

Admiral Hornblower in the West Indies Study Guide

**Admiral Hornblower in the West Indies by C. S.
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Plot Summary

Admiral Hornblower is commander-in-chief of the West Indies station from 1821 to 1823, and experiences several situations which demand personal intervention. First, Hornblower must personally intervene to prevent a French contingent from attempting to reinstate Napoleon as the emperor of France. He then intrigues to capture a Spanish slave ship and shortly thereafter spends a brief period of time as hostage to a band of dim-witted pirates. Hornblower subsequently escapes entanglement in a South American revolution and then survives a hurricane while attempting to return to England with his wife Barbara.

The novel consists of five major episodes occurring at the end of Hornblower's professional naval career. He has attained the rank of admiral and is appointed the commander-in-chief of the West Indies station. On a routine courtesy visit to New Orleans, Hornblower learns that a United States ship has been commissioned by Cambronne, a French general and one-time supporter of the exiled Napoleon. Cambronne intends to receive hundreds of French soldiers and boards large stores of munitions. Hornblower correctly deduces that Cambronne intends to rescue Napoleon from St. Helena and reinstate him as the emperor of France. Realizing success would mean a fresh eruption of global war, Hornblower intervenes by sacrificing his honor in a lie—he informs Cambronne that Napoleon has died. Hornblower returns to port to tender his resignation as a disgraced gentleman only to learn that by fortuitous coincidence, Napoleon has indeed recently died.

A few months later, Hornblower's West Indies fleet is unable to intercept *Estrella del Sur*, a fast and handy Spanish slave ship, which easily outstrips British pursuers. The crafty Hornblower follows the slaver into a neutral port where he ostensibly makes a courtesy visit to the governor—in reality, his crew uses the time to fasten a sea drogue to the slaver's underwater hull. When the slaver departs the port, Hornblower nonchalantly follows. When the slaver turns away and begins to run, the sea drogue stalls the vessel, actually pulling the rudder off. Hornblower then easily intercepts the slave ship and captures her. A few months later Hornblower and his secretary are captured by a small band of dim-witted pirates who crudely attempt to exchange him for a pardon of their crimes. The pirates release Hornblower to carry their demands, and, fortunately, his secretary is a capable man, who escapes a few hours later. Hornblower then carries a ship's mortar up-river and fires upon the pirate's putatively unassailable hideout, killing many and capturing the rest.

A few months later Hornblower meets Ramsbottom, a vastly wealthy Englishman who claims to have a fondness for yachting. Ramsbottom is actually a filibuster, who subsequently travels to the Venezuelan coast and intervenes in a revolution of local forces against the distant Spanish government. Hornblower treads a fine line between untoward laxity and actual involvement in the affair and comes away with a signal success free of long-term political implication. Finally, his term at an end, Hornblower is joined by Barbara, hands over his command and plans to return to England. The vessel upon which they travel, however, is caught up in an unseasonable hurricane and

founders. Only Hornblower's seamanship and direct intervention saves the vessel from complete loss. After several dangerous days on the storm-tossed hulk, Hornblower and Barbara are rescued by a passing ship.



Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

Admiral Hornblower is commander-in-chief of the West Indies station from 1821 to 1823, and experiences several situations which demand personal intervention. First, Hornblower must personally intervene to prevent a French contingent from attempting to reinstate Napoleon as the emperor of France. He then intrigues to capture a Spanish slave ship and shortly thereafter spends a brief period of time as hostage to a band of dim-witted pirates. Hornblower subsequently escapes entanglement in a South American revolution and then survives a hurricane while attempting to return to England with his wife, Barbara.

As the narrative opens Rear Admiral Lord Horatio Hornblower, commander-in-chief of His Britannic Majesty's ships and vessels in the West Indies, pays an official courtesy visit to New Orleans. Hornblower commands three frigates and fourteen sloops and schooners, but as the frigates are either undergoing refit or on distant duty, his flagship is the unlikely Crab, a diminutive schooner. Aboard ship, Hornblower entertains His Britannic Majesty's Consul-General, Mr. Cloudesley Sharpe. While Hornblower and Sharpe hold discussions, a steam tug pulls Crab upriver to New Orleans proper. The men discuss the slave trade and the problematic letters of marque being issued by various revolutionary South American governments. They also discuss the delicate political situation between the United States of America and England. As they gain anchorage, Sharpe points out a ship—Daring, owned by United States interests. The ship was originally built as a privateer and is large, very fast and well armed. Sharpe informs Hornblower that Daring has been hired by Cambronne, a French soldier of past renown and a devoted Bonapartist. Cambronne's official explanation entails using Daring to transport several hundred French soldiers from a failed mutual-aid colonization attempt in Texas back to France. Hornblower immediately suspects something else entirely, and Sharpe agrees that Cambronne is likely up to no good. Hornblower determines to keep a close eye upon Cambronne.

Later, Hornblower learns that Daring will shortly take on board a large amount of bonded freight. He delivers instructions to Crab that they are to investigate the nature of the cargo so far as is practicable. Later that evening Hornblower attends a gala at Sharpe's large estate. Cambronne also attends the party, and as the evening develops, various unofficial political discussions are held. Early in the evening, Cambronne excuses himself on a social pretext and the normally astute Hornblower is rather full of wine and mistakes Cambronne's exit as genuine. Within a few hours, however, news arrives that Cambronne has returned to Daring, and Daring has sailed—taking both steam tugs in employ. As Hornblower awaits an available steam tug, he discusses the situation with Sharpe. Sharpe is rather more interested in not being wrong than in being helpful, and beyond noting that Cambronne must call at Corpus Christi to embark his men, he refuses to make a guess as to an ultimate destination. Hornblower then learns from the men of Crab that Cambronne's cargo was muskets, French dress uniforms and



military headwear peculiar to the time of Napoleon's greatest influence. Hornblower then enters a prolonged period of introspection and consideration. Crab eventually puts to sea.

Considering all the clues at his disposal, Hornblower finally concludes that Cambronne must intend to attempt to free the deposed and exiled Napoleon—then imprisoned on St. Helena—and attempt to restore him to the throne of France. Such a move would doubtlessly embroil Europe in another round of costly bloodshed, and Hornblower is determined to prevent that at any cost. Yet Daring is faster than Crab and far more heavily armed. Nevertheless, Hornblower evolves a plan and directs Crab to the Tobago Channel, where his navigational instincts tell him Daring must pass. As Crab sails, Hornblower undergoes an agony of internal doubt and self-criticism, though the precise reason for his downcast attitude is not known. As predicted, Crab intercepts Daring on the open sea, and Hornblower takes his boat and, unarmed and unescorted, boards Daring.

There, he meets with Cambronne and states flatly that he knows Cambronne's intentions and has come on an errand to prevent further bloodshed. Hornblower then executes his simple but considered tactic telling Cambronne that Napoleon has recently died. Hornblower delivers the lie with a stony face and icy reserve. Cambronne demands Hornblower's word as a gentleman and naval officer—and Hornblower offers his solemn word that his news is legitimate. Cambronne, convinced beyond doubt, bewails the loss of his emperor, breaks his sword, and casts the remnants into the sea. His many soldiers hear the news, wail and moan, smash their muskets, and throw them overboard. Cambronne announces that he will now sail for France directly, and Hornblower impassively returns to Crab.

As Crab sails for Port of Spain, Hornblower sinks into an agony of despair. He has prevaricated upon his word as a gentleman and he sees his future, stripped of honor and devoid of respect, as untenable and horrible. As the hours pass Hornblower's mood descends into despair and as soon as Crab anchors, he proceeds to the governor's house where he intends to tender his resignation before his shame becomes public. The governor greets the shattered Hornblower with some exciting news, however—Napoleon has recently died at St. Helena, and the world is finally and utterly free of the tyrant's influence. Stunned, Hornblower staggers into a chair and sits in shocked silence, remembering the legend of St. Elizabeth of Hungary.

Chapter 1 Analysis

Chapter 1, deals nearly entirely with Hornblower's legendary powers of deduction coupled with his own sense of self-worth and honor. The early portions of the narrative establish Hornblower's current situation in life as a Rear Admiral and commander-in-chief of the West Indies station. As such, he oversees one of the most politically complicated and sensitive area of England's empire at the time; there is no doubt, however, that Hornblower is up to the task at hand. The visit to New Orleans is as far north as Hornblower travels during the novel, and his call there is characterized as one



of courtesy rather than strict duty. In New Orleans Hornblower sees steam tugs, which are fairly irrelevant to the story except insofar as they prevent his leaving New Orleans in a timely fashion; they do serve, however, as a sort of symbolic death knell to the age of sail. Just as Hornblower's advancing age indicates an impending death, so the steam tugs indicate the end of Hornblower's age of sailing vessels. Hornblower vaguely feels this to be so, even as he looks upon the steam tugs as something of a curiosity.

Sharpe makes an appearance only in this chapter of the novel, but he is a memorable character and is fully developed. Fat, affluent, intelligent and observant, Sharpe is nevertheless far more concerned with his personal wellbeing than that of the British Empire. Rather than making an "educated guess" about Cambronne's intentions, Sharpe delivers various facts to Hornblower and therewith discharges full responsibility. For example, when Hornblower half-jokingly suggests a list of little-likely destinations for Cambronne, Sharpe agrees they are possible instead of shrugging them off as unlikely.

The chapter features two lengthy segments, which consist of little more than Hornblower's mental machinations. In the first episode Hornblower mulls over a mass of political facts and combines them with what he knows of Cambronne and Daring's odd cargo. The bearskin cap finally becomes the deciding factor in Hornblower's decision—he realizes that a man with Cambronne's experience would not obtain non-utilitarian dress uniforms for men heading into combat. Instead, the symbolic value of the dress uniforms must be the deciding factor. Having reached a decision, which is fundamentally correct in principle, Hornblower then moves into a second episode of introspection as he considers how he might go about stopping Cambronne. Rather than reporting the information to a higher authority—something that Sharpe would doubtlessly do—Hornblower, the man of action, evolves a plan to prevent Cambronne's intended action. The problem for Hornblower is that he has nothing to offer except his own good name and word of honor. In an age when a man's word was his bond, Hornblower determines to sacrifice himself on the altar of national interest and simply lies to Cambronne. This act, carefully considered and carefully executed, precipitates Hornblower into a crisis of agony and despair. The surprise ending is enjoyable if a bit incredible and leaves Hornblower's reputation as a man of honor intact.

