Flying Colours Study Guide

Flying Colours by C. S. Forester

BOOKRAGS

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Plot Summary

Captain Horatio Hornblower languishes in a Spanish prison, captured after the loss of his 75-gun command Sutherland. Tried by a sham French court, he has been sentenced to death in absentia and is shortly transported to Paris, with Lieutenant William Bush and his coxswain Brown, for execution. On the trip the three men make a daring escape and are taken in by a local Count who sympathizes with their plight. They spend the winter months preparing for a spring escape and then take to the Loire River in a fishing boat. They descend the Loire, steal a cutter, and make their way to the fleet. Hornblower returns to England, where he is received with public adulation and much political acclaim.

The novel opens with Hornblower on land and in a Spanish prison, just hours after losing a four-to-one odds naval combat with a French squadron. His wrecked ship, Sutherland, lies foundering within sight and the portion of his crew which survived the battle are also imprisoned, including his steward, Polwheal, his coxswain, Brown and his trusted lieutenant William Bush. Bush has lost a foot in the combat and his survival is questionable. Within hours the remainder of the English squadron arrives and engages the crippled French squadron making short work of the ships—and also firing Sutherland in the process.

Hornblower, Bush and Brown are shortly are their way to Paris, where the two officers face execution on trumped-up prior charges of piracy. Bush becomes feverish but survives and then on a stormy night when the opportunity presents itself, Hornblower acts decisively, and the three men escape by rowboat down the Loire River. After capsizing in a rapid, they gain the shore and, freezing cold, seek shelter in a nearby residence a few miles from Nevers. There, they meet the Count Graçay and his beautiful, widowed, daughter-in-law, Marie. Fortunately for Hornblower, the Count is an English sympathizer and takes the men into hiding for a prolonged period of recuperation and preparation. Over the course of several months, Hornblower and the Count develop a close friendship whilst Hornblower and Marie pursue a sexual liaison.

When spring arrives, Hornblower, Bush and Brown leave the Count's house and proceed down the Loire River as far as Nantes. There, they don disguises as Dutch customs officials and in an audacious move steal a 10-gun cutter and sail it out of Nantes and into the English fleet. Having traveled some 750 miles by coach and boat through France, Hornblower has been absent for some five months, and he is received with stunned welcome. He learns that his wife has recently died in childbirth but also that Barbara, his love interest, is recently widowed. Hornblower returns to England where he is honorably acquitted of the loss of Sutherland and then realizes that he is something of a popular celebrity. Made a Knight of the Bath and endowed with a considerable amount of wealth, Hornblower is then reunited with an adoring Barbara and his infant son, Richard, and the novel ends on a most happy note.

Chapters 1 and 2

Chapters 1 and 2 Summary

Captain Horatio Hornblower languishes in a Spanish prison, captured after the loss of his 75-gun command Sutherland. Tried by a sham French court, he has been sentenced to death in absentia and is shortly transported to Paris, with Lieutenant William Bush and his coxswain, Brown, for execution. On the trip the three men make a daring escape and are taken in by a local Count, who sympathizes with their plight. They spend the winter months preparing for a spring escape and then take to the Loire River in a fishing boat. They descend the Loire, steal a cutter and make their way to the fleet. Hornblower returns to England where he is received with public adulation and much political acclaim.

Captain Horatio Hornblower, thirty-four years old, is a prisoner of the French, held in a prison in the occupied Spanish city of Rosas during November, 1810. His Spanish guards allow him a great deal of latitude in his imprisonment, and he is allowed to walk the premises under light guard for extended periods. From his walking route he can see, about half a mile away, the ruined and dismasted wreck of HMS Sutherland, his ship until only a few days ago. Hornblower led the Sutherland into combat against four French ships-of-the-line—the Sutherland was forced to strike, severely damaging the four French vessels. Hornblower can see two of them dismasted and ruined, a third dismasted and severely damaged, and a fourth with extensive damage. The Sutherland suffered notable casualties—two-thirds of her crew were killed or wounded and William Bush, 1st lieutenant, lost a foot during the bloody engagement. Remarkably, Hornblower escaped without injury. After capture, the French disgracefully robbed the English—Hornblower's sword had eventually been returned with a hilt-less tang and the blade's gilding scraped off.

With Hornblower in prison are the 145 surviving wounded men and a few dozen unwounded men. Hornblower is informed that soon he will be transported from Rosas to Paris for execution. Due to prior activities on the sea, Hornblower has been tried in absentia by the French government, convicted of piracy and sentenced to death. As he walks around, Hornblower frets about the future of his pregnant wife, Maria and his soon-to-be-born child's future. He also thinks wistfully of Lady Barbara Leighton—the wife of his admiral and the love of his life. He struggles with self-doubt about losing his ship—even though ordered into combat with four-to-one odds—and worries about his impending execution. Although he has a private room in the prison, he also visits his wounded men in the common area and notes that, day by day, many of them continue to die of their wounds.

A few days later Hornblower awakens to the sound of massed cannon fire answered by massed naval cannon fire. He instantly realizes some great naval action is occurring and runs to the door of his prison cell where he summons the guard. Hornblower tenders his parole and runs to the prison walls to watch. He sees an English fleet,

commanded by Admiral Leighton, close with the damaged French squadron. The English send in a fire-ship, which destroys one French vessel. A landing party reaches the wreck of the Sutherland and fires her, depriving the French of their trophy. During the attack one French ship explodes, two others are driven onto the rocks and founder, and the fourth is left a smoking and sinking wreck. The English vessels suffer minor damage and then sail away. Hornblower realizes the easy victory was made possible by his activities a few days earlier.

Later, a new prisoner enters the jail's common room. Hornblower visits him and interviews the man. He was aboard an English vessel when damage to the rigging caused him to fall into the sea. He has little to report beyond what Hornblower has personally witnessed, except to inform Hornblower that Admiral Leighton was seriously wounded during the attack. Afterwards, Hornblower exults to think that Admiral Leighton might die, leaving Barbara a widow—and yet, he is both married and condemned. His death sentence weighs heavily on his mind, and Hornblower experiences the psychological misery of imprisonment.

Chapters 1 and 2 Analysis

The opening chapters of the novel are vital; they introduce the mechanism which drives the entire plot, as well as introducing many of the novel's major characters, setting the tone and texture of the novel, and establishing the setting. The novel, published in 1938, is the seventh volume in a series of ten books. It was the third-written, however, following the previous two volumes in chronological order. Thus, many of the characters have been developed in prior novels. Flying Colours is unique within the series, however, because it's setting is almost entirely on land, devoid of ship action and overt nautical themes.

The novel opens with Hornblower a prisoner of war. Years before, he had languished in a Spanish prison for many months and is thus somewhat mentally prepared for the hardships of lengthy imprisonment. The circumstances are vastly different, however. During his first imprisonment, he was a junior officer largely devoid of responsibility. During the present imprisonment, he is a senior officer who has lost his ship, and he is also under a sentence of death. Should by some chance he survive and return to England, he still would face a mandatory court-martial due to the loss of his ship. Although Hornblower enjoys a wide leeway granted by the Spanish prison guards, he is under substantial mental duress. Always hampered by excessive introspection and self-doubt, Hornblower agonizes over his captivity. Although following direct orders to attack four ships-of-the-line without support, Hornblower wonders if perhaps there might have been some way of salvaging his command. The naval attack in the second chapter, however, fully vindicates Hornblower's actions—the French squadron is completely destroyed. Thus, the English have traded one 74-gun ship-of-the-line for four French ships-of-the-line, two of them larger than, and two of them equivalent to, the Sutherland. Further, the French ships had already successfully run the English blockade and were therefore a menace to English safety. These events refer heavily to events discussed in a previous volume in the series.

The novel makes additional reference to Hornblower's activities during a previous volume in the series to establish him as a convicted pirate—pirate, that is, in the eyes of the French government. In brief, Hornblower had flown a French flag on a British ship as a successful ruse de guerre. The French authorities have subsequently styled him a pirate and condemned him in absentia to death. When captured, Hornblower thus is already under a death sentence. He is informed that shortly he will be transported to Paris where he will be executed. The final major event in the introductory chapters involves Hornblower learning that Admiral Leighton, the husband of Hornblower's love interest, Barbara, has been seriously wounded. As if Hornblower's situation is not complicated enough, he now entertains the mental complication of finding his love interest once again 'eligible.'

Chapters 3 and 4

Chapters 3 and 4 Summary

Colonel Jean-Baptiste Caillard arrives at the Rosas prison and interviews Hornblower. Caillard is stiff, unyielding and holds Hornblower in obvious contempt. Caillard, like the tyrant Napoleon, denigrates his social and military inferiors and cares little or nothing for the welfare of those under his supervision. He announces that Hornblower and William Bush will be immediately transported to Paris for summary execution. Hornblower appeals that Bush's involvement in the putative piracy was constrained by orders, and thus the lieutenant should not be involved. Caillard dismisses Hornblower's appeal as irrelevant. Hornblower then argues that for the sake of humanity, the gravely-injured Bush—he lost a food during Sutherland's battle—cannot be transported for weeks. Again, Caillard dismisses Hornblower's objection as irrelevant. The Spanish warden intervenes and demands that Hornblower, as a gentleman, be allowed a personal attendant on the voyage, and Caillard reluctantly agrees. Hornblower considers his steward, Polwheal, but rejects the idea—Polwheal has always been difficult if not troublesome. Hornblower then thinks of Brown, his coxswain of some years. Brown's powerful build and iron determination seem suited to the task, thus Hornblower selects the man as his attendant. As a final act of compassion, the Spanish warden gives Hornblower a purse of money for the long voyage.

Bush's foot has been shot away and the stump has been amputated and tended by a Spanish physician. Bush is obviously in intense pain and is at a critical stage of his recovery—the ligatures of arteries still extend beyond the wound and the stump has yet to heal over. The Spanish surgeon writes many notes and instructs Hornblower on the proper care of Bush; in any event, it is possible that Bush will die on the voyage. The surgeon objects to Caillard about moving Bush yet, but the petty tyrant notes that Bush's survival to Paris will simply entail his execution anyway, thus, Bush will be transported immediately. Within hours Hornblower, Bush and Brown are bundled into a heavily-guarded French coach and subsequently travel to the French border town of Cerbère, where they take a room in a local inn for the evening.

