Hornblower and the Hotspur Study Guide

Hornblower and the Hotspur by C. S. Forester

BOOKRAGS

Contents

Plot Summary

Newly-married lieutenant Horatio Hornblower, master and commander of HMS Hotspur, leaves England during the last few days of the Peace of Amiens to reconnoiter the disposition of the French fleet anchored at Brest. When war erupts, Hornblower thus possesses considerable knowledge of use to the English. Hotspur then joins the blockading squadron and Hornblower plans, executes several daring shore raids, and weathers severe storms for the course of many months. After these adventures, Hotspur sails to Gibraltar where Hornblower deals with an issue concerning his personal steward. Hornblower then learns his energetic actions have earned him an appointment as post captain. As Hotspur is insufficient for a captain's command, Hornblower leaves his beloved ship and crew at the novel's conclusion.

The novel opens with Hornblower's marriage to Maria Ellen Mason, a woman whom he has known and halfheartedly courted for some time. Hornblower is a lieutenant and has been recently appointed master and commander of Hotspur. Although England is not at war, military leaders believe she soon will be again at war with France. Hotspur is sent to watch French activities at the harbor of Brest. Within weeks, France declares war and Hotspur is joined by a large blockading squadron. Hornblower spends the next approximately thirty months nearly continuously at sea, participating in the blockade of Brest. Meanwhile, Maria gives birth to Hornblower's first child—a boy named after his father.

The novel relates several incidents transpiring during the period of the blockade. Hornblower engages local fishermen for information. He then plans and leads an audacious and dangerous raid deep into French territory. Creeping into the Brest harbor environs at night, Hotspur engages and sinks several coastal mercantile vessels. Hornblower then plans and leads a secondary raid—even more audacious and still more dangerous—against the shore battery and garrison near Brest. Leading his men, Hornblower lands at night in ship's boats, destroys a French signaling semaphore, ruins the battery, and explodes the magazine. Casualties are high, but the mission is entirely successful.

As the conflict prolongs the blockade, duty becomes monotonous but critical. On several occasions, severe weather forces Hotspur from her patrol station. On one occasion, the ship runs dangerously short on water during a prolonged series of gales. Desperate, Hornblower finally sails the ship through full gale conditions to reach the channel and fetch Tor Bay where he resupplies before again being sent to blockade station. On another occasion, Hotspur leads the attack against French transports trying to sneak from Brest under cover of darkness. Finally, Hornblower leads Hotspur against a French frigate to prevent it from warning an approaching Spanish treasure fleet about an English ambush. After this, Hornblower returns to blockading duty for more weary months until the fleet admiral retires. The admiral announces that Hornblower's resolute duty has earned him promotion to captain, and the novel concludes with this happy news.

Chapters 1 and 2

Chapters 1 and 2 Summary

Newly-married lieutenant Horatio Hornblower, master and commander of HMS Hotspur, leaves England during the last few days of the Peace of Amiens to reconnoiter the disposition of the French fleet anchored at Brest. When war erupts, Hornblower thus possesses considerable knowledge of use to the English. Hotspur then joins the blockading squadron and Hornblower plans, executes several daring shore raids, and weathers severe storms for the course of many months. After these adventures, Hotspur sails to Gibraltar where Hornblower deals with intrigue concerning his personal steward. Hornblower then learns his energetic actions have earned him an appointment as post captain. As Hotspur is insufficient for a captain's command, Hornblower leaves his beloved ship and crew at the novel's conclusion.

The novel opens with the marriage of Horatio Hornblower to Maria Mason during the Peace of Amiens. Lieutenant William Bush manages most aspects of the formal arrangements, while Mrs. Mason attends to other aspects of the ceremony. Maria is obviously excited whereas Hornblower, with his typical reticence, is reserved, stiff, and nervously formal. Shortly after the post-ceremony celebrations begin, Hornblower is summoned to attend on Admiral the Honorable Sir William Cornwallis who happens to be lodging very close by. Lieutenant Hornblower has recently been appointed master and commander of HMS Hotspur, sloop-of-war; it is a significant appointment for a rather junior lieutenant but well-deserved none-the-less. Cornwallis confides in Hornblower that the Peace of Amiens—always shaky—is likely to entirely collapse in the coming weeks. It is vital to English interests and safety to gather intelligence about the French fleet anchored in the harbor of Brest. Hornblower is ordered to take his ship to see as quickly as possible and to proceed to the environs of Brest and there observe conditions generally. Cornwallis concludes by noting that if war indeed eventuates, Brest will be blockaded by a significant naval force.

Hornblower returns to his wedding celebration. To ameliorate the military intrusion somewhat, Cornwallis attends Hornblower and drinks to the health of the marriage party. Mrs. Mason is duly impressed with Cornwallis' notable presence. As quickly as courteous, Bush leaves the wedding celebration with the numerous seamen and returns to Hotspur to ready the ship for sea as quickly as possible. For Hornblower, the next hours are largely a balancing act between his new bride and his official duty. Fortunately, Bush is entirely competent and performs many extra duties to relieve Hornblower. Hornblower spends his marriage night ashore—courtesy of exceptional orders issued by Cornwallis—even though his commissioned vessel rides at anchor in the harbor. He arises early in the morning and shares a hearty breakfast with Maria. Throughout the night and morning, Maria gushes with tenderness and sorrow at their sudden parting. Hornblower finds Maria somewhat irritating but vacillates between a standoffish brusqueness and a stiff attempt at tenderness. After breakfast, they walk to the docks and say tender good-byes. Maria makes a present of thick woolen gloves to

Hornblower—he has not thought to have a gift for her, but he informs her she is authorized to draw some of his pay in his absence.

Chapters 1 and 2 Analysis

The initial chapters of any novel are critical—they establish the setting, set the tone and texture of the narrative, indicate the narrative construction, and introduce significant characters. The novel begins with the rather simple marriage of Horatio Hornblower and Maria Mason; their meeting and rather bumpy engagement are described in a previous novel of the series. Up until the last moment, Hornblower considers running from the altar, but his sense of duty keeps him nailed to the spot despite his misgivings. Hornblower's friend William Bush arranges the various niceties of the ceremony with his usual subtle efficiency. The marriage allows deep characterization of Hornblower, light characterization of Bush, and an examination of their relationship. The tension between Hornblower's natural reticent nature and his internalized discussion about needing to be the polite and attentive newlywed is enjoyable. The intrusion of military matters into the wedding ceremony itself is obvious and sets the tone for the Hornblowers' entire marriage, which persists through several volumes of the series. The single night Hornblower spends with his new bride is sufficient to father a child by her, as described in subsequent chapters. Throughout the novel, Maria remains a dutiful but distant wife, hoping for, but not expecting, a deep emotional connection with her husband.

The chapters follow a strategy, used in other volumes of the series, of transitioning Hornblower from life ashore and past entanglements to life aboard with a fresh start. This allows the various volumes, including the present volume, to retain their atomic nature without feeling artificially episodic. In general, Hornblower is summoned to the life of a naval military man and issued orders which supersede his 'normal' life—though for Hornblower, life aboard actually is more normal, and more preferred, than life ashore. Upon their final parting, Maria gives a pair of gloves to Hornblower. They are symbolic of Maria herself—functional, well-made, and useful—but unfashionable and plain. They are also a symbolic physical link between Hornblower and his life at home in England.

Chapters 3 and 4

Chapters 3 and 4 Summary

Hornblower boards Hotspur amidst the usual ceremony. As expected, Bush has everything ready and the ship is prepared for sea. Because of the recent Peace of Amiens, Hornblower and Bush have not been at sea for nearly two years—but this has not dulled their skill as mariners. Bush puts the ship through evolutions to hoist anchor and get underway—Hornblower watches him with admiration for his skill. As Hotspur creeps away Hornblower watches Maria through a telescope—she fades away into the horizon as Hornblower makes the rapid transition from family man to military-man. Hornblower tells Prowse, the sailing master, to plot a course for Ushant, an island near Brest—the command informs the crew of a possible destination. Hornblower then feels how odd it is, for the first time in his life, to take to the sea in military command during a time of peace—there is something disconcerting and weird about it.

Hotspur proceeds and Cargill, the second master's mate, has the watch. Hornblower orders a tack and Cargill executes it with too much restraint and too little caution. Hotspur turns but fails to cut the wind. The ship falters, then falls off, and falls into irons. Cargill nervously orders the ship hauled back to the original tack, gathers her way again, and reattempts the maneuver. The ship nearly fails again but due to a fortunate combination of wave and wind manages to come about, much to Cargill's relief. Bush is disgusted but Hornblower calmly and correctly notes that Hotspur is trimmed wrong and must have weight shifted. The situation is discussed by Hornblower, Bush, and Prowse. Hornblower causes two forward cannons to be moved to empty gun ports near the stern, fixing the trim for the moment. Hornblower reflects on Hotspur's size and armament—twenty nine-pounder long guns and four carronades. The shift helps and upon the next tack, Cargill executes the maneuver correctly and swiftly. When Hotspur gains the open sea, the motion, as usual, causes Hornblower to become seasick. Over the next days, the ship sails to Ushant and Hornblower slowly recovers his sea legs. Hornblower, poor, newly married, and coming off years of half pay, has virtually no private stores aboard and usually dines on ship's fare. He looks forward to the meager personal stores put on board by Mrs. Mason, his new mother-in-law.

Hotspur sails to a particular distance from England whereupon Hornblower is authorized to open a heavy package of sealed orders. The process makes him self-conscious and he feels it a little silly, but he is scrupulous in observing the location before opening the orders. The orders largely recapitulated what Cornwallis has already told Hornblower, but the packet also includes several rolls of gold coins—French francs. The orders stipulate that Hornblower should use the money to purchase favor and information, including French newspapers, as widely as possible. As the voyage continues, Hornblower inspects the ship thoroughly and strenuously exercises the crew at sailing and gunnery. One day a French merchant ship passes close by and Bush looks at it wistfully, wishing it were available as a prize of war. One day the lookout raises a small French fishing craft. Hornblower directs Hotspur to close with the vessel, whereupon he

hails the French captain and requests some of the catch. He then invites the French captain aboard and into his cabin for a few drinks of grog and small talk. He pays the French captain an enormous sum for the few fish, whereupon the French captain becomes quite talkative and divulges a large amount of information valuable to Hornblower. The French captain mentions that the French frigate Loire is ready for sail, but the remaining warships at Brest are not yet ready.

Chapters 3 and 4 Analysis

These chapters fully transition Hornblower, Bush, and the other men from life ashore to life afloat in the Royal Navy. Hornblower watches through a telescope as Maria fades away until he can no longer see her—obviously a realistic event, but also symbolic of the metaphoric distance interceding in their relationship. Although most of the officers and crew have been away from the sea for some period of months, they retain their essential nature as mariners. Bush is eager to get away and demonstrates this by exceptional efficiency and devotion to duty. Hornblower's discomfort and disorientation at leaving for the sea during a time of peace in intriguing and illustrates how thoroughly a military officer he actually is.

