrors of crossing the Drina by ferry and 40 years later as the de facto administrator of the Ottoman Empire orders and pays for the construction of the grand bridge just described. How the project begins is not well-covered in myth. Andrić is eloquent describing the plight of the Christian parents seeking to keep their sons, aged 10-15, from being juridically kidnapped and taken to the capital to become Muslims, be renamed, and put to work in the administration. The early chapters, set in the 16th century show the constant economic pressure placed on Christians to convert in the Balkans—and the withholding of the promised rewards. The psychology of any religious convert and the reactions of "old hands" to them is nicely depicted.

Chapters 3-4

Chapters 3-4 Summary

Workers and equipment arrive in the spring, causing fear among the locals, especially the Christians. Abidaga is in charge, assisted by the mason, Tosun Effendi. Abidaga gathers the notables to warn that his reputation is not exaggerated; he is bloodthirsty and accepts no excuses. Trees are felled and the river banks excavated, mostly by conscript labor. Abidaga watches for malingerers, whom he points out with a green staff to be beaten, revived, and returned to work. In late autumn, Abidaga leaves, having threatened the whole town if the scaffolding is harmed by sabotage or natural forces. In the spring, they return with 30 Dalmatian stone masons led by Mastro Antonio, assisted by "the Arab." Quarrying begins in Banja and great stones are dragged to Višegrad. The following spring, roads are built and steady streams of men and material pour in. As the locals suffer inflation, theft, and the turning of their town into a chaotic hell, enthusiasm for the project cools. The Christian rayah (serfs) are hauled from their land to labor without pay and kept at it until heavy frost. Abidaga grows furious at the dwindling daylight.

The exhausted, resentful workforce is entertained by a Montenegrin traveler, who sings patriotic Serbian songs, and a local conscript, Radisav of Unište calls for sabotage to be blamed on a vila (fairy) who opposes the useless bridge. A fable quickly spreads that the vila will not stop until twin children, Stoja and Ostoja, are walled up in the foundations. In a nearby village, a half-witted servant, Ilinka, gives birth to stillborn twins, searches for them around the bridge site. Abidaga gives the chief of the guards, a "Man from Plevlje," three days to capture the culprits or be impaled. On the third night of vigil they capture Radisav. Fearing the loss of the Vezir's good favor, Abidaga supervises torture that reveals no broader plot.

The population is forced to watch Radisav's execution on an elevated place, where the angle mercifully hides details of the stake being driven from anus to neck without hitting a vital organ. Radisav is hoisted upright, his face a grimacing mask, moaning curses at the Turks and the bridge. Realizing that it could have been he who perished in horror, the Man from Plevlje loses his mind and is carted off to his village. Radisav is still alive at twilight but dies overnight and people, relieved he is beyond pain, talk of him as a martyr and saint. Abidaga orders the body thrown to the dogs, but workers bribe the executioner into letting them give him a secret Christian burial. Women claim that the vilas bury Radisav and heaven showers candles on his grave.

Work on the bridge continues through mid-December blizzards, and people are thankful for winter. In the spring Arif Beg replaces Abidaga, whose cruelty and graft have gotten him fired. Arif Beg pays and feeds the workers and reduces the level of fear. Work on a matching caravanserai to lodge travelers, horses, and goods overshadows placing the foundations for the piers. The Arab is killed when a great stone slips loose and pins him from the waist down. His solemn funeral does not slow construction. When scaffolding

is removed, everyone but Ahmedaga Sheta repents of earlier doubts and lauds the bridge's beauty and convenience. Arif Beg throws a party, and young and old delight in crossing water and space. A white plaque commemorates the great and wise Mehmed Pasha bridging the swift Drina, and invokes Allah's blessing on him and it. The Vezir creates an endowment for the Han from income on Hungarian properties. A crazy dervish stabs Mehmed, but his bridge is, to mortal eyes eternal.

Chapters 3-4 Analysis

Chapter 3 describes the first years of the complex building project and the impact it has on quiet, backward Višegrad. Christians, pejoratively termed rayah—flock of animals in Arabic and Turkish—and the Muslims, termed Turks, initially view the bridge project differently. The Muslims are proud of their Vezir's grand vision. Very soon, all become disillusioned. Part of it comes from the attitude of the overseer, Abidaga, who is proud of his reputation for cruelty and efficiency on past jobs and plans to, as it were, pad his resume in Višegrad. Much of the disillusionment comes from the dislocation that everyone suffers as the male population doubles through the influx of workers. That an "oriental village" in the mid-16th century can suffer inflation brings a bit of surprise, but the project appears as monumental as any modern enterprise. Forests are felled for scaffolding, which the simple peasants take to be the bridge itself, and then the banks of the Drina are excavated to build footings. Stone is dragged in from an hour away. As the work goes too slowly for Abidaga's tastes—it is soon seen that he is morbidly fearful of falling short of the Vezir's expectations and having his reputation ruined—he kidnaps peasants from tilling the land, which quickly creates a sullen workforce among whom rebellion is easily fomented.

A minstrel creates the mood. His careful tuning of the one-string gusle builds anticipation among laborers who ought to be sleeping off their exhaustion, but are ripe for some sort of protest. His song, exalting the high point in the independent history of Serbia under Stefan Uroš V, is treasonous from the Turkish point of view. When Radisav points out that only the Ottoman military can benefit from a bridge, the young men support his call to sabotage indifferently. The older ones know better. Through songs and spoken fables, people are convinced that a vila (fairy) opposes the project and is causing damage. The fable stipulates that this will continue until twin children, Stoja and Ostoja, are walled up in the foundations. Chapter 1 has introduced this myth and the current interpretation. Coincidentally, in a nearby village a half-witted servant, Ilinka, gives birth to stillborn twins, searches for them after their hasty burial, and takes up residence around the bridge site. She is tolerated and even helped to survive and comes to be identified with the myth.

The foundations of the second myth, the illuminated grave, come from the act carried out solely by Radisav and Jovan, if Radisav's confession under extreme torture is to be believed. Abidaga convinces the guards to capture the perpetrators by threatening to impale their captain who, of course, passes the threat downward. They set an ambush on the bridge, but Radisav and Jovan strike successfully. They lay off one night, and strike again, and Radisav is captured in a wild mêlée. The Man from Plevlje, curiously

never named, has grown frantic feeling the last night of his life appears passing by. When Radisav is taken, Abidaga is quickly on the scene and supervises his brutal interrogation. Andrić is graphic in detailing the horrors inflicted on the man, partly in order to establish the Turks as inhuman, to be contrasted later with European overlords.

Why the Man from Plevlje is so worried about the punishment threatened him becomes clear when he supervises its execution on Radisav. The narrowness of his escape drives the Man from Plevlje crazy by chapter's end. Meanwhile, the atmosphere of a bloody medieval execution at midday on a Sunday (not a day off in Muslim lands) is closely depicted. Until he is hoisted upright like a lamb on a spit, spectators see or hear little, except the pounding of the mallet. How it is done is laid out fully for the reader up-close. It makes for harrowing reading.

In Chapter 4, months and years are condensed into sentences as the people see nothing happening behind the scaffolding. Cruel Abidaga is sacked by the Vezir—his greatest fear—when someone, Tosun Effendi, it would appear from his reticence to discuss the matter reports on the violence and graft occurring in Višegrad. Abidaga is allowed to keep his remaining fortune and take his harem to Anatolia. This shows leniency he would extend to no one. Abidaga's replacement, Arif Beg pays and feeds the workers and reduces the level of fear, but is not adverse to punishments. None are seen. The Stone Han takes shape more quickly than the bridge. Its upkeep is guaranteed from a vakif (Islamic religious endowment) established by the Vezir. Its income is drawn from newly-conquered lands in Hungary. When those territories are taken back years later, the income dries up and the Stone Han falls into disrepair. Even when it is eventually demolished, the site remains the "Stone Han" forever. The aesthetics of its windows, intricately carved out of limestone blocks, likewise remain a motif after they are destroyed.

The technology for setting in place the underwater foundations of the bridge pillars is described, involving the horrible death of "The Arab." This debunks the myth told in Chapter 1 and repeated throughout the book. In Chapter 16, the state of the foundations 300 years later is examined, and in Chapter 19 the Islamic mythology of how angels create the first bridges and stand as their guardians forever is discussed. At this point, the work is difficult, dangerous, and mundane. When scaffolding is removed from the bridge, everyone except Ahmedaga Sheta, repents of earlier doubts and laud the bridge's beauty and convenience. Ahmedaga is sure that the current at flood stage will wash it away. Pious Muslims will throughout the book repeat Ahmedaga's point of view that only what God creates is permanent.

At any rate, Arif Beg out of his own pocket pays for a two-day celebration of the bridge's completion. Young people dance the kolo amid great cauldrons of halva, which everyone is invited to enjoy. One child dies after overeating. Dim-witted Murat Turković becomes the first person to cross the river on the two-foot wide parapet. Two more drunks will repeat the feat centuries later, in a far more harrowingly fashion. The bridge —and particularly the kapia—is destined to be the site of suicides and innumerable executions. At the time of the dedication, however, attention is on the verses lauding Mehmed Pasha and asking Allah to bless him and the bridge. Everyone literate in town

interprets the poetic text differently and the illiterate remember the parts they like. In later chapters, public announcements are posted beneath this plaque. The chapter ends with details of Mehmed Pasha's assassination, about which news reaches Višegrad slowly, for the Turks discourage negative publicity. Andrić finishes by philosophizing about permanence and how for 300 years the bridge defines the town.

Chapters 5-6

Chapters 5-6 Summary

The bridge and the Stone Han serve as intended until the end of the 17th century, when the Turks are expelled from Hungary, and funding for their upkeep dries up. Dauthodja Mutavelić puts himself in dept to keep the han patched and dies repairing the roof. As the han falls into ruins, travelers turn to Ustamujić's Inn. By contrast, the bridge ages to perfection.

Spring and fall normally bring flooding in low-lying areas, and once every 20-30 years, there comes a "great flood," which binds that generation psychologically and provides material for storytellers. One of the greatest occurs in the second half of the 18th century. Oldtimers know enough when "the waters are hostile" to empty the warehouses to higher ground, but that year the Rzav also rises and the combined waters submerge Višegrad. Suljaga Osmanagić's horse senses it coming, awakens everyone, and they flee uphill to Mejdan, where Turks take in Turks and Christians take in Christians and Jews. The richer merchants and heads of the three faiths meet in Hadji Ristić's house, where, masking anxieties, they recall comical aspects of earlier floods. In the morning, for the first time in memory, there is no bridge. In two days, the water drops and as years of clean-up begin, people are too busy to think about the bridge's survival. The winter is hard but, come spring, young people again sing at the kapia, forgetting what has been borne away.

Historical events begin that have greater potential to harm the bridge. Višegrad stands on the frontier between Bosnia and Serbia, but when Serbia revolts against the Turks early in the 19th century, action is centered far away. As Bosnian Turkish conscripts are marched through Višegrad, prices rise along with anti-Serbian sentiments. When battles come within two hours' march, people claim to hear "Karageorge's gun" and see camp fires in the hills—like Radisav's grave. Christians and Muslims offer prayers with opposing intentions.

A permanent military force comes to guard the bridge. They erect a crude wooden blockhouse on the kapia, restricting traffic. On the first day, it claims the first of countless victims, Jelisije, a wandering religious eccentric from Čajniče, and a young Mile of Lijesko, both falsely accused of espionage. The headsman skillfully decapitates them and puts their heads on display. The kapia is rarely without such ornaments for decades. The headsman, Hairuddin, disapproves of vigilantism as is carried out on Pop Mihailo. Hairuddin 's successor, is less skilled. After the rebellion dies down and the blockhouse is unneeded, it burns down accidentally and the bridge is freed of the monstrosity. Weather soon washes it white again and the kapia returns to being the social center.

Chapters 5-6 Analysis

Chapter 5 describes the great flood that occurs in the second half of the 18th century. It examines the "where where you when—?" mindset, which dates life events before and after a truly monumental happening (for Americans, the deaths of presidents Roosevelt and Kennedy or 9/11). Storytellers then embellish the facts, a process already seen at work in this novel. Note that Christians narrate their stories on holy days and Muslims at Ramadan (Andrić uses the Turkish spelling: Ramazan). Life in the rival communities throughout the book is show to be "separate but equal." For the first time, a small Jewish community is seen. Its importance grows late in the novel.

In the interfaith gathering of community leaders, huddling soaked and chilled after getting the refugees from low-lying areas put up among co-religionists high on the hillside, adversity creates camaraderie and good humor. The current priest talks about a predecessor who has such bad luck praying for rain that when he starts a prayer to stay a flood, a drunken parishioner shouts out he should use the one for rain. The Muslim leader tells of two hodjas who read prayers and someone prefers the one whose house is already submerged, since the other is only half-praying. The Rabbi warns that too much talk of prayer will get them hauled out into the rain to perform some. The devastation left behind is easily pictured today, but clean-up by hand and without government subsidy probably cannot be. The people will spend the rest of their lives getting back to where they had been economically.

The water rises high enough to flow over the roadway of the bridge, so people for the first time in their lives see the Drina without its adornment. When the waters recede, they are too busy with their own emergencies to contemplate the bridge's survival—despite all the debris that has crashed against it, a sound vividly described. It dries out resplendent and apparently imperishable. At the very end of the novel this proves untrue, but it is by then a constant motif. The one thing more eternal is love, and lovers return to the kapia that spring to sing and dance. This atmosphere returns towards the end, before the great tragedy of World War I is described.

Chapter 6 looks at a greater disaster to befall the structure a while later, when Turkish troops establish a permanent garrison in town as the Serbian revolt approaches. They build a monstrous wooden blockhouse in the center of the bridge, which for decades serves as the public site for executions. The first two victims and the headsman (executioner) are characterized. One is a meandering pilgrim who truly finds himself in the wrong place and the wrong time. He crosses the bridge, is seized and interrogated, and bears Christian witness. Islamic law would not allow him to be killed for blasphemy, being a Christian, but the Turks are willing to suspect anyone of sedition. Late in the novel, Austro-Hungarian troops will repeat the procedure on three hapless victims, changing only the mode of execution. Jelisije of Čajniče's companion at death's door is a youngster merely singing a popular song as he cuts trees. Soldiers hear him, bind and beat him, and present him on the bridge. He does not understand any of the big words, including the politically explosive one, Karageorge. That name, the nom de guerre of the Serbian peasant who leads the insurrection of 1804, is mentioned several times in the

novel, with reverence by the Serbs and loathing by the Turks. The dynasty that eventually rules Serbia is named after him.