That evening, Hornblower reflects that it has been sixteen days since the loss of the Sutherland. A local surgeon attends to Bush's stump and, despite the previous day's travel, Bush looks rather well. The men eat a good dinner, which is preferable to the prison food of the past weeks. Hornblower contemplates Brown—the man has thick black hair, is twenty-eight years old and has seventeen years of naval service. Hornblower envies Brown's strength and dexterity even as Brown sits down to dinner for the first time in his life at a table with china and silverware. Brown is entirely self-conscious and manages to eat dinner only with difficulty. Even so, Hornblower reflects on Brown's easy ability to master nearly anything. That evening Hornblower is self-conscious preparing for bed in the presence of other men. He spends most of the night fretting about death; he has not informed the others, as yet, that he and Bush will face execution. Hornblower hopes he will face execution "with colours flying" (p. 56).

Chapters 3 and 4 Analysis

These two chapters conclude the first day of the men's transportation—they have travelled some twenty-three miles by coach on terrible Spanish roads and have crossed the border into France. The voyage from Rosas to Paris is some 573 miles; therefore, the entire trip might might be accomplished in some twelve days or thereabouts given France's superior roadways. Much of the narrative during the voyage is devoted to Hornblower's internal analysis of being a prisoner of war under death sentence. He looks forward to possible death and desires to manfully face it when the time comes—his mental reference "with colours flying" (p. 56) informs the title of the novel.

Bush endures the first day of travel rather well and at the end of the day, Hornblower secures good lodging, adequate food and even medical care for Bush. Brown proves to be an excellent choice for a traveling companion—he adapts quickly to the role of personal steward and helps Bush toilet and bathe. Brown immediately gauges the proper deference and adequate initiative needed to please the testy Hornblower and falls into his new role with aplomb. Hornblower is companioned by men who match his very ideal of manhood—strong, capable, adaptable and fearless. Ironically, he considers himself to be void of all these traits though his record proves otherwise. The French serving staff is very sympathetic to the group of English sailors and views the French officers with thinly-veiled dislike. Even so, they are so thoroughly inculcated in the atmosphere of fear and tyranny marking Napoleon's reign that they comply with all Caillard's desires.

Chapters 5 and 6

Chapters 5 and 6 Summary

In the morning Bush is feverish and has taken a marked turn for the worse. The local doctor returns and examines the stump, removing one of the two arterial ligatures. He tells Caillard that Bush's recuperation is at a critical stage and strongly advises that he not be moved for at least a few days. Hornblower concurs with the doctor and angrily argues that Bush must not be moved. Caillard ignores the doctor and orders Bush readied for travel. The English men are loaded into the coach where the innkeeper serves them ersatz coffee and breakfast. During the day Hornblower continues to mull the fact that he is a prisoner. Hornblower mistakenly calculates that the entire voyage may take as little as 5-12 days of travel; he wants to live and considers the coach's great speed with alarm. The coach arrives in Perpignan, and road signs indicate that the coach is travelling on National Route 9, headed for Paris some 528 miles distant. The coach continues on to Sigean, with Paris some 500 miles distant. The coach has covered about sixty-two miles in the second day of travel. Hornblower again secures a room, but no surgeon can be located. Hornblower and Brown tend to Bush's stump, and, following the written instructions, Hornblower withdraws the final ligature from the wound. Bush's stump bleeds and oozes pus, and Bush is feverish and very ill.

Over the next days the travel continues as Bush recovers; Hornblower marvels at Bush's incredible constitution. The coach changes from National Route 9 to National Route 7, and Hornblower spots a road sign which indicates Paris to be only 178 miles distant. The men have travelled nearly four hundred miles in perhaps ten days' time. Then a winter storm blows overhead—the date is about early December, 1810. The sleet falls thickly and the road turns to mud, slowing progress considerably. The coach is often stopped so that the ice can be cleared from the horse's shoes, and one of the animals throws a shoe. Then, the coach slides off the elevated roadway and nearly drops into the Loire River. The guards try to drag the coach to the roadway, but it is impossible. Bush is unloaded and Hornblower and Brown assist—but to no avail. The Englishmen are again loaded and Hornblower overhears Caillard dispatch the guards to Nevers, some four miles away, for assistance. While he sits in the coach fretting, Hornblower sees a rowboat bobbing on the river, and he forms an instant plan. Brown quickly knocks down Caillard with a powerful blow, ties him up, and flings him into the coach. Hornblower and Brown carry Bush to the boat and the men then push off into the sleeting darkness, down an unknown and frigid river in a small, stolen rowboat.

The men proceed by boat through several frightening rapids. They drift through Nevers in just a few minutes and continue on. Hornblower happily realizes that their escape by river allows them to rapidly outstrip any warning sent overland. The boat grounds in shallows but Hornblower and Brown drag it free. They continue downriver through more rapids and then encounter a small waterfall. The boat instantly capsizes and Hornblower is thrown into the current where he is repeatedly pulled under and tumbled about at the foot of the falls. Nearly drowned, Hornblower finally struggles to shore

where he meets Brown and Bush and learns their escape to shore had been very easy. The men are alive but freezing and soaking wet. They see a distant house, and, although it means likely recapture, they proceed toward it because remaining in the wilderness means certain death by freezing. Hornblower knocks on the door and announces himself as a prisoner-of-war. The door to the considerable house opens and the men are invited in.

Chapters 5 and 6 Analysis

The voyage to Paris continues without respite. Hornblower spends many hours of each day standing uncomfortably in the coach, his neck bent at an awkward angle so he can peer out of the coach's high windows. Because of this he gains a good idea of where the coach is and what kind of speed it can make over the improved French roads. By modern standards, the progress is maddeningly slow: what today would be a single day's drive consumes day after day of constant travel. Faced with execution at journey's end, however, Hornblower finds the progress altogether too rapid for his taste. On the second day of travel, Bush takes a turn for the worse and becomes feverish. His incredible constitution kicks in, however, and within a few days he is past the dangerous point. Perhaps three weeks since his injury, Bush is healed to the point that he is out of danger. The chapters also continue to develop Brown as a capable and deferential man. He is placed in the somewhat untenable situation of being the sole enlisted man in the constant company and proximity of two officers, and he successfully balances the line between deference and participant in the voyage.

These two chapters mark a transition from the novel's opening segment to the house, which will be their residence for many months; indeed, the men will remain in the house through the beginning of Chapter 11. It is thus interesting to note that they approach the house with trepidation fearing that they will shortly be handed over to the authorities. The mysterious door opens and figuratively—as well as literally—draws the men from their past involuntary imprisonment into a future of voluntary imprisonment.

When the boat overturns, all three men are cast into the river. Bush and Brown make an easy escape and simply swim to shore and clamber onto the bank. Hornblower is drawn to the foot of the falls, though, and spins around and around in blackness, nearly drowning. Hornblower reflects that this different experience is simply a freak of the current, but it is also symbolic of Hornblower's mental experience contrasted to Bush and Brown's mental experience. The two men are relatively at ease and free of the eternal round of self-doubt and self-criticism to which Hornblower ceaselessly subjects himself. The event can thus be interpreted as a concise symbolic recapitulation of the first six chapters of the novel. In this light, Hornblower's escape foreshadows his eventual escape from France.

Chapters 7 and 8

Chapters 7 and 8 Summary

The men are taken inside the house and shown into the kitchen where a fire burns. Monsieur le Comte de Graçay Lucien Antoine de Ladon, the host, apologizes for receiving guests into the kitchen but notes it to be the warmest room in the house. The Count introduces Madame le Vicomtesse de Graçay Marie, his daughter-in-law. Hornblower struggles with his rudimentary and rusty French but manages to stammer introductions. Hornblower immediately notes Marie's dark eyes, auburn hair and simple beauty. He judges her to be about thirty and notes she is stout and decidedly not English. Meanwhile the Count realizes who Hornblower and Bush are, and makes another round of more-proper introductions. The Englishmen are dried off and clothed, and Bush is bundled into bed while Brown remains with the servants in the kitchen. Hornblower joins the Count in a reading room where he reviews several weeks' worth of newspapers. The Count questions Hornblower and receives honest, but difficult, answers. Surprisingly, the Count then announces that Hornblower will remain safe as his guest—he will not summon the authorities. The Count even offers Hornblower a loaded pair of pistols for safety, but Hornblower declines the generous offer.

In the morning Hornblower struggles to speak in French to Marie. Marie explains that the Count had three sons—Antoine, Marcel and Louis-Marie. Marie had married Marcel. The Count had lived in London as an exile before returning to France during an amnesty at his sons' request. His sons entered the service and were subsequently all killed in action. Thus, the Count, although he is against the current administration, enjoys a reputation beyond dispute. Marie reveals herself as a peasant girl, married to Marcel while he was stationed in her village. Hornblower finds her attractive and beautiful. Typically, Hornblower then thinks about his marriage to Maria; he finds his wife's constant attentions cloying and irritating. Yet their two small children had died of smallpox, in their arms; even now, Maria is pregnant with her third child, who is due in only a few weeks' time. Hornblower compares Maria unfavorably to Marie.

Later in the day the local law enforcement officer arrives at the house and inquires about any fugitives. Hornblower and Brown hide in Bush's locked room during the visit, and the Count dismisses the officer with a negative statement. Later, Hornblower and the Count discuss escape. The Count feels Hornblower should escape, but argues that the attempt must be delayed several months until spring or summer. By April, the search will have been called off; the river will not be in dangerous flood, and Hornblower could proceed by river. Although the thought of waiting four months agitates Hornblower, he concedes that the Count's plan is sound. The men will wait for April, hiding as the Count's guests.

Chapters 7 and 8 Analysis

The men are invited into the Chateau Graçay where, remarkably, they are greeted as friends and not as enemies of France. The elderly Count's story is related to Hornblower by Marie, and the story is credible. What strains the suspension of disbelief is Hornblower's random selecting of a house which happens to be sympathetic to three escaped prisoners-of-war. This happenstance reunion, a sort of deus ex machine, is the plot's weakest element. Fortunately, the narrative makes little of the event and simply moves forward, leaving the fortuitous accident as a large but momentary bump in the fictional roadway.

The introduction of the Count and Marie completes the cast of major characters in the novel; both the Count and Marie appear as major characters in one other subsequent volume of the series and both of them remain major characters through the end of Chapter 10. Note how Hornblower views Marie as rather plain upon their initial meeting, finds her fairly beautiful on the next few meetings, and finally finds her a great ravishing beauty by the end of his stay at the Count's house. Marie's gradually increasing virtues are appreciated by Hornblower only as he falls in love with her; in this respect, the narrative construction playfully and enjoyably mimics the process of falling in love. Upon their first private conversation, Marie makes Hornblower think of Maria, his distant wife. This seemingly incongruous reaction foreshadows the torrid sexual affair which will consume Hornblower during the next few months. Although not yet consciously aware of it, Hornblower already finds the well-married peasant girl, Marie, attractive. The complex Hornblower finds her peasant background appealing, and also the fact that she is well-married and thus socially 'significant' in a way that Maria can never attain. Yet Marie's peasant origin makes her approachable in a way that Barbara, the admiral's wife, can never be. For Hornblower at least, Marie thus straddles two disparate worlds and embodies the best of both of them.