Cargill's watch and the failed tack are particularly well-written and demonstrate the technical mastery the author has over the subject of sailing vessels. The description of the coming about and falling into irons are intriguing, compelling, and accurate. Cargill's ashamed reaction demonstrates the human element present in the naval warship. Bush's angry reaction is as typical of the character as is Hornblower's intellectual response. Hornblower's simply remedy is to reallocate two cannon sternward. Bush's pointless unease at leaving a gap in the line of cannon is humorous, as is Hornblower's banal reassurance that once stores are depleted the cannon can be put back. It is interesting to note how early in this, his first appointment as master and commander, Hornblower mistakenly allows the lieutenant and the sailing master to enter into an overly-friendly advisory role. As the cruise continues, Hornblower will struggle against this over-familiarity as he asserts his role as captain. The role of captain necessitates a distance and certain unapproachable space, which initially is difficult to establish between the long-time friends Hornblower and Bush.

When Hotspur reaches the open seas, the motion instantly changes and Hornblower is plunged into the hell of seasickness. This humorous characteristic of a great naval captain makes the character more human and more credible. As Hornblower notes, the contrast of having nothing but ship's stores to eat and having seasickness is ironic. Hornblower's scrupulousness in observing orders to open sealed orders at only a certain distance from England is typical of his exacting nature.

Chapters 5 and 6

Chapters 5 and 6 Summary

John Grimes is Hornblower's steward, and he is fairly inefficient. Hornblower attempts to have a good breakfast, which is a meal of which he is notably fond. Grimes is ignorant of how to prepare coffee, so Hornblower instructs him. Grimes' constant expressions of surprise anger Hornblower, and the resultant brew is lukewarm and gritty. Hornblower looks forward to a breakfast of eggs from the meager supplies provided by Mrs. Mason but Grimes hesitatingly informs him that half of them are bad. Hornblower then discovers that even the jam provided is black currant, his least-favored flavor. Throughout, Grimes nearly quakes with fear that Hornblower will have him flogged for the poor performance. Finally, the terrible meal ends.

Hotspur then cruises past the entrance to Brest harbor, maintaining a respectable distance so as not to provoke the French. Hornblower sends men aloft to count ships and observe conditions generally. When Bush reports his findings that a single frigate is sea ready Hornblower causally mentions it to be Loire. Hornblower's knowledge, gained from the French fishing captain, astounds Bush who rather believes Hornblower capable of something like magical feats. Some time later Loire puts to sea on a trial voyage and passes close by Hotspur. It is a tense moment for the British sailors as their usual custom would be to fire at a passing French ship-of-war. Instead, they ready and render honors and the French ship returns the gesture, playing God Save the King. Hornblower, entirely tone deaf, fails to even recognize the song!

Days later, a gale blows up and the changing motion of the ship again makes Hornblower seasick and miserable. On the other hand, Bush faces the prospect of heavy weather with enthusiasm. The French frigate Loire puts to sea during the weather and closes Hotspur. Bush wonders aloud what the French ship's intentions could be—Hornblower muses that England and France are perhaps, now, again at war. Hornblower's presumption is largely based upon the belief that the French warship would not willingly put to sea during a storm. Loire is twice the size of Hotspur, and the French ship bears forty eighteen-pounders compared to Hotspur's twenty nine-pounders. Obviously, any exchange between the ships will be on vastly unequal terms. Hotspur clears for action and turns away to sea. A racing chase ensues and Hornblower, ignorant of the political situation, is tense. The hours pass by as the larger and faster French ship continues to close the windward Hotspur. The French ship's belligerent attitude convinces Hornblower that France has declared war. Although Hornblower possesses the weather gauge, the French ship is larger and thus will inevitably win any long race of equal terms. Prowse becomes gloomy and pessimistic, believing capture to be inevitable. Hornblower develops a complex sailing strategy to escape, however. Various turns ensue and on one occasion, Hornblower executes a complicated maneuver, which fools the French ship into turning. Hotspur quickly pivots back on her original tack and the French frigate tacks twice in quick succession—too quick, as it turns out, and the frigate falls into irons while Hotspur gains critical speed.

Hornblower has carefully laid the trap, and as the French frigate founders, Hotspur fires a wholly unanswered broadside of canister atop of shot into the enemy vessel at pistol-shot range before turning away and running downwind into the shallow waters of Ushant. Against Prowse's gloomy prognostication, Hornblower has executed a brilliant escape coupled with a moral victory of firing the first broadside in anger upon resumed hostilities.

Chapters 5 and 6 Analysis

Grimes is here presented as a comic character who is inept at nearly everything. He is nearly overcome by fear of Hornblower, and his nervous behavior seems out of place. Hornblower, full of natural pride, mistakes Grimes' extreme nervousness as a response to the close proximity of an angry captain. Future developments in the novel will make Grimes' early behavior appear natural and intelligible. The terrible breakfast scene, however, is comical and adds an element of the rigors of naval life to the narrative.

The lengthy chapter six presents the first nautical action of the lengthy novel, and the writing is superb. The details of maneuver, the tension of the prose, and the beauty of the narrative all are exceptional. Hornblower immediately grasps the danger presented by Loire and immediately executes plans to preserve his ship—here he is the great captain in his natural element, and his superiority of command is obvious. Note how Hornblower's plan involves a synthesis of the short, medium, and long-term efforts needed for success: immediate maneuver to gain the windward course; medium complicated maneuver to maintain a diminishing lead; and long-term plans to shelter in available but distant waters. The lengthy crew training in sailing and gunnery pays off as he sails the ship through a tricky evolution while simultaneously running one broadside out and in, without firing, and then quickly runs out, fires, and runs in the other broadside. The crew is obviously beyond capable. The fact that the experienced Prowse gives up hope early on indicates how dire the situation really is. Just as Prowse is pessimistic, Bush remains the eternal optimist in Hornblower's capabilities—after the first broadside Bush suggests that Hotspur remain to deliver another. Hornblower, more a realist than Bush, wisely declines to exchange Hotspur's 90-pound broadside for Loire's 360-pound broadside. In all, the headlong chase is one of the most compelling scenes in the novel. The chapter marks a major turning point in the narrative as the political situation between England and France changes from an uneasy truce to outright hostilities. Hornblower, Bush, and the rest are more familiar with this situation.

Chapters 7 and 8

Chapters 7 and 8 Summary

Weeks pass and Hornblower's meager personal stores are exhausted—he subsists on ship's stores like an ordinary seaman. With the resumption of war, the British fleet has been mobilized and Hornblower's independent command has been replaced by a multi-tiered system. Hotspur is assigned to an inshore squadron, which in turn is assigned to a fleet responsible for blockading Brest. The main body of the fleet contains at least twelve ships-of-the-lines. The inshore squadron is composed of two two-deckers, two frigates, and Hotspur, and is then joined by another ship-of-the-line—Hornblower learns to his delight that it is Tonnant, commanded by Captain Edward Pellew. As a midshipman, Hornblower enjoyed a distinguished career serving under Pellew and the two men enjoy a mentor-student role as well as a close friendship. With Tonnant's arrival, Hotspur is resupplied with fresh foods and letters. Hornblower receives letters from Maria that inform him that she is pregnant and he will shortly be a father.

Upon a prominence, the Petit Minou, west of Brest the French maintain a semaphore. The gigantic tower has arms that can be revolved by means of ropes, and the semaphore sends visual coded signals to the next inland semaphore in long line of relay stations that extends to the naval command in Brest. Hornblower—indeed all the English—find the semaphore irritating as it offers ready communication between coastal observers and the French fleet at Brest. The semaphore station, however, is protected by a magazine and coastal battery. Brest is accessed primarily by sea—the roads in the area are poor. As the English control the seas, the French mercantile traffic moves by small vessels—coasters—at night. They creep about in shallow water and stay in close to the coastal batteries where they are protected from English ships of war.

As Hotspur sails on station, an exasperated Bush trains Foreman as the signal midshipman. Hornblower considers Pellew's arrival and his crew's capabilities while he mulls over becoming a father. After some hours, he writes a letter to Pellew, suggesting a ship-to-shore night action. Pellew approves of the action and the various blockading ships execute a feint maneuver to throw the French into confusion. As darkness falls, Hotspur creeps to the shore and sneaks past the French coastal batteries into the estuary around Point Toulinguet, where mercantile shipping on coasters is common.

Hotspur closes with numerous coasters and opens fire at point-blank range. The action is hot and close but lopsided as most of the coasters are unarmed. Hornblower and Prowse concentrate on sailing the ship in shallow waters with tidal fluctuations while Bush handles the guns. After the fierce combat, Hotspur turns about and runs out of the shallow waters; navigation is technical and difficult, but successful. In the morning, visual observation confirms that Hotspur has sunk or otherwise destroyed ten coasters—a huge financial loss to the French. Bush laments that no prizes could be taken—he keenly feels the loss of prize money. Hornblower thinks that prize money is corrosive

and dislikes the entire system of motivation. However, as all normal sailors covet prize money, Hornblower keeps his own council on the matter.

Chapters 7 and 8 Analysis

Hotspur has been at sea for forty days and, within the past ten or so days, has been joined by a much larger fleet with many superior officers to Hornblower. He has thus fallen from independent command into a rigid naval hierarchy. For many junior officers this would cause an end of initiative—but Hornblower is obviously exceptional. When Pellew arrives Hornblower feels confident that he can propose a plan of action which will receive due consideration. During prior service—detailed in earlier novels—Hornblower enjoyed a great deal of respect from Pellew, much his senior officer. The notes that Pellew and Hornblower exchange make this mutual respect obvious.

As Hornblower has much more time on station, he is familiar with the local conditions obtaining on the Brest coast. He knows that the French mercantile shipping is largely successful due to smaller coastal vessels—he refers to them as coasters—moving about at night under cover of coastal batteries. This irritates Hornblower and he develops a plan to strike a serious military blow against the French. Another irritant for Hornblower is the massive semaphore station that allows the French nearly instantaneous communication over many, many miles. Hornblower's focus on the semaphore station heavily foreshadows the raid made in Chapter 10.

The section of the novel contains some charming presentations of the midshipmen's training and Bush's expectation of quick aptitude. Hornblower, freed from direct oversight, affords a more patient view. The re-provisioning operations described are interesting. Hornblower finds the slaughtering of the cattle distasteful even as he readies to slaughter Frenchmen. In addition, the theme of the strain between life-at-home and life in the navy is again manifested when Hornblower learns, by letter, that Maria is about two months pregnant. He wonders where he will be in the early part of 1804 when the child will be born, even as he plans a dangerous military adventure.

The military action itself is possible only because of Hotspur's shallow draft due to depleted stores and water. She enters the shallow coastal areas with only six inches of available water under keel in order to enter in among the French coasters. Any minor error of navigation would put Hotspur upon rocks or mudflats, where she would be captured and destroyed. A timid captain would stand further out to sea—but that would hardly answer the plan. Hornblower, with Prowse, guides the ship into perilously shallow water and brings her out again. Meanwhile, Bush runs the guns. The raid is entirely successful and Hotspur receives only minor desultory fire. Bush's envy of prize money, along with Hornblower's contemplation about prize money, heavily foreshadows events at the end of the novel where Hornblower again passes prize money in pursuit of duty.