As the bridge survives the great flood, so it survives the blockhouse. Built of resinous wood, it burns down accidentally and the elements wash away all traces. Andrić declares that Jelisije and Mile are remembered together more lastingly than other, more important victims, but says the only folk remnant from the period is use dby old women of the name of Hairuddin to scare away thieving children. This shows how arbitrary folk memory is, for the Anatolian executioner is one of the most intriguing characters in the novel, showing his victims consideration, to the point of invoking the Trinity over them. As a Muslim, this would be a capital offense. He is also a proud and skilled professional, dispatching victims swiftly—quite the opposite of Radisav's executioner, who is rewarded for keeping the suffering going as long as possible.

Chapters 7-8

Chapters 7-8 Summary

The Sultan decrees (and the Russian Tsar agrees) that Prince Miloš is to administer Serbia in his name and borders are fixed. The first border is the Drina below the bridge and above Veletovo. Some say the Turks will withdraw to the Black Sea. Sitting on the kapia, Višegrad's leading Turks squirm. Thirty years pass before refugees straggle out of Užice and cross the bridge on a warm summer evening, when the kapia is full. There are 120 families, of which 15 intend to stay in town, while the rest are bound for Sarajevo. They pass silently through the onlookers, dead tired, dazed. Only one man accepts water and a cigar and talks about their flight. By morning, the people of Višegrad have put it out of mind. In the mid-19th century, plague rages twice at Sarajevo and cholera once and Muslims disobey Muhammad's strict orders about quarantine. Gendarmes are stationed on the bridge to prevent travel. Would-be travelers argue their cases, determining which young guard is easiest to bribe.

People are shaken by an event that becomes a legend. At opposite ends of the horseshoe-shaped Drina Valley lie two hamlets, Nezuke and Velije Lug, home respectively to the prominent Hamzić and Osmanagić families. The Osmanagići have the finest house in the district, whose windows reflect the setting sunlight to town. The head of the house, bold, fiery, asthmatic Avdaga, has a beautiful and witty daughter, Fata, about whom everyone talks but who seems destined not to be courted. The Hamzić family, headed by Mustajbeg, lives less grandly and in isolation. When Nail-beg Hamzić sees Fata at social gatherings and boldly suggests marriage, she proudly declares that Velije Lug will never come down to Nezuke, but their fathers arrange the nuptials.

Fata submits and prepares her trousseau, while people gossip about Fata's vow. Her resolve to choose death over shame is set. To obey her beloved father, Fata appears with Nail-beg before the local kadi (judge). Re-crossing the bridge en route to the religious ceremony at Nezuke, Fata asks to stop at the kapia and, while her brother is adjusting her stirrups, leaps over the parapet into the raging waters below. A fisherman finds her body next day downstream, naked except for her veil, and with Salko Ćorkan recovers it for burial. Avdaga dies of grief that winter and Nail-beg takes another wife. Fata's beauty and wisdom live on in song.

Chapters 7-8 Analysis

Chapter 7 in a few paragraphs summarizes how Serbia's Prince Miloš becomes the Sultan's suzerain through agreement with Russia. Miloš succeeds Karageorge after the first rebellion fails (and may have murdered him). This is the first mention in the novel of Russia, whose self-appointment as protector of the Orthodox Serbs help precipitate World War I, as the final chapters of this novel hint. Having been masters in the Balkans

for centuries, the Muslims find it hard to accept the other faiths as having equal power. This theme continues to build through the end of the book.

The arrival of Muslim families displaced by the treaty from Užice are seen approaching the bridge en route to Sarajevo. The chapter then bounces about, introducing elements that become important later. Salko Ćorkan is described as the town buffoon and butt of cruel jokes, introduced to show that even a fool falls silent in the face of tragedy. He runs through more important story lines going forward. The locals try to show compassion but the refugees are so shocked and demoralized that all but one passes by in silence. He speaks just enough to communicate the basics and cuts himself short.

The scene jumps abruptly to plague and cholera in Sarajevo and provisions taken on the bridge to head off an epidemic. The Prophet Muhammad's strict orders and common sense reasoning on the subject are explained—and routinely ignored. As a result, Turkish authorities institute a strict quarantine, which becomes intertwined with the developing political unrest in Chapter 19. First, however, a tragic short story is inserted, which shows the evolution of a legend.

Fata is the rich girl so beautiful and intelligent that she seems likely never to marry. Town gossips constantly rate her odds and a song is made up about her. After admiring Fata at social gatherings, young Nail-beg Hamzić boldly suggests marriage, but she haughtily declares that her hillside hamlet, Velije Lug, will never come down to his secluded, end-of-the-road hamlet, Nezuke. The fathers, occasional business partners, strike a deal, however, and announce the marriage. Gossip turns to the odds of proud Fata obeying. Fata joins in the month-long preparation of her trousseau, even allowing herself to join in the laughter of the women folk, but constantly reminds herself that she has bound herself by her word.

On the eve of the wedding, Fata stands at her window, admiring the starry night and feeling the power of nature. In a rare sensual passage, Andrić has Fata's nipples serve as barometers of her emotions. She is in an existential crisis, trapped by fate; it is a question of death or shame. Her father's asthma attack pulls her out of her reveries. She contemplates their physical resemblance despite the ravages of age on his dear face and steels herself to obey the letter but not the spirit of his will. Fetched by the future in-laws to the civil registration of the marriage before the local kadi (Islamic judge), Fata is "covered with a heavy new black veil, as if under a suit of armour." The procession then returns to the groom's home for the formal wedding ceremony. Fata is thinking wildly how to escape the marriage. Bridal parties frequently stop at the kapia, Višegrad's social center, and it is prudent to ask that her stirrups be shortened for the steep downhill ride to Nezuge. Without warning, Fata leaps to her death in the river. Her beloved father dies of grief within a year. The townspeople are frustrated when the men who recover Fata's naked body refuse to provide prurient details. Fata lives on in song and legend, as is seen in passing later in the novel.

Chapters 9-10

Chapters 9-10 Summary

In 1878, new rebellions put newly-severed Serbian heads on display on the kapia. Hostilities are short, but rumors of an Austrian occupation causes anxiety. Knowing that the people of Višegrad are by reputation pacifists, the mufti of Plevlje nevertheless gathers the leaders to incite resistance and, failing, leaves his assistant, Osman Effendi Karamanli, to talk continue arguing. Karamanli's chief opponent is Alihodja Mutevelić, a trained hodja who loathes Christian rule over Muslims but even more opposes actions that cannot be won. Their debate degenerates into a quarrel, providing community leaders no direction.

Survivors of the Austrian rout trudge into Višegrad and Karamanli prepares to dig in. Alihodja says I told you so and recommends that he not make things worse. Karamanli lashes out with religious fervor and holds court daily by the ruins of the han. Hearing the legend of Sheik Turhania rising to slay the first infidel who sets foot on the bridge, Karamanli adds this to his rants. When the Austrians appear, Karamanli orders Alihodja nailed painfully to the kapia through his right ear. The Schwabes (Austrians) approach cautiously and an orderly wearing a hateful red cross sets him free. A proclamation is posted in Serbian and Turkish, telling the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina that with the Sultan's concurrence, the Council of Nations has given them to the King-Emperor, who wants them to live in peace and prosperity. The "imperial words" and reality that Bosnians are just political pawns irk Alihodja as he walks dully home: life has been split in two.

The Austrian troops enter next day to an empty, silent, shuttered town. Everyone fears everyone else. The officer in charge confirms the police chief in office and orders him to assemble the leading men at noon next day to greet the commandant. Pop Nikola and Mula Ibrahim, who grow up together on the bridge, are old, while Hussein Effendi, the affected schoolmaster, and timid Rabbi David Levi are young. The four smoke and chat, waiting for the tardy colonel. Pop Nikola watches his nervous colleagues. His friendly relations with Mula Ibrahim are legendary. The colonel is preceded by trumpeters and a detachment of hussars. A young officer whispers to him about the reception committee. He dismounts, tolerates Pop Nikola's speech without listening, and leaves, insisting peace and order be maintained. Left alone, the notables are disillusioned, for each has worked himself up for this event, feared it, and now is relieved to survive. The notables go home, priest and hodja walking together a while. They agree that this army is a "bloody business." Drums and bugles now are heard in Višegrad.

Chapters 9-10 Analysis

Chapter 9 introduces Alihodja Mutevelić as a young, smart-mouthed intellectual who opposes his people joining a senseless and hopeless war against a great power,

Austro-Hungary. A non-practicing member of the Muslim clergy, Alihodja grows old through the remaining pages of the novel, and dies on the last page a broken old man, as people still fight over the Višegrad bridge. Alihodja confronts a religious zealot who is unable to answer his practical questions and falls back on an insistence that all good Muslims shed their blood to prevent infidels from seizing political control over Muslims. Alihodja is as zealous against this intolerable situation—the very sight of a Red Cross armband on the medic who treats his throbbing wound infuriates him—but Alihodja is a realist.

When Alihodja reads, as best he can, the big "imperial words," the most painful thought is that he is a pawn. The experience in the center of the bridge leaves him feeling like life has broken in half. The breaking of the physical bridge becomes a motif going forward.

What Andrić terms the "Council of Nations" is the Congress of Berlin, which in 1878 adjusts the Russo-Turkish Treaty of San Stefano more to the liking of the European powers. It creates 30 years of peace before Austro-Hungary unilaterally annexes Bosnia and Herzegovina, as the novel later describes. Note that the Bosnians call Austrians "Schwabes," Swabia designating southwestern Germany in medieval times.

Chapter 10 shows the arrival of the sharp, crisp hussars and jaegers in "parade kit" (dress uniforms), looking quite unlike any military units that the locals have ever seen. The Austrian units are showing the dazzling, glistening "power and force" of Empire. Unfortunately, all the glamor fades when the unnamed colonel makes his delayed appearance and appears miffed to have to dismount and endure a welcoming speech. He is a short, nervous, preoccupied man in an ill-fitting uniform and unshined boots. He listens to a translation of Pop Nikola's words without hearing and insists on peace and order—precisely the priest's wish.

The interfaith reception committee is kept waiting for hours in the sun, three clerics and the local teacher, allowing Andrić to develop their biographies. The clergy are sons of earlier clergymen met in the novel. Pop Nikola's father is beheaded on the kapia. Note that Eastern Orthodox parish clergy, including the Serbian Orthodox, are married and often have large families, and over generations they become a caste. Pop Nikola and Mula Ibrahim have a rather unique and easygoing relationship akin to friendship, which sets them apart from other clergy in Bosnia. The rabbi is much younger and quite timid, making it hard for him to fit into the group, but there is no suggestion of discrimination. Given the general tenor of the novel, this is remarkable.

Chapters 11-12

Chapters 11-12 Summary

Life quickly returns to normal in Višegrad. Yellow military vehicles deliver things never seen before, and soldiers take over the kapia until fall. Civil servants then arrive with families, followed by artisans and craftsmen whose short stays become permanent. The newcomers are never at peace or allow others to be. Almost imperceptibly they change the appearance, customs, and habits of Višegrad. Many of their tasks seem silly but are done with care and zeal, and months later become new regulations that curtail liberties and increase obligations. Inside their homes, people live as they have for centuries, but outwardly old and new ways clash, mingle, and coexist. Few struggle against innovation like stubborn Shemisbeg Banković who comes out only to pray in the mosque, talks to no one in the marketplace, allows no innovation in his house, and even withdraws his grandchildren from school. Older Muslims visit to vent their bitterness and fears but gain little, for Shemisbeg thinks much but says little. He dies in the third year, having spoken a bitter word about nothing.

The town is transformed with refurbishments and construction; the market place is leveled and widened and a new konak (administrative center) built. The need constantly to expend energy on projects amazes old timers and seems a bad omen. The newcomers dismantle the dilapidated and abandoned Stone Han, leaving an empty space, which in a year is filled by an ugly massive barracks out of harmony with its surroundings. Life on the bridge continues, with Serbs, Jews, and even women more freely enjoying the kapia than in the times of Turkish privilege.

Life on the kapia becomes livelier and more varied, but each participant is wrapped in his or her own cares. Prematurely aged Milan Glasičanin of Okolište has a passion for gambling, a vice less prevalent in Višegrad than womanizing and alcohol, and always finds a game in progress in the stale, smoky back room in Ustamujić's Inn. One night a stranger joins in, generally winning more than he loses, and Milan stays away. The stranger finds him at home and invites him to play by moonlight on the deserted kapia. Soon, he has won all of Milan's money, land, and property, and finally offers to restore everything on a single hand—but if Milan loses, he must jump into the Drina.

As soon as he loses, Milan hears a cock crow, the wind scatters the money and cards, and the stranger vanishes. Milan staggers home and lies in delirium for two months, receiving last rites from Pop Nikola, to whom he confesses everything, and who considers it a hallucination. Milan believes that he has played with Satan, who summons to the kapia those whom he would destroy. Next day, 16-year-old Bukus Gaon visits the kapia, finds a golden coin embedded in a crack, and works it lose, breaking the law of the Sabbath rest. On Sunday, Bukus goes to Ustamujić's Inn and becomes a gambler, and later a vagabond, to the dismay of the Jewish community. No one hears from him for 14 years but all talk about the "devil's ducat."

Chapters 11-12 Analysis

Chapter 11 shows how an influx of civil servants from elsewhere in the Balkans bring change to Višegrad. It contrasts the Western compulsion to build and rebuild, to gather statistics and use them as a basis for regulations, with the traditional attitude shared by Christians and Muslims: accept what is as the will of God and make only the most necessary repairs. This theme deepens throughout the rest of the novel. The chapter also shows how traditional home life behind closed doors continues as it has for centuries, offering colorful details, but in passing observes that this will survive for only another 10-15 years. On the streets, old and new compete and blend, according to the laws of evolution: the fittest survives. Shemisbeg Banković is offered as an example of a person who refuses all innovation, finally secluding himself and dying frustrated. Fellow reactionaries make pilgrimages to him before he dies but get little from the taciturn old man.

The Stone Han, designed and long used as a continuation of the beautiful bridge, but for centuries dormant and dilapidated, is dismantled, leaving an empty space. It remains in speech the Stone Han even after an ugly barracks is constructed there, out of harmony with its surroundings. Strange Western music can be heard from its windows until the bugle calls for lights out, disturbing all the dogs in town, a rich and fitting symbol. Social life on the bridge continues, however, but with Serbs, Jews, and even women enjoying greater freedom to enjoy the kapia than in the times of Turkish privilege. Women laughing in public—even when escorted by males—evokes anger among reactionaries. Note the colorful description of the Austrians dressing up for weekend or evening on the kapia. Clothing comes to play an important role in the chapters ahead.