The reference to St. Elizabeth of Hungary is explained in the text. Like Hornblower, she had been about noble causes when entrapped by an ugly political paradigm. Also like Hornblower, she had been saved from retributive consequence seemingly by Divine intervention. Hornblower feels that such has been his own experience. Note that the historic event of Napoleon's death can be used to date the events of Chapter 1 to May, 1821.



Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

Hornblower has transferred his flag to the frigate *Clorinda*. *Clorinda* cruises in the West Indies in search of pirates or slave runners; at the opening of the chapter a strange sail is raised and the frigate closes on her. They discover the vessel to be *Estrella del Sur*, a large schooner capable of exceptional speed. Hornblower knows that *Estrella del Sur* is a slave ship that frequently runs the British slave embargo. She routinely carries 400 slaves and can outrun nearly any ship large enough to capture her. *Clorinda* is commanded by Captain Thomas Fell. Fell is fairly poor and maintains an extravagant wife in England and is thus always interested in money. British law compensates ships-of-war for capturing slave ships by awarding "head money"—a certain amount of cash for each slave which is prevented from reaching the slave market. Fell quickly calculates that capture of *Estrella del Sur* would enrich him by about one thousand pounds—a considerable sum—and he takes immediate and potentially foolhardy action to run down the slaver. The chase is prolonged, but futile—a fact detected quickly by Hornblower as well as by Erasmus Spendlove, Hornblower's handsome and talented young secretary. Eventually it becomes apparent that Fell's actions are not enough, and the slave ship easily sails around *Clorinda* and gains the safety of San Juan with the English ship coming in behind her.

The political situation is then considered—San Juan is a neutral port for *Clorinda*, and, thus, the English ship is legally prevented from harassing *Estrella del Sur*. Spain is expected shortly to sign an anti-slaving law into force, but has not yet done so. Should *Clorinda* capture *Estrella del Sur* close to San Juan, the action would be deemed a violation of the rules of engagement by England and official protests would ensue. Fell concludes that the slave ship is beyond reach—but Hornblower feels rather differently. Fell also feels that his failure to capture the slave ship will likely mean a loss of appointment as captain, leaving him on half pay indefinitely. Hornblower realizes this is likely Fell's fate and, even though he does not personally like the man, sets out to help him retain his command. Hornblower concocts a risky, but ingenious plan, to capture the slave ship and informs Spendlove of the plan. Under Hornblower's orders, the bewildered Spendlove then suggests the plan to Fell as if it were Spendlove's own idea. An excited Fell then relates the plan back to Hornblower, who, no surprise to the reader, enthusiastically endorses it. Fell begrudgingly admits the plan to have been Spendlove's but quickly forgets this minor detail as events unfold.

Hornblower makes an official state visit in San Juan and encounters the slaver's captain at government house. The two men make pleasant small talk, and Hornblower smugly congratulates the slaver's captain on his ship's incredible speed and maneuverability. The governor reminds Hornblower of the rules of engagement, and, by stratagem, Hornblower connives to have the slave ship's captain casually disregard some of the finer points of law to Hornblower's eventual favor. Hornblower then returns to *Clorinda*. In his absence, his plan has been executed. Sail cloth and sparring have been



fashioned into a large, truncated cone and the cone is affixed to a length of chain. This sea anchor, or drogue, has been secretly attached to the rudder pintle of the slave ship. A length of spun yarn has been used to keep the drogue bundled up until Estrella del Sur reaches top speed, whereon increased water pressure and flow will break the yarn and release the drogue. If Hornblower has planned correctly, the slave ship will leave harbor and gain the high seas without detecting the drogue; then, when they spread all sail, the drogue will open and stall the ship while Clorinda closes in for the capture.

Soon enough Estrella del Sur departs, followed closely by Clorinda. Just as planned, Estrella del Sur proceeds slowly until the high seas are reached whereupon all plain sail is set. As the drogue deploys, the massive towing force jerks on the rudder pintle, yanking it from the hull, and the slave ship slews into the wind unable to steer any course. Clorinda quickly closes as Fell exults in the success of "his" plan. The slave ship is captured; Hornblower, Fell, and the crew enjoy a large bounty of head-money, and the ingenuity attributed to Fell ensures his continued employment as captain of Clorinda.

Chapter 2 Analysis

Having faced a world-wide strategic crisis with resolute determination, Hornblower is now faced with a minor tactical problem. The slave ship Estrella del Sur plies the West Indies passage carrying four-hundred slaves per trip. The slave trade is illegal in England, though not in Spain or the United States of America. English ships are allowed to seize and hold slave ships but instead of prize money are awarded head money for each slave intercepted. Thus, Estrella del Sur represents a modest financial reward if she can be captured. Much of the narrative in the chapter is given over to a detailed exposition of the prolonged sailing chase between the slave ship and Clorinda. The technical details are fascinating and enjoyable, but the end result is simply that, all things being equal, Clorinda is too slow and unwieldy to capture the fast slave ship. Hornblower sets out to ensure that all things are not equal.

Both ships call at San Juan—Estrella del Sur to offload sick slaves at the local market, and Clorinda ostensibly to re-water but in actuality to execute Hornblower's simple but ingenious plan. One of the subtle aspects of the narrative involves Hornblower's use of Spendlove to allow Fell to feel as if he has not failed utterly; as Fell comes to believe Hornblower's plan to really be Fell's own plan, thus his confidence is restored and his future retention of command is made likely. It is intriguing that Hornblower should so favor Fell as he does not even like the man personally—but such are Hornblower's complicated and subtle methods. As a rear admiral, Hornblower is hardly in need of further accolades and is therefore satisfied to see subordinate men achieve some measure of distinction. Note particularly how Fell's attitude toward the plan develops throughout the narrative: at first, he tentatively approaches it as an interesting idea, and by the execution thereof, he embraces it entirely as his own creation.

A drogue is little more than a parachute made to function in water. Just as a parachute slows a jumper by drag, so a drogue slows a ship by dragging through the water. In



appearance they are little more than a miniature parachute made of very heavy construction. In modern sailing they are frequently used during heavy weather to slow and stabilize small craft. Hornblower's plan calls for a drogue of substantive size—and hence drag—to be secretly attached to the slave ship. Were the slaver to detect the drogue before leaving harbor, however, it would be ejected in the safety of the neutral port, thus, the drogue is folded and packaged with spun yarn. The theory is that the yard's breaking point will come only when *Estrella del Sur* reaches the open sea and sets all plain sail for a long run. The breaking yard will subsequently release the drogue, which will hamper the slave ship and allow *Clorinda* to capture her. In execution, the drogue works exactly as planned except that the resistance upon deployment is so great that the rudder is yanked entirely off the slave ship.

The segment of the narrative between weighing anchor and the success of the drogue is easily one of the most humorous portions of the novel. Hornblower, just as anxious as any midshipman, waits to see if the drogue will work with the affected disinterest he feels proper for an admiral. He is surrounded by nervous men part anticipating and part doubting success. And they all try—largely unsuccessfully—to eat dinner with casual conversation and collected composure.



Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

Hornblower, Spendlove, Gerard and others attend a ball given by Mr. Hough, a wealthy local businessman and Jamaican planter. Hornblower believes that Lucy Hough, about seventeen years old, and Spendlove, his secretary, share a mutual attraction. When Hornblower arrives, Lucy greets him in a private moment and is effusive and confused—Hornblower believes he mistakes her enthusiasm for Spendlove as an attachment to Hornblower. Then he dismisses such a foolish idea. The evening is hot and after some hours, Hornblower and Spendlove step outside into the cooler garden area. Suddenly, Hornblower is grabbed, gagged and dragged off at knifepoint. A bag is placed over his head and he is pushed onto a mule. His gruff kidnappers prod and hit him as they come to a river, and he swims across, partially dragged by the swimming mule. Across the river the nightmare journey continues on mule or on foot for many minutes. Finally Hornblower is led to a dangling rope ladder and climbs up into what appears to be thin air. He is led to a stony shelf and thrust down. Moments later a battered and semi-conscious Spendlove is cast down beside him. They gradually regain their senses and as the dawn breaks, they discern their location to be somewhere near the border of Jamaica's infamous Cockpit Country—a semi-autonomous region populated with civilization's castoffs.

They discover that they sit on a rocky ledge jutting out in front of a cave on a cliff face, near Montego Bay. To one end of the ledge is a waterfall which plummets many feet into a deep pool and river at the base of the cliff. The other end of the cliff simply ends; a rope ladder is affixed to the cliff to allow ascent or descent. The cave and cliff appears impregnable. The two men have been kidnapped by a disorganized band of ruffians. The leader of the band, Ned Johnson, occupies a tenuous position and has no real authority. Johnson informs Hornblower that he and the other men and women are the remnant of a pirate band led by Harkness, recently killed in a raid. They have since escaped to their redoubt. Johnson tells Hornblower that he must write a letter to the governor requesting a pardon for the surviving pirates; Johnson demands the pardon bear a seal. It is obvious that Johnson, the brightest of the pirates, is an illiterate and ignorant man, scarcely more than a savage idiot. Most of his speech consists of graphic threats of torture. Hornblower temporizes and considers the situation. Finally concluding that he has no option, Hornblower avoids torture by writing a brief letter on the flyleaf of a book proffered by the pirates. None of the pirates can read, so they have Hornblower read the letter to them. Johnson then tries to send men to deliver the letter to the governor, but none of them will comply for fear of imprisonment. Clearly, Johnson has no real authority and the pirate's plan is haphazard.