The Count's history is somewhat complicated but presented in a very straightforward manner. Marie's chronological and uninterrupted recounting in Chapter 8 is easily understandable. Although living in France, the Count is opposed to Napoleon's tyrannical government. As the local nobleman, he is simultaneously in charge and beyond suspicion. His servants are all long-term acquaintances, and his egalitarian views and even-handed treatment of them ensures their absolute loyalty. Hornblower, Bush and Brown have happened upon perhaps the only place in France where they can winter in comfort and safety while they prepare their springtime escape.

Chapters 9 and 10

Chapters 9 and 10 Summary

Weeks pass and Bush wholly recovers. Brown manufactures various peg legs for Bush, and numerous alterations are made as Bush learns to walk on the artificial limb. Every few days local law enforcement makes various wide-area sweeps; as the weeks progress these searches happen with decreasing frequency. Finally, the newspapers announce that Hornblower and his companions have drowned during an escape attempt, and the searches are discontinued. The Count warns that the French government will never admit to a mistake; thus, if Hornblower is recaptured after the announcement he should expect to be shot immediately. As the days go by Hornblower worries about Maria, his wife; the child has surely come, and he envisions Maria as a putative widow in mourning. He also envisions Barbara mourning his death; at least, he hopes she does. As the days go by Hornblower's French rapidly improves; Brown surprisingly becomes quickly fluent, but Bush can't fathom anything but nautical English. Even as spring arrives the men are forced to always stay inside so their presence goes entirely undetected.

Hornblower is delighted to learn that the Count favors the game whist; Hornblower, the Count and Marie form a nightly foursome with the reluctant Bush. But constant repetition molds even Bush into a dependable, if predictable, player. The English men make the acquaintance of the Count's core staff including Felix, the butler; Felix's wife, the housekeeper and Felix's daughter Louise, the maid. Felix's brother, Bertrand, is the coachman; and Bertrand's wife, Fat Jeanne, is the cook. Bertrand's two daughters work in the kitchen; two of his sons work in the stables, and another son is the footman. Hornblower spends many hours gazing out of the window at the towers of distant Nevers or the bends of the nearby Loire River. Meanwhile, Bush and Brown build a stout flat-bottomed river boat, 15' 5" in length and capable of taking all three men to the coast. Hornblower watches the work on the boat and envies Bush and Brown's ability to work with their hands and create a boat from wooden planks. Through it all, Hornblower and Marie fall in love. One night, they meet near Marie's bedroom and clasp each other in a passionate embrace, which quickly leads to sexual intercourse.

Their affair continues through the next few weeks, and they successfully keep it a secret. The kitchen bakes fifty pounds of ship's biscuit for the voyage—Hornblower is happy that he alone knows how the peculiar bread is made. The Count estimates the river voyage in the boat at 325 miles and seventeen days, and the biscuit is supplemented with various other provisions. The trip is planned and discussed, Hornblower's French rapidly improves, and he falls head-over-heels in love with Marie.

The Count suggests that the men pose as fishermen while on the boat until they reach the coastal city of Nantes. There, the men plan to pose as Dutch customs officials. The Count's staff sews Dutch uniforms, and the Count gives Hornblower the Legion of Honor medal posthumously awarded to Louis-Marie. Coupled with Bush's missing foot, the

uniforms and medals will prove an effective disguise. Hornblower's phony high rank will allow him to pass unchallenged through society, and their assumed Dutch nationality will explain their strangely-accented French. The plan seems good to all. As the days pass, Hornblower and the Count discuss the war, politics, and newspaper articles and become fast friends. The Count harbors some affection for Hornblower as something of a surrogate son. Finally, the date of departure approaches, and the Englishmen say their goodbyes to their hosts and friends. Hornblower and Marie seek a sexual liaision a final time, even as Hornblower worries about court-martial for the loss of the Sutherland awaiting him beyond possible escape.

Chapters 9 and 10 Analysis

The two chapters encompass about eighteen weeks of time and develop along largely unremarkable lines given the narrative framework established in Chapter 8. The Count remains true to his word and harbors the fugitives until the search is called off. Throughout, he proves a gracious, attentive and devoted host. Bush recovers his health completely and learns to walk again using a peg leg, giving the redoubtable character something of a pirate's flair—ironic in that he has been condemned as guilty of piracy. Brown proves to be wholly remarkable and quickly masters French, spending nearly all his time in company with the servants, and perhaps too much time with Annette, one of Bertrand and Fat Jeanne's daughters, though that plot element remains to be resolved in a subsequent volume in the series.

The men also prepare thoroughly for their pending escape attempt. Bush and Brown build a flat-bottomed boat suitable for river travel. Hornblower supervises the laying in of provisions for the trip. The two disguises are prepared for each man—one as a simple fisherman, and one as a Dutch customs official. The plan is well thought-out and, in the execution, works flawlessly. The narrative exposes one peculiarity, however. Early on, Hornblower estimates the speed of a coach at about sixty miles in twelve hours, or five miles per hour; he also muses that river travel by boat is faster than travel by coach during his initial escape from Caillard. However, the Count estimates—and Hornblower agrees—that river travel by boat will proceed at about nineteen miles in twelve hours, or only about a mile and a half per hour. Thus, Hornblower and his companions travel 395 miles in ten days by coach but expect to travel only 325 miles in seventeen days by the 'faster' river boat. Both distances and travel times seem plausible, but do not agree with Hornblower's assertion that river travel by boat is faster than travel by coach.

Finally, Hornblower develops a deep friendship with the Count and pursues a torrid sexual affair with Marie. Hornblower is aware enough that his behavior is shameful in view of the Count's gracious hosting, but he does not stop his behavior. In the chronological progression of the series of novels, this is Hornblower's first extra-marital affair, and Marie is his only long-term, extra-marital lover. After Maria's death, Hornblower marries Barbara and—once again—seeks out Marie for a second series of extra-marital sexual encounters.

Chapters 11 and 12

Chapters 11 and 12 Summary

Hornblower, Bush, and Brown move the boat to the river and load supplies. Hornblower notes with surprise that all of the serving women weep when Brown says goodbye; he also notes with surprise that Brown's French is quite good. The men enter the boat and shove off down the river, drifting with the current and putting out fishing poles to complete their disguise. They occasionally ground on the shallow river bottom, and from time to time make difficult portage around obstacles. As the hours pass by, Hornblower thinks of Marie and feels shame for having so comported himself with her. In the evening they land and prepare dinner. The men find it awkward to resume a life of naval discipline together after such a prolonged and relaxed stay. Their necessary proximity and disparate ranks add to the awkwardness.

Days pass and they drift down river. Bush often vocally frets about the loss of his foot, noting that it will make promotion, or even active-duty service, unlikely. Hornblower muses about his own future and worries about his pending court-martial. The three men come to realize they are close friends. They pass down the Loire River through Gien, Sully, Château-Neuf-sur-Loire, Jargeau, Orleans, and Beaugency. Hornblower observes the local architecture of the towns they drift through. The river bed changes from heavy rock to gravel and then to sand as the volume of water constantly increases. They pass through Blois, Chaumont, Amboise, Tour, and Langeais, and continue onward. Finally Brown notes that he can smell the sea, and Hornblower realizes he can also. They observe the river's flow carefully and detect a slight tidal swell. Now that they have reached tidewater, they must proceed with extreme caution as Napoleon's agents routinely patrol tidewater regions.

Chapters 11 and 12 Analysis

These two chapters bridge the pleasant but restrictive stay at Château Graçay and the Englishmen's escape to the sea through Nantes. The writing is particularly taut and enjoyable, and much of the focus of the narrative is given over to descriptive passages and Hornblower's generally pleasant, internal contemplation. Additionally, the men exchange casual conversation and realize, slowly and inaudibly, that they have developed a strong bond of friendship, which transcends the boundaries of rank. While Hornblower is the captain and remains in command, Brown feels at-ease enough to make comments from time to time and speak before spoken to. While this would normally infuriate Hornblower, in this instance it does not. This brief interlude can almost be considered a camping narrative. The men travel through idyllic countryside, enjoy the voyage, camp at night, fish during the day and have no mishaps. The boat that Bush and Brown have built functions perfectly; the supplies which Hornblower selected are sufficient, and the equipment needed for the voyage is at hand. In all, the river descend is successful, enjoyable and unremarkable. One humorous aspect is Hornblower's

amazement at how 'acceptable' it is to have limitless fresh water available. Used to seawater sailing, the river experience is different in notable ways beyond merely being fresh water. Hornblower struggles with the current and the constricted course, fumbled in landing the boat in current instead of surf, struggles with portage and misjudges distance and speed. However, he finds all this enjoyable rather than frustrating and rather quickly masters most aspects of river travel.

The French governmental policy of the time was to heavily patrol roadways and coastal zones. Thus, Hornblower's initial idea of traveling overland by horse was quickly discarded as impracticable—French law enforcement could be expected every dozen or so miles. The French government has a blind eye for water travel, however. Thus, passing down river as apparent fishermen spares the Englishmen from encountering any law enforcement. This changes as the river enters tidewater and the coastal zone. As England rules the seas, the French empire must be secured against English coastal invasion. Thus, all coastal areas are heavily patrolled by various governmental agents. When Brown smells the sea and Hornblower detects tidal surge, the men realize they are entering a narrow zone of coastal waters, which are heavily patrolled by French agents—the idyllic fishing trip necessarily changes into a desperate and risky escape attempt.

Chapters 13, 14, and 15

Chapters 13, 14, and 15 Summary

Hornblower, Bush and Brown discard their fishermen disguise and put on the disguise of Dutch customs officials. They then enter Nantes for the high-risk portion of their escape. Their boat is unsuitable for the open sea, and they must beg or steal suitable passage. Hornblower looks about Nantes and sees that the town, once a flourishing port, is slowly dying of strangulation due to the English blockade. Only two mercantile ships of the neutral United States of America are in the harbor. Hornblower reminisces about his many months and years of blockade duty and is intrigued to view their local effect. Hornblower looks around for an ocean-going craft which he can steal. He also notes several chain-gangs of slave labor unloading the merchant ships.

