Lord Hornblower Study Guide

Lord Hornblower by C. S. Forester

BOOKRAGS

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Plot Summary

Captain Horatio Hornblower is dispatched to quell a mutiny. After successfully capturing the mutinous ship, he learns of an opportunity to foster a local anti-Napoleon rebellion in France. He throws his strength behind the revolt and sees the thing successfully accomplished. Appointed mayor of the rebellious city, he organizes a successful aggressive defense. However, it sadly results in the death of his long-time friend and associate, Captain William Bush. Upon the fall of Napoleon, Hornblower becomes estranged from his wife Barbara. As she travels to Vienna, Hornblower travels to the French home of his old friend the Comte de Graçay. There, Hornblower recommences a sexual relationship with Marie, the Comte's widowed daughter-in-law. This awkward situation persists until Napoleon regains power, whereupon Hornblower and his compatriots become fugitives. They fight a losing guerrilla action for several weeks before they are captured, with Marie being killed in the final confrontation. Hornblower and the Comte face a morning firing squad but are saved from death by news of Napoleon's catastrophic defeat at Waterloo.

The narrative is somewhat disjointed and consists of a series of fairly unconnected episodes in which Hornblower always plays the dominant role. The opening action finds Hornblower attending church during a time of idle pursuits. He is commanded to seek out a mutinous brig and bring in the ship and such crew as can be captured. The mutinous crew has contacted England's enemy, France, and arranged a tentative surrender. Hornblower intervenes and, through deception, causes the French to reject the defection of the English mutineers. Shortly thereafter, Hornblower captures the mutinous ship, personally killing the ringleader of the mutiny. As part of the ship-to-ship combat, probably the most exciting passage in the novel, Hornblower also makes a prize of a French gunboat. The first episode of the narrative thus concludes with Hornblower succeeding beyond all reasonable expectations.

The second major episode in the novel begins when, among the captured French, Hornblower meets one Lebrun, a rising star in the socio-political power base of Le Havre, the nearby French port. Lebrun indicates that Le Havre is ready to denounce Napoleon and declare for King Louis XVIII. In exchange, the city would expect commerce privileges with English trade as well as some measure of British military support. Hornblower realizes the strategic advantage of such a major defection and wholeheartedly supports the rebellion of Le Havre. Largely through bold bluster, he gains the harbor and establishes a strong English naval presence there. Napoleon moves to capture the city, but Hornblower makes an offensive surprise attack which destroys the French siege train; unfortunately, Hornblower's particular friend William Bush is killed in the combat. At this point in time, Napoleon's influence sags and his military options wane, and the Le Havre-centered rebellion expands. Then news arrives of Napoleon's defeat and abdication. Hornblower is made a Baron of the United Kingdom for his service even as his personal relationship with Barbara, his wife, falls apart.

The third major episode in the novel begins when Barbara travels to Vienna for an extended stay and Hornblower returns to England. Quickly bored, he returns to France and seeks solace in the arms of a former lover, Marie. This brief interlude is terminated by Napoleon's return to power. Thus, the fourth major episode in the novel sees Hornblower as the military genius behind a disintegrating guerrilla action, which succeeds insofar as it pins down many of Napoleon's soldiers. Eventually, Hornblower is captured and faces a firing squad, only to be saved from execution by news of Napoleon's disastrous defeat at Waterloo.

Chapters 1, 2, and 3

Chapters 1, 2, and 3 Summary

Captain Horatio Hornblower is dispatched to quell a mutiny. After successfully capturing the mutinous ship, he learns of an opportunity to foster a local anti-Napoleon rebellion in France. He throws his strength behind the revolt and sees the thing successfully accomplished. Appointed mayor of the rebellious city, he organizes a successful aggressive defense. However, it sadly results in the death of his long-time friend and associate, Captain William Bush. Upon the fall of Napoleon, Hornblower becomes estranged from his wife Barbara. As she travels to Vienna, Hornblower travels to the French home of his old friend the Comte de Graçay. There, Hornblower recommences a sexual relationship with Marie, the Comte's widowed daughter-in-law. This awkward situation persists until Napoleon regains power, whereupon Hornblower and his compatriots become fugitives. They fight a losing guerrilla action for several weeks before they are captured, with Marie being killed in the final confrontation. Hornblower and the Comte face a morning firing squad but are saved from death by news of Napoleon's catastrophic defeat at Waterloo.