The pirates argue and then some pirate women make lunch. After eating rough fare, the older, exhausted Hornblower sleeps while Spendlove considers the situation. As Spendlove recovers from being knocked out, he becomes increasingly protective of Hornblower. The pirates finally come to a decision; they will retain Spendlove as a



hostage and send Hornblower to the governor, bearing his own request for a pardon "with a seal" (p. 149). Hornblower is horrified—obviously, he holds Spendlove in honor and does not intend to forget it. Spendlove hints broadly that Hornblower should leave and not worry further, but Hornblower mentally refuses to abandon his secretary and friend. The pirates have at least plumbed thus far into Hornblower's psyche. Hornblower thus makes the return voyage on mule and then on foot. He staggers into the planted fields and is immediately spotted by a local man out searching. He is escorted to the Hough house where he is greeted by Lucy. Lucy falls to her knees and clasps Hornblower's waist, sobbing out her great love and devotion for him. Surprised and somewhat disgusted, Hornblower recoils from her just before her father enters the room. The men then proceed to Government House.

Hornblower explains the situation to Governor Augustus Hooper. Hooper is furious at the cost of the search mission and flatly rejects any pardons for pirates. He further states that Spendlove is expendable. When Hornblower announces his honorable intention to return to captivity, Hooper refuses to hear it and tells Hornblower he will be arrested and imprisoned if he attempts to return. Hooper then orders Hornblower to bed and the fatigued admiral complies. In the morning Hornblower is much recovered and joins Hooper for breakfast where he begins to subtly argue for Spendlove, when, surprisingly, Spendlove staggers into the room. He explains that in the evening he fixed upon a spot on the cliff where the water, far below, appeared deep. In the night he walked to the spot and leaped into the darkness, landing in the pool below and swimming downriver to Montego Bay. There he borrowed a horse and rode the seventy miles to Government House. Hornblower is amazed and delighted.

Hooper is nonplussed and begins to order a military strike on the pirate's redoubt. Hornblower notes a traditional assault would be costly to impossible and volunteers to reduce the pirates' stronghold. Hooper agrees. Hornblower boards ship, sails to Montego bay and debarks. He has a ship's mortar mounted on a light boat and has the men haul the boat up the river. When the boat grounds out, the men dam the river behind the boat until the water rises to float the boat, and they continue again until the boat grounds again, whereupon they repeat the process. They thus haul the ship's mortar into firing position and range in on the pirate's cave. The heroic Spendlove then advances with a white flag and requests the pirates surrender. They fire upon him instead. The mortar is then fired several times and scores multiple direct hits on the cave and cliff, flinging bodies and body fragments into the air. After several rounds, the few surviving pirates surrender.

Chapter 3 Analysis

The plot of Chapter 3, is very straightforward—Hornblower and Spendlove are captured by pirates, escape by separate avenues and rejoin to assault and kill the pirates in their stronghold. Ned Johnson, the supposed pirate leader, is a mental midget without a sound plan beyond exchanging his kidnapped victims for a parole with a seal—he attaches great symbolic value to the seal. In the end, he is killed by shellfire and his few surviving followers are hanged. Such is the fate of pirates during this period of history in



the West Indies. Obviously, the pirates would have been better off simply fading into obscurity in the Cockpit Country. Even so, the kidnapping is carried out with a certain rigor that implies rudimentary planning. The pirates' redoubt is formidable, and the entire situation could have turned out better—for the pirates, at least—had Johnson been able to evolve a slightly more complicated plan beyond the initial kidnapping.

Spendlove and Hornblower then consider their situation and determine that it is fairly desperate. The much younger Spendlove appears to realize that escape is as simple as jumping from the ledge into the river below and swimming away. Obviously the older Hornblower would not be able to make such a leap. Spendlove is protective of Hornblower and solicitous of his good treatment. When the pirates send Hornblower away, Spendlove tries to convey a message to Hornblower, but for once the astute admiral fails to get the hint. About the time Hornblower arrives at Government House, Spendlove leaps from the cliff into the river and effects his own escape. Much of the remainder of the narrative tension evolves around Hornblower's attempt to gain Spendlove's rescue. It must be said that Hornblower's intent to return to captivity, while honorable, is indeed foolish.

The conclusion of the story involves Hornblower leading a naval detachment to an assault on the pirate stronghold. What would be a very costly or impossible traditional assault is rendered trivial by the use of a naval mortar—a high-angle-of-fire weapon capable of throwing explosive shells long distances. The mortar is constructed lightly enough that it can be transported up river in a punt without too much effort. The pirates are thus killed or forced to surrender, and those that surrender are hanged a few days later. Hornblower's revenge is complete, though, of course, he finds the "cold dish" of revenge unappealing.

The only complication in the plot involves the foolish teenage, Lucy Hough. Spendlove loves Lucy and believes his affections returned. Lucy, however, has a strange May-December crush on the politically-powerful Hornblower and hardly knows who Spendlove is. No harm is done, however, as Hornblower instinctively ducks Lucy's rather untoward advance and thereafter properly avoids Lucy and encourages Spendlove to pursue the young lady. The minor plot incident is amusing but otherwise irrelevant to the narrative.



Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

Hornblower prepares to receive Charles Ramsbottom, a very wealthy industrialist who has recently entered society. Ramsbottom effects a penchant for yachting in a military style and has retained a naval brig and ostensibly plans to cruise the Carribean. Letters from Hornblower's wife, Barbara, inform Hornblower that Ramsbottom has made a big splash in the English social scene and that the man is a millionaire. It is the first time Hornblower has read the word as being attached to an individual, and he finds it distasteful in that context. Ramsbottom arrives in his yacht, *Bride of Abydos*, a brig purchased from the Royal Navy and remodeled somewhat. Hornblower is surprised to find Ramsbottom eminently likable and affable. Over the next days, Ramsbottom makes a big splash in the Jamaican social scene and spends several evenings playing whist with Hornblower. One evening Ramsbottom invites Hornblower, Governor Hooper, and several wealthy planters to dine aboard his yacht.

Hornblower arrives first and is led on an inspection tour of the brig. He sees that it mounts a reduced armament of two six-pounder cannons and ten twenty-four-pounder carronades. It is otherwise outfitted like a military vessel and, in fact, is crewed mostly by older navy veterans. Hornblower is impressed. An excellent and complicated dinner is then served, which surprises even the boorish Hooper by its quality and quantity. One dish is served from an iron box with tinned seams. Ramsbottom explains that it was sealed under great heat and thus the prepared meat inside is preserved; he predicts it will shortly revolutionize shipboard fare. Hornblower samples the meat and immediately agrees. As the food is presented and consumed, the conversation wanders through local and regional politics. In brief, the tenuous Spanish control of South America is waning and the revolutionary general and leader Simón Bolívar is enjoying military success in Venezuela. Ramsbottom casually mentions that his mother is Venezuelan; Hornblower casually mentions that he shortly will depart with his fleet for two weeks of maneuvers and training on the high seas. Ramsbottom takes an apparently casual interest in Hornblower's plans.

Soon after the dinner, Hornblower departs and spends two weeks on the open sea drilling his squadron. Upon his return, he is summoned to Government House where an outraged Hooper demands an explanation for English intervention in Venezuela. Hornblower is dumbfounded but shortly discerns that Ramsbottom has been posturing as a British commissioned ship-of-war acting under Hornblower's orders. Hornblower postulates that Ramsbottom is likely to have a letter of marque issued by Bolívar and has therefore, technically, not broken any English or International law. Hooper is instantly mollified by Hornblower's non-participation. Dutch and Spanish ministers then engage Hornblower and Hooper in animated conversation. Hornblower learns that Ramsbottom, posing as an English officer, has renamed his ship *Desperate* and used it to announce the blockade of the Venezuelan coast as well as to capture the Dutch ship *Helmond*. *Helmond* was transporting two batteries of field artillery to support the



Spanish royalist forces; its capture means that Bolívar's march will not be opposed by heavy guns. Hornblower then observes that in fact the opposite is likely— Bolívar will certainly by now have possession of the captured guns! With Hooper's consent, Hornblower immediately departs to sea and heads to Venezuela. Meanwhile, circulars are dispatched to inform the various authorities that the putative English blockade of Venezuela is nothing more than a ruse de guerre perpetrated by Ramsbottom.

Hornblower calls at Curaçao and learns that Bolívar is marching on Puerto Cabello. Hornblower makes all haste to Puerto Cabello and, from the sea, hears the flat discharge of cannon from inland. He cruises the coast and comes across *Bride of Abydos* anchored next to *Helmond*. A Spanish anchor watch rows away from *Bride of Abydos* as the *Clorinda* approaches. Hornblower's boat intercepts the Spanish sailors, and Hornblower questions them and learns that *Helmond's* artillery guns were offloaded days ago. He releases the Spanish sailors, boards *Bride of Abydos* and discovers the ship abandoned. He assigns a prize crew and then proceeds to *Helmond*. Boarding *Helmond*, he frees the Dutch crew and speaks with the captain. After a brief exchange, he turns the ship over to its captain and then returns to *Clorinda*. *Bride of Abydos* and *Clorinda* return to Puerto Cabello. There, Hornblower goes ashore and witnesses the routing remnants of the Spanish Royalist forces. Some hours later, he encounters Ramsbottom. The man is joyful but nearly hysterical and has lost an arm in combat. Ramsbottom refuses surgical care and follows his stolen artillery battalions as they pursue the retreating Royalist forces. Hornblower feels rather that Ramsbottom has no chance of survival. After inspecting conditions ashore generally, Hornblower returns to his ship as two ships-of-war enter the harbor. Hornblower orders *Clorinda* cleared for action as the other frigates close and then anchor. Spanish and Dutch officials call on Hornblower; they make various demands, which Hornblower adroitly deflects. Finally, using his command of rhetoric and dialogue, Hornblower confounds the foreign embassies and then bundles them off his ship. The crisis averted, *Clorinda* and *Bride of Abydos*—now firmly Hornblower's prize—return to a friendly harbor. The chapter concludes as Hornblower receives another letter from his wife, Barbara.