The men put their boat alongside a quay and disembark. They note that nearby is a 10-gun cutter, Witch of Endor, formerly an English boat captured some eleven months previously by the French. The cutter has only an anchor watch—two men and one officer. Hornblower impulsively decides to steal Witch of Endor, yet there is no pilot for the difficult estuarial waters, and there is no crew for such a large vessel—obviously, the theft of the cutter is impracticable. The three men walk around the dock area and watch another ship warp in. The ship is made fast to the quay and the local pilot comes off her. Hornblower feels a surge of impetuosity and makes an instant decision to take Witch of Endor, practicable or not. He approaches the pilot and asks him to clarify something about a chart; the pilot, awed by Hornblower's lofty Dutch rank, agrees. The party of four men proceeds to Witch of Endor and Hornblower blusters his way on board and into the cabin, accompanied by the officer of the anchor watch. The pilot and officer are quickly overpowered and tied up. Hornblower summons the two sailors on watch and they, too, are overpowered and secured. Hornblower then walks onto the quay and talks to the French boss of a chain-gang of ten men, requesting temporary assistance in moving stores on Witch of Endor. The boss is awed by Hornblower's Dutch rank and agrees. On board the cutter, the boss is subdued and secured and Hornblower frees the men—little more than slaves, really. He changes from Dutch to English uniform, delivers a rousing speech to the staggering slaves to convince them to act as crew and secure their own freedom, and then browbeats the local pilot with vicious threats. Bush and Brown cast off from the quay, and Witch of Endor drifts into the current as Hornblower is consumed with fiery determination to make good his escape.

As Witch of Endor reaches the broad estuarial waters, the wind dies. The vessel might easily drift into range of the harbor guns with the running tide and Hornblower puts the men to work at the sweeps. After several minutes he sees the harbor semaphore begin signaling and soon the closest fortress runs out its guns and begins firing—fortunately, they are just out of range. Then Hornblower sees three small boats heavily laden with soldiers, put off from the shore and give chase. As the men row the boat, Hornblower carries shot and powder from the magazine to the deck and trains around a light deck gun. Bush puts the vessel over a little and Hornblower opens fire at extreme range,

assisted by the bullied pilot, while the men rest and eat. Hornblower maintains a steady but low fire, and the men again start the sweeps. Hornblower scores a hit at 1,000 yards and, a few minutes later, a second hit on the same boat causes it to founder and break up. The other two boats pick up their comrades and continue to close. As the second boat ranges up, Hornblower fires at close range and sinks it—the third boat turns back and Witch of Endor continues to sea under power of the sweeps.

After hours of backbreaking labor, the wind comes up and the vessel sails outward as the men collapse to the decks, hands bleeding. Hornblower has a dreamy, sleepless feeling and reacts to stimuli slowly and confusedly, having been without sleep for three days. He remembers Marie's naked body and nearly drowning in the river as one confused, jumbled series of images. Bush exults in their dramatic escape while Hornblower frets about impending court martial for loss of the Sutherland. Hornblower wonders what his return will entail and speculates about Maria and his three-month-old child. Finally, Brown spots a distant sail and they close on the English ship. It is the Triumph, commanded by Sir Thomas Hardy. Hornblower is received aboard with incredulity; he delivers his report to a stunned Hardy. Hornblower then learns that Admiral Leighton indeed died of his wounds—Barbara is a widow. He asks about Maria but receives no news, and he images that he has an infant son. Hornblower mulls these developments and is equally disoriented by the realization that, finally, he is once again free of captivity—and then he goes to sleep.

Chapters 13, 14, and 15 Analysis

At the time of Hornblower's escape, the Netherlands were occupied by France and the two countries were nominal allies. Throughout Europe, wounded soldiers would commonly be posted to non-combat functions such as customs inspection. Thus, the disguise of Dutch customs officials is imminently suitable. The wounded Bush would fit the role, and Hornblower and Brown's accented French would be explained. As a high-ranking military officer, Hornblower's activities would not be questioned. And everyone would expect to see foreign customs officers moving about waterfronts and estuaries. Note that Hornblower discards the Dutch disguise very quickly, however, perhaps even imprudently quickly. He fears being captured during the escape attempt and being branded a spy. He realizes he is already under death sentence and in any case will be shot upon capture, but to Hornblower the reality of acting as a spy is a personal problem—he is not a spy; he is an escaping English officer. Once the escape is in progress, he must appear as an English officer and not as a spy. The plan to steal Witch of Endor is audacious; her departure will be noticed, and her worth is considerable. Instead of filching a fishing boat during the night, Hornblower sails a vessel of war out of the harbor in broad daylight, using freed slaves as crew and a coerced pilot.

This segment of the novel is the climax of a prolonged rising action, which began in Chapter 5 with the Englishmen's initial escape. For about five months the men have been fugitives from justice, seeking escape from a hostile country and existing under threat of a death sentence. Indeed, their tenuous survival has become so rote that Hornblower only slowly realizes he has achieved freedom. Their escape in Witch of

Endor is remarkable and audacious; they have recovered a captured vessel of war of considerable value, fled a hostile port in a running battle and returned—as it were—from the dead. More, the intervening months in England have been full of events. Admiral Leighton has died, leaving Hornblower's love interest, Barbara, a widow. Sir Thomas Hardy and Triumph are lightly fictionalized representations of a historically-significant captain and ship. Other events referenced make it fairly easy to date specific fictional events within the novel to a given month and year of historic time.

Chapters 16 and 17

Chapters 16 and 17 Summary

In the morning Hornblower again meets with Hardy and delivers a more-complete recounting of events as well as catching up on various minor topics. Triumph and Witch of Endor sail to rejoin the fleet, whereupon Hornblower reports to Admiral Lord Gambier, known derogatively as "Dismal Jimmy" among the fleet. Lord Gambier receives Hornblower with surprise and listens with a strange expression to Hornblower's recounting of his prolonged adventures. Lord Gambier then states that Hornblower has enjoyed the protection and guidance of divine providence. Hornblower officially reports on the loss of the Sutherland, with 117 killed and 145 wounded, of which 44 later died of wounds. Again, Lord Gambier suggests that God's hand has guided Hornblower. Lord Gambier considers for a moment, and then announces he will promote Bush to commander of Witch of Endor and send the vessel with dispatches to England. Hornblower is surprised but, of course, very pleased. Lord Gambier then informs Hornblower that he is under official arrest pending court martial—a routine procedure—but gives him latitude to roam the flagship. Later in the afternoon Lord Gambier's secretary joins Hornblower to write down the official written report of events. The secretary is obviously in awe of Hornblower; after a long session of dictation, Hornblower again sleeps.

In the morning Hornblower receives some devastating news from a sympathetic fellow officer—Maria died in childbirth, some three months previously. Hornblower is staggered and receives the news with confusion and profound sadness. Over the next several days he spends his time in isolation and, landing in England, returns to his now-empty residence. Bush then visits Hornblower and brings gifts, news and good cheer. Bush proffers a stack of newspapers that all laud Hornblower's magnificent exploits even as Hornblower worries about his upcoming court martial. Bush tells him that Witch of Endor has been purchased into the service—Hornblower is richer by 2,600 pounds; more than he has ever had. Bush and Brown also profit handsomely. Bush derives great consolation from Bush's cheery disposition. Later, a letter from Barbara arrives. She greets him warmly and states she has adopted his son—presumed an orphan—and named him Richard Arthur Horatio Hornblower. Over the next few days much mail arrives, all of it written with adulation. Hornblower deals with the minor expenses of Maria's funeral.

Chapters 16 and 17 Analysis

These chapters mark another transition for Hornblower. No longer a fugitive, he is nevertheless formally arrested pending court martial. Although this is standard procedure and merely a formality, it is still distressing to Hornblower who realizes that strange things may happen in a court martial. Bush is finally made commander—a notable action on the part of Lord Gambier and a public declaration that Hornblower's

many actions have been deemed 'correct' by the admiral. Even so, Hornblower continues to fret about the court martial through its completion in Chapter 18.

Another major development is the death of Hornblower's wife Maria during childbirth, some three months earlier. In a strict, chronological examination, Hornblower was thus likely a widower when he began his affair with Marie—though he had no way of knowing that at the time. Hornblower reflects upon Maria with a complicated and strange suite of emotions. He feels he has never really loved her, and certainly there has been a lack of passion in the relationship, but they had been married about eight years and have had three children together, two of whom died of smallpox. Since their courtship Hornblower has risen from a poverty-stricken lieutenant to a publicly-acclaimed captain of some wealth. He views it all with profound sadness but is not disabled by the loss. Indeed, Hornblower's reaction is a masterpiece of psychological characterization and is one of the strongest elements of the novel. Hornblower has returned home, finally, after a months-long voyage through hundreds of miles of a hostile country. He has returned to a glorious reception and feels, now, that at least possibly he and Barbara can be together. Ever reserved, Hornblower focuses on the potential negatives rather than the many profound positives in his current situation.

Chapters 18 and 19

Chapters 18 and 19 Summary

Hornblower attends his court martial. The proceeding is fairly brief and straightforward, and he is quickly and honorably acquitted. Hornblower meets Hookham Frere, a government agent. Frere maneuvers him to a waiting coach and spirits him away to London; Hornblower insists on a short stop to visit the church where Maria is buried. Hornblower soon discerns that Frere is a political figure, and that the government intends to use Hornblower's popularity to make political hay. On the way, crowds line the roads and cheer for Hornblower as a returning hero. Hornblower is first interviewed by the Prime Minister and then moves on under Frere's watchful eye to a meeting with the under secretary of state. Finally, he is introduced to His Royal Highness. Hornblower is then surprised to be knighted Sir Horatio Hornblower, Knight of the Bath; he is surprised and pleased to be named Colonel of Marines—an appointment which includes no responsibilities but carries a 1200-pound annual salary. Finally, after a prolonged and exhausting day, he goes to bed.

In the morning, Hornblower is visited by Lady Barbara Leighton; she is still dressed in mourning for her late husband, but Hornblower sees her as beauty personified. She brings along Richard, Hornblower's son. Hornblower experiences an awkward moment of confused introspection while he mulls his feelings for Barbara, but then in an epiphany he realizes that she loves him, too. As the happiness wells up inside him he looks into his young son's captivating brown eyes and realizes a bright future indeed is in store.

Chapters 18 and 19 Analysis

The dénouement is presented as two short chapters. Chapter 18 deals with Hornblower's professional career while Chapter 19 deals with his personal situation. The court martial proceeds along standard lines and quickly concludes that the loss of the Sutherland is not a failure on Hornblower's part. Indeed, he is not merely acquitted but is "most honorably acquitted" (p. 275) and further commended by the court for his action. What follows is a whirlwind tour of political significance. As cheering spectators line the road, Hornblower is whisked to London by Hookham Frere, a lightly-fictionalized representation of John Hookham Frere, a historic diplomat of the period. Frere presents Hornblower serially to the prime minister, the under secretary of state and finally His Royal Highness. Hornblower then receives a knighthood and an appointment as Colonel of Marines. The appointment is purely ceremonial and carries no obligations—it is merely a way for the crown to reward individuals for notable service. Thus, within a few days Hornblower moves from being a captain to a knight and from being nearly penniless to being remarkably wealthy. He becomes an quite eligible bachelor, nearly equal to Barbara's station, as well as being the talk of the town.