Sir Horatio Hornblower sits in Westminster chapel listening to what seems an interminable service. He studies the tracery of the ceiling and attempts to divert his mind from the sermon; yet being a Knight of the Most Honorable Order of the Bath requires his attendance. He is surrounded by many of the finest naval officers in England, including Lord St. Vincent. Then, a lieutenant makes his way into the chapel and seeks out Lord St. Vincent, delivering a packet of papers. Lord St. Vincent reads them through twice, and then abruptly leaves the service, sending the lieutenant to fetch Hornblower. With apparent nonchalance, Hornblower rises and leaves the sermon. Lady Barbara, his wife, also leaves and accompanies him outside.

Lord St. Vincent addresses Hornblower. The men of His Majesty's Brig Flame have mutinied against Captain Augustine Chadwick, a lieutenant. Hornblower is familiar with Chadwick, having served with him as a midshipman many years previous. Chadwick, recalls Hornblower, had always been mean-spirited and a sadistic tyrant; there is little wonder that his crew had mutinied. The mutineers have sent a letter to the Admiralty, which Hornblower reads. It demands a full pardon and a fair trial for the many alleged abuses of Captain Chadwick. The British Navy will not countenance mutiny, obviously. Hornblower is therefore ordered to voyage to sea and, by whatever means possible, suppress the mutiny and regain Flame. The situation is tricky, however, as Flame lies close to the French port of Le Havre and will go over to the French if approached with any sizable force. Hornblower therefore will sail on Porta Coeli, Flame's sister-ship, with Captain Freeman. Freeman has served under Hornblower previously, in the Baltic Sea. Hornblower reflects that this assignment is perilous, with scant chance of any type of success and copious chance for spectacular failure. Lord St. Vincent, realizing the difficult nature of the assignment, gives Hornblower broad discretion in dealing with the mutineers.

Hornblower later meets Barbara at their apartment and they exchange tearful and passionate good-byes. After a short period of passion, a messenger arrives with Hornblower's formal, written orders, and he departs. Hornblower takes to the sea in a small boat and moodily reflects upon the vagaries of life—how one moment he was dressed in finery and surrounded by the comforts of life, and how the next moment he is buffeted by spray and wind and tossed about in a small ship. His introspection is nearly despondent and he sinks into a sort of ephemeral depression as he usually does at the start of any prolonged mission. He gains the Porta Coeli, greets the familiar and respected Freeman, informs him in broad detail of their mission, and orders the ship away. After scant hours the ship is enveloped in a gale and Hornblower becomes seasick while Freeman is forced to heave-to and wait for the storm to blow out.

Chapters 1, 2, and 3 Analysis

The novel, ninth in a series of volumes, opens in a traditional way of depicting Horatio Hornblower on land in a recuperative role. The previous year had seen him strenuously engaged in the defense of Russia against a Napoleonic invasion—Hornblower's efforts had been entirely successful but had left him with a debilitating case of typhus. He had spent the year previous to the principle opening of the novel as a convalescent at his country estate in Smallbridge, where he is the local squire. As a knight of the Order of the Bath, Hornblower attends various official functions, including a particular sermon at Westminster. The novel opens with a bored Hornblower, never one much for religious pomp, staring at the ceiling in admiration of the workman's handicraft. Lord St. Vincent, the superior officer of nearly all officers present, is based upon a historical figure of great renown and importance. The exploits of Lord St. Vincent described in the novel outline his many historical accomplishments. Lord St. Vincent receives a troubling dispatch and immediately looks about for the resourceful Hornblower. Although not fully convalescent, he immediately accepts the difficult assignment.

Hornblower is to regain control of a mutinous brig, Flame. The difficulty of the situation lies in Flame's whereabouts—close in to the French shore, the vessel will immediately go over to France if any show of force is used. Hornblower must thus capture the ship either by negotiation or subterfuge, not by superior force of arms. The opening three chapters include a notable amount of Hornblower's interior dialogue which is so familiar to readers of the series—he is a man wracked by self doubt, yet always essentially correct in action. In truth, regaining Flame offers little enough potential for reward but threatens to virtually end Hornblower's career if not handled perfectly. Furthermore, any happy outcome of the situation is highly unlikely. Hornblower thus enters upon the mission with a justifiable amount of doubt. Lord St. Vincent is obviously aware of the nearly impossible nature of Hornblower's mission and quickly agrees to allow him a remarkable degree of latitude in negotiation, should such become necessary. The give-and-take discussion between Hornblower and Lord St. Vincent verges upon banter and, given other discussions between Hornblower and his superior officers, is frankly candid. The mission of retrieving Flame consumes the next few chapters, but in reality it is a prelude to the main plot development of the novel.