Chapter 4 Analysis

The plot of Chapter 4 relies heavily upon the regional geopolitical situation existent during the early 1820s in the West Indies. Most of South America at the time was a Spanish dominion, though lengthy and fractured revolutionary activities had weakened the Spanish monarch's influence. One of the preeminent revolutionary leaders was Simón Bolívar. His attack upon the Puerto Cabello area is a lightly-fictionalized version of historic events, which transpired about 1821. In the novel, the Spanish authorities have commissioned the Dutch ship *Helmond* to carry artillery to the defending Spanish Royalist forces. As a neutral ship, *Helmond* should enjoy certain privileges potentially denied a Spanish ship; of course, her transporting war material prevents her from receiving all neutral courtesies. Ramsbottom is a keen thinker and moves decisively to intercept *Helmond*, capture her stores and deliver them to the Spanish Republican forces. At the time of the novel, nearly all South American revolutionary battles were fought between battalion-sized elements of perhaps at most 5,000 men on each side;



thus, the artillery captured by Ramsbottom proves decisive in the encounter. As noted in the novel, most of the veteran infantry of Bolívar is composed of English mercenaries recruited after the cessation of the Napoleonic wars. It can thus readily be appreciated that English, Spanish, Dutch and Republican Venezuelan interests are all least slightly in conflict, if not diametrically opposed. Hornblower walks through this delicate situation with aplomb. He navigates the morass of political interests using two major actions. First, he conferences with Hooper and establishes that Ramsbottom, while certainly sneaky and perhaps underhanded, has not technically violated any English or International law. Thus, Hornblower need not treat Ramsbottom as anything other than a private English citizen. Second, Hornblower is a man of action and seizes Bride of Abydos and frees Helmond before Dutch or Spanish frigates arrive. In this case, possession makes right, and Hornblower concludes the narrative on the offensive. Rather than submit to the decisions of others, he makes his own decisions and forces them to their logical conclusion.

Ramsbottom is a fictionalized representation of a type of international adventurer known during the period as a filibuster or freebooter. Such individuals were commonly of English or American extraction and usually traveled to Central or South America in an attempt to gain some advantage through military action. They proven an enormously destabilizing influence in the developing region, and much political intrigue resulted as a result of their influence for many decades. Insofar as Ramsbottom is fighting for local independence, he is representative of the less-obnoxious class of filibuster. It is interesting that Hornblower genuinely likes Ramsbottom and views his actions with something akin to reserved admiration. Aside from the political intrigue, the plot is nearly void of intricacies or parallel sub-plots. If the contemporaneous, local political milieu is understood, the narrative is particularly accessible through this chapter.



Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

It is late 1823, and Hornblower looks forward to his release from service with equal parts expectation and trepidation. Barbara, his wife, is sailing out from England to accompany him on the return voyage from the West Indies. He has served nearly three years there and looks forward to a period of idleness, even as he wonders what life will bring. He goes about his various duties and undergoes typical periods of self-critical introspection. His staff, Gerard and Spendlove chief among them, is by now proficient and adept at understanding Hornblower's foibles and quirks. His squadron is drilled and disciplined, and there is little left that he can achieve.

Then Drum-Major Cobb proffers charges of mutiny against musician Hudnutt. While rehearsing a new cornet-and-drum-only piece of music, Hudnutt, on cornet, had declined to play B-flat. Cobb tried and tried again, and then simply ordered Hudnutt to play the piece as written, but in front of the entire band, Hudnutt claimed he could not play the piece with a B-flat note. Hornblower considers the case trivial, but clearly discipline must be maintained. Later, he contrives to speak directly to Hudnutt in the stockade and the young man, nearly a simpleton, confirms the basics of Cobb's charges. It appears to be an open-and-shut case.

A few hours later, Barbara's ship finally arrives. Hornblower and his wife have a joyful reunion and then ready to vacate Admiralty House so that the arriving replacement can move in. They plan to spend several days as Hooper's guest in Government House until their packet for England departs. When Barbara hears about Hudnutt's case, she is shocked and asks Hornblower to dismiss the charges. He explains that he cannot, but that he will request the incoming admiral to dismiss them as an act of clemency. The situation causes some friction between Hornblower and his wife, but over the next few days they enjoy each other's company and make rounds of social visits. When Hornblower finally turns over command, he makes the clemency request from the new admiral who dismisses it as ridiculous. That night, keenly feeling the loss of political stature, Hornblower informs Barbara that Hudnutt will likely be hanged. She appears strangely complacent and merely asks for a large amount of money, which Hornblower supplies. The next day it is discovered that Hudnutt has escaped the stockade. A search with bloodhounds is made, but the trail soon goes cold. Hudnutt has seemingly vanished into thin air.

A few days later Hornblower and Barbara board *Pretty Jane*, a fast packet ship destined for England. Their quarters are within a deckhouse bolted to the vessel's deck. Aside from Barbara's extensive baggage, *Pretty Jane* carries a cargo of coir. *Pretty Jane* sails and Hornblower quickly settles into being a passenger. A few days later, inclement weather is encountered and continues to mount for several hours. Eventually it becomes apparent that *Pretty Jane* has been caught in an unseasonably early hurricane. For many, many hours the ship is driven and nearly lost. The masts, spars,



and rigging offer too much windage to control the ship in the violent seas. The captain and crew become too exhausted and frightened to take decisive action, and it remains for Hornblower to go forward with a blade and sever the windward foremast shrouds until the foremast dismasts in the weather. The loss of windage allows Pretty Jane to pay into the wind and weather the waves better. Hornblower then sees the deckhouse is beginning to tear away from the deck and he goes inside to get Barbara. There, fearing for her life, she confesses that he is the only man she has ever loved; even though she married once before, she did not love the man. Hornblower rescues Barbara from the deckhouse only moments before a towering wave scours it, bolts and all, right off of the ship. Hornblower ties Barbara and himself to the mainmast. They pass many, many hours in a state of semi-delirium as the hurricane gradually passes. As the seas calm, Hornblower uses his shirt to capture rain water which he shares with Barbara. The ship's planking and hull have worked open and the cargo hold is flooded with seawater—in fact, were the cargo not buoyant coir, Pretty Jane would long-ago have sunk. The captain has died of exposure, as have a few of the crew. Others of the crew have been lost overboard. Hornblower rallies the survivors and they salvage coconuts and other food items from the hold. A few days later, a passing ship takes Hornblower and Barbara aboard and deposits them at Puerto Rico. They are housed in the governor's house and recover their strength before being officially introduced into society.

As they enter the palace, they are stunned to see Hudnutt, now wearing a Spanish uniform, playing trumpet. The last time Hornblower was at San Juan he had sabotaged the Spanish slave schooner *Estrella del Sur*; nevertheless, he is greeted with pomp and circumstance. Later, Pretty Jane finally makes port with her surviving senior officer looking forward to salvage. Barbara later confesses to Hornblower that she had taken the borrowed money and hired a local ne'er-do-well to rescue Hudnutt from the stockade and spirit him away to safety. Hornblower is amazed at the risky chance Barbara had taken but instantly forgives her, feeling that her actions were essentially correct. The novel ends as Hornblower realizes, thanks to Barbara's confession of love during a time of extremity, that he can surrender much of his internal self-doubt and look forward to a happy retirement.

Chapter 5 Analysis

Chapter 5, is the longest segment of the text and is unique in that for about half of its length, Hornblower is acting as a private citizen and not as a military man. After a remarkably successful term as admiral of the West Indies station, Hornblower surrenders the reigns of command to his replacement and enjoys a brief period with Barbara before attempting to return to England. The plot for the chapter involves three threads—first, Hornblower's handing over of authority; second, Barbara's intervention to save Hudnutt; and third, the unseasonable hurricane and the Hornblowers' survival. Of course, elements from each thread inform elements in other threads.

Hornblower turns over political and military authority to his replacement and does it in a routine and courteous manner. At forty-seven years of age, Hornblower has thirty years of naval service and is far too experienced and polished to make any faux pas in the



ceremony. Nearly his last act as admiral is to consider the ultimate fate of Hudnutt, a young cornet player in the military band. It is particularly humorous that this matter involves Hornblower, who is entirely tone deaf and finds music—all music—dreadfully irritating at best. In brief, Hudnutt has "refused" to play B-flat on the cornet, an instrument that transposes on B-flat, meaning that when he plays a B-flat, it is actually tone-wise, a "C." The simpleton Hudnutt responds to a direct order to play a B-flat with the simple statement "I can't" (p. 249); his commanding officer, apparently unfamiliar with the cornet, takes this to be rank insubordination. Hornblower can't be expected to know differently, and thus Hudnutt will face court-martial and probable execution. Fortunately for Hornblower, the case happens to occur just as he leaves office so it will be up to his successor to carry out the dreadful duty. This does not mollify Barbara, though, and she takes matters into her own hands by hiring a local ne'er-do-well to rescue Hudnutt from the stockade and spirit him away to safety. Hudnutt humorously ends up as a trumpet player on the Spanish island of Puerto Rico, where he makes the startled acquaintance of Barbara and Hornblower one more time. When he learns of Barbara's action, Hornblower is rather startled for her safety but surprisingly does not object to her circumvention of military discipline.

The final element of the narrative concerns the near loss of *Pretty Jane* in an unseasonably early hurricane. Hornblower spends many of the initial hours in the deckhouse sleeping. By the time he awakens to the gale, the crew and captain are already fatigued. After dozens of hours, they are near collapse. At the critical moment the wind blows across the seas and *Pretty Jane's* rigging and spars cause her to lay perpendicular to the waves, which constantly swamp her and threaten to thrash her to pieces. Hornblower realizes the crew are too fatigued or frightened to do anything to save the ship, and, thus, he runs forward with little more than a pocketknife. He severs the windward shrouds and devoid of support, the foremast tumbles over. The loss of windage allows the rudder to point *Pretty Jane* into the waves, and this action saves the ship from loss. Thereafter, the storm abates and the ship is saved, although with considerable loss of life. Barbara's confession to Hornblower—that he is the only person she has ever loved—is touching and a poignant conclusion to the series of novels; in effect, it is the "happily ever after" ending to Hornblower's life. That he does not realize it for what it is until several days have passed is typical of Hornblower's usual mental gymnastics. Note that the writing during this section, particularly the description of the weather and the ship's wallowing action, is among the most technically precise and compelling storm narratives in all of fiction and is definitely one of the most memorable scenes in the novel.