The final chapter, the shortest in the novel, wraps up personal issues. Hornblower awakens to find Barbara calling on him with his son—and her adopted son—in arms. Little Richard, about three months old, takes an immediate liking to his father. Hornblower finds Barbara compellingly attractive and, after a few awkward moments of introspection, realizes that she reciprocates his feelings. Their burgeoning romance is free to proceed and, indeed, will shape the remainder of both of their lives. Like nearly all the volumes in the series, then, the novel ends on a happy note.

Characters

Captain Sir Horatio Hornblower, Knight of the Bath

Captain Horatio Hornblower is a post captain in the British Navy during the Napoleonic wars and commands the H.M.S. Sutherland, a 74-gun ship of the line, though the command has been lost at the opening of the novel. His age is thirty-four, and he is fit but not overly strong, and is personally critical of his thinning hair and slight roll about the middle. He is very educated and joined the naval service fairly late at the age of seventeen, as a midshipman in 1794. By about 1800, he had reached the rank of lieutenant; by 1803, the rank of lieutenant, and posted captain about 1805. Thus, he has a term of naval service at the novel's opening of some sixteen years. Hornblower is an exceptional captain, seaman and leader, though he is nervous and constantly plagued by internalized self-doubt. He usually regards himself as cowardly and dishonest, yet all who know him regard him in an opposite way. His powerful drive to unqualified success masks his internal turmoil. He maintains an icy reserve, and even his closes 'friends' never fully know him. An introspective and lonely man, Hornblower is married to Maria and had two children by her—a boy and a girl named Horatio and Maria, respectively. Both children died of smallpox prior to the novel's primary timeline. A third child, Richard, is born during the novel's primary timeline, and, sadly, Maria dies during childbirth—in the belief that her husband has preceded her in death.

Hornblower is entirely tone deaf and finds music irritating and incomprehensible. He is somewhat prone to seasickness, abhors many of the normal usages of naval life, declines strict discipline achieved through flogging, and prefers to pass his time in isolation, reading or occasionally playing whist. He is unusually poor for a captain and worries frequently about his shabby appearance—at least at the novel's open. Hornblower's early career is mentioned casually during several scenes in the novel. A somewhat recent captain, the Sutherland was not his first command. Prior to the novel's primary timeline, he spent a prolonged period as a prisoner of war in Spain, where he became tolerably fluent in Spanish. In any non-combat, stressful situation, however, his Spanish deserts him, and his English becomes stuttering and halting. Hornblower also speaks halting French. Hornblower expects much from his officers and crew, and when occasion demands it, he is a relentless taskmaster. His leadership qualities are grounded in the reality of always expecting more from himself than he does from his subordinates. He is described physically in only vague terms—about 6' 1" in height and of average weight; he finds his bulging middle unacceptable. His thin brown hair also troubles him. His fingers are long and apparently delicate, though he considers them bony.

Maria Ellen Hornblower née Mason

Maria Ellen Hornblower is the daughter of a landlady, who owned a tenement where Hornblower lived during the Peace of Amiens. Maria's mother is dour and penurious, but

Maria is expansive of spirit, optimistic and generous. Maria and Hornblower's wedding followed a sexual encounter, and though Maria loves Hornblower deeply, her feelings are not particularly reciprocated; in fact, Hornblower finds Maria cloying and irritating. Maria is described as rather plain and perhaps a bit homely, with a body thickened by childbirth and hard work. Hornblower finds her overly prone to weeping and emotionally clinging. Obviously devoted to Hornblower, she dotes upon his needs. In return, Hornblower is formal and distant but also devoted and proper respecting her support. Bush finds Maria generally irritating.

Maria and Hornblower have had two children—a boy and a girl—prior to the novel's primary timeline. Both children died of smallpox while very young. When the novel opens, Maria is some six months pregnant with their third child. About one month prior to the child's birth, Maria believes Hornblower to have died, drowned in France. Maria dies during childbirth, though the child—a boy—survives. Maria is a fairly minor character in the novel; in fact, she does not actually appear in the narrative—but is notable as Hornblower thinks of her often during his long voyages. In virtually all respects, most men would consider her to be an exceptional companion.

Richard Arthur Horatio Hornblower

Richard is Hornblower's third child and second son. Richard's two older siblings, Horatio and Maria, died of smallpox about 1808, making Richard Hornblower's sole heir. Richard's mother, Maria, died in childbirth. Believing Hornblower to also be deceased, Lady Barbara Leighton adopted Richard and named him after her two famous brothers, Richard and Arthur, as well as after his father. When Hornblower returns to England, Barbara happily introduces Richard to his father. Although only three months old, Richard appears alert and cognizant and instantly takes a liking to his father. Hornblower notes that Richard has striking brown eyes.

Lady Barbara Leighton née Wellesley

Lady Barbara Leighton is the aristocratic, younger sister of two militarily and politically successful brothers. She comes from an established, respected and powerful British family and has spent considerable time in India and Central America, and is familiar with the practices of the sea. Barbara met Hornblower when she took passage on his warship from Central America to England, and the two characters fell in love during the voyage, though their relationship has been platonic—these events were covered in a prior volume in the series. At the time, of course, Hornblower was married, and Barbara's superior station prevented any public union. Barbara married Admiral Leighton in about 1810—a move which crushed Hornblower but also consolidated political influence around the Wellesley family.

Barbara is fairly beautiful through Hornblower is entirely smitten by her and believes her to be far more beautiful than she probably is. She has a willowy and graceful figure, however, and a youthful intensity and a joy of life, which is infectious. Highly educated,

she demonstrates a natural intelligence and a gift for putting others at ease. She is keenly insightful and easily influences men, enjoying easy successes among them. Hornblower feels dubious about Barbara's feelings for him, though, in fact she loves him as deeply as he loves her. Barbara is widowed in late 1810, after scarcely a few months of marriage when her husband is killed in action. When Maria Hornblower dies in childbirth about 1811, Barbara adopts the infant because she believes Hornblower is dead. She names the boy after her two famous brothers and his famous father giving him the impressive name of Richard Arthur Horatio Hornblower. When Hornblower returns to England, Barbara is overjoyed and presents Richard to him, simultaneously indicating to Hornblower that, as his station is elevated and his fortune secured, they can now publicly court—after a suitable mourning period for the deaths of their spouses.

William Bush

William Bush, born circa 1766, is about forty-four at the novel's opening. He is a tallish man of great courage and dominant physical strength with satisfactory intelligence but no great insight. He is well-liked, open, generous and gracious but suffers from a lack of spontaneity of thought. He is in his element when surrounded by rough seamen and sailors and finds women nearly unintelligible. He is thoroughly honest and entirely dependable. He is also formidable with a sword, a good shot with a pistol and an excellent commander of gunnery. Little is revealed of Bush's life ashore—he has several sisters and he supports them, along with his mother, financially. In all respects, Bush is a bluff and likable man who can be depended upon in any crisis.

Bush has served with Hornblower nearly constantly for about seventeen years when the novel opens. Both men had been lieutenants together; in fact, Bush was the senior lieutenant. Hornblower's stellar career allowed Bush to ride along to great successes, and the two men form a redoubtable and capable team. Bush has served as Hornblower's 1st lieutenant in nearly every command since Hornblower's promotion. During the Peace of Amiens, the men had remained fast personal friends. The fact that Bush retains personal and professional discipline and order throughout all of the various episodes in the novel, speaks well of his capacity as a reliable, if uninspired, leader of men and dependable friend.

At the opening of the novel Bush suffers from a grievous wound—the loss of a foot during the action aboard the Sutherland. During the first days of transportation, he is feverish, but his iron constitution quickly asserts and within a week, he is well on his way to recovery. During the daring escape from Caillard, Bush is more of a hindrance than a help due to his injury. In fact, he fully expects to be left behind. When he is dunked in the ice-cold Loire River later that day, he recovers without any ill effect, perhaps due to a lifetime of swimming in cold water. Within a few weeks, Bush is fully recovered, and then, with his typical stubborn demand of personal achievement, he rapidly learns to walk with an artificial leg. At the conclusion of the novel Bush is promoted to Commander by Admiral Lord Gambier as a public statement in support of Hornblower.

Brown

Brown is Hornblower's coxswain of lifelong naval service, though during the novel he acts more as a personal steward. He has a natural physical aptitude, which makes him good at nearly everything he does, whether it is mending clothes, building a boat or supporting Hornblower as captain. Brown assists Hornblower accomplish nearly everything physical in the novel—Hornblower conceives the proper action, and Brown then carries it out to physical perfection. He demonstrates a truly remarkable versatility throughout the novel, walking a delicate line between proper deference to his captain and friendly familiarity with his traveling companion. He becomes fluent in French during a short four months and is universally beloved by those who meet him. Throughout the novel Brown is tireless and dedicated in supporting Hornblower and Bush. Brown is present in most of the scenes of the novel, but always in a minor and subservient role; little biographical data are offered for Brown—except that he is hugely strong, very dexterous, and has a shock of thick black hair.

Colonel Jean-Baptiste Caillard

Colonel Caillard is a French official who escorts Hornblower and Bush from Roses, Spain to Paris. He is a petty tyrant and fairly cruel in outlook; Hornblower compares him to Napoleon, though devoid of significance. Caillard cares little for his wards and expresses the sentiment that should Bush die from wounds during transport, it would be no great loss. Caillard's one redeeming virtue is that he is dedicated to his duty—though he executes it without imagination and in the end fails. Caillard is an unlikable minor character and symbolically represents the very worst of the French empire.

Lucien Antoine Hector Savinien de Ladon, Comte de Graçay

The Comte de Graçay is usually referred to within the novel as simply the Count. He is an older gentleman, widowed, whose three sons have all been killed serving Napoleon in the wars. He lives in a smallish, rococo castle in a rural area about four miles from the city of Nevers and alongside the Loire River. The Count is above all a polite gentleman, who never lets unpleasant events ruffle his composed and kindly demeanor. He represents an older class of nobility, prior to the radicalization of the French government under Napoleon. Although not blatantly treasonous, he objects to Napoleon's methodology and vision and refuses to participate in the new style of government. He is beloved by his few subjects and revered by nearly all who know him as a man of unshakable principle.