First, however, comes Chapter 10, a morality play in which Milan Glasičanin loses his fortune—and nearly his life—to the devil through his addiction to gambling. After gambling is shown to rank low on the list of Višegrad's favorite vices (a theme expanded on going forth) Milan is shown trying to resist, but being tempted out of his very home by a stranger who seems always to win more than he loses. The annoying stranger leads Milan to the kapia, which is strangely deserted, to play under the moonlight. The game of otuz bir (thirty-one) is described in minute detail, the reader hanging over the final cards, as the stakes grow. Only when he has agreed to an all-or-nothing final hand, which will restore his fortune or claim his life in the waters of the Drina, does Milan realize the value of the gift of life. He loses, but the stranger disappears.

For months Milan is delirious, wondering if he had actually played—and if the opponent had been Satan. Pop Nicola, who brings him the last rites, believes it is simply hallucination. At any rate, Milan is cured of his addiction, but is a lost soul in Višegrad. The spirit of gambling then takes up residence in a young Jew, Bukus Gaon, who breaks the Sabbath rest by digging out a coin lost the night before on the kapia. The Jewish community in Višegrad begins to take on a more important role.

Chapters 13-14

Chapters 13-14 Summary

A census preliminary to a military draft offends the Muslims, whose leaders agree on "passive resistance." Austrian officials look the other way for two years before recruiting, and then deal with insurrection and banditry by assigning gendarmes to patrol the bridge around the clock. Later, these are replaced by streifkorps, handpicked mobile storm troops, including a gigantic, childlike Rusyn, Gregor Fedun. They are put on alert for a notorious and cunning brigand, Jakov Čekrlija, who is operating nearby. Suffering spring fever, Fedun is enthralled by a beautiful Turkish girl who, crossing and recrossing, begins to look at him while his partner, Stevan of Prača, sleeps. She tells Fedun that after seeing her grandmother across at dusk she will be alone, but never shows up. Instead, he is interrogated before Major Krčmar and hears from the girl, Jelenka, that he is the guard considered the softest. She smuggles her lover, Čekrlija, past, disguised as an old crone, but is caught in town when a Turkish gendarme grows suspicious. Čekrlija escapes across the Rzav. Fedun is ordered court martialed but kills himself. The young assistant priest, Pop Joso, dithers about Fedun's state of mind, but Pop Nikola performs the funeral without scruples.

The revolt fizzles and conscription goes forward. Most of the recruits show up drunk but are quieter than the female relatives who see them off, running and tearing at themselves as the young men march off. Letters and pictures from Vienna eventually calm the women and when the first recruits return after two years with wonderful tales, the next call-up goes more smoothly.

Life even in remote Višegrad is touched by the happiness, comfort, and peace that come during Franz-Josef's three-decade rule. People find order, work, and security. The new authorities are more bearable than the Turks, newcomers introduce strange fashions and behaviors that rub off, but also absorb local ways. At first drops of oil on water, they are within years enjoying life on the kapia. By means more humane, the new state increases restrictions and extracts more taxes than the old, but painlessly. Merchants, foreign contractors, engineers, and workers arrive, bringing profits and greater cultural variety. Even the poorest residents believe they will grow rich, and wealth is no longer hidden but openly enjoyed. Vices are more restricted by law, but the illusion of freedom is greater. Višegrad's taste for a carefree life meshes with the newcomers' business sense.

Built near the river by phlegmatic Zahler, "Hotel zur Brücke" eclipses Zarije's Inn for sleeping and Ustamujic's Inn for gambling. It is known by all as "Lotte's Hotel," after the owner's pretty, free-speaking, energetic widowed sister-in-law. Lotte seems always on duty, and is always amiable, bold, and discreet. For two generations she inflames men's desires, gets them to spend their money, and keeps them at bay. She accumulates a fortune, from which she helps the destitute. Lotte has a tiny, overcrowded, stuffy first-floor office that no one else enters, and whose window overlooks the bridge. There, she

corresponds with poor relatives, arranging marriages, resolving quarrels, alleviating suffering. Lotte can only steal odd moments upstairs, lest things go bad in the extrazimmer. Lotte smiles, despite her anxieties, and completes every task without complaint or explanation. She spends little time in the large hall, where Malčika, Gustav, and Milan from Lika handle the crowds, making sure no scandals occur indoors.

Chapters 13-14 Analysis

Chapter 13 looks at Muslim reactions to the Austrians' using census data to organize a military draft. There is again much talk about the machinations of the infidels and historical tidbits before they agree to back Alihodja's plan of "passive resistance." Men will simply not recall their age or birth date and address plaques will conveniently be whitewashed along with the house. It seems rather farcical, but the Austrians do not make a point of it.

There follows another cautionary tale, of Gregor Fedun, a Galician Rusyn (the translator uses the older and less accurate Latinism "Ruthenian"), a big, dumb slob who gets hoodwinked by a pretty girl. The story is, of course, couched in terms of Muslim standards of morality. The troops have been properly indoctrinated and heard stories about what happens if culprits are turned over to a girl's male relatives. Fedun is a conscientious soldier and knows his primary target while on duty, a wily bandit named Jakov Čekrlija. Fedun has two problems: his partner drinks himself to sleep on duty and his own fancies have turned to spring and love.

A beautiful Muslim girl passes several times. She is of an age when full veiling in the feridjah is not yet required, and Fedun is mesmerized by her colorful shawl. Their glances at one another grow longer and bolder and Fedun's emotions soar. She tells him she will lead her ancient grandmother across to the market place and then be able to meet him alone. She, of course, never shows up, but Fedun's superiors do, and he soon finds himself facing court martial for letting Jelena sneak Čekrlija past him. She is caught only by luck and Čekrlija escapes. Defiant after torture and probably resigned to death, Jelena looks older and tougher to poor Fedun. Seeing his life is ruined, Fedun kills himself.

This second suicide in the novel is handled much differently from the first, Fata. She is buried in a Muslim cemetery with no fuss. While suicide in Islam is a sin, deciding the suicide's fate is left up to God. Fedun is an Eastern-Rite Catholic (Uniate) whose rites are nearly identical to the Serbian Orthodox, but who adhere to the Pope. The two confessions have a long history of hatred and violence. The young Serbian priest brings up all the canonical and traditional arguments against burying Fedun from the church, but old, experienced, kindly Pop Nikola overrides him and says, in essence, leave judgment up to God. He performs the rites and stands ready to confer with a Uniate priest should one ever show up.

The chapter ends with a rather stereotyped depiction of hysterical women folk chasing the young men being led off to war. They young men are, however, only going to Vienna

for two years of service (draftees in other regions face three). They come home telling tales about city life and all the amazing things they have seen, becoming agents of change going forward.

Chapter 14 describes how, after a hesitant start, Višegrad settles into the comfortable life that marks the reign of Emperor Franz Josef for three decades. It fits the way the residents have always felt about life. Much of the chapter is given over to Lotte, a widowed Galician Jew who runs the town's first modern hotel and who is her family's generous benefactor. She is portrayed as a consummate coquette, enticing rich customers into drinking and gambling, promising everything and delivering nothing—but everyone is content. Lotte is at her peak in 1885, and remains a central character during a long decline through the end of the novel.

Chapters 15-16

Chapters 15-16 Summary

Drunks expelled from Lotte's can totter to the kapia or go to Zarije's where the rules are less strict and those addicted to plum brandy can await joy or death. Novice drunks, mostly sons of worthies, are talkative, and few choose alcohol over life in the long run. Musicians play, helping patrons to reflect on their moods. Sumbo the Gypsy, Franz Furlan, Salko Ćorkan, and Šaha the Gypsy entertain patrons as singers, jesters, and buffoons. Salko is the most notorious, washed out and old before his time, living on the food and drink given by the bored people that he entertains. One rainy night, a sullen guest recalls Salko's lost lover, a circus dancer to whom he still writes three years later. Salko holds back his anger but is finally, with rum, his new drink of choice, drawn into the conversation.

Salko pines for a beautiful seamstress, Paša from Dušče, with whom he has flirted and perhaps received encouragement. His companions mock him mercilessly throughout the winter, and in the spring Paša becomes the second wife of rich, childless old Hadji Omer, at the insistence of his barren first wife, and bears him a son. Heartbroken, Salko drinks more than ever. People tell him that Paša longs for him and that he is really the son of a Turkish officer who can claim a fortune in Brusa and buy out Hadji Omer. When sober, Salko disbelieves them, but when drunk longs for it to be true. Mehaga Sarač dares Salko to kill himself. Others join in, and Salko wonders why he has not thought of it. They lead him to the bridge and are amazed to see him dancing ecstatically along the narrow, icy parapet. At the end, Salko is a hero.

Notice is posted on the kapia when an Italian anarchist, Lucchieni, assassinates the Empress Elizabeth, and Višegrad's only Italian, Pietro Sola (known as Maistor-Pero), is mortified to be associated with the crime. Soon all is forgotten, but next, in 1900, come engineers to examine the bridge and send workers to plug holes and fix corroded foundations with loads of cement, like rotten teeth. With the kapia off limits, social life transfers to the fronts of buildings in sight of the swarming bridge.

Alihodja listens with ill humor to chat outside his shop. He is slowed now by angina pectoris but still bitterly resists everything Austrian. Needing often to be alone, he hides in a tiny closet behind his shop, which he calls his coffin, from which he hears everything, but feels protected from worries, debts, an insolent young wife, and his costly brood of children. When he has recovered his spirits, Alihodja unshutters his shop and reappears. He declares that he the bridge is "erected by God's will and for God's love," and repeats Sheik Dedije's teaching: Allah creates the earth perfectly smooth, and after the devil scratches it, sends angels to bridge these rivers and ravines with their wings and to teach people how to build bridges. Mehmed Pasha's guardian angel will maintain it for as long as God ordains that it stand. Alihodja shares his thoughts with every passer-by, but few agree with his dark views.

After the repair work, water conduits are installed to bring fresh spring water from the mountains into town. Alihodja is sure that this is a sign of coming evil. In the autumn, work begins on a narrow-gauge railroad to link Sarajevo with the Serbian frontier. New hordes of workers appear. No one understands strategic issues or massive financial statistics, but are hit by inflation, wiping out the prosperity of the first years of occupation. Fortunes are lost. The fourth summer brings the first train and a celebration, but soon it is clear that the bridge is obsolete except for local traffic. No one will waste two days on what takes four hours. Alihodja rails that the Schwabes have not spent such money for the villagers' comfort, but will take them where they do not want to go. The town is reconciled to the change in its fate, enjoys fast transportation when needed, and the bridge remains, eternally young.

Chapters 15-16 Analysis

Salko Ćorkan is mentioned earlier in the story as an indispensable fellow when odd or distasteful jobs are at hand (like fishing Fata's corpse out of the river). Musicians, including another Montenegrin gusle player, are shown entertaining the drunks in Zarije's Inn, which is more tolerant of bad behavior than Lotte's Hotel. The sons of the rich seem to be tempted to try out the dissolute life, but most become upstanding citizens. The rest need to learn not to be too boisterous and fit in among the drunks. "Friends" have long enjoyed teasing Salko about his failed love for a circus tightrope walker, but augment it when he begins swooning over beautiful Paša from Dušče, with whom Salko has flirted and perhaps received encouragement. The Balkan folklore about tansy flowers is noted in the context of Muslim dating (ašikovanje) but only in passing, as the emphasis is on the fun his companions are having at his expense.

The companions mock Salko mercilessly throughout the winter, and in the spring Salko is dismayed to learn that Paša has become the second wife of rich, childless old Hadji Omer, at the insistence of Omer's barren first wife. Polygamy is permitted in Islam, provided the husband can afford it and treats his wives equally. The hadjica's (Hadji's wife) central role in arranging the marriage and molding a mother/daughter relationship with Paša is nicely laid out. Salko's companions try to goad him to suicide on the bridge, but he is too drunk merely to stumble off, and ends up becoming the second person to walk the length of the parapet and survive. He is cheered and taken off for more drinking, while the first fool had been publicly spanked for the prank.

The end of the 19th century brings assassinations and construction. Again the kapia receives an imperial proclamation, this one black-bordered, and the people generally ignore it. The town's only Italian is hounded as though he were responsible for his murderous countryman. He objects that he has never killed even a fly. The story then jumps two years forward to the laying of railroad track and what this means to Višegrad. The pros and cons of technological progress are laid out, with abundant facts and figures, and citizens seem to accept the inevitable, except for aging Alihodja, who, suffering heart trouble, is growing darker in outlook and is bitterly outspoken. He voices the pious Muslim's disdain for the Western need to be always busy, as if one could upset God's plans. He relates the Muslim myth of the first bridges as God's assistance

to overcome the evil intent of the devil. Andrić generally uses the word "God" for the Muslim deity, but in this context uses the Arabic "Allah."

Chapters 17-18

Chapters 17-18 Summary

From the turn of the 20th century, the outside world creeps in on Višegrad through new religious and national parties, newspapers, cultural organizations, and students returning from Vienna and Prague on vacation. Socialism and the "agrarian problem" are debated. Within the daily rituals of coffee, tobacco, and plum brandy, bold new words are heard and men shift friendships. Political change in Serbia and Turkey are felt, as the gendarmes are increased and a special Information Officer installed. Time seems to move faster; exciting news is no longer rare.

In October of 1908, Alihodja is returning from noon prayer when he sees people on the kapia hearing read an imperial proclamation and recalls his earlier humiliation. The Government is giving Bosnia and Herzegovina a happy future through full equality and protection under the law. Alihodja knows that such "imperial words" hide behind fancy words the harm they will do to true believers. The proclamation is torn down over night, Serbian youths are arrested, and a new copy is put back—with a guard.

The army arrives, overflows the barracks, sleeps in tents, and its purchases spur inflation. The hillsides are fortified and one of the bridge piers is drilled (hidden by a tent but the noise and waste make clear what is going on) and capped with an iron manhole cover. No one doubts that the bridge is now mined to explode. Alihodja grows obsessed and Muhamed Branković, a sergeant-major on leave, provides a condescending explanation about military procedures and politely changes the subject when Alihodja demands in God's name how they can desecrate a Vezir's bequest.

Diplomacy settles the "annexation crisis," but the garrison and bridge mines remain. A new officers' mess is built opposite Lotte's Hotel; people begin using money orders and incur debt; inflation and taxes grow, and terms of payment grow shorter. Everyone wants more and fears worse. Older people recall the "sweet tranquility" of Turkish times and the earliest Austrian years. Life is now filled with sensations and variations. On the kapia, the coffee merchant is the first to play a raucous gramophone, and soon they are everywhere. People read newspapers avidly but superficially. The Muslim notables discuss the Turco-Italian war and heroic young Enver Bey, but the gramophone spoils their concentration. Poor Maistor-Pero is chided about the defeat in Tripoli and Stana insults him for not standing up for himself.