After receiving his orders, Hornblower bids a concise but unusually passionate goodbye to Barbara, his wife of several years' duration. When next they meet their relationship will suffer, and it is unfortunate here that Hornblower does not have more time to offer a more proper farewell. He then moves to Porta Coeli and begins his sea voyage. The introductory chapters thus maneuver him from the English countryside which he finds often insipid to the life of a commodore at sea, for which he is so well-suited. The captain of Porta Coeli is Freeman, who has previously served under Hornblower in a Baltic Sea mission described in a previous volume. Porta Coeli is a good selection for the mission as she is Flame's sister-ship; thus, equivalent in points of sailing and gunnery. She should presumably be a match for Flame should combat eventuate, yet she cannot be seen as a heavy-handed response to the mutiny.

Chapters 4 and 5

Chapters 4 and 5 Summary

Porta Coeli is caught in a gale and heaves-to. For several hours she pitches as the gale gradually moderates. Throughout this period Hornblower is seasick and irritable, and remains pensive. He considers the various problems associated with Flame and finds no obvious solution to the problem. Brown, Hornblower's coxswain and personal servant, tends to his seasick master with aplomb and exactly the right blend of conscientious care and deferential casualness. Hornblower envies Brown's easy ability with any physical task, be it driving horses, carving wood, heaving lead, reefing sail, or waiting tables. In truth, Brown is one of Hornblower's few intimate acquaintances even though Hornblower does not appear to fully accept the fact.

Eventually the gale moderates and the ship begins to regain distance lost while hove-to. Hornblower spends more time on the deck and realizes that the men of the ship are pleased to be serving under such a famous and competent commander; the realization makes him writhe inwardly with self-doubt. He meets one seaman, Harding, and recognizes having served with him some twenty years ago; Harding and the other crew are very pleased with Hornblower's attention. To make better speed, Freeman rigs Porta Coeli with jib and staysails, bringing the boom-mainsail about, and handling the brig as a fore-and-aft rigged vessel. Hornblower is impressed with the man's seamanship.

After a few days of sailing, Porta Coeli closes with the French shore during the night. Freeman uses the lead with tallow to sample the bottom and, combined with dead reckoning, slips close to the shore through dangerous waters and interposes Porta Coeli between the presumed location of Flame and the nearest French harbor. Hornblower agonizes about the solution to the seemingly insolvable task of bringing Flame back to England. As dawn breaks, Hornblower has the men assembled and addresses them. He informs them of the dreadful possibility that they will shortly be called upon to attack an English vessel. He enjoins them to perform their duty, noting that mutiny is unconscionable. They respond with muted enthusiasm, and he is convinced they will support any decision he must make. Although the day features thick weather, dawn brings visible land and, soon enough, Flame is raised on the horizon. The sailors remark that she is the virtual mirror image of Porta Coeli, except that due to recent repairs, Flame's fore topsail has what appears to be a large white cross upon it.

Porta Coeli attempts to close Flame, but after several minutes of cat-and-mouse it becomes apparent Flame will not allow herself to be closed. Meanwhile, another sail is raised—it is a French West Indiaman, probably loaded with sugar and other foods (later, Hornblower will discover her name to be Caryatide). Porta Coeli would do well to capture her; as a prize she would bring much prize money for the men. But Hornblower focuses on duty—on Flame—and the French West Indiaman sails by to safety in the nearby French port of Le Havre. Hornblower then orders his boat over the side, and with only a few men he has his boat rowed to the distant Flame. He goes aboard alone and

meets with an older, white-haired seaman named Nathaniel Sweet. Sweet claims to be captain of Flame but declines having encouraged any mutiny. Hornblower makes several probing opening statements but Sweet flatly refuses any sort of bargaining. Hornblower attempts to address the men aboard, but Sweet threatens to shoot him if he continues. Sweet then gives away the strength of his position—he has already been in contact with the French and has written offers of clemency and acceptance should he come over to France. Hornblower then departs amidst vague threats and the insinuation that he should be glad not to receive a flogging.