Chapters 9 and 10

Chapters 9 and 10 Summary

Cornwallis joins the fleet, Tonnant summons all captains in the fleet, and Hornblower is welcomed aboard. It is the first time in eight weeks that he has left Hotspur. Although by far the most-junior captain, Hornblower is received with enthusiasm. Dinner is served and the food is extravagant, fresh, and plentiful. Amidst general talk, Cornwallis announces that all ships will be routinely re-provisioned at sea. Normal custom would allow individual ships to return to England for a week or two to re-provision as appropriate. Cornwallis' order means that the men in the squadron will perhaps not return home for years. Hornblower mulls over how this will impact Maria, as he will likely not see the child until it is older. At the end of dinner, Hornblower subtly locates Côtard, an English officer who speaks perfect French—he says only that the man will be needed as part of a scheme he is developing. Côtard, raised on Guernsey, is a lieutenant aboard Marlborough, but his captain says he will send the man to Hornblower.

Hornblower's plan is approved and Côtard is temporarily assigned. As Côtard is senior to Bush, Hornblower decides he must lead the expedition himself—obviously Bush cannot command Côtard, and just as obviously, Côtard cannot command the crew of Hotspur. After the men are assigned their stations, Hornblower readies to leave the ship. In his cabin, Grimes accosts him—blubbering with fear, Grimes begs to be left behind. Hornblower is astounded and disgusted and quickly assigns another man in Grimes' place. The men enter the ship's boats and other small craft and, under cover of darkness, close the coast near the semaphore and the battery. As they approach the landing jetty, they are hailed by the guard. Côtard represents they are returning fishermen and his French skills secure a safe landing and a surprised guard. After an initial rush, the jetty is silently secured. The marines, led by Captain Jones, move toward the battery and magazine. Hornblower leads a contingent of seamen up a steep ascent to the semaphore.

The men discover that the semaphore operator lives in a house at the base of the machine. Hornblower evicts the man and his family and then sets fire to the entire structure. His contingent hen returns to the coast. The marines have spiked the cannons of the battery but have not quite accessed the powder magazine. Hornblower leads the assault alongside the marine captain through a withering fire, and into hand-to-hand melee. After a fierce combat, the magazine is secured and Hornblower personally lays the priming charge and fuse. The group then makes a fighting retreat to the boats as the magazine erupts with a devastating explosion. English casualties are fairly high but the audacious raid has been incredibly successful. The boats cast off as the fill and Hornblower leaves on the last vessel under heavy fire. He returns to Hotspur and sees that the wounded are appropriately cared for. Simultaneously he begins to fret about Grimes—the man must be punished in the interest of discipline. Hornblower enters his cabin to discover that Grimes has hung himself there. The small space

means that the corpse's knees drag along the ships planks as the ship rolls. Hornblower has Grimes' body cast overboard and then sinks into the oblivion of sleep.

Chapters 9 and 10 Analysis

Chapter 9 is dominated by the dinner of the fleet captains. The discussion of the various foods and their preparation is interesting and conveys a great deal of information about the difficulties of life at sea. Although the junior officer present, Hornblower is offered respect and even some deference because of his widely known successes including the recent raid on the coaster vessels. The dinner conversation is likewise interesting. During the dinner, Hornblower considers another scheme to destroy the hated semaphore at Petit Minou, first discussed in Chapter 7. His plan is simple—a nighttime amphibious raid by armed men arriving in ship's boats. However, to be successful, the men must land nearly undetected and for this, a man who speaks French without accent is required. This leads to Hornblower's apparently casual inquiries and secures for him the temporary services of Côtard.

Hornblower leads the raid personally, ostensibly to obviate a tricky command situation. Côtard should not command the men of Hotspur, as he is not an assigned officer. Yet Côtard outranks Bush, the natural choice to lead the expedition. Thus, Hornblower commands so that Côtard is subordinate. In reality, Hornblower relishes the opportunity to control the situation—though he finds the desire for combat strange when he encounters it in others. As in Chapter 8, the surprise raid is entirely successful. Hornblower leads a group of men who destroy the semaphore. They then reinforce the marine contingent which is somewhat held up. Hornblower himself sets the fuse for the destruction of the magazine. Standing by Hornblower is Captain Henry Jones of the marines. In the resultant explosion, Jones is killed outright while Hornblower is unharmed. Such are the vicissitudes of war, and the randomness of it all causes Hornblower some anguish.

Grimes' essential nature as a coward is here exemplified. Earlier encounters with an angered Hornblower suggested that Grimes' nervousness was perhaps more profound than simple skittishness. Moreover, as it turns out, the man loses himself to fear. Punishment for cowardice at the time was severe—at the least Grimes would be flogged and he could very well be hanged. In any event, he would be shunned with disgust by his fellow crewmen. During Hornblower's hours-long absence, Grimes apparently reflects upon all of these facts and in the end commits suicide. The cabin being insufficiently tall to truly hang, Grimes strings a noose around his neck and then kneels down to strangulate slowly. His resolve, indeed, must be great. From a narrative construction viewpoint, Grimes' death sets up the arrival of James Doughty who is a key character in the latter portions of the novel. It is also interesting to note how Hornblower deals with Grimes' suicide. Obviously, he thinks little of the man at first—but upon lengthier reflection, Hornblower sees many of his own traits mirrored in Grimes' unreasonable fear. It is not that Hornblower lacks fear—it is just that he has mastered it.

Chapter 11 and 12

Chapter 11 and 12 Summary

After a few short hours of sleep, Hornblower wakes up and begins the difficult task of writing his after-action report. He knows that the letter will be published in the Gazette and that Maria will therefore read it. He needs to characterize his own participation as vital but safe and he agonizes over how to proceed. In the end, he decides to mollify Maria's fears and writes a letter, which states his participation but credits his subordinates with all decisive action and all exposure to danger. After writing for a long time, Hornblower concludes with what he internally calls the 'butcher's bill'—the list of the dead and wounded. After completing the report he reads it over and ponders for some time, and then finally adds Grimes' name to the 'butcher's bill'.

News then comes that Pellew is being replaced as commander by Rear Admiral William Parker. Pellew has included a personal letter with the news and it is highly praising of Hornblower. Pellew has also taken the liberty of sending over James Doughty to replace Grimes. Doughty is an experienced steward and is several orders of magnitude more competent than Grimes. Hornblower is startled by Doughty's piercing light blue eyes. While Hornblower fumes over various tedious reports and ledgers, Doughty unobtrusively goes about his business and within a few moments serves an astoundingly good dinner of lobster cutlets. Hornblower is amazed to eat excellent food aboard Hotspur and immediately reconsiders his frosty and grudging reception of Doughty.

The blockade of Brest continues. One day Hornblower, Prowse, and Bush are drawn into a lengthy and theoretical consideration of prize money. Bush and Prowse yearn for prize money while Hornblower argues it is corrosive. As they lapse into idle conversation, Hotspur approaches shoaling waters. They are brought back to reality by a call from the man at the wheel. Hornblower is angry at himself for his lapse in judgment. The summer thus passes in blockade. The French army increases on land, and the semaphore at Petit Minou is rebuilt. Hornblower is dissatisfied with the naval charts of the approach to Brest and begins to update them with the knowledge he has gained over several months.

Chapter 11 and 12 Analysis

Hornblower's report is written in a style meant to mollify Maria's fears. Although he does not realize it, his self-effacing report is exactly the sort of thing that the contemporary public finds enchanting in a hero, and Hornblower's attempt to divert all credit to his subordinates is respected by his superior officers. By adding Grimes' name to the killed-in-action list, Hornblower spares Grimes' family the ignominy of suicide, provides them with a measure of pride—though misplaced—in their relative's service and, most critically, allows any survivors to claim his back pay and certain financial advantages

from the government. It is a touching gesture. Doughty's rather late introduction to the narrative belies the critical role he will play in later chapters.

The Brest blockading squadron now consists of eighteen ships-of-the-line and seven frigates, as well as auxiliary ships such as Hotspur. Elsewhere equivalent British fleets blockade other important French ports. Still more British warships escort mercantile shipping around the world. Though France is dominant on land, the island nation of England is secured by her dominant navy. Napoleon has mustered hundreds of thousands of soldiers to invade England—yet he cannot deliver them on target. Indeed, the very survival of England depends upon the blockading squadrons—should the smaller French navy escape, it could be economically devastating upon English mercantile shipping.

Chapters 13 and 14

Chapters 13 and 14 Summary

Hotspur has been at sea continuously for six months. Hornblower's clothes are beginning to fall apart, having long ago worn out. In early October, Hotspur begins to run low on water just as the weather turns dirty. A gale blows up which prevents Hotspur's re-provisioning. Hornblower becomes seasick; Bush becomes excited. Hotspur and the other blockading ships assume their storm stations and wait for the weather to moderate. After a few days of foul weather, Hornblower reduces the water ration to 2/3 usual. The gale moderates after four days, but another storm quickly arises and then, in quick succession, three gales occur in the same month. Hotspur's water provisions become critical, with only eight days' supply at 2/3 rations. Hornblower signals to another ship that he needs to leave station to seek water—the other captain orders Hornblower to maintain station for four more days. Hornblower reduces the water ration to ½ usual. Incredibly, a fourth gale blows in—Hotspur has weathered a full six weeks of gale.

When four days have passed, Hotspur leaves station. Executing a dangerous series of maneuvers, Hotspur points toward Tor Bay and makes a desperate run before the wind with a heavy following sea frequently swamping the waist. In addition to heavy weather sailing, the men must man the ship's pumps three out of every four hours—and all this on ½ water rations. Hotspur enters the channel and Hornblower begins a series of navigational observations and guesses which prove absolutely correct. Hotspur makes a perfect landfall at Tor Bay and runs in under high wind. The storm is so severe that Hotspur spends three days at anchor without resupply. Throughout, Hornblower is seasick and remembers well his earliest naval days as a seasick midshipman in Justinian, at anchor at Spithead.

Finally, Hotspur receives resupply. Hornblower is summoned to Cornwallis' ship where he receives an impressive dinner and an interview with Cornwallis. Once the critical nature of Hotspur's water stores is explained, Cornwallis relaxes noticeably. Meanwhile, Maria has traveled up from Plymouth and Hornblower sees her on the pier, through his telescope. However, there will be no blissful reunion—Cornwallis orders Hornblower to sail as soon as the wind allows. As the wind veers south later that evening, Hornblower hoists anchor and orders Hotspur back to blockade station at Brest.