In 1912-13 come Serbian victories in the Balkan Wars, far from Višegrad, where time stands still. News makes local Serbs hopeful and Muslims depressed—with equal intensity. With the Turkish surrender at Uvce, the frontier retreats 600 miles, and Muslim elders study the map, stifling sighs, trying to understand how God could let this happen. By night, young Serbs take over the kapia, and when the Sarajevo schools and universities let out, students join in, wearing the latest fashions, and bringing new songs, dances, clichés, and books. They are unlike the timid youths of the early

occupation, who could be married off and quieted. These are intoxicated with their still-limited knowledge and ideas about freedom and human dignity. They are freethinkers, nationalists, and fanatical about action and personal sacrifice.

Among their childhood friends who have stayed in Višegrad and taken jobs, some are satisfied with their destiny and a bit jealous of the students, while others want only to escape and shun the students, whom they cannot equal in conversation. The students are a "generation of rebel angels," studying and entertaining themselves as they wish, satisfying the "atavistic need for heroism" without obligations or responsibility and despising what they should have learned. The best throw themselves into action and are burned up and hailed as saints. This generation on the kapia, talking philosophically, is particularly rich in illusions—and are destined to labor, suffer, and die like few past generations. All that lies ahead in 1913.

Chapters 17-18 Analysis

In these chapters, Alihodja again plays a key role in reacting to current events. He still feels in his ear the pain and humiliation of occupation. Now more "imperial words" — very big and incomprehensible words about constitutional rights and obligations — appear, and he is certain they will harm true believers like himself. Andrić employs a young person of minimal reading skills to try to get the message across to his fellows on the bridge, only to be hooted aside. A confident young man in a leather jacket (obviously Western-trained) reads it fluently. In the midst of the the text, Alihodja's mental processes take over and churn the meaning of the words, then quiet, and the young man finishes the reading, down to the signature and date. When he proposes long life to Emperor Franz Joseph, only the municipal street lamp lighter echoes his sentiment, out of professional obligation. Everyone else wanders off sullenly. The proclamation is torn down overnight but is replaced and guarded.

Previously, the chapter shows the 20th century creeping into Višegrad culturally and politically, and Andrić uses centuries' old male rituals of coffee, tobacco, and plum brandy to show the changes. Time seems to move faster since the train, but Višegrad is still very much an "oriental" town, meaning slow and unchanging, until new troops overflow the camp and cause rampant inflation. Next, the sacred bridge is officially vandalized as a military expediency: one of the central piers is filled with explosives, which can be touched off from the fortress to prevent an invasion. Alihodja sees this as sacrilege, and buttonholes a vacationing sergeant-major to obtain an explanation. Andrić portrays Muhamed Branković as a perfect combination of "Viennese good-humor and Turkish courtesy" in changing the subject. In half a paragraph, Andrić depicts the effects of administrative decay.

By day the Muslim elders study the map to picture how God has allowed the great and holy tide of Islam to go out to sea. The Turco-Italian war of 1911 is mentioned to show hapless Maistor-Pero again the butt of derision and still henpecked. The Tripoli mentioned is in modern Libya and Enver Bey is a leader of the Young Turks movement,

which is beginning to rise. Andrić deliciously has Stana insult her husband for not standing up to the "young Turks" as a generic group.

Chapter 18 ends with a lengthy disquisition on the young people who are destined to experience the horrors of World War I. Because Andrić is writing about his own generation, and particularly about the idealistic, atavistic, nationalistic, freethinking university crowd, the prose is dense and emotional.

Chapters 19-20

Chapters 19-20 Summary

Four university students home for the summer, meet on the kapia: Janko Stiković, Velimir Stavanović, Jacov Herak, and Ranko Mihailović, listened to by younger people Nikola Glasičanin, Vlado Marić, and the school mistresses, Zorka and Zagorka. Stiković and Zorka have kissed and a magazine has badly published his article, leaving Stiković preoccupied when Herak disputes his thesis. Later, Stiković and Glasičanin, former best friends, clash over Zorka, but are interrupted by another debate.

Toma Galus is a poet and debater and Fehim Bahtijarević a silent and proud Beg (honorific title). Both are bound for university in Vienna, Galus to study philosophy en route to being a dilettante, and Bahtijarević to study oriental languages, which Galus says is wrong for Muslims, who seek to defend the old order. Bahtijarević thinks but does not say: change is unhealthy, human desire is like the shifting wind, and deeds become lasting only when God so wills. After the debaters leave, Stiković and Glasičanin hear a violin and piano duet by the regimental doctor, Balas, and the commandant's wife, Mme. Bauer. Everyone winks at the relationship to which the Colonel is oblivious.

Glasičanin resumes: technical progress and relative peace allow so-called intellectuals to speak of Life without reference to real life, a vain and dangerous game. The argument shifts and grows bitter as the romantic rivalry emerges covertly. Glasičanin at length charges that Stiković is too vain to love anyone or anything. Surprised by the outburst, Stiković passes through insult to pride in the characterization, and asks if Glasičanin is talking about Zorka. Glasičanin claims that Stiković will tire of her as soon as she is conquered, as he does everything. Vanity lets him take satisfaction in nothing, and in the end he will devour himself. Stiković has listened well and the words have made his spirit soar. Drunkards approach, singing about Fata Avdagina, coming from "Under the Poplars," the local whorehouse. As Nikola Pecikoza walks the parapet, Stiković recalls as a boy watching Ćorkan's dance. The memory of kissing Zorka and the botched article torments him and Glasičanin's words fill him with anger.

Lotte's window emits the only light in town after midnight as she wears herself out working on accounts. She is old; business is down, and life is crumbling. Her only regular customers are Alibeg Pašić and Pavle Ranković, the trader, who hates "politics" and laments his children's heedless ways and abstract words. Declining credit, stocks, and shares cause a two-year mental breakdown. Brother-in-law, Zahler, loses her capital, has a second daughter to marry off and a ten-year-old son who cannot walk or talk. The family in Galicia for whom Lotte has provided in the good years forget her and still needy relatives. The apparent happy cases all turn out tragedies. Lotte is tired but not discouraged. She does what she can for everyone who asks for aid, advice, or encouragement.

Chapters 19-20 Analysis

Chapter 19 introduces a host of new characters, reminiscent of the four "notables" introduced at the beginning of the Austrian occupation. These are young people—Andrić's contemporaries—mostly self-styled intellectuals who love to show off their learning in debate. The chapter is therefore dense with philosophical arguments and analyses of how youth, having failed fully to digest what they have learned, are apt to argue with flawed reasoning. This has been seen in the earlier philosophical chapters.

Romance enters the novel in two forms. First, a love triangle exists, where the newcomer, Stiković, is in the eyes of his rival, Glasičanin (grandson of the drunken gambler and a school drop-out), incapable of caring for anything but his ego. Pretty, naive Zorka seems sure to be hurt going forward. At this point, Stiković and Zorka have merely foiled the cultural watchdogs and managed to kiss in a deserted school room. Both are immediately disillusioned. Another clandestine romance, much more intense seems clearly destined for tragedy. It involves the army camp doctor and the commandant's wife. Both are musicians and feel like outsiders in the world. The colonel is oblivious, but everyone else on base and in town talk about the lovers. Franz Schubert's sonatina for violin and piano provides a background for the relationship.

Two younger students, Galus (Stiković's alter ego) and Bahtijarević (a Muslim diehard like old Alihodja Mutevelić), argue densely about nationalism. Galus concedes that Mehmed Pasha could not have had as great an impact had he not been kidnapped to Stambul, but insists that the South Slavic native "genius" must be allowed to create a civilization of its own (Yugoslavia, the country founded after World War I means the lands of the South Slavs). Galus insists that former cultural and political masters cannot accept the reality of equality or understand their past in an objective fashion; Bahtijarević should major in economics, not Oriental studies. When the younger debaters depart, Glasičanin charges that Stiković is too vain to love anyone (Zorka) or anything (national self-determination). Vanity lets him take satisfaction in nothing. In the end, he will devour himself.

They leave the bridge when yet another group of drunkards approach and the butt of their jokes survives a walk on the parapet. A brief but colorful history of Višegrad's lone whorehouse is given. The drunks sing about Fata Avdagina Osmanagić, the bridge's most famous suicide. Walking home, Stiković recalls as a boy watching Ćorkan's dance and suddenly, Glasičanin's insults, which had made him soar like a bird, fill him with anger.

Brief Chapter 22 tells about Lotte's depressing state: she is getting old; she has stiff economic competition; her household is beset with problems, including a nephew with rickets that she can no longer afford to take to a specialist, and relatives in Galicia who are disappointments, ingrates, or still destitute. The story of Dr. Albert Apfelmaier marks the first depiction of discrimination against Jews in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Lotte's sister Deborah cares not that he fails to enter the civil service as he wants, but that it drives him to become a socialist—she screams hysterically about this—and never

speaks about him again. He emigrates to Buenos Aires. Albert's sister marries well (which gives Lotte hope she will be able to help other relatives) but is forced to convert to Calvinism and within a year is widowed. Her grief turns to madness. Everyone, it seems, wants Lotte's aid, advice, or at least encouragement and fail to realize she is an aging woman. Andrić shows her shuffling off to bed with steps she allows herself only at bedtime.

Chapters 21-22

Chapters 21-22 Summary

The year 1914 is fatal for the Višegrad bridge. The summer is fruitful and bumper crops are expected. Peasants negotiate loans with merchants like Pavle Ranković and Santo Papo against expected crops. Santo haggles as his father had. That summer, Dr. Balas dies while treating a typhus epidemic The Bauers attend the funeral. She buys a tombstone and disappears, reportedly to a sanatorium. Electrical lighting comes to the main streets of town.

A brief correspondence convinces Zorka that Stiković cares only for himself. She grows thin and pale and thinks of jumping into the Drina until she and Glasičanin are thrown together by rehearsals for the Festival of St. Sava and he displays the love that he has always felt for her. Zorka finds inner peace. By summer, people see that they are "walking out." One night, Glasičanin asks Zorka to marry him and go with him and his friend to America. Zorka asks for a month to reply, hoping to see Stiković that summer.

The Serbs' St. Vitus' Day (Vidovan) picnic with roasting lambs and kolo dancing the length of the bridge is broken up by gendarmes. Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife have been assassinated in Sarajevo and a general persecution of Serbs begun. A guard paces the kapia. For the rest of the summer, Višegrad has no nightlife. Glasičanin tells Zorka that he is going to Serbia that night to fight. If they win, there will be no need to go to America to find freedom and opportunity. Zorka weeps hopelessly.

The young men's flight increases the danger for all Serbs as violence and plunder are unleashed. Hastily-armed schutzkorps round up anyone of ill repute, and Ranković as President of the Serbian Church and School Community is told by the sub-prefect Sabljak that Serbs are collectively guilty of the assassination and subject to military law. The leading Turks are ordered to head the schutzkorps, but Alihodja is violently opposed to involvement in something that does not concern them.

In the center of town, Hungarian reservists erect gallows for two peasants and a townsman, Vajo, accused of sending light signals toward the Serbian border. The peasants placidly cross themselves, but Vajo pleads pitifully in broken German. Alihodja pays no attention, but when he sees Vajo lifted above the crowd, he closes his shop, against orders. The bridge is crowded with vehicles when a shell explodes on the parapet. As more follow, people flee in panic. Austrian artillery on the Butkovo Rocks work to get the range on the Serbian guns at Panos. Incendiary shells fired from Goleš damage Lotte's Hotel and the officers' mess, and destroy the barracks. Howitzer shells target the central pier of the bridge, but none hit the explosive charge at its base. No major damage is done during ten days of bombardment.

Chapters 21-22 Analysis

Andrić begins Chapter 21 by declaring 1914 is the last year of his chronicle. "Scientists and poets" will doubtless deal with its significance in human history and explain the passions that cause and sustain World War I. Those who have survived are at a loss to describe it, and the dead tell no tales. Universal suffrage and military service prepare the way for the horror, which spreads throughout Europe and the world. The unique year 1914 separates "two epochs in human history," but the end of the old is easier to see than the beginning of the new. The 19th century had been savage and bloody, but still maintained "a semblance of dignity." Andrić's soliloquy glides into a lyrical description of the beauty and fecundity of the summer of 1914, tempered by the peasants' wise caveat—if the weather holds. The political "weather" does not hold.

Zorka's love triangle with Stiković and Glasičanin is revisited. Stiković leaves Višegrad after vacation without a goodbye. A series of letters and cards, beautifully crafted linguistically but emotionally empty, convince Zorka that he cares only for himself and she nearly pines away. Andrić describes her decline in all its complexities. She is tempted every night to jump into the Drina, but is briefly rescued by Glasičanin. Andrić shows skillfully how a tentative and unequal relationship can be knit back together, and they become an acknowledged couple. Glasičanin's desire to leave Bosnia, first to seek his fortune in America and then to create a new America in Serbia by fighting for independence, dash Zorka's hopes and she is left seeing no hope for herself, her town, or her world.

The action is delimited by two feast days of the Serbian Orthodox Church: St. Sava, the patron saint of Serbia, in February, and St. Vitus in June. Zorka begins recovering from her suicidal depression when she is thrown together with Glasičanin for play rehearsals and by the time the gendarmes break up the Vidovan festivities, he has asked her to marry him and emigrate. He paints a rosy picture of the life Serbs enjoy in America. The peace of the summer of 1914 is shattered when a Serbian nationalist, Gavrilo Princip, shoots and kills Archduke Ferdinand, the heir apparent of the Austro-Hungarian throne, and his wife Sophie on a visit to Sarajevo (28 June). Andrić concentrates on the Austrians' ferocious reaction by assigning collective guilt to the Serbian people. The beginnings of mass arrests, arson, and summary executions are shown. The Austrians try to manipulate the Muslims into taking the lead in the repression, and old Alihodja is as implacable as ever: Muslims should stay out of what does not concern them. The summer ends with the bridge under bombardment and much of the town damaged or ruined.