The Count harbors Hornblower, Bush and Brown when they arrive at his door soaking wet and freezing cold during a winter storm. Realizing they are fugitives, he offers them hospitality and insists they remain with him throughout the winter. He cares for them and works with them to develop an escape strategy, which ultimately proves successful.

Thus, he hosts the three prisoners of war for several months while Bush recovers from the loss of his foot, and Brown and Bush construct a boat, with which the three men make good their eventual escape. During this time, Hornblower and the Count become fast and intimate friends; the relationship having the additional flavor of a sort of father-son relationship. The two men, along with Bush and Marie, the Count's widowed daughter-in-law, enjoy playing cards and holding conversation. The Count is a major character in Chapters 7 through 10 but does not otherwise appear in the narrative. He is a singular character and very memorable.

Mademoiselle Marie la Vicomtesse de Graçay

The Vicomtesse de Graçay is always referred to simply as Marie within the novel. She is the widowed daughter-in-law of the Count and derives her title entirely through marriage to his deceased son. She grew up as a French peasant girl and met the Count's son while he was billeted in her town during military maneuvers. Fairly shortly after their marriage, her husband was killed in action. The Count's three sons are all casualties in the war, and he has no descendents, leaving Marie his closest—indeed, his only—relative. She functions as a daughter to the Count. Marie is described as beautiful but not overly so; she is strong and heavier than Barbara and has long, auburn hair, almost red in sunlight. Hornblower finds her beautiful and attractive but realizes many men would not consider her to be beautiful. He also notes she is decidedly not English in appearance.

The Count, and hence Marie, harbors Hornblower, Bush and Brown when they arrive at his door as escaped prisoners of war. Marie always acquiesces to the Count's desires and strives to make the English men feel comfortable at the home. The men remain as Marie's guests while Bush recovers from the loss of his foot, and Brown and Bush construct a boat with which the three men make good their eventual escape. During this time, Hornblower and the Count become fast and intimate friends and the two men, along with Bush and Marie, enjoy playing cards and holding conversation. About one month after Hornblower's arrival, Marie enters into a sexual relationship with him. They successfully keep their relationship entirely secret, though they meet frequently. When Hornblower makes good his eventual escape, Marie is saddened but does not cling to him or act maudlin in any way. Hornblower compares Marie to Maria, and finds Marie favorable in nearly every particular. Marie is a major character in Chapters 7 through 10, but does not otherwise appear in the narrative.

Admiral Lord James Gambier

Admiral Lord Gambier replaces Admiral Leighton as commander of the fleet off France during Hornblower's confinement in France. Lord Gambier is a lightly-fictionalized representation of a historic person of great significance. During the novel, he is roundly condemned for his handling of the 1809 Basque Roads battle, in which Gambier putatively allowed the French fleet to escape total annihilation. Lord Gambier demanded a court martial inquiry into his own action; thus, when Hornblower escapes from France

he is mildly surprised to find Lord Gambier still in command, fancying that Gambier may have been found guilty during the court martial. As Hornblower faces court martial himself, Lord Gambier's acquittal foreshadows Hornblower's acquittal.

Lord Gambier is held is minor contempt among the channel fleet, as is indicated by his nickname of "Dismal Jimmy". He is portrayed as a deeply religious man and first suggests, and then insists, that Hornblower has been watched over by Divine Providence. Lord Gambier publicly stamps his approval upon Hornblower's actions, prior to the court martial, by promotion William Bush to commander and giving him command of Witch of Endor. Although a minor character in the novel, Lord Gambier is very memorable and is enjoyable as a fictional presentation of the historic man.

Objects/Places

HMS Sutherland

A Dutch-build, English-captured 74-gun ship-of-the-line commanded by Hornblower prior to the opening of the novel. Hornblower used the ship to engage a French squadron of four ships off Rosas, Spain in a fierce battle, which resulted in the loss of the Sutherland but also the disablement of all four French ships. Hornblower spends much of the novel fretting over an impending court martial for the loss of the Sutherland. The court martial is a standard procedure in the Royal Navy when a captian has lost his ship.

Rosas

Rosas is a town and port on the Eastern, Mediterranean coast of Spain. Rosas, modern Roses, provided a good harbor with several strong coastal defenses and a prison. Chapters 1, 2, and 3 are set in Rosas.

Fire Ship

When Admiral Leighton attacks the crippled French squadron at Rosas, he uses a weapon known as a fire ship. In brief, an old or valueless ship would be packed with combustibles and sailed directly at the enemy fleet at anchor. During the final stages of approach, the fire ship would be set afire and the skeleton crew—usually only one or two men—would abandon ship into a towed rowboat. The fire ship would then hopefully collide with one or more enemy vessels, catching them on fire and hence destroying them. Hornblower watches a fire ship ignite a French ship-of-the-line, which explodes when the fire reaches the powder magazine. Fire ships were effective and feared weapons though control of them was often difficult.

Château Graçay

Château Graçay is the rococo castle of Count Graçay and consists of a main edifice and several outbuildings, including one expansive shed where Bush and Brown build a boat. The compound is located some four miles from Nevers, France and is very close to the banks of the Loire River. The compound is the setting for Chapters 7 through 10 and is presented as a luxurious and comfortable home.

Bush's Wooden Leg

William Bush loses a foot during the Sutherland's last battle. Over the next weeks, he recovers his health as his stump heals—examining surgeons universally declare that

Bush's stump is well-formed, as he fortunately enjoyed excellent medical care from a nameless Spanish surgeon. During his stay at Château Graçay Bush learns how to walk using a wooden leg, or peg leg—the image is humorous as Bush has been convicted in absentia of piracy. Under Hornblower's considered direction, Brown fashions a variety of wooden legs until a suitable one made. In many respects, Bush's wooden leg is symbolic of his own journey from lieutenant to commander through life of warfare.

Nevers

Nevers is a town on the Loire River in southern France. It is near the site where Hornblower, Bush and Brown make their escape from Caillard. The English men drift through Nevers during the night and then take shelter at the Château Graçay, some four miles from Nevers. During their stay several law enforcement officers visit from Nevers, but the men are sheltered by the Count. Interestingly enough, the town was originally founded during Roman occupation prior to the advent of the Christian era.

Loire River

The Loire River is the longest river in France, running over 600 miles in a roughly east-to-west direction and emptying into the Bay of Biscay. The mouth of the Loire River is near the site of the French city of Nantes. The Loire also runs through Nevers and, in the novel, is adjacent to the Château Graçay. Hornblower, Bush and Brown escape from France by sailing down the Loire River, and, as such, it is the setting of Chapters 11 through 13.

Bush's and Brown's Boat

Hornblower, Bush and Brown escape from France by coasting down the Loire River in a flat-bottomed boat constructed by Bush and Brown. Hornblower notes that the wooden craft is 15' 4" in length and has below-deck stowage for food. The shallow draft allows the vessel to run the river without often grounding. The boat is steered by tiller and often rowed by Brown. The boat is constructed entirely by the two men using only hand tools and a mutually-agreed upon mental plan. The fact that the building of it is executed in only a few months, and it does not leak at all demonstrates Bush's and Brown's remarkable seamanship and handiness.

Nantes

Nantes is a city and port in western France, located on the Loire River about thirty miles from the Atlantic coast. The city was once a major port and financial hub of the area, though when Hornblower passes through in mid-1811 he notes that the city appears to have suffered from "slow strangulation" (p. 192) because of the English blockade. In Nantes, Hornblower, Bush and Brown steal the Witch of Endor and make their way to

the Bay of Biscay where they meet the English fleet. Nantes is thus the setting for Chapters 13 and 14 of the novel.

Witch of Endor

The Witch of Endor is a 10-gun cutter, which Hornblower steals to escape from France. The vessel was originally English but circa July, 1810, had been captured by the French. The vessel is not fully described but as a cutter presumably bears a single, centrally-located mast with a fore-and-aft rig featuring multiple headsails. The vessel is small enough to be slowly moved by twelve men at sweeps when becalmed, and features ten, 6-pounder guns. It is presumably much larger than a typical cutter, though, as there is no consideration of making her simply a ship's boat and her independent operation is rather assumed. After rejoining the channel fleet, Lieutenant William Bush is promoted to Commander by Lord Gambier and given his first command in the Witch of Endor.

Themes

Prisoner of War

The novel opens with Hornblower, Bush, Brown and indeed hundreds of English sailors, as prisoners of war. Throughout Chapters 1 through 15 of the novel, Hornblower is a prisoner of war; it is not until he effects his escape in the Witch of Endor that his status changes. For the first three chapters Hornblower agonizes over his status—after all, as a young man, he languished in a Spanish prison as a prisoner of war for many, many months, and here again is in the same situation. He learns that the French government has issued a verdict of guilty in absentia for piracy. Hornblower and Bush are under a death sentence; as prisoners of war they are stripped of legal formalities and must simply accept the verdict. Chapters 4 through 6 see Hornblower, Bush and Brown moving through the French countryside on their voyage to Paris. They are treated as, and indeed are, prisoners of war. Chapters 7 through 13 deal with the men's escape and prolonged travel to Nantes. The exciting boat escape in Chapters 13 through 15 marks the transition from prisoner of war to freedom, as Hornblower, Bush and Brown gain the open sea and reunite with the channel fleet. Ironically enough, Hornblower's escape makes several French sailors prisoners of war in England.

Much of the novel, indeed most of Hornblower's internal brooding, is devoted to the psychological effects of being imprisoned in a foreign country by hostile forces. Caillard is the preeminent petty tyrant who imposes his will upon helpless victims. For example, he states the opinion that should Bush die of wounds during forced transportation, so much the better, as it will save the trouble of executing him the next week. Such a brutal dynamic and the absolute subjugation it implies forms one of the most interesting and complicated themes of the novel.

Escape

The basic plot of the novel involves an escape from imprisonment and execution. Indeed, nearly all of the events in Chapters 3 through 15 are focused on Hornblower's escape from France. As early as Chapter 2, Hornblower contemplates an eventual escape attempt when he decides to take Brown as a personal servant on the trip to Paris. On the one hand, Polwheal, Hornblower's steward of long service, would seem the logical choice. Polwheal indeed is a servant, knows what he should be about, and is well indoctrinated with Hornblower's habits, likes and dislikes. Polwheal is the obvious choice. Yet Hornblower dismisses the idea of personal comfort derived from an attendant in favor of future potential escape. He thinks of Brown—strong, quick, intelligent, and capable of decisive action without a moment's hesitation. Hornblower has seen Brown in combat, has watched him in dangerous and stressful situations, and believes that if any one man could assist him in any dangerous escape situation, that man would be Brown. Thus, Hornblower's first thought turns to escape and even before

any glimmer of opportunity presents, he arranges matters to the best of his ability. And when the opportunity arrives, Hornblower is ready to act.