Chapters 13 and 14 Analysis

This segment of the novel deals with a series of gales during late September and October. As each gale moderates, a fresh system builds. This results in an unprecedented six weeks of continuous dirty weather. Hotspur maintains her storm station well enough and the ship suffers no calamitous damage. However, the water stores aboard run critically low. When the heavy weather begins, Hotspur is not fully

supplied and, as they battle the storms, they are reduced to trying circumstances. At first they drop to 2/3 ration, and later to ½ ration. This means each man receives 2/3 or ½ gallon of stale, often salt-tainted, fresh water each day, while providing backbreaking labor at the ship's pumps in addition to a normal tour of duty during gale. The lack of adequate water is excruciating. Hornblower requests to leave station at an appropriate point of time—with eight days of 2/3 ration remaining—but is ordered to remain on station for four more days. The order supposes that the weather will moderate. As it develops, this is an incorrect supposition. Thus, Hornblower is compelled to run his ship up channel in full gale with virtually no water remaining. His perfect landfall at Tor Bay is a remarkable feat of navigation—a skill for which Hornblower is widely and rightly known. The deprivation continues for three more days, however, because the weather is so heavy that resupply cannot be attempted even in the partially sheltered waters of Tor Bay.

Hornblower's meeting with Cornwallis deserves close reading. The questioning is close and designed to discover why Hornblower has come in from blockading station. When he reports his water situation, Cornwallis is satisfied that Hornblower is not simply fleeing prolonged heavy weather. Cornwallis' comment that Hornblower probably should have actually come in a few days earlier validates Hornblower's initial request to leave station with eight days' supply. Maria's subsequent appearance is difficult for Hornblower—there she is, but he is unable to meet her. Within a few hours of resupply, Hotspur is sent back to sea to resume her blockade station.

Chapters 15 and 16

Chapters 15 and 16 Summary

The blockade continues into the winter. The changing season brings a change in winds that are favorable for a French attempt at escape. Hornblower concludes that Brest must be watched more closely than ever before. Christmas arrives and passes without a change in the monotonous blockade. Hornblower observes that two French ships—large frigates—appear to be riding at anchor more lightly than previous. He also finds something troubling about the number of French cooking fires in the army encampments. Later, Hornblower talks to the French captain of Deux Frères and learns that the ships are 'armés en flûte'; that is, armed like a flute—the gunports down but the cannon removed. That would explain their riding higher in the water. Hornblower considers the information and writes a letter to the fleet admiral, hinting that the French are likely trying to escape with the frigates working as heavily-laden troop transports. Hornblower looks forward to New Year's Day when, letters have told him, his first child is expected. For months, Hotspur has patrolled and made observations. Throughout this period, Hornblower has maintained a rigid schedule of training exercises at gunnery and sailing.

On New Year's Eve, Bush notes that Hornblower looks thin and sickly. Hornblower ponders his reflection in the mirror, and then orders the men to sleep next to their guns. Snow is falling and Hornblower wears the gloves given him by Maria as Hotspur creeps into the Brest approaches under cover of darkness. They proceed much further in than usual and then hear the sounds of French ships coming out. Hornblower quickly discerns that the French ships bear three red lights at the yard—an identification and following signal. He sends Bush to rig three red lights at the yard. The French ships are following each other in line, and Hotspur swerves quickly and darkly aside one French ship, opening a full broadside at yardarm-to-yardarm range. The French ship reels under fire, turns away, and runs aground, crashing against rocks. Hotspur engages the next ship and fires. It falls back and is rammed by the next French ship. The two ships become entangled and Hotspur pours in the fire, and then fires upon the next ship.

Suddenly a heavy broadside rakes through Hotspur, followed by another. A French frigate has discovered the light English ship and is bearing down on her. Hotspur's foremast comes crashing down. Hornblower orders silence and causes the red lights to be presented briefly. The French ship ceases fire, and then Hotspur goes dark and silent. The wreckage is quickly cleared in silence and the French frigate gropes about for her target to no avail. Hotspur, hulled and wrecked, takes on water but sneaks away into the darkness. Arriving at the fleet in early dawn, Hotspur receives assistance from other ships. Once things have calmed down, Bush bids Hornblower a happy New Year's Day. Hornblower wonders if he is now a father.

Chapters 15 and 16 Analysis

During the summer months, the prevailing winds in the approach to Brest are from the west, blowing into the harbor. These winds would make a French escape difficult if not impossible. During the winter months, the prevailing winds reverse, making a French escape easy—except for the presence of the blockading squadron. Thus, as winter comes on, Hornblower's observations become ever more important.

Once again, Hornblower gains valuable information from the French captain who probably even still does not realize the extent to which he is disadvantaging the French naval forces. He mentions that some of the French ships are armed 'en flûte', or like a flute. The various gunports are like the holes in a flute because there is no gun behind them. The only use for such vessels would be to transport men. Hornblower deduces the ultimate goal must be Ireland—though he never learns if he is correct because he foils the sortie.

The French ships proceed in line-ahead formation, each ship following the three red lights of the ship ahead of it in the line. Hotspur engages the first ship in light and gains complete surprise—the damage caused drives the transport onto the rocks where it is lost. The next two transports collide and become entangled, eventually drifting onto the rocks. The fourth transport is fired upon but largely undamaged before the French frigate drives Hotspur away. Hotspur escapes by trickery—she shows the French signal and then goes dark and silent. The large French frigate loses Hotspur and sails into the open sea in fruitless search. The stricken Hotspur creeps back to the blockading fleet and secures emergency assistance from another ship.

Chapters 17 and 18

Chapters 17 and 18 Summary

Hotspur returns to Plymouth for repairs and refitting. In England, Hornblower spends time with Maria and his son, finding domestic life strange and disorienting, but finds some enjoyment in it. He often dines at home and searches newspapers, magazines, and chronicles for mention of his own exploits. A comedic feud of influence and interests occurs between Doughty on one hand and Maria and Mrs. Mason on the other. Hornblower tries to ignore it, assures Maria that Doughty is not quite the thing, and sits amidst domesticity and broods about distant war.

Some of the newspapers that Hornblower reads tell of the aftermath of his most-recent engagement. Three French transports had been run aground and destroyed with large loss of life. One French frigate, armed en flûte, had run aground—boats from another English ship had attacked her the next day and burned her. One French frigate had escaped. A final French frigate—probably the one chasing Hotspur—named Clorinde was intercepted and captured by the English ship Naiad. In all, another spectacular result thanks to Hornblower's intuition and determination.

Hotspur returns to blockading duty and sails until the spring. Napoleon begins to assemble a vast armada of tiny boats—many hardly seaworthy. Apparently, anything that can float and putatively carry soldiers is sent to Brest for a possible cross-channel attack. In response to this, the blockading fleet engages in a sprawling action designed to destroy many of these small vessels. Hotspur sails on station largely out of the action while a nearby lugger, Grasshopper, closes with the shore. Grasshopper is handled poorly, however, and begins to founder before taking fire and losing spars. Hornblower moves in to assist, intending to tow the stricken Grasshopper to safety. Just at Hotspur arrives to help, plunging shellfire arrives from shore batteries. The giant shells are high-trajectory, explosive weapons shot from mortars. A lucky hit lands squarely on Grasshopper and explodes, literally breaking the ship in half. Instead of rendering assistance, Hotspur rescues survivors amidst the plunging fire. One shell smashes through Hotspur's upper spars causing great damage before plowing through to the deck. The bomb lands next to Hornblower who coolly bends over and snuffs out the fuse moments before the weapon explodes. The entire crew stands slack-jawed and frozen, staring at Hornblower as if he has performed some magnificent, heroic, unprecedented feat—and perhaps he has. He barks orders at them, and Hotspur sails to safety.

Chapters 17 and 18 Analysis

Hornblower gets a temporary respite from blockade duty because of the extensive damage done to Hotspur. The ship returns to Plymouth where it undergoes a major refurbishment and refitting. Hornblower spends much of the time ashore getting to know

his new infant and wife. Although he gradually settles into domestic life his focus is distant—he thinks often about the war and the sea and is clearly not particularly at home in his home. Mrs. Mason and Maria gripe ceaselessly about Doughty, apparently ill-at-ease around a man who—as they see it—replaces most of their functions in Hornblower's life at sea. Doughty is largely unaware of their animosity; the situation is humorous though of course the nervous Hornblower derives no pleasure from it. Mrs. Mason's occasional begrudging approval of Hornblower's actions is also a well-written and entertaining aspect of this section of the novel.

Hotspur returns to the tedium of blockade as soon as she is able. During one action, she attempts to rescue another smaller ship but ends up rescuing sailors from the water after the stricken ship explodes. The French utilize a new type of weapon—an exploding shell launched in a high-arc trajectory. The plunging shells do great damage to warships, which are primarily armored with thick sides and not with thick decks. When one lands on Hotspur, it has not quite detonated because the fuse has been cut a tad too long. Hornblower uses his fingers to extinguish the fuse, much as one might snuff a candle. The action seems obvious to Hornblower, though it astounds the crew as inconceivable brave and heroic. Hornblower's after-action report of the shellfire will come to cause brief contention between himself and Bush.

Chapters 19, 20, and 21

Chapters 19, 20, and 21 Summary

The blockade continues into the fall season—it has been six months since Hornblower was at Plymouth. Life is monotonous, interrupted only by occasional insect infestations and letters from home. When newspapers arrive detailing the incident of shellfire, Bush is indignant and nearly infuriated that Hornblower's action to snuff the fuse is not mentioned. Hornblower ignores the omission and reminds Bush that they are soldiers, no actresses. Hornblower is then summoned to meet with Cornwallis. Cornwallis notes that the secret clauses of the Treaty of San Ildefonso, between Spain and France, have recently been disclosed. Spain is expected to shortly declare war on England. Meanwhile a Spanish treasure fleet is approaching from South America—it must be intercepted and diverted—or captured. Cornwallis notes that Hornblower has never had an opportunity for prize money; here is an undreamed of opportunity. Hotspur is released from the blockade to run down to Cadiz, obtain letters to the Spanish treasure fleet admiral, and then join the squadron detailed to intercept the treasure fleet. It is, quite literally, and opportunity of dreams. If successful, Hornblower could expect to receive wealth beyond his dreams. Cornwallis is obviously impressed with Hornblower's tireless dedication and performance.

Hornblower returns to Hotspur dreaming of vast wealth and conflicted over the entire system of prize money. Upon arrival, he learns the remarkable news that Doughty is under arrest for striking an officer. Hornblower is amazed and realizes tat Doughty must be tried in a court martial and will be found guilty and will undoubtedly be executed. Hornblower questions Doughty in the brig. Doughty confirms that he was working under Mayne, a petty tyrant whom has always disliked Doughty, and Mayne had struck Doughty. In anger, Doughty had returned the blow. He admits it freely, apologizes for disappointing Hornblower, and suggests a replacement in the wardroom steward. The interview is interrupted when a package arrives by boat—the package contains letters for Cadiz and instructs Hornblower to depart without delay. There will be no court martial today.