Chapters 23-24

Chapters 23-24 Summary

Continual bombardments bring an exodus from town to the Mejdan, recalling the Great Flood, but with no ethnic mixing, sense of shared disaster, or witty stories to lighten the refugees' hearts. To remain alive they must act as though they are dead. Muslim houses are a bit more lively, resenting that all the shells flying overhead are Christian. Alihodja's house under the fortress is turned into a Muslim religious school for his children and those of Mujaga Mutapdžić, who in his 50 years has been a refugee three times. With help from local relatives, Mujaga within two years builds a small business, but the new fighting has left him wondering how God could leave true believers only one way out: death, fighting in schutzkorps. Alihodja likes and admires Mujaga and tries to console him. A fierce exchange of gunfire forces them to take cover.

The Serbs huddling around the church hope all will end well, just like 100 years before, straining to hear Karageorge's guns. They learn to gauge who is firing and how close shells are landing. Most merchants take refuge in Mihailo Ristić's large home. He, his wife, and widowed daughter-in-law treat them as guests at the family slava (feast day). Mihailo has learned that Peter Gatal of Okolište has been shot in Sarajevo and their house is in flames, but works to keep his sobbing wife Stanojka's spirits up. Mihailo talks about Peter, his godson (kum) being christened late because the folk of Okolište get drunk on the kapia en route to the church in Mejdan. Kept waiting, the famous Pop Nikola storms to the bridge and joins in the drinking rather than bawling them out. Stories that Peter is christened on the kapia are false. The familiar story helps the guests forget their grim situation and enjoy the day.

As the artillery intensifies, few remain in the marketplace, but the army insists that all businesses remain open. Most find excuses for disobeying. Businesses near the Stone Han are too exposed to open. Alihodja comes down the hill once or twice a day to check on things and then returns home. Lotte and her family live in a large new Turkish house on the left bank of the Drina, sheltered in orchards; the Hotel is in ruins. Cut off from her office and her world, Lotte suffers a mental breakdown, leaving everyone astonished and worried how they will manage. In the morning, she is still helpless as an infant, but drowsy Zahler rallies to the occasion, fetches supplies and a doctor, and arranges with the military to get a cart to take the family to Sarajevo. Lotte suffers horrible hallucinations.

Pavle Ranković's shop is also shut and he, along with other prominent Serbs, has been taken hostage—ordered killed if anything happens to the bridge. Pavle sits motionless for hours, contemplating all he has lost and wonders which side will ignite the mines in the bridge. How, he wonders, can he be responsible for the bridge? How can their fates be intertwined? He has spent less of his time on the kapia than his contemporaries. As a teenager, he had worked around the house for Peter Gatal for room and board, then been hired in his shop and learned the power of thrift. He marries a merchant's daughter

at age 23 and begins making—and losing—money. He tries to adapt to the new "politics," performs much public service, trades fairly, and harms no one. Now it appears that he has miscalculated: working and saving are senseless. He cannot understand how might makes right. The guards joke about how much he sweats, thinking about the strange human game of war.

Nearby, the white-uniformed Skadar detachment awaits orders to attack, their captain railing at a gendarmerie sergeant about his men dying of thirst. Sgt. Danilo Repac, the former police chief, once dignified and serene, rushes off to find drink, runs into Alihodja, and slaps him for not keeping his store open as ordered. By the end of September, Višegrad is completely evacuated across the bridge, for the railway line has been cut.

Overnight, it grows cloudy and the Austrians withdraw their last detachments out of reach of Serbian guns. At dawn, they warn Alihodja to evacuate, but he like a mischievous boy goes inside, makes it appear the place is shuttered, and settles into his paradisaical "coffin." He cherishes lulls in the gunfire. Alihodja's silence is broken by a roar and a great shaking of the ground. As Alihodja flies through the air, not knowing where he will land, he thinks about the similarity to kiyamet (judgment day) when the lying world is burnt up, but why would God create this present chaos? How could humans hold such power? Alihodja feels vindicated—but suddenly lands in pain, and loses consciousness. Coming to, hearing voices, he extracts himself from the rubble and crawls out. A great white stone has torn through his roof. Alihodja realizes it is a chunk of the bridge. Alihodja staggers out to encounter armed gendarmes who yell at him about leaving his shop open so they can be blamed for looting.

Alihodja gazes at the bridge. The kapia is there, but between the 6th and 8th piers is a gulf. He blinks in unbelief and then recalls the work six years earlier. Hearing shouts, he locks up and hurries home. Since turning 50, Alihodja has had trouble climbing the hill. He refuses to turn and look at the broken bridge. He has frequently to stop and breathe deeply to slow his heart rate. He has been right all along about senseless work on the bridge. Now the things of God are being taken away and a Vezir's work is crumbling. Somewhere in the world, men of good sense who love God and are not abandoned by him as is Višegrad must be building. The "impure infidel faith" that puts order into everything may conquer all of God's earth. The love of God cannot be extinguished.

Alihodja is sure he hears singing in the market place. He longs to lie on his divan and be among his own. His eyes bulge as he fights for breath, falls to the ground, and ends his life in short gasps.

Chapters 23-24 Analysis

The final two chapter show Višegrad, at least for the duration of World War I. The Muslim and Christian refuges, huddling together as Serbs and Germans exchange gunfire overhead, are again contrasted, as in the Great Flood. Mujaga Mutapdžić is sketched as a life-long refugee, passing back and forth over shifting borders, wishing

only to live where there are no bells. After the cross, bells are the most hated of Christian symbols, and are banned wherever Muslims hold undisputed authority. Mihailo Ristić on the Christian side takes in his compatriots and treats them like guests at a slava, the Serbs' gala annual family feast day. He withholds bad news from a new widow and reminisces about good times a mere 40 years earlier. Andrić earlier in the chapters says that the sharing of light stories as in the flood is absent in this time of trouble.

With a odd tone of "let's wrap things up," Andrić summarizes Lotte's terrible mental breakdown with vivid nightmares from which she awakes screaming in horror. Her family, which has always depended on her, is at a loss what to do until Zahler surprisingly emerges a leader. Pavle Ranković is revisited, now as a hostage to the bridge. He philosophizes about the unfairness of his being singled out, when he has always tried to be fair and just—and for his troubles is broken financially and facing an unjust death. Like the Muslims, he wonders why God would do this to him.

The man who has always known he is right, Alihodja, ends the novel. Still a rebel, he has squeezed into his favorite cubbyhole when a chunk of the bridge comes hurtling and crashes through his roof. Alihodja is thrown in the air and deposited hard on the ground. He does not know how long he is unconscious. Like Ranković, Alihodja wonders why God, who creates and destroys by his word alone, would need such dramatic effects as he and his merchandise flying through the air and bouncing about. Seeing a gap in the bridge, Alihodja feels vindicated: humans have meddled in countless ways, and still the bridge has met its fate. He wonders how God can allow the "impure infidel faith" (Christianity) to prosper but is certain that the love of God cannot be extinguished. Christians, of course, feeling as chosen by God, wonder the same thing about Islam.

The Bridge on the Drina ends with poor old Alihodja suffering a heart attack on his way home, "breath[ing] out his life in short gasps," as empty Višegrad, already has, and as Europe and the world are about to for five dreadful years.

Characters

Mehmed Pasha Sokolli

A historical character (1506-79) Mehmed Pasha takes his surname from the town of Sokolovići in Bosnia, near Višegrad. As a ten-year-old boy he is judicially kidnapped and taken to Stambul and installed as a janissary in the Ottoman Imperial administration. He is converted from Serbian Orthodox Christianity to Islam and renamed Mehmed.

Most of Mehmed Pasha's illustrious carrier is glossed over in the novel: it is stated that he proves himself a brave officer, rises to become Admiral of the Fleet, becomes the Sultan's son-in-law, and is a mostly-successful conqueror on three continents. Above all he proves a good administrator.

The youthful experience of being taken across the across the fast-moving Drina River by ferry, stays with Mehmed Pasha, and he decides to build a great stone bridge and caravanserai at Višegrad. He entrusts the task first to Abidaga, whose sadism fails to move the task along. When Abidaga is denounced for cruelty and embezzling funds, Mehmed Pasha relieves him of duty, orders him to repay the debt, but allows him to enjoy his remaining fortune and harem in Anatolia. He names the competent Arif Beg to complete the project. There is a plaque embedded at the center of the bridge blessing Mehmed Pasha and his great achievement.

Mehmed Pasha creates an endowment for the upkeep of the bridge and caravanserai, but after his death, at the hands of a mentally deranged dervish, the lands in Hungary that fund the endowment are lost to the Ottoman Empire, and the Stone Han gradually decays and is torn down in the 20th century. The bridge remains intact until 1914, when Austrian forces blow out the middle section with explosives to prevent its use during World War I. Bosnian Serbs acknowledge the greatness of Mehmed Pasha's rule but lament that he and countless others had not been allowed to use their talents at home—even if that means he would not have had the opportunity for worldwide fame.

Alihodja Mutevelić

An educated member of the ulema (Muslim clergy), Alihodja threads in and out of the narrative in the second half of the novel. He is the sole surviving son of the diminished but still respected family that for centuries has been entrusted with watching after Mehmed Pasha Sokolli's bequests in Višegrad. Small and red-faced, yet somehow impressive, Alihodja is honest, open, and stubborn.

Alihodja is first seen in his youth, exhibiting a young man's predilection for holding contrary opinions on everything and defending them tenaciously. While he holds the title and rank of hodja, he carries out none of the duties, wanting to remain independent, but tends the shop that he has inherited. When the Austrians occupy Bosnia, Alihodja opposes armed resistance solely on practical grounds—they cannot be beaten. This

puts him in conflict with the militant mufti of Plevlje and his assistant, Osman Effendi Karamanli, who quickly tires of Alihodja's "mischievous pedantry" as they debate on the kapia. When Osman Effendi returns amid survivors of the Austrian rout, he and Alihodja again clash, and when the Austrians advance on Višegrad, Osman Effendi leaves Alihodja bound, with his right ear painfully nailed to the kapia. He never forgets the pain or the crushing embarrassment of having to be tended by a member of the Red Cross—his hatred of Christianity is that intense.

Alihodja is seen fighting safety regulations for shops and in other minor roles, but returns to prominence when Austro-Hungary annexes Bosnia and Herzegovina and declares war on Serbia in 1914, over the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand. The Austrians want to put Muslims in the vanguard of wiping out the local Serbs, and Alihodja argues that Muslims should stay out of fights that are not their own.

Alihodja loves peace and quiet, and crawls into a small space in the back of his shop that he calls his "casket." There on the morning that the Austrians withdraw from Višegrad, Alihodja's peace is shattered by the detonation of explosives placed years before in the bridge's central pier. A chunk of debris crashes through his shop roof, throwing him and his merchandise around and knocking him out. Seeing the severed bridge is a great shock. Suffering angina pectoris for years, Alihodja tries to walk up the steep hill to his home, but dies on the road.

Lotte

Lotte is the real proprietress of Zahler's "Hotel zur Brücke" (Bridge Hotel), the largest building in Višegrad in the late 19th century. She is Zahler's pretty, free-speaking, energetic widowed sister-in-law, "well built, plump, with ivory-white skin, black hair and smoldering eyes." She speaks Serbian with a "piquant and picturesque" accent and listens attentively to every guest. Two generations try without success to do more than spend money and waste time around Lotte. She smiles, despite her anxieties and completes every task without complaint or explanation. Every day she finds time for the self-contained, old Alibeg Pašić. She spends little time in the large hall, where Malčika, Gustav, and Milan from Lika handle the crowds, making sure that no scandals occur indoors.

Lotte is descended from the Apfelmaiers of Tarnovo, whose scattered members she helps out using her fortune, arranging marriages, settling disputes, giving scholarships, and establishing them in business. Late in life, Lotte is saddened that none of those whom she has helped help others or her when business declines and she grows depressed. She takes good care of her money and accumulates a fortune, from which she helps the destitute. As World War I looms, business at the hotel is down, and Lotte has lost a lot of her fortune thanks to Zahler's bad investment, which she backs. She is frustrated not to be able to help her relatives as they need and she wants. When the hotel is badly damaged by artillery, Lotte organizes and leads the family's retreat across the bridge to an old Turkish house. There, however, she suffers a severe mental

breakdown and doctors recommend she be taken to Sarajevo. Zahler unexpectedly rises to the occasion, taking the family's lead.

Abidaga

Grand Vezir Mehmed Pasha Sokolli's hand-appointed foreman on the Višegrad bridge project, Abidaga prides himself in his reputation for cruelty and efficiency. Abidaga is powerfully built, with green eyes, a reddish face and beard, mustaches upturned in the Magyar fashion, and dressing in the manner of Stambul. He carries a green staff with which to point out malingerers for swift and brutal punishment. Abidaga's worst act in Višegrad is the torturing and impaling of Radisav of Unište for sabotage. Over the next winter, Abidaga is denounced, apparently by Tosun Effendi, to the Grand Vezir for cruelty and embezzling funds, is relieved of duty, ordered to repay the debt, and is exiled with his remaining fortune and harem to a small town in Anatolia. He is replaced by Arif Beg.

The Arab

Mastro Antonio's assistant stone mason on the Višegrad bridge project, The Arab is killed in the third year of construction when a great block of stone falls on him, pinning him from the waist down. Mastro Antonio builds a fine memorial over the Arab's grave. The lower half of his body, which cannot be extracted from the bridge, becomes the source of the legend of an Arab living inside the bridge, the sight of whom brings instant death to adults. Children scare each other speculating about him. During repair work in the early 20th century, people are disappointed that the Arab is not found alive.

Arif Beg

Nicknamed "Old Baldie."Arif Beg is the second foreman on the Višegrad bridge project and the opposite of his cruel predecessor. Tall, stooping, bald, with slit-like laughing eyes, Arif is calm, strict, honest, and forthright. He punishes heavily but not capriciously, and the project moves forward on schedule. Workers are paid and fed. When work ends, Arif Beg rewards workers and at his own expense orders a great two-day feast.

Fehim Bahtijarević

A silent, proud Muslim, a member of the younger group of pre-World War I intellectuals, Bahtijarević debates Toma Galus on the bridge. Bahtijarević is the son of a kadi, measured and restrained, bound for Vienna to study oriental languages. The two boys debate the value of orientalism. Bahtijarević thinks that change is unhealthy; human desire is like the shifting wind, and deeds become lasting only when God so wills. Muslim youth carry their philosophy in their blood but do not feel a need—or have the ability—to express it.

Dr. Balas and Mme. Bauer

The regimental doctor, Balas is trained as a civil servant and is a fine musician, and accompanies the commandant's wife, Mme. Bauer, almost every evening playing duets. Everyone in Višegrad winks at their relationship, to which the Colonel is oblivious. Two outcasts, they cling to one another. Balas dies tragically caring for victims of a typhus epidemic The Bauers attend the funeral. She buys a tombstone and disappears, reportedly to a sanatorium.