Characters

Rear Admiral Lord Horatio Hornblower

Lord Horatio Hornblower is a rear admiral in the British Navy, serving as commander-in-chief of the West Indies station from about May, 1821, to about October, 1823. During the time of the novel, he is forty-four to forty-seven years old; he is very educated and joined the naval service fairly late at the age of about seventeen. During his three decades of naval service, he estimates he has spent only several months ashore. Hornblower is an exceptional navigator, admiral and seaman, though he is nervous and constantly plagued by internalized self-doubt. He regards himself as cowardly and dishonest, yet all who know him regard him in exactly the opposite way. His powerful drive to unqualified success masks his internal turmoil in icy reserve, and even his closest friends barely know him. An introspective and lonely man, Hornblower is married to Barbara and has one surviving child—Richard, about ten years old at the novel's open—from a previous wife who died during childbirth. Two other children died of smallpox prior to Richard's birth.

Hornblower is entirely tone deaf and finds music irritating and incomprehensible. Although he speaks French and Spanish with fluency, his tone-deafness ensures he speaks them both with a heavy accent. He is somewhat prone to seasickness, abhors many of the normal activities of naval life, eschews so far as possible the strict discipline achieved through corporal or capital punishment, and preferentially passes his time in isolation, reading or occasionally playing whist. He enjoys daily bathing—an unusual practice which excites comment. Hornblower's lengthy previous career is mentioned casually during numerous scenes in the novel; he is accomplished and distinguished. He has been on two occasions a prisoner of war—once in Spain and once, briefly, in France. Hornblower expects much from his subordinates 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 enjoys great popularity among his subordinates, and the English public views his exploits as nearly legendary. He is described physically in only vague terms—of apparently average height and weight, he finds his bulging middle and thinning hair unacceptable. His fingers are long and apparently delicate, though he considers them bony. Subsequent to the cessation of the prolonged Napoleonic Wars, Hornblower has mellowed considerably.

Hornblower is the dominant figure throughout the novel, even more so than in other volumes of this series. Indeed, the narrative structure can be viewed as primarily an in-depth and prolonged characterization of Hornblower as he moves through five distinct episodes in his later life. As expected, the experienced diplomat meets the political turmoil of the area with a polished approach and is nearly always entirely successful in everything he attempts.



His Britannic Majesty's Consul-General Mr. Cloudesley Sharpe

Sharpe is the Consul-General at New Orleans and functions well within that limited sphere. He is described as obese, insightful and talkative when the situation merits it. Sharpe has an easy fluency with the social usage of political custom, as would be expected of a man in his position. He owns a large and spacious home in New Orleans and appears to be financially wealthy. Sharpe has not risen to his political station through imprudence, however, and his primary goal appears to be to avoid committing himself unless absolutely required. In the opening scenes of the novel he entertains Hornblower and supplies him with much information but refuses to offer an opinion. Sharpe is a memorable but minor character in the novel and does not appear beyond the first segments of Chapter 1.

Lieutenant General the Count of Cambronne

Cambronne, officially introduced as "Son Excellence le Lieutenant Général le Comte de Cambronne, Grand Cordon de la Légion d'Honneur" (p. 20), is a French military man and veteran of the Napoleonic wars. A devoted Bonapartist, Cambronne desires to see the exiled Napoleon once again enthroned as the emperor of France. Thus, Cambronne has secured funds, hired an American ship and embarks muskets and uniforms for a contingent of Bonapartist French soldiers he picks up in Texas. They plan to travel to St. Helena, free Napoleon and accompany him to France for a putatively glorious restoration. Cambronne is a crafty adversary and eludes Hornblower's attempt at shadowing; indeed, he nearly evades Hornblower altogether. When Hornblower informs Cambronne that Napoleon is dead, the man is devastated and immediately determines to simply return to France. Cambronne is described as thin and physically impressive. He wears fancy clothing and maintains an old-style medal of honor. Cambronne is a fairly major character in Chapter 1, but does not thereafter appear in the novel.

Captain Sir Thomas Fell

Fell, captain of *Clorinda*, received his knighthood after a desperate frigate action in 1813. Hornblower considers the action to be a tribute to Fell's courage but not particularly to his professional abilities. Indeed, Fell is brave and a consummate seaman but has no great insight into tactics and is nearly useless among the finer points of diplomacy and politics. In many respects, Fell is analogous to Hornblower's long-time friend William Bush, long deceased, with the notable exception that Hornblower dislikes Fell immensely. Fell is too obtuse to sense Hornblower's attitude, though, and routinely invades Hornblower's privacy. Even though he personally dislikes Fell, Hornblower constantly benefits Fell's career in subtle ways. Fell is a constantly recurring, but fairly minor character, in the novel, making his first appearance in Chapter 2, and appearing thereafter with some regularity. He gains prominence in Chapter 2, when he fails to



capture Estrella del Sur upon their first encounter but subsequently captures the schooner once it has been disabled by a sea drogue.

Fell is a fairly poor man who maintains a wife in England, who harbors high expectations. He is, therefore, always interested in opportunities to make money. Fell is a largely unremarkable character and his numerous brief appearances throughout the narrative are generally very easy to forget. Even so, Hornblower judges him an excellent seaman and fully capable, if uninspired, captain. Perhaps the best that can be said for Fell is that he always follows orders and never demonstrates a lack of courage.

Mr. Erasmus Spendlove

Erasmus Spendlove is Hornblower's devoted and loyal secretary. He is a young man of unspecified age but likely in his early twenties. He is tall, well-formed, muscular and frequently described as handsome. Spendlove enjoys dancing, singing and music and appears equally at ease in social settings and on the deck of a Royal Navy frigate. He is highly educated with a particular focus on things nautical. Hornblower finds Spendlove's judgment generally correct and relies on Spendlove a great deal, especially in carrying out the numerous details surrounding his office. In the execution of his duty, Spendlove is scrupulously attentive and eminently reliable. Curiously, Spendlove does not appear in Chapter 1 of the novel, indicating perhaps he remained in Kingston when Hornblower visited New Orleans. In Chapter 2, Spendlove's opinion of the relative sailing qualities and speeds of Clorinda and Estrella del Sur prove correct, even though the experienced Captain Fell initially rejects Spendlove's position. In Chapters 4 and 5, Spendlove is a fairly minor but frequently-occurring character—though his subtle comments to Hornblower about Hudnutt serve to orient the admiral without seeming condescending. If he has a weakness, it appears to be in judging women—Spendlove is sure that Lucy Hough loves him, though, in fact, she hardly knows his name. A common enough shortcoming in young men of inexperience, Spendlove's failure in this regard can easily be forgiven.

In chapter 3, Spendlove is kidnapped with Hornblower, by pirates. The pirates are very abusive to Spendlove, knocking him out upon the first capture. Thereafter they threaten to torture Spendlove on various occasions. Spendlove rather quickly determines that he can escape from the pirate's stronghold by jumping into the water, though the older Hornblower probably can not. It is therefore with joy that Spendlove realizes Hornblower will be set free to carry the pirates' demands to the governor. As soon as Hornblower is safely gone, Spendlove escapes by his own wiles and arrives at Government house only a few hours behind Hornblower.

Governor Augustus Hooper

Hooper is the crude and domineering governor of Jamaica and lives at Government House in Kingston. Hooper is described as florid, physically powerful, with bulging eyes. Hooper is always far more concerned with himself and his own position than he is with



the welfare of others. He is of royal descent, however, and his often blunt-to-the-point-of-rude statements are therefore overlooked by others. Hooper has a hearty appetite and thinks Hornblower a lesser man for declining to eat and drink heavily. Nevertheless, Hooper is a firm leader and is generally informed about political activities within his sphere. Quick to anger, he is equally quick to forget past problems. Hooper is a minor character in the novel but proves central to several points of plot development because of his political influence. He occurs primarily in Chapters 3, 4, and 5. Hooper gradually learns to trust Hornblower, and as the narrative develops it is interesting to note Hooper's slow but constant change in attitude toward the admiral.

Ned Johnson

Johnson is the nominal leader of the pirate band which kidnaps Hornblower and Spendlove in Chapter 3. After the death of Harkness, the pirate of local renown, the surviving pirates of his band coalesce around Johnson. Johnson does not, however, rule with power but rather by consensus. For example, he cannot order other men to perform actions but must request them to do so and haggle with them if they refuse. He is described as dirty, swarthy and bearing the marks of a hard life at sea. He is illiterate, as are all the pirates, and fairly stupid. Even so, he seems to have some insight into human nature and most of his decisions basically are sound, though his execution of those decisions is usually flawed. Johnson believes that the governor will issue a general pardon for pirates in exchange for Spendlove's release. In this he is wrong, though the talismanic power he assigns to a pardon with a seal is humorous. Johnson is killed by mortar fire during Hornblower's attack on the pirate cave. He is a memorable, though minor, antagonist.

Charles Ramsbottom

Charles Ramsbottom is a very wealthy English industrialist; in fact, he is the first person to whom Hornblower hears the adjective "millionaire" applied. Although rather common in the modern age, a British millionaire during 1821, would be nearly unique. Ramsbottom's father was English and his mother Venezuelan. He enters the social scene in England rather abruptly but quickly charms everyone with his good looks, witty charm and generous hand. Barbara writes to Hornblower and speaks of Ramsbottom in glowing terms. Ramsbottom appears in Kingston aboard a private yacht, converted from a Royal Navy brig bought out of the service. Although some minor comforts have been added, he maintains the ship nearly as a ship-of-war, and it is crewed largely with Royal Navy veterans. Ramsbottom presents himself, in Chapter 4, as a simple man taking pleasure in yachting. He is so disarming and pleasant that even the usually suspicious Hornblower is put at ease.

Ramsbottom has a hidden agenda, however. Like many English of the period, he hates the Spanish yoke placed upon South America and intends to assist the revolutionary forces in any way he can. Thus, after entertaining Hornblower until the English fleet sails to the open seas for drill and maneuver, Ramsbottom proceeds to the Venezuelan



coast and impersonates an English officer commanding a ship of Hornblower's detachment. Ramsbottom announces an official English blockade, though no such thing legitimately exists, and which throws Spanish and Dutch shipping into frenzy. He then captures the Dutch ship *Helmond*, which is transporting artillery to support the Spanish defense against the revolutionary forces. Ramsbottom subsequently lands the artillery, abandons his ship and joins the revolutionary forces as a commander of artillery. Though victorious in battle, Ramsbottom has one hand shot away. When Hornblower next meets him, Ramsbottom is in agony and nearly hysteric, though flushed with the thrill of victory. Given his condition, it is likely he died within hours, though his ultimate fate is not specified in the novel. Ramsbottom is a major character in Chapter 4, but, like so many characters in the novel, does not occur outside of that segment of the narrative.