With Doughty in the brig, Hotspur proceeds with all possible speed for Cadiz, Spain. On the voyage, Hornblower frets about Doughty's execution, which is a certain fate. Hornblower feels it unjust and contrives to have Doughty escape even though he simultaneously feels this compromises his own personal principles. As Hotspur enters Cadiz, a nominally neutral port, Hornblower rather publicly announces that he will entertain dignitaries aboard. He demands Bailey, Doughty's replacement, set a fine supper. Bailey, more or less incompetent, is frightened. Hornblower then casually requests Bush to temporarily release Doughty to assist Bailey in setting a fine supper. This all seems natural and indeed Doughty makes a splendid supper for the visiting dignitary. Hornblower notes that the United States frigate Constitution is anchored at Cadiz, as is the French frigate Félicité; Hotspur anchors between the two ships as Hornblower adapts his plan for Doughty's escape.

In the evening Bailey, Doughty, and Hornblower stand in the cabin awaiting their visitor. Hornblower sends Bailey forward on some errand. In conversational terms, he then tells Doughty that Hotspur is anchored at Cadiz, a neutral country. He then casually points out the stern windows and tells Doughty that the ship visible at anchor is the USS Constitution. He finally calmly asks if Doughty can swim. Doughy says he can swim and quickly thanks Hornblower. Hornblower then goes on deck to receive his visitor, leaving Doughty alone in the cabin. The visitor is Mr. Carron, the English consul at Cadiz and he accompanies Hornblower to the now-empty cabin. Carron and Hornblower exchange information and documents. Carron identifies the likely dates, places of the Spanish treasure fleet, and suggests that Hotspur should sail immediately. Carron and Hornblower agree that Félicité will chase Hotspur. Carron leaves and Hornblower causes Hotspur to be reading quickly and quietly. Bush reports that Doughty has vanished—Hornblower acts angry and disappointed but his emotion is not entirely credible. As Hotspur sails silently away under cover of darkness, Hornblower ponders his recent complicity in Doughty's escape—it is contrary to duty though morally right.

Chapters 19, 20, and 21 Analysis

The blockade continues and the narrative enters a final developmental phase. The novel is unusual in introducing plot complications at such a later portion of the narrative. The political situation obtaining is complicated by a series of secret agreements between France and Spain. England and France are at war—Spain is nominally neutral but will clearly enter the conflict on the side of France. The various secret agreements are clauses in what Cornwallis refers to as the Treaty of San Ildefonso. In brief, Spain will enter the war against England when France requests that they so do. France is waiting to ask, however, until the Spanish treasure fleet arrives in Cadiz. They money—a vast sum—will then be used in the conflict. England must divert the Spanish treasure fleet or capture it to prevent this infusion of cash. Hotspur's mission is to obtain, from Carron, letters addressed to the Spanish fleet admiral that inform him of the situation and urge him to surrender voluntarily to the English. In the event, the letters are not used.

Most of Chapters 20 and 21 is devoted to Doughty's escape. He would be unable to effect escape without Hornblower's enormous help. Hornblower likes the man and feels that his service has been exemplary. Hornblower feels that Mayne provoked Doughty and that Doughty is thus unfairly imprisoned awaiting a court martial that will find him guilty—he is guilty by his own admission—and then hang him to enforce military order. Hornblower finds the prospect unappealing. Thus, he uses circumstances to arrange for Doughty's escape. At the last minute he tells Doughty that the port is neutral and that an adjacent ship is neutral, probably short-handed, and in any eventuality likely to remain neutral. Then he asks if Doughty can swim. The combined information, offered in conversational terms, allows Doughty to realize that Hornblower is arranging for and suggesting escape. Doughty does not hesitate to swim to freedom.

Chapters 22, 23, 24, and 25

Chapters 22, 23, 24, and 25 Summary

Hotspur joins Moore's squadron, which sweeps back and in line abreast searching for the Spanish treasure fleet. Hornblower is at the extreme end of the line and sights Félicité, the French frigate. The enemy vessel is attempting to locate the Spanish fleet and warn it of the English intentions. Hornblower gives chase, realizing it is the correct thing to do even though it means the likely loss of untold prize money. Hotspur clears for action and a prolonged cat and mouse chase ensues. The much-larger French frigate seeks to avoid combat and locate the Spanish fleet. Bush moves two cannons to the stern, cuts holes in the transom, and starts to shoot at the following enemy. Hotspur paces Félicité and maintains fire. The ships exchange long-distance broadsides and a prolonged gun battle runs on all day. Hotspur takes much damage from the far heavier French ship but eventually Hotspur's gunnery tells and Félicité finally turns away as night falls. Hotspur repairs and Hornblower notes the many casualties of the prolonged and bitter combat.

The next day finds an empty sea. Hotspur returns to the reunion station but instead of finding Moore's fleet runs into Parker after several days. Hornblower learns that Moore has captured the Spanish and returned to a hero's welcome in England some days past. Moore is presumably very rich, and England is at war with Spain. Some time later, the illiterate Bailey finds a handwritten note tucked into one of Hornblower's pockets. Hornblower discovers it is a brief thank-you note from Doughty. As Hotspur limps back to the blockading fleet, snow again begins to fall. Hornblower makes his report to Cornwallis who is amazed and impressed at Hornblower's action in abandoning the prize in pursuit of duty; Hotspur is sent back to England for extensive repair.

Hornblower passes time in England with Maria and his son. He begins to find domestic life acceptable. They discuss the news and the war and inconsequential things. Maria likes small chatter and does not understand much about the military. Hornblower's guilt about Doughty's escape is obviated by his sense of accomplishment in battling Félicité. One day Bush arrives, slightly drunk and flushed with enthusiasm. He announces that Moore will be denied the prize—as the Spanish fleet was taken just before the technical declaration of war, the ships are considered Droits of the Admiralty, and hence not eligible prizes. Bush has a good laugh about it and Hornblower feels a certain relief.

Once Hotspur is repaired, it resumes station on blockade and the weeks go by. Hornblower is then summoned to meet with Cornwallis. The meeting is a little strange as Cornwallis is in a relaxed and talkative mood. He states he has been afloat for two years and three months without setting foot on land, and then drops a bombshell—he is retiring. He notes that a retiring admiral is allowed to promote one midshipman to lieutenant, one lieutenant to commander, and one commander to captain. He has selected Hornblower for recommendation to promotion to post captain, noting that having sought duty first Hornblower has missed much prize money. Hornblower, excited

and flustered, responds "I'd rather be a captain and poor than anyone else and rich" (p. 393). The novel ends as Hornblower returns to Hotspur and realizes the ship is not a post command—when his promotion comes through, he will have to leave his beloved ship and crew.

Chapters 22, 23, 24, and 25 Analysis

The exciting concluding scene is based upon the historical capture of the Spanish treasure fleet by the historic person Captain Graham Moore, lightly fictionalized in the novel. The historic facts are essentially duplicated in the novel, with the addition of Hornblower as an auxiliary participant.

As Moore sweeps the approach to Cadiz, Hornblower's ship spots the French frigate. Left alone, the French ship will likely find the Spanish fleet and warn it of the English ships, foiling the capture attempt. Hornblower decides that duty supersedes wealth and closes with the French frigate in a decidedly unequal contest. The French ship seeks to avoid combat and perform its mission but the tenacious Hotspur will not be denied. Eventually general combat is enjoined and Hotspur suffers greatly. By evening, the French ship has had enough and runs for home. Meanwhile, Moore has encountered and captured the Spanish treasure fleet—but this is unknown to Hornblower. Hotspur returns to the rendezvous station and awaits Moore's fleet, which has already sailed to England. Eventually, Hornblower makes his report to Cornwallis. Due to Cornwallis' hint, Hornblower realizes he had been selected by Cornwallis as a reward for hard service. Bush is devastated by the putative loss; Hornblower less so but still affected. It is therefore a happy moment—for at least these two—when they discover the ships will not be considered prizes on a legal technicality. Thus, they performed their duty without losing any prize money; the encounter has a happy ending.

The novel concludes with Hornblower being informed he has earned promotion to post captain. A Royal Navy tradition allowed a retiring admiral to make three promotions independent of the normal mechanism; Cornwallis selects Hornblower to reward him for long and arduous service. Of course, as Cornwallis also notes, Hornblower's promotion will also be of vast use to the Royal Navy because exceptional officers are always beneficial.

Characters

Horatio Hornblower, Master and Commander

Hornblower assumes command of Hotspur after spending eighteen months ashore during the transient Peace of Amiens as Master and Commander. He is thus the titular captain of HMS Hotspur, a 24-gun sloop of war, on independent service. His age is twenty-seven during the beginning of the novel; he is about twenty-nine by the close of the novel. He is very educated and joined the naval service as a midshipman fairly late at the age of seventeen, being promoted to lieutenant after about four years of service. He thus has a term of naval service of ten years. Hornblower is an exceptional navigator and capable seaman though he is nervous and occasionally experiences internalized self-doubt. Hornblower's powerful drive to unqualified success masks his internal turmoil in reserve and steely self-control, and even his closest friends never fully know him.

Hornblower is entirely tone deaf and finds music irritating and incomprehensible—at one point in the novel he even fails to recognize the tune God Save the King! He is prone to seasickness, dislikes many of the normal usages of naval life such as flogging, and passes much of his time in isolation. He enjoys seawater showers, is usually poor for a man of his rank, and usually appears disheveled and unkempt. Hornblower's early career as a midshipman or junior lieutenant is briefly alluded to during several scenes in the novel. Hornblower expects much from his subordinate officers and the crew and when occasion demands it, he is a relentless taskmaster—though his leadership qualities are grounded in the reality of always expecting far more from himself than he does from his subordinates. He is described physically as of apparently average height and weight though perhaps a little tall at 5' 11", and a little light. His brown hair is fine, and his fingers are long and apparently delicate. Hornblower is usually the master of his temper, but between arising and taking breakfast with much hot coffee he frequently, though briefly, loses control.

Maria Ellen Hornblower née Mason

Maria Ellen Hornblower is the daughter of a landlady who owns a tenement where Hornblower lived during the Peace of Amiens. Maria's mother is dour and penurious but Maria is expansive of spirit, optimistic, and generous. Maria and Hornblower's wedding festivities open the novel—their courtship was discussed in a previous novel of the series. Maria is described as rather plain and perhaps a bit homely, though willowy and thin. Hornblower finds her overly prone to weeping and emotionally clinging. Obviously devoted to Hornblower, she dotes upon his needs. In return, Hornblower is formal and distant but also devoted and proper respecting her support. Bush finds Maria generally irritating. Hornblower remembers how he had engaged Maria in sexual intercourse about one week before their formal wedding. While Hornblower is on blockade duty, Maria gives birth to their first child—a son named for his father. Maria is a minor

character in the novel but is notable as Hornblower thinks of her often during his long voyages.

Lieutenant William Bush

William Bush is about thirty, a tallish man of great courage and dominant physical strength, satisfactory intelligence but no great insight. He is well-liked, open, generous, and gracious, but suffers from a lack of spontaneity of thought. He is in his element when surrounded by rough seamen and sailors but finds women nearly unintelligible. He is thoroughly honest and entirely dependable. He is also formidable with a sword, a good pistol shot, and an excellent commander of gunnery. Little is revealed of Bush's life ashore—he has several sisters and he supports them financially.