Shemisbeg Banković

An obstinate old Muslim living in Crnče surrounded by six grown sons, Shemisbeg comes to the marketplace in Višegrad only on Fridays to pray in the mosque. During the Austrian occupation, he talks to no one and allows no innovation to enter his house, even withdrawing his grandchildren from school. Conservative Muslims make pilgrimage to vent their bitterness and fears, but receive little advice, as Shemisbeg thinks much but says little. When signs of change grow unbearable, Shemisbeg retreats completely, and in the third year dies, without falling ill or speaking a bitter word about anything.

Salko Ćorkan

The illegitimate son of a gypsy woman and an Anatolian soldier, Salko grows up an orphan, early losing his left eye, is raised by everyone and no one in Višegrad. People play crude jokes on him. By 1885, Salko is living on free drinks and food given to him in return for jesting in Zarije's Inn. Pining for a beautiful seamstress, Paša from Dušče, Salko is broken hearted when she marries old Hadji Omer and bears him a son. "Friends" convince Salko that he is in truth the son of a Turkish officer and heir to a fortune. They goad him into jumping from the bridge, but Salko instead manages in his drunken stupor to dance across the narrow, icy parapet, earning himself enduring fame.

Gregor Fedun

A 23-year-old Rusyn from Eastern Galicia, the size of a bear but childlike and modest, Fedun comes to Višegrad in the winter of 1878 as part of the elite streifkorps, which has seen combat in eastern Bosnia. Fedun prides himself in sending his pay home to his large family in Kolomea. Placed on night patrol at the kapia, Fedun finds nothing to do but watch the stars and wait for spring, singing to himself. Enamored of a Muslim girl, Fedun allows her to take her stooped and veiled grandmother across the bridge, with the promise that afterwards they can spend time alone together. Jelenka turns out to be the lover of a notorious and cunning brigand, Jakov Čekrlija, who escapes, posing as the grandmother. Facing court martial, Fedun kills himself and Pop Nikola buries him despite the rules about suicides and religious jurisdiction.

Toma Galus

Galus is a member of the younger group of pre-World War I intellectuals who spend their summers debating on the bridge. He rivals Janko Stiković as a poet and debater and dislikes him. Galus resembles his tall, amiable father, Alban von Galus—"Mr. Albo"—only physically. A recent graduate of Sarajevo secondary school, he is bound for university in Vienna, intending to study philosophy rather than technical sciences or forestry as his father wants. Galus reads passionately and seems destined to be a dilettante, quoting Nietzsche and Stirner with cold passion but exaggeration and uncoordinated understanding. Galus believes that it is time to throw off Austro-Hungarian chains and build a society of unity and equality that will contribute to the progress of humanity and demonstrate the Serbs' "racial genius."

Milan Glasičanin

Addicted to gambling since the age of 30, the nondescript businessman, thin, bowed, prematurely graying, who seems to notice nothing about him and goes unnoticed, Milan as a boy settles with his father, Nikola, in Okolište, apparently fleeing the circumstances of ill-gotten fortune elsewhere. Milan is a regular in the stale, smoky back room in Ustamujić's Inn for 14 years before an encounter with a stranger—possibly the devil—makes him see the value of life and stop gambling. Milan dies in a Sarajevo lunatic asylum shortly after the Austrian occupation. His son Peter, is weak and sickly, as is his grandson Nikola, who drops out of school and takes a boring office job with a German timber firm.

Nikola Glasičanin

A poor, sickly drop-out who works a boring office job for a German timber firm on the eve of World War I, Glasičanin's intellectual horizons are frustratingly narrow, and he grows old before his time, focusing on bad luck and loneliness. His boyhood friend, Janko Stiković, becomes Glasičanin's rival for the hand of the schoolmistress Zorka. Glasičanin never conceals his passionate love for her. Glasičanin believes that technical progress and relative peace have created conditions for so-called intellectuals to speak of Life with no reference to real life. They rationalize higher aims for the masses. It is a vain and dangerous game. Glasičanin at length charges that Stiković is too vain to love anyone or anything.

When Stiković departs, leaving Zorka nearly suicidal, Glasičanin befriends her and shows her true love. He proposes marriage and emigration to America, but she wants time to think. The assassination of Archduke Ferdinand by a Serbian anarchist brings on World War I, and Glasičanin flees to Serbia to serve in its army, hoping that victory will bring allow Serbs to create American-style freedom and prosperity.

Hairuddin

The early 18th-century headsman (executioner) at the Višegrad bridge, Hairuddin is a fat, dark-skinned Anatolian who is always smiling and good humored. Although apparently a Muslim, he exchanges the Christian kiss of peace with Mile of Lijesko and invokes over him and Jelisije of Čajniče the name of the Christian Trinity—blasphemy for a Muslim—before beheading them. People say that Hairuddin has a lighter hand than the barber. Hairuddin is a proud professional and disapproves of vigilantism such as is carried out on the town's priest, Pop Mihailo. Hairuddin dies of anthrax and is succeeded by someone far less skilled. Hairuddin's name remains a curse that old women use to frighten off thieving children.

Hamzić (or Turković) Family

Headed by Mustajbeg, the Hamzići own the remote, fruitful hamlet of Nezuke, located at the far end of the Višegrad valley from Velije Lug. Only one narrow, stony path leads to and from Višegrad, along the Drina off the main road out of town. Nothing lies beyond Nezuke. Mustajbeg owns a large white house, where he lives with his daughters and son, Nail-beg. Mustajbeg's brothers have humbler homes nearby.

Nail-beg sees beautiful Fata Osmanagić at social gatherings and boldly suggests marriage, but she proudly declares that Velije Lug will never come down to Nezuke. The fathers, nevertheless, arrange a marriage, which is concluded before the local kadi (judge). Crossing the bridge en route to gala festivities at Nezuke, Fata leaps to her death in the river and becomes a legend.

Mula Ibrahim

The dried up, timid Muslim dignitary waiting to greet the Austrian Colonel arriving in 1878, Mula Ibrahim is not much younger than his childhood friend, Pop Nikola. He has a sparse beard, clear, childlike eyes, and a painful stutter when he tries to speak in public. When he speaks to believers in private—they seek him out from all over the region—he is attentive, sympathetic, and helpful, with no stutter. Alihodja Mutevelić is his disciple and often quotes him. Mula Ibrahim and Pop Nikola enjoy a relationship unique among rival clerics, accepting joint responsibility for the people and a need to keep peace.

Hussein Effendi

Small, plump, well-educated, but pretentious schoolmaster who in 1878 accompanies the other Višegrad dignitaries in greeting the Austrian colonel, Hussein speak with affectation, as though watching himself in a mirror. He prides himself on having the town's biggest library, but rarely reads. The books give him a good reputation. He is said to be writing a chronicle of Višegrad but in 5-6 years has written little. He offers his scholarly opinions on a number of matters during the novel.

Jelisije of Čajniče and Mile of Lijesko

The first of countless victims of Turkish vigilantism against spies during the first Serbian uprisings, Jelisije is a semi-monk who for years has been visiting all the Christian churches and monasteries in the region; he happens to cross the Višegrad bridge on the day that the blockhouse is constructed on the kapia, carrying a staff carved with religious texts that the Turks cannot read and suspect of carrying messages. Jelisije confesses his belief in the approaching Second Coming and in the Trinity, which the translator twists to make him look bad.

Mile is a 19-year-old mill worker who is heard innocently singing as he cuts down trees in the forest. With Karageorge substituted for Alibeg in the lyrics, Mile is taken for a traitor. Both are skillfully decapitated and their heads are displayed on spikes. The kapia is rarely without such ornaments until 1878.

Osman Effendi Karamanli

An assistant to the militant mufti of Plevlje, who wants to incite armed revolt against the Austrians in 1878, Osman Effendi is a tall, thin, pale man with feverish eyes and epileptic scars. He quickly loses his temper at Alihodja Mutevelić, one of the Muslim leaders in Višegrad, who bombards him with practical, pedantic questions, and the discussion turns into a personal quarrel, with Osman Effendi hurling invectives before leaving to join his mufti in Sarajevo. After the Austrians route the Turks at Glasinac, Osman Effendi returns to Višegrad to dig in at the bridge and is again confronted by Alihodja. Osman Effendi lashes out with religious fervor, and when he leaves again, abandons two cannons and leaves Alihodja bound, with his right ear painfully nailed to the kapia.

Man from Plevlje

The never-named chief of Abidaga's guards at the Višegrad bridge project in the 16th century, the "Man from Plevlje" is a pale, unhealthy looking man whose mutual hostility, distrust, and repulsion with Abidaga are intense. The more the Man from Plevlje abases himself, the more Abidaga hates him, and the Man from Plevlje spends sleepless nights obsessing about what might happen to himself. When sabotage begins on the project, Abidaga gives the Man from Plevlje three days to capture the culprits or be publicly executed by impalement. The Man from Plevlje gathers his men, threatens them with horrible death in two days if they do not deliver the culprit, and in fear and rage keeps vigil each night. They capture Radisav of Unište with only hours to spare. The Man from Plevlje supervises Radisav's impalement, loses his mind at the thought it could have been he, and is carted back to his village.

Pop Mihailo

The taciturn and witty village priest is first met joking with Muslim and Jewish leaders on the night of the great flood in Višegrad, telling a story about his hapless predecessor, Pop Jovan. Not long afterwards, during the early Serbian revolts, vigilantes behead Pop Mihailo and defile him by sticking a cigar in his lifeless lips for display. The official executioner, Hairuddin, disapproves. Mihailo's rebellious son calms down and succeeds him as parish priest, as Pop Nikola.

Dauthodja Mutavelić

The mutevelia (administrator) of Mehmed Pasha Sokolli's endowment for the Stone Han in the late 17th century—when funding dries up, Dauthodja uses his own money and borrows from relatives to keep the han patched. He is a wise, godfearing, obstinate man long remembered in Višegrad. He believes that humans must fight decay, death, and dissolution, even knowing that in the end, they will fail. When money runs out to pay laborers, Dauthodja weeds and makes minor repairs. He dies while repairing the roof.

Pop Nikola

The son of martyred Pop Mihailo, Pop Nicola, in his 70s, is the calmest of the dignitaries waiting to greet the Austrian Colonel arriving in Višegrad in 1878. After a stormy youth in which he several times flees to Serbia, Nikola returns to the parish, marries, is ordained, and settles down. He has administered a widespread, difficult parish wisely, calmly, and with great devotion. People of all faiths respect him when he walks in town, calling him "Grandad." Pop Nikola's smile shows that he is at peace. His great red beard is just starting to turn gray. The only shadow in his life is lack of children, but he and his wife take in relatives' children all the time.

Osmanagić Family

The Osmanagići in the mid-19th century are divided unequally between those living in Višegrad and those in the hamlet of Velje Lug beyond Stražište. Those in Velje Lug have the finest house in the district, whose glazed windows reflect the setting sunlight. The head of the house, bold and fiery Avdaga, has a wholesale business in Višegrad, run by his five married sons while he chats with acquaintances. Avdaga is a large, imposing man, rugged, but asthmatic. His speech is frequently interrupted by choking attacks.

Avdaga also has a beautiful and witty daughter, Fata, whose marriage prospects are a major topic of discussion in town, but few men have the courage to court her. When Nail-beg Hamzić sees Fata at social gatherings and boldly suggests marriage, she proudly declares that Velije Lug will never come down to Nezuke. The fathers, nevertheless, arrange a marriage, which is concluded before the local kadi (judge).

Crossing the bridge en route to gala festivities at Nezuke, Fata leaps to her death in the river and becomes a legend.

Radisav of Unište

A small, fast-walking peasant from the Heraci family, conscripted for the Višegrad bridge project in the 16th century, Radisav sows rebellion among the laborers, telling them that since the bridge will benefit only the Turks, the people should sabotage the work and spread rumors that a vila (fairy) opposes the bridge. Radisav and and accomplice, Jovan, make nightly sabotage raids, but only Radisav is caught, tortured with red-hot chains, and has his toe nails torn-out.

The people, ordered to watch his execution, wonder at his droll, dancing gait, caused by the injuries. He asks his executioner, the Man from Plevlje, to expedite his death but is turned down. A sharpened stake is pounded through him from anus to neck, missing all vital organs, and Radisav is lifted up on the eight-foot stake as an example. He hangs there for two days, conscious and cursing the Turks and the bridge. His body is ordered thrown to the dogs, but through bribery, townspeople obtain the corpse and give it a secret burial. Radisav is immediately revered as a martyr and a saint.

Pietro and Stana Sola

The only Italian in Višegrad at the turn of the 20th century, Pietro (known by all as Maistor-Pero) is a blue-eyed, good-natured, stooped builder and artist, married to athletic, harp-tongued Stana. Maistor-Pero is twice made to feel ashamed by fellow Italians, first when the anarchist Lucchieni assassinates Empress Elizabeth in Geneva in 1898, and second when Italy fights a war with Turkey in Libya. Each time when taunted, Maistor-Pero pulls his hat down in shame and Stana rebukes him for not standing up for his rights.

Janko Stiković

A thin, vain, dissatisfied intellectual on the eve of World War I, Stiković has been studying natural history in Graz for two years, is already well known as a revolutionary writer and poet (under different pen names), speaker, and debater. One day, Stiković and the Višegrad schoolmistress Zorka meet clandestinely in an empty classroom, kiss, and are both disillusioned. Stiković is then further demoralized to find an inherently weak article he has written badly printed in a youth paper. That evening Stiković is too preoccupied to defend his theses against socialist criticism by Herak, but clashes with his former best friend, Nikola Glasičanin, who loves Zorka from afar and is troubled by the interest she shows in egotistical Stiković. Stiković leaves town without saying goodbye, and writes Zorka without showing any commitment. It puts her into a near-suicidal depression.

Zorka

With Zagorka, her constant companion, Zorka is a young schoolmistress in Višegrad on the eve of World War I. She is a poor orphan who grows up with relations to whom she feels no attachment, attends the Teachers' Training College in Sarajevo, and returns to town to teach. Admired from afar by Nikola Glasičanin, a drop-out who works a boring office job for a German timber firm, Zorka becomes enamored of the revolutionary poet and writer Janko Stiković. One day in an empty classroom, they secretly kiss and are both disillusioned. When he leaves town and writes non-committal letters and cards, Zorka despairs and grows suicidal. She revives when she reconnects with Glasičanin and they become a couple. Glasičanin proposes marriage and emigration to America, but Zorka wants to see Stiković again to be sure. Glasičanin then leaves town to join the Serbian war effort and Zorka is left feeling utterly hopeless.