Hudnutt

Hudnutt is a young cornet and trumpet player in the military brass band at Kingston. He is widely acknowledged as incredibly musically gifted but more or less a simpleton in other matters. While practicing a new piece of music with the assembled band, Hudnutt cannot play a B-flat on the cornet. Rather than explaining the cornet to be a transposing instrument in B-flat, he simply states he can't play the note. It is possible, in fact, that Hudnutt does not understand the issue. In any event, he does not play the correct note after a direct order from a superior officer and thus is brought up on charges of mutiny. The tone-deaf Hornblower knows nothing about music or instruments and therefore concludes, after interviewing Hudnutt, that for some peculiar reason the man chose to disobey a direct order. Hornblower chalks it up to an artistic conscience and is thankful that due to legal process the case will default to his successor.

When Barbara learns that Hudnutt will probably hang for his "offense," she takes matters into her own hands and hires a local smuggler to help Hudnutt escape the stockade and flee Kingston. She next meets Hudnutt, quite by accident, in San Juan. Faced with an escaped prisoner in a Spanish uniform, Barbara confesses her involvement to Hornblower who immediately forgives her. Hudnutt is a minor character in the novel.

Barbara Hornblower

Lady Barbara Hornblower née Leighton née Wellesley is the aristocratic younger sister of two militarily and politically successful brothers. Her oldest brother, Wellington, is a lightly-fictionalized character based upon a historic person of great importance. She comes from an established, respected and powerful British family and has spent considerable time in India and is familiar with the practices of the sea. She has known Hornblower since 1808, and the two were quickly attracted to each other upon first meeting. Both have been previously married and widowed. Wellesley is described as attractive but not overly pretty. She has brilliant white teeth, long fingers and a highly-arched nose. Her skin tone is usually white and creamy, though after life aboard ship,



she sports a deep tan. 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, moving among them with a casual confidence and enjoying easy successes among them. Her social ability and natural grace quickly wins the affection of most. Barbara joins Hornblower at the end of his tenure as commander-in-chief of the West Indies station. She plans to accompany him home, and Hornblower looks forward to her arrival with great expectation. When she arrives she intervenes to prevent a measure of military justice which she deems wrong. Thereafter she accompanies Hornblower home until their packet encounters an unseasonably early hurricane and almost sinks. Barbara survives the ordeal with aplomb, never complaining and relying upon Hornblower's superior seamanship and experience. She has the tact to take a dangerous moment and profess her love for him, simultaneously stating that she has never loved anyone else. Although Hornblower does not realize it at the time, Barbara's insightful comment keeps him going through the next difficult hours. Indeed, her love for him forms one of the basic themes of the novel.



Objects/Places

His Majesty's Schooner Crab

Crab is a tiny schooner, mounting only two six-pound guns, crewed by a total of sixteen men and commanded by Lieutenant Harcourt. She is nevertheless one of Hornblower's fourteen sloops and schooners in the West Indies station. At the beginning of the novel, Hornblower makes Crab his flagship because his preferred frigate, Clorinda, is undergoing refit at the time.

Steam Tug

A steam tug is a small vessel with a powerful steam engine powered by coal or other combustibles. Their primary function was to assist other vessels or ships maneuver through difficult or restricted passages. The first successful steam ships were built circa 1807, and at the time of the novel, a steam tug would have still been something of a novelty. Although Hornblower views them as curious but useful machines, he can but little guess that they spell the doom of an entire profession.

Daring

Daring is a private ship owned by a United States firm. She is noted as having a displacement of about 800 tons and has fine lines, raked masts and wide yards, which enable her to sail at a good speed. She is flush-decked and bears twelve twelve-pounder cannon. In the narrative, Daring has been hired by Cambronne to carry out a secret mission.

Head Money

Head money is a cash payment issued by the English government to British ships-of-war that intercept slave ships carrying human slaves. A fixed amount is paid for each slave so liberated. Although not a huge amount of money when compared to prize money, head money can add up to a considerable amount if a large, full slave ship is captured.

Estrella del Sur

Captained by a man named Gomez, Estrella del Sur is a Spanish schooner and slave ship, running up to four hundred slaves on each passage. Her sailing qualities are spectacular, and her lines and sail plan allow her to easily outmaneuver frigates such as Clorinda. Estrella del Sur is disabled by a drogue fastened to her rudder. The schooner is captured by Captain Fell acting under instructions of Hornblower.



Drogue

A drogue is essentially a small parachute designed to operate under water. Just as a parachute slows a falling object by drag, so a drogue slows a towing ship by drag. As water is more dense than air, so a drogue is necessarily smaller and heavier-built than a parachute. A large drogue is constructed in Chapter 3, and its design is described in detail.

Mortar

A mortar is a fairly lightweight weapon throwing an explosive shell in a high arc. The high angle-of-fire allows a mortar to strike distant objects obscured from sight, or to place a shell into a target that a traditional line-fire weapon could not reach. At the time of the novel, naval mortars were somewhat common. Hornblower uses a naval mortar to attack and destroy a pirate hideout.

Bride of Abydos

Bride of Abydos is a private yacht converted from a Royal Navy brig bought out of the service. She bears reduced armament but has been fitted with some creature comforts. Owned by Charles Ramsbottom, the brig is used to intervene in the South American revolution to decisive effect. She captures a Dutch transport laden with Spanish artillery and hands the captured field weapons to the revolutionary forces. During her very brief career as a privateer, the brig temporarily is renamed Desperate.

Cornet

The cornet is a brass instrument very similar to a trumpet. The most common cornet is a transposing instrument in B-flat. The cornet was invented in 1814, and featured heavily in English military brass bands over the next several decades. During the time of the novel, the cornet was just gaining popularity in the West Indies.

Pretty Jane

Pretty Jane is a small, two-mast packet traveling between England and Jamaica. She is flush-decked and has been fitted with a capacious deck-house bolted to the deck such that she can accept passengers. Barbara takes passage on the vessel from England to Jamaica, and then Hornblower and Barbara take passage on the return trip to England. Pretty Jane is caught in an unseasonably early hurricane and founders; fortunately, her coir cargo keeps her afloat even after the hull fills with water. Only Hornblower's heroic actions save Pretty Jane from breaking up. The nearly-wrecked ship eventually makes a safe landfall.

Themes

Adventure

The novel's principle setting is the high seas in an area of turbulent politics, piracy, revolution and difficult weather. As an admiral of the Royal Navy, Hornblower's sworn and obvious duty is to protect British interests in the area, gaining whatever ground can be obtained without involving England in any unwanted political entanglements. He carries out this duty at Admiralty House, in Kingston, and aboard primarily two ships, HMS Crab, a tiny vessel, and HMS Clorinda, a frigate.

The novel relates a series of adventures during the years 1821 to 1823; although the experiences are fictional they contain many historical elements, and the revolutionary activities described are derived from several historical accounts. All the ships mentioned in the novel represent fictionalized ships of historically-appropriate type. While most of the persons mentioned in the text are fictional, some, such as Bolívar, are fictionalized representations of individuals of historical significance. Though much of the novel uses a land setting, all aspects of the novel are related to sea adventure; much of the action takes place at sea and even the action which takes place on land generally relates to the sea.

The strength and popular appeal of the novel is undoubtedly due to the nature of high seas adventure and the conversational way in which it is presented. Although full of accurate descriptions of nautical and amphibious maneuvers and frequent technical descriptions of nautical equipment, the text is presented in an accessible and friendly manner, which allows the reader to descend to deck-level, at it were, and enjoy the excitement of days long gone.

Duty

One of the main themes of the novel centers on military duty within the Royal Navy. Hornblower is deeply concerned with honor and duty and feels bound to uphold the interests of the Royal Navy even at the great expense of personal loss. Hornblower demonstrates his adherence to duty by rigorously complying with Royal Navy directives and laws. Indeed, the very essence of the story related in Chapter 1, pits Hornblower's personal honor against his professional duty. Hornblower ultimately sacrifices his honor in the execution of his duty. It is only through a fortuitous accident that Hornblower is able to retain his honor. Chapter 2 sees Hornblower again risking his reputation in exchange for pursuing his duty—should the drogue be discovered or fail to operate, Hornblower knows he will be ridiculed throughout the region. Duty, again, is the major focus of Chapter 3, where Hornblower faces the unpalatable prospect of voluntarily returning to the pirates so that his duty to Spendlove, as a fellow sailor and personal friend, will be fulfilled. Chapter 4 examines, in part, Hornblower's analysis of his own duty and finds him taking a largely observer-like role in momentous events. Finally, in



Chapter 5, Hornblower completes his professional duty when he hands over command to his replacement. Having once again executed his professional duty to the best of his considerable ability, Hornblower looks forward to many years of happy marriage to Barbara. His future is only secure and acceptable because he has managed to execute his duty to King and country. The theme of duty is also supported by numerous minor characters and their activities.

Love

By most standards the relationship between Hornblower and Barbara is unusual. He comes from a common background while she comes from a noble heritage. Most of Hornblower's life has been spent in grinding poverty; whereas, Barbara comes from a wealthy family. Hornblower has spent his entire career as a naval officer—a military man; Barbara has been a lady of subtle politics. Although they have been married for more than a decade by the end of the novel, they have spent only about half of that time in each other's company. Naval duty has called Hornblower away from home for prolonged periods of time; their separations have been difficult.