Bush joins Hotspur at Hornblower's request, prior to the opening of the novel. He acts as first—and only—lieutenant serving under Hornblower. Prior to Hornblower's appointment as master and commander, Bush outranked Hornblower due to seniority. This situation causes some awkward moments initially but the two friends quickly surpass the situation. The fact that Bush retains discipline and order throughout all of the various episodes in the novel, speaks well of his capacity as a reliable if uninspired leader of men. Ashore, Bush proves a courteous and devoted friend and meets Hornblower on a few occasions where he offers friendship; advice not always heeded, and congratulations. Bush also coordinates most of the physical aspects of Hornblower's wedding celebration, prior to taking to the sea.

Admiral the Honorable Sir William Cornwallis

Cornwallis selects Hornblower to command Hotspur prior to the outbreak of warfare with France. Cornwallis has the foresight to understand that war is coming, and takes steps to make sure England is in position to defend herself. As a senior officer, Cornwallis must rely upon junior men to execute his orders. His keen insight into others' capabilities allows him to select men who are capable, intelligent, and energetic in their execution of their duty. Events prove that Cornwallis' foresight is correct and that his selection of Hornblower was appropriate. After the opening scenes of the novel, Cornwallis is a relatively minor character though he appears with some regularity. Hornblower is promoted to post captain upon Cornwallis' request at the conclusion of the novel.

Captain Edward Pellew

Pellew is the captain of HMS Tonnant and directs the operations of the blockading fleet for several weeks. He is physically average in most ways but is a keen seaman and has a fine insight into the mind of the enemy. Pellew, during the novel, is never wrong and makes no mistakes in the execution of his duties—traits that Hornblower emulates. Hornblower holds Pellew in very high regard, and Pellew is not afraid to recognize achievements and credit his subordinate officers. Pellew is a strong presentation of the

best qualities of the Royal Navy. Pellew is a recurrent character in the narrative, but makes only brief appearances. Pellew is a lightly fictionalized representation of the real-life Edward Pellew, first Viscount Exmouth, born 1757 and died 1833. The historical Pellew died an Admiral and was widely respected for his skill, courage and leadership.

John Grimes

Grimes is Hornblower's first personal steward aboard Hotspur. He is barely competent and finds Hornblower altogether intimidating. For example, on one occasion after serving a poor breakfast to Hornblower, Grimes literally quakes with fear. Grimes is unable to adapt well to change. When Hornblower readies to go ashore in a nighttime raid, Grimes' courage fails him and he weeps and begs an astounded Hornblower to allow him to remain behind, safe on the ship. Disgusted, Hornblower thrusts Grimes aside and selects another man. During the lengthy mission, Grimes masters himself and considers his situation. He will surely be flogged, possibly executed, and will ever after bear the scorn of his shipmates. Faced with the unpleasant realities of his actions, he hangs himself in Hornblower's cabin. The cabin is not high enough for Grimes to truly hang, so Hornblower finds him strangled with his knees trailing along the decking as the ship rolls. A compassionate Hornblower lists Grimes as having been killed in action on the shore raid, so that his surviving family at home can collect his back pay and escape the shame of suicide.

Prowse

Prowse is the master, or sailing master, of Hotspur. Hornblower privately notes that Prowse is technically only the acting master and actually a senior master's mate with an acting warrant. In any event, Prowse proves to be fully capable and possessed of considerable experience. During the initial stages of the Hotspur's peacetime voyage Prowse attempts to overbear Hornblower through superior experience. The unflappable Hornblower fumes inwardly but outwardly acts in a resolute manner, which eventually subdues Prowse. Although capable and brave, Prowse is overly-cautious and objects to some of Hornblower's actions on the grounds that they endanger the ship. Hornblower realizes that the easiest way to emasculate a ship-of-war is to be overly concerned such that the weapon cannot be used effectively. Thus, Prowse frets at many of Hornblower's commands even as he carries them out with promptness. Prowse's navigational and sailing skills come in particularly helpful during the Chapter 8 raid on the coastal vessels. After Prowse's master performance and Hornblower's public praising of Prowse's skill, the two men engage in a more natural relationship. Prowse is an example of the best traits of warrant officers in the Royal Navy of the period. Though frequently appearing in the narrative, he is somewhat a minor character.

Alexander Cargill

Cargill is the second master's mate aboard Hotspur and he is a watch-standing officer from early during Hotspur's voyage. He is described as about thirty, ruddy, and corpulent. Cargill has a nervous habit of opening and closing his fingers while holding his hand tightly against his leg. Cargill's service begins inauspiciously when he misses a tack and Hotspur is left in irons. Cargill recovers, however, and later on proves a competent warrant officer. Cargill later commands the take-off boats during a shore raid and performs admirably in that capacity, even going so far as to countermand Hornblower's orders about precedence of departure—a correct decision as Hornblower later confirms. Although a minor character, Cargill is memorable and appears constantly throughout the novel.

James Doughty

James Doughty joins the Hotspur about halfway through the narrative. After Grimes' suicide, Doughty is sent to Hotspur to serve as Hornblower's steward. Doughty is assigned to the task by Pellew. Although Hornblower is initially nonplussed, Pellew has performed a great favor for Hornblower. Doughty is remarkably adept at his job and Hornblower is constantly amazed at Doughty's dedication and resourcefulness. In fact, Hornblower values his service to much that Maria and Mrs. Mason feel Doughty is intruding on their natural sphere of influence. Doughty is strong and capable and has piercing blue eyes. Naturally intelligent and observant, his service is unobtrusive and always welcome.

One of Hotspur's warrant officers, Mayne, develops a disliking for Doughty and the two men are often at odds. During one work assignment, Mayne strikes Doughty and in a fit of anger Doughty returns the blow. Of course, striking an officer is a capital offense in the Royal Navy and Doughty is thrown into the brig to await court martial. His court martial is prevented when Hotspur sails on immediate orders to Cadiz. At Cadiz, Hornblower anchors next to a United States frigate and then contrives to have Doughty assist to prepare a dinner for a visiting dignitary. At the right moment, Hornblower informs Doughty that he is in a neutral port and adjacent to a neutral country's warship. After casually inquiring whether Doughty can swim, Hornblower leaves him alone in the cabin. Doughty takes the broad hint, leaps out the window, and swims to freedom.

Captain Graham Moore

Moore is captain of Indefatigable and commander of the squadron sent to intercept the Spanish treasure fleet. Moore easily locates the fleet and captures it after a brief exchange of fire. Returning to England with splendid prizes, Moore rather expects he is a millionaire. He is disappointed, however, when the Spanish ships are declared invalid as prizes as they were captured before a state of war between Spain and England. Moore is a minor character in the novel, appearing only in the last few chapters, but is

based upon a historical figure of the same name who actually did capture a Spanish treasure fleet that was subsequently adjudicates as Droits of the Admiralty.

Objects/Places

Peace of Amiens

The brief period of peace resulting from the Treaty of Amiens was referred to as the Peace of Amiens. It lasted from March 1802 through May 1803. The peace interrupted the military naval careers of Hornblower, Bush, and others, leaving them ashore on half-pay. The novel can be definitively grounded in historical terms by noting that the early chapters of the novel occur immediately before the end of peace in about April 1803.

HMS Hotspur

H.M.S. Hotspur is an English sloop-of-war with 20 nine-pounder long cannon and four carronades. The ship sails well, fights well, and is responsive—indeed Hotspur is beloved of her crew. The ship is of typical construction of the time, with gun decks, quarterdeck, stern captain's cabin, and so forth. She has of course three ship-rigged masts and is capable of sailing in fairly light airs. Her compliment is 150 seamen and seventeen marines. Because the ship was manned during a time of peace, she has an unusually capable crew with about 100 able seamen, 20 ordinary seamen, a mere 10 landsmen, and about 20 boys. The novel states Hotspur's draft as thirteen feet when fully loaded and eleven feet when lightly burdened, making her suitable for inshore work. Fully stocked, Hotspur carries food and water for a full complement for 111 days. The ship's logs indicate she uses eighteen tons of water every month.

Hotspur is commanded by Hornblower, with 1st lieutenant Bush, and midshipmen Cheeseman, Orrock, Cummings, and Foreman. The named crew includes: Prowse, sailing master; Mayne and Alexander Cargill, master's mate; Poole and Young, unspecified warrant officers; Gurney, gunner; Hewitt, coxswain; Wise, bosun; Simmonds, cook; Wallis, surgeon; Huffnell, purser; Martin, captain's clerk; Bailey, gunroom steward; and named seamen Sanderson, Black, Downes, Firth, and James Johnson—who is killed in action. Additionally, Hornblower serially employs two stewards during his voyage—John Grimes, who commits suicide, and, later, James Doughty. Hotspur also bears seventeen marines including: Captain Henry Jones, who is killed in action; Lieutenant Reid; an unnamed sergeant, corporal, and drummer; and twelve unnamed privates.

Maria's Gift of Gloves

After getting married, Maria gives a pair of heavy woolen gloves to Hornblower before he embarks on his many-months' voyage. Hornblower notes the gloves have a separate thumb and forefinger and are admirably suited to life aboard. The gloves are a minor symbol of the link, however tenuous, between Hornblower and his new family in England. Like Maria, the gloves are simply, sturdy and functional—but unglamorous.

Futtock-Shrouds and the Lubber's Hole

The top of each lower mast is surrounded by a platform known as the top—hence, maintop, foretop, etc. The top is reached by climbing the ratlines on the standing rigging which runs from the outside hull upward on an incline to a point just below the platform of the top. The top is most-easily attained by climbing the rigging and then passing through a hole in the platform of the top known as the "lubber's hole". The top itself is stabilized by standing rigging which runs from the edges of the platform downward to the mast, forming lines that have a negative angle; that is, an overhang. These overhanging lines are called the futtock-shrouds. Seamen climb the rigging, then move onto the futtock-shrouds and climb up, hanging backwards at a steep angle, and thus gain the top by clambering over the edge of the platform. Less-capable men are expected to gain the top by use of the aptly-named lubber's hole.

Splinters

Naval combat between large wooden ships was violent and dangerous, even though it rarely resulted in complete victory for either side. Ships rarely sank outright, though they were sometimes captured. The chief weapon of naval engagement was the cannon—a few types, weights, and configurations are noted in the novel. In general, cannons threw heavy iron balls—cannonballs—at the enemy. The cannonballs would strike the enemy ship's outer hull and cause flocks of splinters to spill away from the ship's inner hull. These splinters, traveling at great velocity, were the chief cause of injury and death among the ship's crew. The word 'splinter' seems innocuous enough; however, they were lethal and often very large.

The Weather Gauge

To have or possess 'the weather gauge' describes the favorable positioning of "a sailing vessel relative to another with respect to the wind"; in simplistic terms, it is any position upwind of the other vessel. Being upwind, or having the weather gauge, allows a vessel to maneuver at will toward any downwind point and thus gain the tactical advantage over other ships. Further, the ship having the weather gauge typically controls the timing and even the occurrence of naval military engagement. In general, correct tactics dictate that seeking the weather gauge is always an appropriate endeavor.