Objects/Places

Višegrad Bridge and the Stone Han

Over the course of five years (1567-71), an impressive structure in two parts is erected at Višegrad on orders and at the expense of the Ottoman Grand Vezir Mehmed Pasha. The first part is a monumental bridge consisting of eleven-stone arches. The roadbed is 15 meters above the "green boisterous waters" of the Drina River. The bridge is 250 paces long and 10 paces wide, except at its center, where it splays out to double that width in a section called the kapia. The kapia becomes the town's cultural meeting place. On the right side of the kapia is a stone sofa for seating, backed by the protective parapet. In the center of the parapet stands a 13-verse tarih (inscription) praising the builder.

Once the bridge is built, the city develops at both ends. Generations grow up playing around the bridge and learning its legends—different versions for Christians and Muslims—and on the kapia also flirt, fight, make up, bargain, sell, beg, sing, joke, read proclamations, and witness grisly executions. Weddings and funerals inevitably pause there.

The second part of Mehmed Pasha's construction project is a caravanserai, built in the same style as the bridge. The "Stone Han" is a grand building intended to give free shelter, food, water, and fire to travelers, their servants, and their horses. By tradition, the visitor blesses the memory of Mehmed Pasha for the gift. The Stone Han has 36 rooms ringing a central court. The windows are carved from single blocks of limestone into beautiful grilles. Mehmed Pasha leaves an endowment for the Stone Han's upkeep, but it dries up when the Hungarian lands on which its income depends are lost to the Ottoman Empire, and the grand building falls into disrepair and eventually caves in. It is torn down by Austro-Hungarian occupation forces in the 19th century and the land on which it once stands is reused for barracks and later an officers' mess. Typically, the locals continue calling these wooden structures the Stone Han.

The bridge is not as high maintenance and better weathers the centuries. In the 19th century, however, Austro-Hungary mines the central tier to deny the enemy Serbs passage across the river in time of war. During the early 18th century the bridge survives a great flood and the addition of a monstrous two-storied wooden blockhouse on the kapia, and in 1914 intense Serbian shelling from the hills. Its surface deflects the shells. Around dawn on the day that the Austrians abandon Višegrad, however, the 7th pier is exploded, leaving a ragged gap in the span. In the bombardment, the last structure erected on the site of the Stone Han also burns to the ground.

Banja

Banja is the site from which limestone is quarried for the Višegrad bridge project. It is located an hour's walk from Višegrad.

Drina River

The Drina is a long river in the Balkan Peninsula that marks the frontier between Serbia and Bosnia, the former being largely Orthodox Christian and the latter primarily Muslim with a minority of Christians and Jews. In this novel Muslims are denoted Turks. For most of its length, the Drina runs through steep, narrow gorges. Only in a few places does it create flat areas that can be cultivated. One of these is Višegrad, where the smaller Rzav river joins it from the right. The Drina is noted for its green, fast flowing water and periodic floods. In the 16th century, it is bridged at Višegrad to expedite travel between Stambul and Sarajevo.

Lotte's Hotel

Officially the "Hotel zur Brücke" (Bridge Hotel), the popular name for the largest building in Višegrad in the late 19th century comes from the owner Zahler's pretty, free-speaking, energetic widowed sister-in-law. It is constructed near the Drina River, behind retaining walls, and opposite the municipal botanical garden. The hotel quickly eclipses Zarije's inn, which had been the first thing visitors see upon entering town. The top floor boasts six clean, well-furnished guest rooms, while the ground floor has two public rooms, one large for humbler clients, and the other a small "extrazimmer" for officials and the affluent. Lotte has a tiny first-floor office that no one else enters, whose window overlooks the bridge. There, she corresponds with poor relatives, arranging marriages, resolving quarrels, alleviating suffering. Lotte can only steal odd moments in her lair, for in her absence things always go wrong in the extrazimmer. Lotte spends little time in the large hall, where Malčika, Gustav, and Milan from Lika handle the crowds, making sure no scandals occur indoors. Damaged by shrapnel and incendiary shells at the beginning of World War I, Lotte's Hotel, already declining in business and profitability, is abandoned.

Mejdan

Mejdan is the high ground on the right bank of the Drina River, whence people flee during periodic heavy flooding. A Serbian Orthodox church is located there, along with large houses belonging to the town's notables.

Panos

A rocky, forested mountain crest overlooking Višegrad, Panos attracts Serbian combatants during the uprisings of the early 19th and early 20th centuries. In the first, Serb campfires remind the women in town of the legend of Radisav's grave; in the second, mountain cannons are trained on the bridge and center of town and duel with Austro-Hungarian ordnance.

Sarajevo

The capital of the Ottoman province of Bosnia, Sarajevo is frequently mentioned in the novel as terminus of road travel from Stambul, necessitating first a bridge at Višegrad and later a railroad skirting Višegrad. It is an educational center, primarily for secondary students, and, most notoriously, as the city in which a Serbian nationalist, Gavrilo Princip, assassinates the Austro-Hungarian Archduke Ferdinand and his wife Sophie on 28 June 1914, precipitating World War I.

Sokolovići

Sokolovići is a small village near Višegrad, the birthplace in the 16th century of the unnamed (in this novel) ten-year-old, who grows up to become Grand Vezir of the Ottoman Empire, Mehmed Pasha Sokolli. Recalling the ordeal of the ferry crossing at Višegrad, Mehmed Pasha builds a grand bridge.

Stambul

Known as Constantinople to Christians and Istanbul on modern maps, Stambul is the capital of the Ottoman (or Osman of Turkish) Empire, which incorporates much of the Balkan Peninsula at the start of this novel and is mentioned, though decaying and shrinking. It is ruled by the Sultan through the Grand Vezir.

Under the Poplars

"Under the Poplars" is Višegrad's local whorehouse, operated on the outskirts of town by Terdik and Julka in a Turkish house on the Stražište slopes. It begins as a four-girl operation (Irma, Ilona, Frieda, and Aranka), whose weekly sashays through town to the hospital for check-ups upset the good women of Višegrad's. "Julka's Girls" expands their ranks, and the house is expanded as the influx of railroad workers brings plentiful business. After getting drunk at Under the Poplars, Nikola Pecikoza becomes one in a line of survivors of walking the narrow parapet across the bridge.

Ustamujić's Inn

Ustamujić's Inn is built at the time that the Stone Han falls into disrepair, and travelers grow willing to pay for a comfortable alternative to the free night's lodging the Stone Han traditionally offers travelers. The Inn is conveniently situated to the bridge. By the 1870s, its stale, smoky back room is a center for constant gambling, and Milan Glasičanin becomes a regular, but with the building of the "Hotel zur Brücke," better known as Lotte's Hotel, Ustamujić's Inn loses the genteel clientèle. It continues to thrive on drunks thrown out by Lotte's bouncer.

Velije Lug and Nezuke

Hamlets at opposite ends of the horseshoe-shaped Drina Valley, Velije Lug and Nezuke are home, respectively to the Hamzić and Osmanagić families. The heads of these houses arrange for the marriage of Nail-beg Hamzić and Fata Osmanagić, but beautiful Fata, who has pledged never to go down to isolated Nezuke, jumps from the bridge to her death, becoming the stuff of legends.

Themes

Terror

Terrorism as a method of intimidating individuals or communities or coercing them to behave in an intended fashion is not a modern invention and is encountered throughout Ivo Andrić's The Bridge on the Drina. The Ottoman practice of requiring "blood tribute" from the raya—conquered Christian subjects—clearly terrorizes the people of Bosnia. During the building of the bridge, Abidaga struts about with his green staff, which becomes a potent symbol of the suffering that strikes anyone who malingers on the job. Abidaga terrorizes his security chief, the "Man from Plevlje" by threatening to impale him if he fails within three days to capture the saboteurs. He spends sleepless nights obsessing about his fate and in turn threatens his staff with a horrible death unless they deliver the culprit. In supervising the torture and impalement of Radisav of Unište and leaving him displayed to the populace for two days, the Man from Plevlje loses his mind and is carted off to his village. In the end, Abidaga, who boasts of his past acts of terror, fails in his task and is replaced.

When the Austrians occupy Bosnia, they set up a grim guardhouse at the town's cultural center, midspan on the bridge, they immediately begin using terror to control the population. An innocent pilgrim who happens to cross the bridge and a boy who does not realize that he is singing politically-charged lyrics are summarily executed and their gory heads spiked as a warning to would-be opponents. Several times it is emphasized that heads are rarely wanting on the guardhouse for decades to come. Still, the Serbs rebel. As the rebellion intensifies and Serbian terrorists assassinate Austrian dignitaries, gallows are erected and people are hung on flimsy evidence. Even passing Austrian troops find leaving the bodies displayed to maximize the message appalling. Finally, the Austrians persecute run-of-the-mill Serbians on the theory of "collective guilt," a technique perfected by the Nazis in the Balkans during World War II. Pavle Ranković is held hostage near the bridge, awaiting execution if anything happens to the structure. He philosophizes about the unfairness of being singled out, when he has always tried to be fair and just and wonders why God would do this to him.

Authority

The Bridge on the Drina examines various views of authority in the Balkans. The Ottoman view is strictly Islamic: power is vested by God to faithful rulers to subjugate and rule non-believers (or wrong-believers - the "raya"). It is unthinkable that a Muslim should be subject to a non-believer. The Ottomans suffer a slow decline in power. The loss of Hungarian territory has an immediate effect in Višegrad: funds dry up for the upkeep of the Stone Han and it crumbles. Centuries later, the revolt touches Višegrad more extensively, as Austro-Hungary occupies the region. They post decrees on the kapia beneath the plaque commemorating the building of the bridge and asking God to bless it and its founder. Eventually, Austro-Hungary annexes Bosnia and Herzegovina,

with lip-service to the medieval Christian doctrine of the divine right of kings, but more so by international concordat. Pious Muslims are left to wonder why God would allow the tide of authority to flow out, leaving countless believers under infidel rule. Many flee across the retreating borders.

Finally, there come the secularists, young nationalists and socialists of various sorts, looking to create an ideal state where people decide their own destiny and ensure themselves the blessings of freedom, equality, and opportunity. A young Muslim intellectual is shown incapable of formulating an argument for the futility of any system not ordained by God, and Muslims resist the forces of change. World War I brings the debate to an abrupt end. Andrić leaves it to historians and poets to describe what happens in the coming years. The divine right, Muslim and Christian, of course, suffers a setback.

Progress

The notion of progress is shown in The Bridge on the Drina to be a Western concept that initially has little impact on a quaint "oriental town" like Višegrad. The bridge, a great technological advancement in the 16th century, becomes an item of changeless, everyday life. Only when Austro-Hungary occupies the town in the 19th century and troops are followed by bureaucrats and business people, does progress become an issue. Newcomers bring new ways of thinking and doing, new words, clothing, song, and dances, and there is a period in which the old and new coexist, and each group adopts select items from the other. Gradually, over generations, the Western ways win out on the streets, but in people's homes, the old ways are still surviving at the end of the novel.

Christians are more pliant than Muslims, who believe the Western obsession with business—measuring, recording, promulgating laws, cleaning, repairing, and new construction—are evil. From their point of view, nothing lasts unless God wishes it to. Once God has blessed an endeavor, like the bridge, it is impious to interfere with it. Piping water across it from pure mountain streams to supply the town is godless. The water is itself ritually impure. The Christians enjoy its convenience. When the Austrians excavate one of the central supporting piers and mine it for military purposes, the leading Muslim conservative, Alihodja, is appalled at the blasphemy. He recalls the story of how bridges first come to be built, as God sends guardian angels to thwart the devil's carving of rivers and ravines in the perfectly flat earth.

The bridge, once an innovation that the pious believed God would sweep away in the first good flood, is now part of God's plan, not to be improved on, and yet the Westerners light it and build a railroad to render it obsolete. Finally, they blow out its central section. Himself dying, Alihodja imagines God inspiring people somewhere to build rather than destroy.

Style

Point of View

Ivo Andrić characterizes his novel as a "chronicle" of his native Bosnia and writes as a contemporary of the characters depicted at the end of the book. Most of the time, Andrić narrates in the third-person past tense, but occasionally (briefly and sporadically) shifts into the present tense, although this could well be a peculiarity introduced by the translator, Lovett F. Edwards. Andrić's highest concern, it seems, is reveling in the beauty of the land and the homogeneity of the culture, despite religious, political, and ideological divisions. The translator's foreword notes that Andrić spends much of his childhood in Višegrad, which has changed little even in the late 1950s.

Dialog, that is to say conversations among characters, is relatively unimportant in the novel, and uses whatever tense is relevent to the context. Diatribe, on the other hand, is frequent, put in the mouths of dogmatically-minded individuals of all stripes with the suggestion that they are not representative spokesmen. From broad to narrow, the Balkan Peninsula, Bosnia, and Višegrad are for centuries ideological battlefields between Christianity and Islam. Andrić writes from the Christian point of view, captures both the background antagonisms and the intended slurs and jibes but does not dwell on them. The clergy of Višegrad disprove the folk wisdom that the two faiths cannot coexist. Several times Andrić describes Christians and Muslims worrying, thinking, and praying at the same moment over the same event but at odds in their purposes, and wondering why God allows the others to prosper.

At the end of the novel, Andrić shifts to the social and political ideas motivating and inflaming his own generation. As his opinionated, self-styled intellectuals debate, he points out the flaw of youth—growing dogmatic before fully assimilating one's facts. He suggests that those who survive World War I will be straightened out.

Setting

The Bridge on the Drina is set near the frontier between Bosnia and Serbia, beginning in 1516, when the future Grand Vezir Mehmed Pasha Sokolli is abducted by Janissaries, and the dreadful experience of crossing the swift-flowing Drina River by ferry is burned into his memory. In 1546, he orders the a magnificent bridge constructed over the "green boisterous waters" at Višegrad, a town located on the road between Sarajevo, capital of Bosnia, and Stambul, capital of the Ottoman Empire. The lion's share of the novel is set in and around Višegrad, which grows into a fair-sized "oriental" town at both ends of the famous bridge.

Most of the novel's movement is in time. It begins by depicting the high- and low-lights of the bridge's five-year construction, and then jumps forward nearly two centuries to the decay of the matching caravanserai and the most famous of the great floods. The

Ottoman Empire is now contracting and its effects are felt in remote Višegrad. Jumping next into the 19th century, the novel shows the local impact of the two Serbian revolutions, and the Austro-Hungarian occupation, which brings vast cultural changes. Moving into the 20th century, Višegrad experiences the "annexation crisis," the coming of the railroad, growing political awareness in the young generation, and finally the destruction and dislocation of World War I. The focus throughout the novel is on the beautiful white bridge across the green river, its fate unchanging until the final pages.