Both characters have been previously married—Hornblower to Maria, who died during childbirth; and Barbara to Admiral Leighton, who was killed during a naval action within a few months of Maria's death. The characters met by accident but fell in love only to be kept apart for several years by other complications. Once married, they have had difficulties and disagreements. For example, in the novel Barbara circumvents naval justice by hiring a smuggler to help Hudnutt escape. But all of this complicated history is swept aside by their love for each other. This theme of romantic love is developed primarily in Chapter 5 of the novel; there, Hornblower demonstrates his masculine love for Barbara by protecting her even at great personal risk. Barbara demonstrates her feminine love for Hornblower by professing her exclusive love for him at a moment of crisis. Their strong relationship clearly will weather the storms—both literal and figurative—that lie ahead. The theme is also developed by a minor incident in Chapter 3; there, the youngster Lucy Hough professes a profound love for Hornblower. He recoils from the beautiful young woman; the seasoned Hornblower realizes that her feelings are transient and do not constitute love. The theme of love is subtle, but well-developed and forms an enjoyable subtext within 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. For example, Hornblower is often portrayed in an agony of self-critical and nervous thought. A notable exception to the novel being constructed of direct action or dialogue, concerns the scene in which Hornblower must contemplate sacrificing his personal honor for the cause of peace. In this instance, Hornblower's internal thought process drives much of the plot of the second half of the first chapter. This technique allows the reader, like Hornblower, gradually to feel the intensification of discomfort as it develops inside the protagonist.

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 or affected mannerisms as deliberate rather than haughty. The narrative also allows portrayal of some of Hornblower's foibles as difficult but not entirely pathetic—for example, his seeming inability to find happiness without constant internal conflict. 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, which vary from chapter to chapter, is allowed through the point of view selected; it is carried throughout nearly all of the novels of the series and is accessible and successful.

Setting

The novel features a diffuse setting spread over vast regions of the West Indies station including New Orleans, Puerto Rico, Jamaica, Venezuela and many points in between. In addition, several ships are featured as transient settings. More than any physical location, the novel's setting relies upon the fictional recreation of a historic time's flavor for the romantic period of sail. New Orleans is only lightly described, and the narrative pays more attention to the food served than the city itself. Hornblower is concerned about and distractedly interested in the operation of the steam tugs that navigate the channel to the harbor. The presence of the steam tugs certainly signals the eventual end of sailing vessels as dominating weapons of war. Puerto Rico is featured in two occasions within the narrative, but in both episodes it is little more than a political seat of power with hospitality attached. As with New Orleans, the various lodgings and foodstuffs of Puerto Rico receive more narrative development than the place itself.



Jamaica is probably the best-developed setting of the novel, and the narrative develops the locale of Montego Bay to some extent as the plot relies upon the geography. The cultivated fields interspersed with roads are memorable; the various locations of major domiciles are noted, and the general lay of the land is considered. The trek between civilization and the pirate's lair is considered only in passing, but the pirate's cliff and cave hideout is well developed as a setting. The plot depends upon a careful sense of place—otherwise, for example, Hornblower's ship's mortar would hardly seem a more-suitable weapon than a file of marines. In any event, it is interesting to note that Forester offers a very liberal version of Jamaica's actual terrain. Venezuela is developed as a setting only insofar as it is noted as being hot, often dusty and surprisingly traversable for an English naval officer. The political situation is developed more than the setting, but even this receives fairly short shrift as the intricacies of revolution concern Hornblower only tangentially.

Language and Meaning

The novel's language is generally simply and accessible. Standard punctuation is used to indicate dialogue, and interior thoughts and descriptive text are easily distinguished. Most of the places, some of the objects and even some of the events referenced in the narrative are identifiable as real geographical locations, historic objects or historic events. However, Forester's description of the geography of Jamaica, in Chapter 3, does not agree with actual local geography. It is notable that the novel was originally written and published in England and uses standard English spelling styles, which may be somewhat unfamiliar to American readers, though they pose no problems of meaning. Occasional words are given in a foreign language—nearly always in dialogue and always in Spanish or French. These, too, present no particular barrier to comprehension as they are brief and their meanings are easily inferred from the context.

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 that are probably not particularly familiar to modern readers. The technical language is accurate and interesting, and having reference to a general sailing encyclopedia will assist in a careful reading and complete understanding of portions 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 in no way detracts from the novel's readability. Nearly all these events, of course, occurred in a prior volume of the series, of which this novel chronologically is the tenth and final volume. Indeed, such references are obviously required in a work of this sort.

Structure

The 329-page novel is divided into five chapters ranging from a low of 51 pages to a high of 86 pages. Each chapter functions as an individual narrative, and, as such, the



novel can be best understood as a collection of five similarly-themed novellas or vignettes. The novel describes events centered on Hornblower while he is the commander-in-chief, or admiral, of the West Indies station during a two and one-half year period from May, 1821, to October, 1823. The events of each chapter follow chronologically the events of the previous chapter, though the passage of time within the novel as a whole is uneven; some paragraphs span weeks while other chapters are devoted to the activities of a single day. Although common in fiction in general, the construction within the novel is somewhat disjointed and lends a sort of episodic feel to most of the major plot developments.

The novel was the ninth-written volume in a series of ten volumes and, chronologically within the series, occurs last. It is the only Hornblower novel that is set outside the time of the Napoleonic wars of 1793 to 1815; Hornblower's command is during a time of nominal peace for England. This is not to say there is a paucity of conflict in the West Indies station—indeed, far from it. 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. Based on textual statements and links to historic events, the novel can be accurately placed in time. Some of the political entities discussed no longer exist and may be unfamiliar to modern readers. The novel is sometimes published under the abbreviated title *Hornblower in the West Indies* and has appeared in omnibus editions gathering other Hornblower novels into the same binding.



Quotes

Rear Admiral Lord Hornblower, for all his proud appointment as commander-in-chief of His Majesty's ships and vessels in the West Indies, paid his official visit to New Orleans in H.M. schooner Crab, mounting only two six-pounders and with a crew of no more than sixteen men, not counting supernumeraries.

His Britannic Majesty's consul-general at New Orleans, Mr. Cloudesley Sharpe, remarked on the fact.

"I hardly expected to see your lordship in so diminutive a craft," he said, looking round him. He had driven down in his carriage to the pier against which Crab was lying, and had sent his liveried footman to the gangway to announce him, and it had been something of an anticlimax to be received by the trilling of the only two bos'n's calls that Crab could muster, and to find on the quarterdeck to receive him, besides the admiral and his flag lieutenant, a mere lieutenant in command.

"The exigencies of the service, sir," explained Hornblower. "But if I may lead the way below, I can offer you whatever hospitality this temporary flagship of mine affords." (p. 3)

Now he could take off his wet shirt and trousers, and dab himself dry with a towel. Somehow the little cabin did not seem so oppressively hot; perhaps because they were out at sea, perhaps because he had reached a decision. He was putting on his trousers at the moment when Harcourt had the helm put down. Crab came round like a top, with lusty arms hauling in on the sheets. She lay far over to starboard, with the wind abeam, and Hornblower, one leg in his trousers, after a frantic hop, trying to preserve his balance, fell on his nose across his cot with his legs in the air. He struggled to his feet again; Crab still heeled over to starboard, farther and then less, as each roller of the beam sea passed under her, each roll taking Hornblower by surprise as he tried to put his other leg into his trousers, so that he sat down twice, abruptly, on his cot before he managed it.

It was as well that Harcourt and Gerard re-entered the cabin only after he had succeeded. They listened soberly while Hornblower told them of his deductions regarding Daring's plans and of his intention to intercept her at the Tobago Channel; Harcourt took his dividers and measured off the distances, and nodded when he had finished. (p. 47)

"By the way, my lord, have you heard the news? Boney's dead."

Hornblower had not sat down. He had intended to refuse the sherry; the governor would not care to drink with a man who had lost his honour. Now he sat down with a jerk and automatically took the glass offered him. The sound he made in reply to the governor's news was only a croak.

"Yes," went on the governor. "He died three weeks back, in St. Helena. They've buried him there, and that's the last of him. Well—are you quite well, my lord?"

"Quite well, thank you," said Hornblower.

The cool twilit room was swimming round him. As he came back to sanity he thought of Saint Elizabeth of Hungary. She, disobeying her husband's commands, had been



carrying food to the poor—an apron full of bread—when her husband saw her. "What have you in your apron?" he demanded. "Roses," lied Saint Elizabeth. "Show me," said her husband. Saint Elizabeth showed him—and her apron was full of roses. Life could begin anew, thought Hornblower. (pp. 71-72)

"My lord," said Gerard, "you've had no breakfast as yet." Hornblower tried to conceal the discomfiture he felt at this reminder. He had forgotten all about breakfast, despite the cheerful anticipation with which he had once been looking forward to it. "Quite right, Mr. Gerard," he said, jocular, but only clumsily so, thanks to being taken by surprise. "And what of it?" "It's my duty to remind you, my lord," said Gerard. "Her ladyship—" "Her ladyship told you to see that I took my meals regularly," replied Hornblower. "I am aware of that. But her ladyship, owing to her inexperience, made no allowance for encounters with fast-sailing slavers just at mealtimes." "But can't I persuade you, my lord?" The thought of breakfast, now that it had been reimplanted in his mind, was more attractive than ever. But it was hard to go below with a pursuit being so hotly conducted. "Take that bearing again before I decide," he temporized. Gerard walked to the binnacle again. (pp. 82-83)

"And welcome to you and to your ship, Captain," added Mendez-Castillo hastily, nervous in case it should be too apparent that he had been so engrossed in his meeting with the fabulous Hornblower that he had paid insufficient attention to a mere captain. Fell bowed awkwardly in reply—interpretation was unnecessary. "I am instructed by His Excellency," went on Mendez-Castillo, "to inquire if there is any way in which His Excellency can be of service to Your Excellency on the notable occasion of this visit?" In Spanish the phrasing of the pompous sentence was even more difficult than in English. And as Mendez-Castillo spoke, his glance wavered momentarily towards the Estrella; obviously all the details of the Clorinda's attempted interception were already known—much of the unavailing pursuit must have been visible from the Morro. Something in the major's attitude conveyed the impression that the subject of the Estrella was not open to discussion. "We intend to make only a brief stay, Major. Captain Fell is anxious to renew the water supply of his ship," said Hornblower, and Mendez-Castillo's expression softened at once. "Of course," he said hastily. "Nothing could be easier. I will give instructions to the captain of the port to afford Captain Fell every facility." "You are too kind, Major," said Hornblower. Bows were exchanged again, Fell joining in, although unaware of what had been said. (p. 93)



Down below Spendlove was waiting in the lighted cabin.