The Englishmen's escape is a desperate gambit, but is the only plausible alternative to imminent death. Whether Hornblower is shot during an escape attempt or shot against a wall matters little—in fact, the former is perhaps preferable. Hornblower would rather drown in the Loire than be shot in Paris, and Bush is of the same mind. Thus, no matter how desperate the attempt, no matter how unlikely is success, clearly any opportunity must be seized. From Chapter 6 through Chapter 15, Hornblower, Bush and Brown prosecute their escape from France with single-minded determination. The idea of escape is broadened by several other symbolic events—Bush escapes from death; Hornblower escapes from drowning, and Barbara and Hornblower escape from unhappy relationships. The process of escape, of getting away from something, forms one of the major themes of the novel.

Affair of the Heart

Hornblower is not a man much given over to maudlin sentiment. He does form a romantic attachment to Barbara, and he does allow a certain idealization of her, but in general, he is pragmatic in his analysis and, if somewhat critically, in his self-analysis. Usually, Hornblower prides himself on abstinence, on conforming of the body to his will. He is not a man overly given to passion or the quest to satiate bodily desire. It is interesting, therefore, that he yields to basic physiological and psychological yearning and seeks comfort in the arms of Marie. Upon first meeting Marie, Hornblower judges her fairly harshly. He sees her as attractive but not beautiful and compares her somewhat unfavorably to Barbara. At the end of their torrid sexual affair, however, Hornblower has idealized Marie and conceives her as a great and profound beauty. The couple's brief affair of the heart forms a concise, but powerful, episode in the novel and consumes much of Chapters 7 through 11; in fact, Hornblower returns to Marie's arms in a subsequent volume of the series.

Additional elements of the theme of love affairs include Hornblower's prolonged introspection about his loveless but proper marriage to Maria, as well as his unremitting desire for Lady Barbara Leighton. An additional subtle element can be found in Hornblower's surprise at noting how several of the young women at Château Graçay weep as Brown readies to leave. As usual, Hornblower is rather dense regarding these types of things, and it will not be for many years that he realizes why the young women are crying—eventually, Brown will return to wed one of them. The prominent plot twist of Hornblower's unexpected affair of the heart forms one of the more interesting themes of the novel.

Style

Point of View

The novel is told from the third-person, limited point of view. The narrator is reliable, entirely effaced and unnamed. Hornblower, the main character, is the protagonist and central figure in all the scenes in the novel. The narrator divulges frequent internal thoughts of the protagonist, but not of other characters. The majority of the story is told through action and dialogue; revealed thoughts are frequent but generally are used for characterization rather than plot development.

The third-person point of view allows Hornblower to be presented in a highly-sympathetic manner. For example, the narrative structure portrays Hornblower's isolated mannerisms as deliberate rather than haughty. The narrative also allows portrayal of Hornblower's life situations as difficult but not pathetic. In this way, the choice of narrative view is appropriate and successful. Indeed, the structure of the novel and the method of plot development nearly require the use of a third-person point of view. Finally, the frequent appearance of minor characters is allowed through the point of view selected; it is carried throughout all but one of the novels of the series and is accessible and successful.

Setting

The novel features a complex array of ever-changing settings but nearly all of them are ashore, which is fairly unique for the series. The initial setting is a prison near Rosas, Spain, where Hornblower and his men are held after the loss of the Sutherland. Hornblower remains there for only a few days, and the setting comprises Chapters 1 through 3. The next setting is a mélange of French towns through which Hornblower passes on his forced transportation to Paris. The named towns include Cerbère, the setting for Chapter 4; Perpignan, the setting for Chapter 5; and Nevers, the setting for Chapter 6. All these French towns are poorly described and form a rather diffuse and transient setting through which Hornblower passes. A similar set of French towns forms an equally diffuse and transient setting for Hornblower's descent of the Loire, including Orleans, Blois, and Tours, among many others.

The Loire River is then introduced and is the primary setting for Chapters 7, 11, and 12. The river is described in considerable detail and forms an idyllic and peaceful setting during the summer months, which contrasts markedly with the river as a dangerous obstacle during the winter months. Some of the most compelling writing in the narrative describes Hornblower's passage down the Loire River. Chapters 8 through 10 are set in Château Graçay, the rococo castle of Count Graçay, which forms Hornblower's confined refuge during the winter months. The house is described vaguely, though more attention is given to its environs and the nearby Loire. The compound is obviously large, luxurious and very private. Chapter 13 is set in the port city of Nantes, which is

described in some detail—at least the waterfront portions. Of all the French towns considered, Nantes is the most-developed, though it is not a fully-developed setting. Chapters 14 through 17 feature a much more typical setting for the series of novels in that they transpire aboard ships-of-the-line of the Royal Navy at sea blockading France. Hornblower is immediately put at ease by the familiar nautical circumstances, though individual ships are only lightly discussed, often consisting of little more than a name. Finally, Chapters 18 and 19 are set in England in the environs around London. None of the specific locales are particularly developed, however. It can thus be readily appreciated that setting is not a strong element within the narrative construction and the novel reads more as a travelogue than as a development of a specific sense of place.

Language and Meaning

The novel's language is generally simple and accessible. Standard punctuation is used such that dialogue, interior thoughts, and descriptive text are easily distinguished. Most of the places, some of the objects and even some of the characters and events referenced in the narrative are identifiable as real geographical locations or historic persons or events. It is notable that the novel was originally written and published in England and uses standard English punctuation and spelling styles, which may be somewhat unfamiliar to American readers, though American-style punctuation is used throughout.

The novel becomes linguistically complex in two primary respects. First, when dealing with nautical events a somewhat-complicated, specialized language is used, which includes references to various parts of sailing craft and sailing techniques, which are probably not particularly familiar to modern readers. The technical language is accurate and interesting and a reference to a general sailing encyclopedia will assist in a careful reading and complete understanding of the text. Second, the novel makes frequent reference to various events which occur prior to the novel's opening. This is a standard construction technique and does not detract from the novel's readability. Indeed, the well-developed characters of Hornblower, Bush, Maria and Barbara are derived from previous volumes in the series and forms one of the more enjoyable aspects of the novel.

Structure

The novel has been variously entitled Flying Colours or Flying Colors, the latter preferred in some American printings. The 294-page novel is divided into nineteen enumerated, but unnamed, chapters of roughly equal length, except the two concluding chapters are very brief. The narrative is presented in chronological order with each chapter's events occurring after the events in the previous chapter and before the events in the subsequent chapter. Of course, references to previous events occur with some frequency, and characters from time to time think about future events, Hornblower, in particular, broods often upon possible future events. Such deviations

from the principle timeline are minor and are clearly identifiable as such. Thus, the novel's principle timeline is accessible and easily followed.

The novel is part of a series of novels; specifically, it is chronologically the seventh novel in a series which extends to ten volumes; however, the novel was the third-written of the series. Many of the principle characters presented in the novel, therefore, are recurring characters with backgrounds and histories developed or lightly re-developed in a chronologically prior novel. Even so, as the first-written novel in the series, there are no problematical references to prior events as might be expected.

The structure is further complicated by adherence to historical events. In broad terms, events in the novel are fictional or fictionalized events, which could have occurred or did occur, in the period of time used as the novel's setting; namely, the war between England and France during November, 1810, through June, 1811. Thus, the novel's language, technology, politics, geography, et cetera, are all based upon historically-accurate representations.

Quotes

"How did you come here?"
"We was settin' sail, sir, to beat out o' the bay. We'd just seen the old Sutherland take fire, an' Cap'n Elliott he says to us, he says, sir 'Now's the time, my lads. Tos'ls and to'gar'ns.' So up we went aloft, sir, an' I'd just taken the earring o' the main to'gar'n when down came the mast, sir, an' I was pitched off into the water. So was a lot o' my mates, sir, but just then the Frenchy which was burnin' blew up, an' I think the wreckage killed a lot of 'em, sir, 'cos then I found I was alone, an' Pluto was gone away, an' so I swum for the shore, an' there was a lot of Frenchies what I think had swum from the burning Frenchy an' they took me to some sojers an' the sojers brought me here, sir. There was a orficer what arst me questions—it'd 'a made you laugh, sir, to hear him trying to speak English—but I wasn't sayin' nothin', sir. An' when they see that, they puts me in here along with the others, sir. I was just telling 'em about the fight, sir. There was the old Pluto, an' Caligula, sir, an'—"
"Yes, I saw it," said Hornblower, shortly. "I saw that Pluto had lost her main topmast. Was she knocked about much?"
"Lor' bless you, sir, no, sir. We hadn't had half a dozen shot come aboard, an' they didn't do no damage, barrin' the one what wounded the Admiral."
"The Admiral!" Hornblower reeled a little as he stood, as though he had been struck. "Admiral Leighton, d'you mean?"
"Admiral Leighton, sir."
"Was—was he badly hurt?" (pp. 22-23)

Hornblower's walk was nearly finished when one of the young French aides-de-camp of the Governor approached him on the ramparts and saluted.
"His Excellency sends you his complements, sir, and he would be glad if you could spare him a few minutes of your time as soon as it is convenient to you.
Addressed to a prisoner, as Hornblower told himself bitterly, these words might as well have been "Come at once."
"I will come now, with the greatest pleasure," said Hornblower, maintaining the solemn face. (p. 28)

Suiting the action to the word the surgeon sniffed at the dressings and at the raw stump. "Smell, monsieur," he said, holding the dressings to Hornblower's face. Hornblower was conscious of the faintest whiff of corruption.
"Beautiful, is it not?" said the surgeon. "A fine healthy wound and yet every evidence that the ligatures will soon free themselves."
Hornblower realized that the two threads hanging out of the scars were attached to the ends of the two main arteries. When corruption inside was complete the threads could be drawn out and the wounds allowed to heal; it was a race between the rotting of the arteries and the onset of gangrene.
"I will see if the ligatures are free now. Warn your friend that I shall hurt him a little."
Hornblower looked towards Bush to convey the message, and was shocked to see that

Bush's face was distorted with apprehension.
"I know," said Bush. "I know what he's going to do—sir." (p. 44)