Carronades

A carronade was a short smoothbore cannon used by the British Navy until about 1860. They were designed as short-range weapons. Lightweight and devoid of many of the features of cannons, or long guns, carronades were devastating at short ranges but notoriously inaccurate beyond pistol-shot ranges. Hotspur is fitted with four carronades. A carronade weighed approximately ¼ as much as a long gun throwing an equal weight of metal.

Coaster and Chasee-marée

The French use several smaller classes of ships for various purposes; these are not considers ships-of-war due to their small size. Hornblower generally classifies them as either a coaster or a chassee-marée. These vessels were designed to operate only in coastal waters and would hardly be considered reliable in the open sea. Even so, they could be and were capable ships within their sphere of influence. A coaster is predominantly a mercantile vessel of shallow draft, which sails tight in against the coast—hence their informal name. A chassee-marée, or tide-chaser, is a lightly constructed type of vessel that bears a few cannon. Like a coaster, they have shallow draft and are intended to be used in estuaries or coastal waters only. Hotspur closes with and destroys several coasters during Chapter 8. Note that both designations are informal and largely overlap.

Semaphore

The French and English of the period used semaphore stations to transmit information over long distances very rapidly. Hornblower is particularly concerned with a semaphore station erected at Petit Minou, as it observes all of his actions and then quickly transmits the information to the naval commander at Brest, some four or five miles away. The semaphore has huge arms ending in colored flags. The operator uses ropes to move the arms into various positions that indicate encoded information. The exact operation and construction of the semaphore are not offered in the text, but in any event, they must be simple. Hornblower leads a raid ashore during Chapter 10, which destroys the semaphore station by the simple expedient of burning it down.

The Approach to Brest

Nearly the entire novel takes place on the open sea in the nautical approach to Brest, a port town in Brittany of France. The approaches are discussed at length in the text. The westernmost island in the approach is Ushant, and from there a string of smaller islets lies toward the southeast. The water entrance to the harbor is referred to as the Parquet, and it houses several tiny but treacherous rocky outcroppings. Brest itself lies on the southern shore. Readers unfamiliar with the general area, which is quite complex, would do well to consult a nautical chart.

Themes

Devoted to Duty

Hornblower, by any standard the dominant character in the narrative, is entirely devoted to his duty as a naval combatant and officer of the Royal navy. He unflinchingly accepts all hardships and difficulties associated with pursuing his duty to King and country. Hornblower is unfailing in wresting the last vestige of success from any position, however untenable. So dedicated is he to the concept of duty that he accepts harsh discipline and widespread privation—things to which he is morally opposed—as necessary in the pursuit of success. Hornblower also projects his profound sense of duty onto his subordinates and expects them to carry the weight of duty with enthusiasm and alacrity. Further, he naturally supposes his superiors to possess the same vigilant attachment to duty as he does.

This theme is echoed by the other major characters in the novel, as well as by many minor characters. For example, early chapters focus on the duty of Prowse, the sailing master, to ensure Hotspur is preserved from physical harm; focus on an unnamed marine's duty at his station; and focus on Bush's duty as 1st lieutenant to ensure all ship's tasks are carried out correctly. Much of Hotspur's training activities before the advent of war and designed to drill them men with their shipboard duty and to instill in them a sense of honor toward their duty—notice how Hornblower carefully molds the midshipmen Cheeseman, Orrock, Cummings, and Foreman during the training exercises and inspections. Individuals who do not perform their duty are routinely despised by Hornblower.

Naval Adventure in the Age of Sail

The novel's principle setting is the high seas during a time of war; Napoleon Bonaparte's military adventures threaten the British Empire and only a strong naval response keeps the French aggression at bay and ensures the survival of the empire. As a master and commander of the Royal Navy, Hornblower's sworn and obvious duty is to engage the enemy at every opportunity. He carries out this duty with H.M.S. Hotspur.

The novel relates a sea voyage from April 1803, to July 1805. Although the voyage is fictional, it contains many historical elements and the maritime combat described is derived from several historical accounts. The ships mentioned represent fictionalized ships of historically appropriate type, though the crews are entirely fictional. Although there have been several historical ship named HMS Hotspur, the ship in the novel is not intended to represent any of her eponymous contemporaries. All aspects of the novel are related to sea adventure; most 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 lengthy 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.

The Isolation of Command

Much of the novel concerns itself with the new captain Hornblower's constant nervous introspection and his abject and absolute isolation aboard his own ship. The captain of a royal ship bears the entire burden of success or failure, and a captain on independent service, such as Hornblower, is harshly judged long after the facts by those who have, through fortune or luck or skill, achieved a certain level of success and thereby exemption from further chancy trials. Hotspur may be successful or she may fail; whatever the outcome, it will be entirely Hornblower's to enjoy or explain.

Hornblower affects a personal style of rigidity and isolation though this is made difficult by his inexperience as captain and by his close personal friendship with Bush, his first lieutenant. In fact, Bush is senior to Hornblower in rank as lieutenant. This relationship is particularly difficult for Hornblower because on occasion Bush—or even Prowse—questions his command decisions and this leads Hornblower to become simultaneously irritated and doubtful that he has made correct decisions. Hornblower introspects about this aspect of his personality and situation. For a man such as Hornblower, this putatively faulty result of common friendship indicates the entire relationship must be restructured. Hence, toward the end of the novel, Hornblower attempts to live in abject isolation aboard his own ship.

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 of 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.

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 Hornblower's life situations as difficult but not entirely pathetic. The sole exception to this is in Hornblower's seeming inability to find happiness without constant 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 is allowed through the point of view selected; it is carried throughout all of the novels of the series and is accessible and successful.

Setting

The novel features two principle settings. The first and most important setting is well developed and is aboard ship of H.M.S. Hotspur, an English sloop-of-war with 24 guns. The ship sails well, fights well, and is responsive—indeed Hotspur is beloved of her crew. The ship is of typical construction of the time, with gun decks, quarterdeck, stern captain's cabin, and so forth. She has of course three ship-rigged masts and is capable of sailing in fairly light airs. Her compliment is 150 seamen and fifteen marines. Because the ship was manned during a time of peace, she has an unusually capable crew with about 100 able seamen, 20 ordinary seamen, a mere 10 landsmen, and about 20 boys. The novel states Hotspur's draft as thirteen feet when fully loaded, making her suitable for inshore work. Alongside Hotspur, the novel a diffuse secondary setting composed of various harbors, fortresses, and landscapes around Brest, a port on the coast of France. Most of these are not described in significant detail and are developed only as transient settings for plot development. As these secondary settings generally refer to historical places and geographic locations, their development relies heavily upon facts obtained from historical reality.

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. It is notable that the novel was originally written and published in England and uses standard English spelling styles which may somewhat unfamiliar to American readers, though they pose no problems of meaning. Occasional words are given in a foreign language—nearly always in French. These, too, present no particular barrier to comprehension as they are brief and their meaning is 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 may not be particularly familiar to modern readers. The technical language is accurate and interesting and a reference to a general sailing encyclopedia will assist in a careful reading and complete understanding of the text. Second, the novel makes frequent reference to various events that occur prior to the novel's opening, proper—this is a standard construction technique and in no way detracts from the novel's readability. Nearly all of these events, of course, occurred in a prior volume of the series, of which this novel is the third.

Structure

The 394-page novel retains English spelling and grammar but uses standard American punctuation. The text is divided into twenty-five chapters of roughly equal length. The narrative is presented in strictly chronological order with each chapter's events occurring after the events in the previous chapter and before the events in the subsequent chapter. Of course, references to previous events occur with some frequency and characters from time to time think about future events. Such deviations from the principle timeline are minor and are clearly identifiable as such. Thus, the novel's principle timeline is accessible and easily followed. The passage of time within the novel is very uneven, however—some paragraphs span weeks or months while other chapters are devoted to the activities of a single evening. Although common in fiction in general, the construction within the novel deliberately is somewhat disjointed and lends a sort of episodic feel to some of the major plot developments.

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

The structure is further complicated by adherence to historical events. In broad terms, events in the novel are fictional or fictionalized events that could have occurred, or did occur, in the period of time used as the novel's setting; namely, the Napoleonic war between England and France during the years 1803-1805. Based on textual statements and links to historic events, the novel can be accurately placed as having transpired between April 1803, and July 1805. Thus, the novel's language, technology, politics, geography, et cetera, are all based upon historically accurate representations. Some of the political situations discussed are no longer obtaining and may be unfamiliar to modern readers.

Quotes

"And you'll be able to draw my monthly half-pay," went on Hornblower harshly, to keep the emotion from his voice; and then, realizing how harshly, he continued: "It is time to say good-bye now, darling."
He had forced himself to use that unaccustomed last word. The water level was far up the Hard; that meant, as he had known when he had given the orders, that the tide was at the flood. He would be able to take advantage of the ebb.
"Darling!" said Maria, turning to him and lifting up her face to him in its hood.
He kissed her; down at the water's edge there was the familiar rattle of oars on thwarts, and the sound of male voices, as his boat's crew perceived the two shadowy figures on the Hard. Maria heard those sounds as clearly as Hornblower did, and she quickly snatched away from him the cold lips she had raised to his.
"Good-bye, my angel."
There was nothing else to say now, nothing else to do; this was the end of this brief experience. He turned his back on Maria; he turned his back on peace and on civilian married life, and walked down towards war. (pp. 29-30)

"There's the bouy, sir," said Prowse.
"Thank you. Mr. Cargill! Tack the ship, if you please."
"Aye aye, sir."
Hornblower withdrew aft. He wanted not merely to observe how Cargill handled the ship, but also how Hotspur behaved. When war came, it was not a mere possibility but a definite probability that success or failure, freedom or captivity, would hinge on how Hotspur went about, how handy she was in stays.
Cargill was a man of thirty, red-faced and corpulent in advance of his years; he was obviously trying hard to forget that he was under the simultaneous scrutiny of the captain, the first lieutenant, and the sailing master as he applied himself to the manoeuvre. He stood beside the wheel looking warily up at the sails and aft at the wake. Hornblower watched Cargill's right hand, down by his thigh, opening and shutting. That might be a symptom of nervousness or a mere habitual gesture of calculation. The watches on deck were all at their stations. So far the men were all unknown faces to Hornblower; it would be profitable to devote some of his attention to the study of their reactions as well.
Cargill obviously braced himself for action and then gave his preliminary order to the wheel.
"Helm-a-lee!" he bellowed—but not a very effective bellow, for his voice cracked half-way.
"Headsail sheets!" That was hardly better. It would not have served in a gale of wind, although it carried forward in present conditions. Jib and fore topsail began to shiver.
"Raise up tacks and sheets!"
Hotspur was coming round into the wind, rising to an even keel. She was coming round, coming round—now was she going to hang in stays?
"Haul, mains'l! Haul!"