"The vultures are gathered together," said Hornblower. It was amusing to see Spendlove was pale and tense too. "I hope you gentlemen will join me."

The younger men were silent as they ate. Hornblower put his nose to his glass of wine and sipped thoughtfully.

"Six months in the tropics has done this Bordeaux no good," he commented; it was inevitable that as host, and admiral, and older man, his opinion should be received with deference. Spendlove broke the next silence.

"That length of spun yarn, my lord," he said. "The breaking strain—"

"Mr. Spendlove," said Hornblower, "all the discussion in the world won't change it now. We shall know in good time. Meanwhile let's not spoil our dinner with technical discussions."

"Your pardon, my lord," said Spendlove, abashed. Was it by mere coincidence or through telepathy that Hornblower had been thinking at that very moment about the breaking strain of that length of spun yarn in the drogue; but he would not dream of admitting that he had been thinking about it. The dinner continued.

"Well," said Hornblower, rising his glass, "we can admit the existence of mundane affairs long enough to allow of a toast. Here's to head money." (p. 115)

"Oh, the dames of France are fond and free

"And Flemish lips are willing"

That was young Spendlove singing lustily only two rooms away from Hornblower's at Admiralty House and he might as well be in the same room, as all the windows were open to let in the Jamaican sea breeze.

"And sweat the maids of Italy—"

That was Gerard joining in.

"My compliments to Mr. Gerard and Mr. Spendlove," growled Hornblower to Giles, who was helping him dress, "and that caterwauling is to stop. Repeat that to make sure you have the words right."

"His lordship's compliments, gentlemen, and that caterwauling is to stop," repeated Giles dutifully.

"Very well, run and say it."

Giles ran, and Hornblower was gratified to hear the noise cease abruptly. The fact that those two young men were singing—and still more the fact that they had forgotten he was within earshot—was proof that they were feeling lighthearted, as might be expected, seeing they were dressing for a ball. Yet it was no excuse, for they knew well enough that their tone-deaf commander-in-chief detested music, and they should also have realized that he would be more testy than usual, on account of that very ball, because it meant that he would be forced to spend a long evening listening to those dreary sounds, cloying and irritating at the same moment. There would certainly be a table or two of whist—Mr. Hough would be aware of his principal guest's tastes—but it was too much to hope for that all sound of music would be excluded from the card room. The prospect of a ball was by no means as exhilarating to Hornblower as to his flag lieutenant and to his secretary. (pp. 132-133)



Hornblower rose slowly; he would have taken his time in any case in an effort to preserve what dignity was left to him, but he could not have risen swiftly if he had wanted to. His joints were stiff—he could almost hear them crack as he moved. His body ached horribly.

"These two men take you," said Johnson.

Spendlove had risen to his feet too.

"Are you all right, my lord?" he asked anxiously.

"Only stiff and rheumatically," replied Hornblower. "But what about you?"

"Oh, I'm all right, my lord. Please don't give another thought to me, my lord."

That was a very straight glance that Spendlove gave him, a glance that tried to convey a message.

"Not another thought, my lord," repeated Spendlove.

He was trying to tell his chief that he should be abandoned, that nothing should be done to ransom him, that he was willing to suffer whatever tortures might be inflicted on him so long as his chief came well out of the business.

"I'll be thinking about you all the time," said Hornblower, giving back glance for glance. (pp. 154-155)

Two days later he was announcing his immediate departure to the governor.

"I'm taking my squadron to sea in the morning, Your Excellency," he said.

"Aren't you going to stay for the hangings?" asked Hooper in surprise.

"I fear not," answered Hornblower, and added an unnecessary explanation. "Hangings don't agree with me, Your Excellency."

It was not merely an unnecessary explanation; it was a foolish one, as he knew as soon as he saw the open astonishment in Hooper's face. Hooper could hardly have been more surprised at hearing that hangings did not agree with Hornblower than he would have been if he had heard that Hornblower did not agree with hangings—and that was very nearly as correct. (p. 191)

Hornblower's mind had now attained the comforting certainty that the future was uncertain, and that nothing he could do during the next few hours could change it. With that, he might well have gone to sleep; he was, in fact, on the point of dozing off when he brushed what he thought was a trickle of sweat from his bare ribs. It was not sweat. A flurry against his finders told him it was a cockroach crawling over his skin, and he started up in disgust. The Caribbean was notorious for its cockroaches, but he had never grown to tolerate them. He walked across in the darkness and opened the door to the after cabin, admitting light from the lamp that swung there, and this revealed a dozen of the disgusting creatures scuttling about.

"My lord?" It was the faithful Gerard hurrying out of bed as soon as he heard his admiral stirring.

"Go back to bed," said Hornblower. (p. 225)

"Well, my lord, it was like this. We was rehearsing the new march that come out in the



last packet. 'Dondello,' it's called, my lord. Just the cornet an' the drums. An' it sounded different, an' I had 'Udnutt play it again. I could 'ear what 'e was doin', my lord. There's a lot of B flat accidentals in that march, an' 'e wasn't flattin' them. I asked 'im what 'e meant by it, an' 'e said it sounded too sweet. That's what 'e said, my lord. An' it's written on the music. Dolce, it says, and dolce means sweet, my lord."

"I know," lied Hornblower.

"So I says, 'You play that again and you flat those B's.' An' 'e says, 'I can't.' An' I says, 'You mean you won't?' An' then I says, 'I'll give you one more chance'—although by rights I shouldn't 'ave, my lord. An' I says, 'This is an order, remember,' an' I gives 'em the beat an' they starts off and there was the B naturals. So I says, 'You 'eard me give you an order?' An' 'e says, 'Yes.' So there wasn't nothing I could do after that, my lord. I calls the guard an' I 'ad 'im marched to the guard'ouse. An' then I 'ad to prefer charges, my lord."

"This happened with the band present?"

"Yes, my lord. The 'ole band, sixteen of 'em." (pp. 248-249)

He kissed her hurriedly, his lips against her dripping cheek. It was only the most perfunctory kiss. To Hornblower's subconscious mind Barbara, in making her request, was risking their lives for it—staking ten thousand future kisses against one immediate one. It was womanlike for her to do so, but odds of ten thousand to one had no appear for Hornblower. And still she lingered.

"Dearest, I've always loved you," she said; she was speaking hurriedly and yet with no proper regard for the value of time. "I've loved no one but you in all my life. I had another husband once. I couldn't say this before because it would have been disloyal. But now—I've never loved anyone but you. Never. Only you, darling."

"Yes, dear," said Hornblower. He heard the words, but at that urgent moment he could not give them their rightful consideration. "Stand here. Hold on to this. Hold on!"

It was only a lesser wave that swept by them.

"Wait for my signal!" bellowed Hornblower into Barbara's ear, and then he made the hurried dash to the binnacle. One group of men had bound themselves to the wheel. (p. 296)

Topics for Discussion

In Chapter 1, after gathering much information, Hornblower deduces that Cambronne must be embarking French soldiers and munitions in an attempt to reinstate Napoleon as the emperor of France. Discuss the various clues used by Hornblower to correctly divine Cambronne's intent. Can you offer an equally plausible, but alternative, motivation for Cambronne's actions?

Speaking to Cambronne, Hornblower pledges his word of honor as a gentleman that Napoleon has died. After doing this, he looks forward to a life of disgrace and plans to tender his resignation before he receives a discharge. If the novel was set during a modern time period, would Hornblower face such a glum future after telling a lie?

In Chapter 2, Hornblower devises a plan to disable Estrella del Sur, the slave ship. He has his secretary Spendlove suggest the plan to Captain Fell, and then receives the plan back from Fell with the appearance of having heard the plan for the first time. Why does Hornblower use this circuitous route to evolve the plan rather than simply suggesting it outright?

Hornblower, Fell, Gerard and others find the very presence of Estrella del Sur offensive. Do you think that this view of slavery is realistic for the time period presented in the novel? Or is it, perhaps, a retroactive application of modern sensibilities to a historic period? Is Fell more interested in capturing the slave ship to prevent slavery or to obtain head-money? How can Hornblower stand in abject opposition to slavery and yet serve aboard Royal Navy ships crewed largely with impressed seamen? Discuss.

In Chapter 3, the pirates conduct a bold kidnap of Hornblower and Spendlove but follow up their decisive action with an ineffectual plan. The novel suggests that the difference between success and failure is not so much decisive action as a correct plan. Is Hornblower an example of a decisive man or an example of a meticulous planner? Or is Hornblower an example of both qualities?

After Hornblower and Spendlove are captured by pirates, Spendlove seems particularly willing to remain hostage while Hornblower is released to serve as emissary. Do you think Spendlove's attitude is based more upon genuine care for his superior officer or the realization that, freed of the aged Hornblower, escape would be relatively easy? Do you see a successful future for Spendlove?

In Chapter 4, Hornblower meets Ramsbottom and derives satisfaction from having "...at last come across a name more unlovely than his own" (p. 194). Discuss how this and other minor characterizations manage to more-fully develop a fictional character that has already been the primary protagonist of nine previous novels.



Ramsbottom's brig, crewed in military fashion, is named *Bride of Abydos*. Had Hornblower been a more literary man he might have realized the name to be derived from a then-contemporaneous publication of Lord Byron. Do you think Hornblower could have used the contents of Byron's text to anticipate Ramsbottom's actions? Why or why not?

In Chapter 5, Hudnutt faces charges of mutiny for refusing to play a B-flat on a cornet, a rather new instrument in the West Indies service. At the time, nobody seems to realize that the cornet is a transposing instrument in B-flat. Given the facts of the case, who is actually to blame for the musical conundrum—Hudnutt or Cobb, the Drum-Major? Is Hornblower's tone-deaf ear partially to blame?

Hornblower—a consummate seaman—and Barbara, his wife, board a ship destined for England and are subsequently nearly drowned in a terrible hurricane. Discuss how modern weather forecasting and storm tracking have impacted travel and how this incident may have turned out differently were the Hornblowers traveling today.