Language and Meaning

The Bridge on the Drina is a translation from Serbian into British English by Lovett F. Edwards. As such, it is important to realize that author Ivo Andrić's rich "dialects and localisms" are largely sacrificed (confesses Edwards in his foreword) in order to avoid being "pedantic, dull and cumbersome." Edwards transliterates many Turkish words according to the Bosnian spelling rather than Turkish or customary English rendition (thus: "vezir" for vizier). He freely uses cultural and religious titles with which modern readers may be unfamiliar. He does not define or describe them all. Among the most common are Effendi and Beg (honorific titles), Hadji and Hodja (pilgrim to Mecca and Medina), mutevelia (administrator of a religious bequest or vakif—from the Arabic waqf), mukhtar (Muslim leader), khmet (Christian headman), kadi (Muslim judge), and ulema (Muslim clergy). There is a handy chart of Croatian diacritical marks in the spelling of names.

Andrić for his part tells an elongated chronicle of a land and people he obviously loves. His descriptions of nature are lush and moving. Human beings fare less well, for Višegrad knows many villains across three and a half centuries. Having detailed the torturing and impalement of a 16th century saboteur, Andrić shows later beheadings and hangings as almost benign. He describes his people's need to create fables and live by them. He shows Christians and Muslims despising one another but peacefully coexisting. Western cultural modes are introduced and compete with tradition in a Darwinian survival of the fittest. Western technology is more destructive. Particularly among Muslims there are individuals who absolutely resist change. Both religions wonder why God lets the other survive. Among the brutal and the angry, Andrić sprinkles innocents, fools, and dupes. He shows a Jewish widow who builds a business and uses its profits to support her still downtrodden relatives. In the final chapters, Andrić debates the political and philosophical questions that his own generation carries into World War I.

Structure

The Bridge on the Drina consists of twenty-four numbered but untitled chapters. There are no formal structures at a higher level, but time-jumps suggest four main parts: 1) action in the 16th century, when the bridge is built, 2) events in the late 18th century (the demise of the Stone Han and great flood), 3) the 19th-century revolutions and Bosnia's

permanent occupation by Austro-Hungary, and 4) the growing turmoil of the early 20th century, culminating in the outbreak of World War I.

Following Ivo Andrić's lyrical impressions of the place he spends much of his youth and remains in the late 1950s largely unchanged (claims translator Lovett F. Edwards) and a confused introduction to the legends that have sprung up about the bridge, episodes are related from the 16th century, showing how the construction of the bridge and caravanserai disrupt and reform life at Višegrad. It is a brutal time in history and its flavor is captured well. The Ottomans' loss of Hungary in the late 18th century results in a loss of income for the caravanserai, which decays and is abandoned—but its space never ceases to be "the Stone Han."

As the story advances to the 19th century, the Serbian insurrections create a sharper division between Christians and Muslims that has previously existed, and the Austrian army occupies Višegrad, accelerating cultural change. The ugly blockhouse built on the kapia and and interrupting social life, becomes the place of execution for suspected Serb nationalists. The grisly display of their heads after execution still pales before the impalement described centuries earlier. Muslims wrestle with the question of how to react to the Christians' warfare and their loss of sovereignty. A number of vignettes are use in this section to give a feeling for the times.

With the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, cultural change accelerates. The bridge is repaired and then mined. The railroad renders the bridge passé as a route to Sarajevo. A new generation of students, Andrić's contemporaries, take over the kapia, to debate in the evening about the great ideological issues of the day, particularly nationalism and socialism. The vignettes grow heavier as the tragedy ahead looms. Lotte's mental breakdown exemplifies the atmosphere. Finally, the summer of 1914 arrives. It moves swiftly from a time of great promise to tragedy. The bridge is cut in two and Višegrad evacuated. Historians and poets, Andrić says, will tell what follows.

Quotes

"The common people remember and tell of what they are able to grasp and what they are able to transform into legend. Anything else passes them by without deeper trace, with the dumb indifference of nameless natural phenomena, which do not touch the imagination or remain in the memory. This hard and long building process was for them a foreign task undertaken at another's expense. Only when as the fruit of this effort, the great bridge arose, men began to remember details and to embroider the creation of a real, skillfully built and lasting bridge with fabulous tales which they well knew how to weave and to remember." Chapter 2, pg. 27.

"This most terrible part of the bloody task was, luckily, invisible to the onlookers. They could only see the bound body shudder at the short and unexpected prick of the knife, then half rise as if it were going to stand up, only to fall back again at once, striking dully against the planks. As soon as he had finished, the gypsy leapt up, took the wooden mallet and with slow measured blows began to strike the lower blunt end of the stake. Between each two blows he would stop for a moment and look first at the body in which the stake was penetrating and then at the two gypsies, reminding them to pull slowly and evenly. The body of the peasant, spreadeagled, writhed convulsively; at each blow of the mallet his spine twisted and bent, but the cords pulled at it and kept it straight. The silence from both banks of the river was such that not only every blow but even its echo from somewhere along the steep bank could be clearly heard. Those nearest could hear how the man beat with his forehead against the planks and, even more, another and unusual sound, that was neither a scream, nor a wail, nor a groan, nor anything human; that stretched and twisted body emitted a sort of creaking and cracking like a fence that is breaking down or a tree that is being felled. At every second blow the gypsy went over to the stretched-out body and leant over it to see whether the stake was going in the right direction and when he had satisfied himself that it had not touched any of the more important internal organs, he returned and went on with his work.
From the banks all this could scarcely be heard and still less seen, but all stood there trembling, their faces blanched and their fingers chilled with cold." Chapter 3, pg. 49.

"But within themselves they were all greatly anxious and each of them, beneath all the jokes and laughter at misfortune, as if under a mask, turned over and over in his mind anxious thoughts and listened continually to the roar of the waters and the wind from the town below, where he had left all that he possessed. The next day in the morning, after a night so spent, they looked down from Mejdan to the plain below where their houses were under water, some only half submerged and others covered to the roof. Then for the first and last time in their lives they saw their town without a bridge. The waters had risen a good thirty feet, so that the wide high arches were covered and the waters flowed over the roadway of the bridge which was hidden beneath them. Only that elevated part on which the kapia had been built showed above the surface of the troubled waters which flowed about it like a tiny waterfall." Chapter 5, pg. 80.

"The revolt, with shorter or longer periods of truce, lasted for years and in the course of those years the number of those thrown into the river to drift down to 'look for another, better and more reasonable land' was very great. Chance had decreed, that chance that overwhelms the weak and unmindful, that these two simple men, this pair from the mass of unlearned, poverty-stricken and innocent, should head the procession, since it is often such men who are first caught up in the whirlpool of great events and whom this whirlpool irresistibly attracts and sucks down. Thus the youth Mile and the old man Jelisije, beheaded at the same moment and in the same place, united as brothers, first decorated with their heads the military blockhouse on the kapia, which from then onwards, as long as the revolt lasted, was practically never without such decoration. So these two, whom no one before then had ever seen or heard of, remained together in memory, a memory clearer and more lasting than that of so many other, more important, victims." Chapter 6, pg. 90.

"Yes, she both saw and heard him as if he were standing beside her. That was her own dear, powerful, only father with whom she had felt herself to be one, indivisibly and sweetly, ever since she had been conscious of her own existence. She felt that heavy shattering cough as if it had been in her own breast. In truth it had been that mouth that had said yes where her own had said no. but she was at one with him in everything, even in this. That yes of his she felt as if it were her own (even as she felt too her own no). Therefore her fate was cruel, unusual, immediate, and therefore she saw no escape from it and could see none, for none existed. But one thing she knew. Because of her father's yes, which bound her as much as her own no, she would have to appear before the kadi with Mustajbeg's son, for it was inconceivable to think that Avdaga Osmanagić did not keep his word. But she knew too, equally well, that after the ceremony her feet would never take her to Nezuke, for that would mean that she had not kept her own word. That too was inconceivable, for that too was the word of an Osmanagić. There, on that point of no return, between her no and her father's yes, between Velje Lug and Nezuge, somewhere in that most inescapable impasse, she must find a way out." Chapter 8, pgs. 109-110.

": But one day its turn came too. First engineers who spent a long time measuring the ruins, then workmen and labourers who began to take it down stone by stone, frightening and driving away all sorts of birds and small beasts which had their nests there. Rapidly the level space above the market-place by the bridge became bald and empty and all that was left of the han was a heap of good stone carefully piled.
"A little more than a year later, instead of the former caravanserai of white stone, there rose a high, massive two-storied barracks, washed in pale-blue, roofed with grey corrugated iron and with loopholes at the corners. Soldiers drilled all day on the open space and stretched their limbs or fell head first in the dust like suppliants to the loud shouts of the corporals. In the evening the sound of incomprehensible soldiers' songs accompanied by an accordion could be heard from the many windows of the ugly building. This went on until the penetrating sound of the bugle with its melancholy melody, which set all the dogs of the town howling, extinguished all these sounds

together with the last lights in the windows. So disappeared the lovely bequest of the Vezir and so the barracks, which the people true to ancient custom went on calling the Stone Han, commenced its life on the level by the bridge in complete lack of harmony with all that surrounded it." Chapter 11, pgs. 139-140.

"'Do you know what, friend? Let us have one more turn at the cards, but all for all. I will wager all that I have gained tonight and you your life. If you win, everything will be yours again just as it was, money, cattle and lands. If you lose, you will leap from the kapia into the Drina.'
He said this in the same dry and business-like voice as he had said everything else, as if it were a question of the most ordinary wager between two gamblers absorbed by their play.
So it has come to losing my soul or saving it, thought Milan and made an effort to rise, to extricate himself from that incomprehensible whirlpool that had taken everything from him and even now drew him on with irresistible force, but the stranger sent him back to his place with a glance. As if they had been playing at the inn for a stake of three or four grosh he lowered his head and held out his hand. They both cut. The stranger cut a four and Milan a ten. It was his turn to deal and that filled him with hope. He dealt and the stranger asked for a complete new hand." Chapter 12, pgs. 149-150.

"But such restful moments never lasted long for it always happened that they were interrupted by some cry from the café below; or new clients demanding her presence or some drunkard, awakened and ready for renewed onslaughts, shouting for more drinks, for the lamps to be lighted, for the orchestra to come, and always calling for Lotte. Then she would leave her lair and, carefully locking the door with a special key, go down to welcome the guests, or by her smile and her special vocabulary to smooth down the drunkard like a newly awakened child and to hep him to a chair where he could recommence his nightly session of drinking, conversation, song and spending." Chapter 14, pg. 181.

"As soon as he heard what was in question, the sergeant-major suddenly became serious. His broad smile disappeared and his ruddy clean-shave face took on a wooden expression as if he were on parade at the moment of the command: attention. He was silent for a moment as if in indecision and then replied in a sort of hushed voice.
'There is something in all you say. But if you really want my advice, then it is best not to inquire about this or speak of it, for it comes under the head of military preparedness, official secrets and so forth and so on.'
The hodja hated all the new expressions and especially that 'and so forth and so on'. It was not only that the words grated on his ears, but he felt clearly that, in the speech of these strangers, it took the place of an unspoken truth and that all that had been said before meant nothing at all.
'In the Name of God, don't stuff me up with their ... 'and so forth and so on', but tell me and explain, if you can, what they are doing to the bridge. There can be no secret about that. In any case what sort of secret is that, if even the schoolchildren talk about it?' the

hodja interrupted angrily. 'What has the bridge to do with their war?'
'It has, Alihodja; it has very much to do with it,' said Branković, once again smiling." Chapter 17, pgs. 222-223.

"A drummer was standing by, waiting to give a roll on his drums. In the general flurry and commotion the noise of the drum sounded like distant thunder. Silence fell on that circle around the gallows. The officer, a Hungarian reserve lieutenant, read in a harsh voice the sentences of death in German; they were then translated by a sergeant. All three had been sentenced to death by a summary court, for witnesses had declared on oath that they had seen them giving light-signals by night towards the Serbian frontier. The hanging was to be carried out publicly on the square facing the bridge. The peasants were silent, blinking as if in perplexity. Vajo, the man from Lika, wiped the sweat from his face and in a soft sad voice swore that he was innocent and with frenzied eyes looked around him for someone to whom he could still say it." Chapter 22, pg. 286.

"At that moment the hodja felt the stool under him rise upward and lift him like a toy; his 'sweet' silence was shattered and suddenly transformed into a dull roar and a great smashing that filled the air, tore at the eardrums and became universal and unbearable. The shelves on the wall opposite cracked and the things on them leapt at him as he at them. Ah, shrieked the hodja: or rather he only thought that he shrieked for he himself no longer had voice or hearing, even as he no longer had any place on the earth. Everything was deafened by sound, shattered, torn up by the roots and whirled about him. Improbable as it seemed, he felt as if the little tongue of land between the two rivers on which the town was built had been plucked out of the earth with a terrific noise and thrown into space in which it was still flying; that the two rivers had been torn out of their beds and drawn upward to the skies, only to fall once more with all their mass of waters into the voice, like two waterfalls which had not yet been halted or broken. Was not this kiyamet, that last Day of Judgment of which books and learned men spoke, in which this lying world would be burnt up in the twinkling of an eye, like one stubs out a spark? But what need had God, whose glance was enough to create and extinguish worlds, with such a chaos? This was not divine. But if not, how had human hands such power?" Chapter 24, pgs. 309-310.

"He stood in front of his damaged shop, mouth open, with heavy head and broken body. Before him lay the square which, in the early morning sun, looked like a battlefield, scattered with large and small bits of stone, tiles and broken branches. His gaze turned to the bridge. The kapia was there where it had always been, but just beyond the kapia the bridge stopped short. There was no longer any seventh pier; between the sixth and eighth yawned a gulf through which he could see the green waters of the river. From the eighth pier onward the bridge once more stretched to the farther bank, smooth and regular and white, as it had been yesterday and always." Chapter 24, pgs. 311-312.

Topics for Discussion

How is myth creation depicted in the novel? What is the psychological need behind it? Which myth of the bridge is your favorite—and why?

Beyond the certitude that each holds the one true faith, how are Christians and Muslims shown to be alike and different in this novel?

How are Jews portrayed in The Bridge on the Drina?

What is the social significance of the kapia? How does it change over time and how does it remain eternally the same? What modern equivalences (if any) are there?

What is the social impact of the Austrian occupation on Višegrad? How do Christians and Muslims differ in their reaction?

Which of the star-crossed lovers' tales affects you most and why?

Why does Alihodja's lonely death cap the novel? What do his final thoughts add to the tragedy of the bridge's destruction?