This was the crucial moment. The hands knew their business; the port-side bowlines and braces were cast off smartly, and the hands tailed onto the starboard-side ones. Round came the yards, but the Hotspur refused to answer. She balked. She hung right in the eye of the wind, and then fell off again two points to port, with every sail a-shiver and every yard of way lost. She was in irons, helpless until further action should be taken. (pp. 35-36)

At this moment he nearly lost his footing as Hotspur heaved up her bows, rolled, and then cocked up her stern in the typical motion of a ship close-hauled. She was out now from the lee of the Wight, meeting the full force of the Channel rollers. Fool that he was! He had almost forgotten about this; on the one or two occasions during the past ten days when the thought of seasickness has occurred to him he had blithely assumed that he had grown out of that weakness in eighteen months on land. He had not thought about it at all this morning, being too busy. Now with his first moment of idleness here it came. He had lost his sea-legs—a new roll sent him reeling—and he was going to be sick. He could feel a cold sweat on his skin and the first wave of nausea rising to his throat. There was time for a bitter jest—he had just been congratulating himself on knowing where his next meal was coming from, but now he could be more certain still about where his last meal was going to...Then the seasickness struck, horribly. (p. 42)

"What are your orders?"
The marine stood stiffly at attention, feet at an angle of forty five degrees, musket close in at his side, forefinger of the left hand along the seam of his trousers, neck rigid in its stock—so that, as Hornblower was not directly in front of him, he stared over Hornblower's shoulder.
"To guard my post—" he began, and continued in a monotonous singsong, repeating by rote the sentry's formula which he had probably uttered a thousand times before. The change in his tone was marked when he reached the final sentence, added for this particular station: "...to allow no one to go below unless he is carrying an empty cartridge bucket."
That was so that cowards could not take refuge below the waterline.
"What about men carrying wounded?"
The astonished marine found it hard to answer; he found it hard to think after years of drill.
"I have no orders about them, sir," he said at last, actually allowing his eyes, though not his neck, to move.
Hornblower glanced at Bush.
"I'll speak to the sergeant of marines, sir," said Bush. (p. 56)

"Do you think she could carry the main topmast stays'l, sir?"
That was a question with many implications, but there was only one answer.
"No," said Hornblower.
That staysail would probably give Hotspur a little more speed through the water. But it would lay her over very considerably, which, along wit h the additional area exposed to the wind, would increase her leeway by an appreciable proportion. Hornblower had

seen Hotspur in dry dock, knew the lines of the turn of her bilge, and could estimate the maximum angle at which she could retain her grip on the water. Those two factors would balance out, and there was a third one to turn the scale—any increase in the amount of canvas exposed would increase the chances of something carrying away. A disaster petty or great—the parting of a line to the loss of a topmast—would thrust Hotspur helplessly within range of the enemy's guns.
"If the wind moderates that's the first extra canvas I'll set," went on Hornblower to modify the brusqueness of his refusal, and he added, "Take not of how that ship bears from us."
"I've done that, sir," answered Prowse; a good mark to Prowse. (p. 97)

"She's aground! Drop it—dead 'un!"
Hornblower swung round to look; the coaster there was undoubtedly on the rocks and consequently not worth firing at. He mentally gave a mark of approval to Foreman, who despite his youth and his excitement was keeping his head, even though he made use of the vocabulary of the rat-killing pit.
"Four bells, sir," reported Prowse amid the wild din. That was an abrupt reminder to Hornblower that he must keep his head too. It was hard to think and to calculate, harder still to recall his visualization of the chart, and yet he had to do so. He realized that Hotspur could have nothing to spare over on the landward side.
"Wear the ship—Mr. Prowse," he said; he remembered just too late to use the formal address completely naturally. "Get her over on the port tack."
"Aye aye, sir." Prowse seized the speaking trumpet, and somewhere in the darkness disciplined men hurried to sheets and braces. As Hotspur swung about another dark shape came down at her from the channel.
"Je me rends! Je me rends!" a voice was shouting from it.
Someone in that coaster was trying to surrender before Hotspur's broadside could blow her out of the water. She actually bumped against the side as the current took her round, and then she was free—her surrender had been premature, for now she was past Hotspur and vanishing in the farther darkness. (pp. 149-150)

Hornblower counted the ships in Brest Roads, and as he did so he was very conscious that this morning routine was the ultimate, most insolent expression of the power of England at sea. England had a heart, a brain, an arm, and he and Hotspur were the final sensitive fingertip of that long arm. Nineteen ships of the line at anchor, two of them three-deckers. Seven frigates. They were the ones he had observed yesterday. Nothing had contrived to slip out of the Four or the Pointe du Raz.
"Mr. Foreman! Signal to the Flag, if you please. 'Enemy at anchor. Situation unchanged.'"
Foreman had made that signal several times before, but, while Hornblower watched him unobtrusively, he checked the numbers in the signal book. It was Foreman's business to know all the thousand arbitrary signals off by heart, but it was best, when time allowed, that he should corroborate what his memory told him. An error of a digit might send the warning that the enemy was coming out.

"Flag acknowledges, sir," reported Foreman.
"Very well." (pp. 224-225)

"We'll have a westerly gale, sir, or my name's not William Bush."
"Very likely," said Hornblower, who had been sniffing the air all day long.
Hornblower was a heretic in this matter. He did not believe that the mere changing from a day a minute longer than twelve hours to one a minute shorter made gales blow from out of the west. Gales happened to blow at this time because winter was setting in, but ninety nine seamen out of a hundred firmly believed in a more direct although more mysterious causation.
"Wind's freshening and sea's getting up a bit, sir," went on Bush, inexorably.
"Yes."
Hornblower fought down the temptation to declare that this was not because the sun happened to set at six o'clock, for he knew that if he expressed such an opinion it would be received with the tolerant and concealed disagreement accorded to the opinions of children and eccentrics and captains. (pp. 235-236)

"This fellow says he has a message for you, sir."
This was a swarthy gypsy-faced fellow who met Hornblower's eye boldly with all the assurance to be expected of a man who carried in his pocket a protection against impressment.
"What is it?"
"Message for you from a lady, sir, and I was to have a shilling for delivering it to you."
Hornblower looked him over keenly. There was only one lady who could be sending a message.
"Nonsense. That lady promised sixpence. Now didn't she?"
Hornblower knew that much about Maria despite his brief married life.
"Well, yes, sir."
"Here's the shilling anyway. What's the message?"
"The lady said look for her on Brixham Pier, sir."
"Very well." (pp. 267-268)

"Thank you, Mr. Foreman. Up-helm, Mr. Bush. Course sou-west by south."
Hotspur came round, and as every sail began to fill she gathered way rapidly.
"Course sou-west by south, sir," said Prowse, breathlessly returning.
"Thank you, Mr. Prowse."
The wind was just abaft the beam, and Hotspur foamed along as sweating hands at the braces trimmed the yards to an angle that exactly satisfied Bush's careful eye.
"Set the royals, Mr. Bush. And we'll have the stuns'l booms rigged out, if you please."
"Aye aye, sir."
Hotspur lay over to the wind, not in any spineless fashion, but in the way in which a good sword-blade bends under pressure. A squadron of ships of the line lay just down to leeward, and Hotspur tore past them, rendering passing honours as she did so.
Hornblower could imagine the feelings of envy in the breasts of the hands of those ships

at the sight of this dashing little sloop racing off towards adventure. But I that case they did not allow for a year and a half spend among the rocks and shoals of the Iroise.
"Set the stuns'ls, sir?" asked Bush.
"Yes, if you please, Mr. Bush. Mr. Young, what d'you get from the log?"
"Nine, sir. A little more, perhaps—nine an' a quarter."
Nine knots, and the studding sails not yet set. This was exhilarating, marvellous, after months of confinement. (pp. 342-343)

"I'm extremely angry about this, Mr. Bush. Somebody will smart for it."
"Well, sir—"
"Well, Mr. Bush?"
"It seems you left him alone in the cabin when the consul came on board, sir. That's when he took his chance."
"You mean it's my fault, Mr. Bush?"
"well, yes, sir, if you want to put it that way."
"Mm. Maybe you're right, even if I do say it." Hornblower paused, still trying to be natural. "God, that's an infuriating thing to happen. I'm angry with myself. I can't think how I came to be so foolish."
"I expect you have a lot on your mind, sir."
It was distasteful to hear Bush standing up for his captain in the face of his captain's self-condemnation.
"There's just no excuse for me. I'll never forgive myself."
"I'll mark him as 'R' on the ship's muster, sir."
"Yes. You'd better do that."
Cryptic initials in the ship's muster rolls told various stories—"D" for "Discharged," "DD" for "Dead," and "R" for "Run"—deserted. (p. 356)

Those last words of Collins' were still running through Hornblower's mind. He would have to leave the Hotspur; he would have to say good-bye to Bush and all the others, and the prospect brought a sadness that quite took the edge off the elation that he felt. Of course he would have to leave her; Hotspur was too small to constitute a command for a post captain. He would have to wait for another command; as the junior captain on the list, he would probably receive the smallest and least important sixth-rate in the navy. But for all that he was a captain. Maria would be delighted. (p. 394)

Topics for Discussion

The Hornblowers' marriage is described in considerable detail in the novel. Based upon modern marriage customs, which events were unusual or surprising to you? Do you think Maria received a memorable celebration?

Early in the voyage of Hotspur, Cargill misses a tack and has to attempt the maneuver a second time. Bush apparently feels Cargill is inept whereas Hornblower believes Hotspur is incorrectly trimmed. Which opinion seems closest to the truth, given subsequent events? Were both men partially correct?

The French captain of the coaster Deux Frères chats with Hornblower and, apparently inadvertently, provides a considerable amount of sensitive information. Later on, the man exchanges information for large payments. In today's world, would the Frenchman be considered a traitor and a spy?

During one particularly catastrophic breakfast, Grimes is afraid of Hornblower as he thinks Hornblower will have him flogged. If your supervisor at work or teacher at school could have you tied up and flogged for irritating them, would your behavior be any different than it now is? Discuss.

Hotspur encounters dirty weather on several occasions during the novel. Usually, Hornblower becomes seasick and faces the prolonged stormy weather with resigned endurance. On the other hand, Bush seems to exult in foul weather and high winds. If you were at sea, do you think you would endure or enjoy dirty weather?

When Hornblower leaves England, it is under trying financial circumstances and he thus ships no personal stores. Mrs. Mason provides an enjoyable but inadequate and inexpensive minor larder. Yet for the most part, Hornblower eats the simple far of a common seaman for several months. On a few occasions, he enjoys better fare. On one notable occasion, the fleet captains gather for a nearly decadent feast. Do you think that food, under naval circumstances in 1803-1805, might take on a meaning all out of proportion to its nutritional value? Why or why not? Discuss.

In what ways is Hornblower an effective naval captain? How could he improve? What things does he do right, and what things does he do wrong?

During the novel both of Hornblower's personal stewards—John Grimes and James Doughty—disappoint Hornblower's expectations. However, Hornblower essentially forgives each of the men their respective shortcomings, and takes efforts to assist Grimes' family and secure Doughty's freedom. What does this say about Hornblower's character?

After reading the novel, do you envy the lot of the common seaman in the Royal Navy during the Napoleonic wars? Why or why not?