"By God!" said Hornblower in sudden panic, standing up to peer ahead.
It was too late to save themselves—he had noticed the difference in the sound of the fall only when they were too close to escape. Here there was no rapid like those they had already descended, nor even one much worse. Here there was a rough dam across the river—a natural traverse ledge, perhaps, which had caught and retained the rocks rolled down in the bed, or else something of human construction. Hornblower's quick brain turned these hypotheses over even as the boat leaped at the drop. Along its whole length water was brimming over the obstruction; at this particular point it surged over into a wide swirl, sleek at the top, and plunging into foaming chaos below. The boat heaved sickeningly over the summit and went down the slope like a bullet. The steep steady wave at the foot was as unyielding as a brick wall as they crashed into it. (pp. 95-96)

"You will pardon us, I hope," said the Count, "if we continue to speak French. It is ten years since I last had occasion to speak English, and even then I was a poor scholar, while my daughter-in-law speaks none"
"Bush," said the Vicomtesse. "Brown. I can say those names. But your name, Captain, is difficult. Orrenblor—I cannot say it."
"Bush! Orrenblor!" exclaimed the Count, as though reminded of something. "I suppose you are aware, Captain, of what the French newspapers have been saying about you recently?"
"No," said Hornblower. "I should like to know, very much."
"Pardon me, then."
The Count took up a candle and disappeared through a door; he returned quickly enough to save Hornblower from feeling too self-conscious in the silence that ensued.
"Here are recent copies of the Moniteur," said the Count. "I must apologize in advance, Captain, for the statements made in them." (pp. 109-110)

Then Hornblower lifted his face to hers again, and read the tragedy in her eyes. The sight of her tears moved him inexpressibly. He stroked her cheek.
"Oh, my dear," he said in English, and then began to try to find French words to express what he wanted to say. Tenderness was welling up within him. In a blinding moment of revelation he realized the love she bore him, and the motives which had brought her submissively into his arms. He kissed her mouth, he brushed away the splendid red hair from her pleading eyes. Tenderness re-awoke passion; and under his caresses her last reserve broke down.
"I love you!" she sighed, her arms about him. She had not meant to admit it, either to him or to herself. She knew that if she gave herself to him with passion he would break her heart in the end, and that he did not love her, not even now, when tenderness had replaced the blind lust in his eyes. He would break her heart if she allowed herself to love him; for one more second she had that clairvoyance before she let herself sink into

the self-deception which she knew in the future she would not believe to be self-deception. But the temptation to deceive herself into thinking he loved her was overwhelming. She gave herself to him passionately. (pp. 148-149)

The big green Loire was shrinking to its summer level. Hornblower had seen its floods and its ice come and go, had seen the willows at its banks almost submerged, but now it was back safely in its wide bed, with a hint of golden-brown gravel exposed on either bank. The swift green water was clear now, instead of turbid, and under the blue sky the distance reaches were blue as well, in charming colour contrast with the spring-time emerald of the valley and the gold of the banks. (p. 166)

Then there was Brown with his unfailing cheerfulness. No one could judge better than Hornblower the awkwardness of Brown's position, living in such close proximity to two officers. But Brown always could find the right mixture of friendliness and deference; he could laugh gaily when he slipped on a rounded stone and sat down in the Loire, and he could smile sympathetically when the same thing happened to Hornblower. He busied himself over the jobs of work which had to be done, and never, not even after ten days' routine had established something like a custom, appeared to take it for granted that his officers would do their share. Hornblower could forsee a great future for Brown, if helped by a little judicious exertion of influence. He might easily end as a captain, too—Darby and Westcott had started on the lower deck in the same fashion. Even if the court-martial broke him, Hornblower could do something to help him. Elliott and Bolton at least would not desert him entirely, and would rate Brown as midshipman in their ships if he asked them to with special earnestness. (p. 185)

Hornblower forced himself to hold up his head and walk with a swagger; the pistols in his side-pockets bumped reassuringly against his hips, and his sword tapped against his thigh. Bush walked beside him, his wooden leg thumping with measured stride on the stone quay. A passing group of soldiers saluted the smart uniform, and Hornblower returned the salute nonchalantly, amazed at his new coolness. His heart was beating fast, but ecstatically he knew he was not afraid. It was worth running this risk to experience this feeling of mad bravery.
They stopped and looked at the Witch of Endor against the quay. Her decks were not of the dazzling whiteness upon which an English first lieutenant would have insisted, and there was a slovenliness about her standing rigging which was heartbreaking to contemplate. A couple of men were moving lackadaisically about the deck under the supervision of a third.
"Anchor watch," muttered Bush. "Two hands and a master's mate." (pp. 195-196)

Hornblower told himself that a variation of two hundred yards in the fall of shot from a six-pounder at full elevation was only to e expected, and he knew it to be true, but that was cold comfort to him. The powder varied from charge to charge, the shot were never truly round, quite apart from the variations in atmospheric conditions and in the temperature of the gun. He set his teeth, aimed and fired again. Short, and a trifle to the

left. It was maddening.
"Breakfast, sir," said Brown at his elbow. (pp. 221-222)

Bush was still babbling away happily beside him at the tiller. Hornblower heard the words, and attached no meaning to them.
"Ha—h'm," he said, "Quite so."
He could find no satisfaction in the simple pleasures Bush had been in ecstasy about—the breath of the sea, the feeling of a ship's deck underfoot—not now, not with all these bitter thoughts thronging his mind. The harshness of his tone checked Bush in the full career of his artless and unwonted chatter, and the lieutenant pulled himself up abruptly. Hornblower thought it was absurd that Bush should still cherish any affection for him after the cutting cruelty with which he sometimes used him. Bush was like a dog, thought Hornblower bitterly—too cynical for the moment to credit Bush with any perspicacity at all—like a dog, coming fawning to the hand that beat him. Hornblower despised himself as he walked forward again to the mainsheet, to a long, long period of a solitary black hell of his own.
There was just the faintest beginning of daylight, the barest pearly softening of the somberness of night, a greyness instead of a blackness in the haze, when Brown came aft to Hornblower.
"Beggin' your pardon, sir, but I fancy I see the loom of something out there just now. On the port bow, sir—there, d'you see it, sir?" (p. 237)

He had lost Maria. She had died in childbed, and having regard to the circumstances in which the child had been engendered, he had as good as killed her. Maria was dead. There would be no one, no one at all, to welcome him now on his return to England. Maria would have stood by him during the court-martial, and whatever the verdict, she would never have believed him to be at fault. Hornblower remembered the tears wetting her coarse red cheeks when she had last put her arms round him to say good-bye. He had been a little bored by the formality of an affectionate goodbye then. He was free now—the realization came creeping over him like cold water in a warm bath. But it was no fair to Maria. He would not have bought his freedom at such a price. She had earned by her own devotion his attention, his kindness, and he would have given them to her uncomplainingly for the rest of his life. He was desperately sorry that she was dead. (p. 257)

"Captain Hornblower," said the President of the Court—that nasal tenor of his had a pleasant tone: "this Court is of the unanimous opinion that your gallant and unprecedented defence of His Majesty's ship Sutherland, against a force so superior, is deserving of every praise the country and this court can give. Your conduct, together with that of the officers and men under your command, reflects not only the highest honour on you, but on the country at large. You are therefore most honourably acquitted."
There was a little confirmatory buzz from the other members of the Court, and a general bustle in the cabin. Somebody was buckling the hundred-guinea sword to his waist; someone else was patting his shoulder. Hookham Frere was there, too, speaking

insistently.
"Congratulations, sir. And now, are you ready to accompany me to London? I have had a post-chaise horsed and waiting this last six hours." (pp. 274-275)

His eyes met Barbara's again, and he knew she was his for the asking. To those who did not know and understand, who thought there was romance in his life when really it was the most prosaic of lives, that would be a romantic climax. She was smiling at him, and then he saw her lips tremble as she smiled. He remembered how Marie had said he was a man whom women loved easily, and he felt uncomfortable at being reminded of her. (p. 294)

Topics for Discussion

At Rosas, the Spanish warden treats Hornblower with respect. He returns Hornblower's sword, allows Hornblower wide discretionary liberties, and even gives Hornblower a purse of money before releasing him. On the other hand, the Frenchman Caillard, treats Hornblower with contempt and views him as a pirate. Discuss the political situation during the time of the novel and why the Spanish officer's outlook varied so enormously from that of the French officer.

Hornblower's loss of the Sutherland crippled the French squadron. Hours later, the remainder of the English squadron annihilated the disabled French squadron. Would the sinking of four French ships-of-the-line have been possible without Hornblower's actions with the Sutherland? In the strategic situation, who was the victor—England or France? Why?

Hornblower admires Brown's easy competence at nearly any task and marvels at Brown's social adaptability. On several occasions Hornblower admires Brown's masculine body and powerful build. As you read the novel did you find subtle homosexual overtones in Hornblower's estimation of Brown's physique? Or is Hornblower merely envious? Discuss.

As he contemplates imminent death by execution, Hornblower hopes he will die "with colours flying" (p. 56). What does it mean to do something with "Flying Colours"? What other colloquial phrases do you use which are derived from nautical usage?

Nearly all of the events in the novel are credible except, perhaps, that Hornblower stumbles by random chance upon probably the only refuge in all of France where he would be welcomed rather than betrayed. Did you find Hornblower's happenstance introduction to Count Graçay credible? Or did it strain your suspension of disbelief?

Hornblower speaks halting French at the beginning of the novel but by the end has become fluent. Brown picks up a fluency in French with incredible alacrity. Bush never masters even the rudiments of the language. Have you ever learned (or tried to learn) a foreign language? Did you find it difficult or easy?

Hornblower feels his sexual affair with Marie is shameful and poor repayment for the Count's benevolence. He does not seem to worry that, as a married man, an affair is morally wrong. Discuss how the nature of marriage and the roles of men and women differ between the time depicted in the novel and modern times.

The Count suggests that Hornblower, Bush and Brown pose as Dutch customs officials while they travel through the port town of Nantes. Enumerate the several elements of their disguise which the Count correctly argues will prove to be in their favor.

The novel is essentially a series of minor adventures involving a core of three characters. Which episodic portion is your favorite?— the initial captivity, the forced

transportation and escape, the confinement at Château Graçay, the trip down the Loire, the escape and battle at Nantes, or the slow dénouement? Why is that episode your favorite?

Does the novel function as a novel? That is, is the narrative construction mapped onto a traditional action sequence followed by a building sequence, a climax, and then a dénouement?

Near the end of the novel when Hornblower is nearly free, he reflects upon his past experiences and imagines a scene combining elements of Marie's naked, sexualized body and his near-drowning in the icy Loire River. Why do you think Hornblower would equate sex with a woman to near-fatal immersion in turbulent water? What elements of the two experiences would Hornblower find similar?

Of the one major and two minor protagonists Hornblower, Bush and Brown, which character is your favorite? Why? Of the various minor characters, which stand out in your memory of the novel? Why?