Hornblower is rowed back to his ship—he frets over his failure to make any progress, and worries about the untenable situation. Then he has a moment of insight. When he returns to Porta Coeli, he summons the most-experienced sail-maker and arranges to have a fore topsail manufactured that will appear exactly as Flame's repaired sail. Knowing that Hornblower is up to some trick, the men of Porta Coeli begin to manufacture the sail with gusto. Hornblower then explains his plan to Freeman: Porta Coeli will be disguised as Flame and will then raid Le Havre, cutting out the French West Indiaman. Believing they have been attacked by Flame, the French will not welcome the mutinous English Brig should she seek safety in the French port.

Chapters 4 and 5 Analysis

Chapters 4 and 5 form the minor arc of the novel that completes the transition of Hornblower from an idle country life of convalescence to the life of military action upon the sea. The subsequent chapters will see hot ship-to-ship actions of the type for which Hornblower is famous. Here he is depicted as still full of self-doubt and the impression that his mission is unsolvable. This morose introspection dissolves on the moment when Hornblower realizes he does have a plan.

The sailing qualities of Porta Coeli and Flame are nearly identical; their fighting qualities are also nearly the same. The only vital difference between the two brigs is the intellect which commands each. Nathaniel Sweet, ringleader of the mutineers, is a former bosun's mate who has been once dismissed for drinking. He is an experienced sailor and a crafty "sea lawyer" who attempts to strengthen his position by extending mutiny to nearly treasonous action. He communicates with the French officials at Le Havre and receives from them a guarantee of clemency. Should Hornblower not accede to Sweet's demand for a full and immediate pardon, he will simply take the ship over to France and be welcomed as a sort of unofficial hero. As Flame is within reach of a friendly port that will fire upon Porta Coeli, Hornblower's position appears unsolvable. But then the commodore takes stock of a certain peculiarity of the situation—the French have not seen Porta Coeli and are unlikely to rationalize that there could be two nearly identical ships in the area. Should Porta Coeli disguise herself as Flame, the French would surely assume her to actually be Flame. If Porta Coeli were then to engage in open hostilities with the French port of Le Havre, naturally Flame's supposed welcome would be revoked—at least for a short time. Long enough, however, for Hornblower to attack Flame and deny her the support of France. His entire ploy is obvious, but will depend to a great measure upon fortunate circumstance. Never one to second-guess a

fundamentally sound insight, Hornblower readies immediately to seize the advantage. Hornblower's ingenious plan marks a major turning point in the novel.

Chapters 6 and 7

Chapters 6 and 7 Summary

Porta Coeli feints away from Flame, sailing as if to return to England. After dark, they pass close by Le Havre and look into the harbor to assess conditions there. The recently-seen French Indiaman is anchored rather far out in the harbor with lighters alongside to carry away the cargo—not much has been unloaded. Porta Coeli sails into Le Havre with the failing light, carefully maneuvered by Hornblower. When the harbor pilot comes aboard he is captured without incident. Some minute later, a revenue cutter comes alongside and various officers board the ship where they, too, are captured without incident. Hornblower anchors near the Indiaman, and the ship's boats are launched in the darkness. The ship is captured swiftly and quietly. Porta Coeli turns about and leaves the harbor. She is challenged by another French cutter and the hail cannot be avoided. As she sails out, followed by the captured Indiaman, the ruse is discovered and the harbor fortress opens ineffective fire. Hornblower escapes with his prize.

The next morning Hornblower bathes on deck as is his custom. The sailors, like the servants back home, find this daily devotion to personal cleanliness unfathomable and somewhat ridiculous. But Hornblower is the captain. In the early hours of daylight the lookout raises Flame. Porta Coeli clears for action and closes with Flame. Flame, unaware of the previous night's activities, makes a run for Le Havre. Soon enough many small gunships put out from Le Havre and close with Flame, whom the French suppose attacked the port the previous evening. As Porta Coeli closes the distance, the French gunships attack Flame. Flame, expecting a happy reception, is entirely surprised. The action is close and hot and Porta Coeli approaches virtually unobserved, sinks several small French craft with cannon fire, then makes a final tack and comes alongside a large French gunship, the Bonne Celestine. Led by Hornblower, the men of Porta Coeli board the French ship and capture her quickly, even as the combat aboard Flame continues. Hornblower again rallies his men and surges forward, over the Bonne Celestine and on to Flame. The crew of Flame, by now obviously aware that they are not welcome in the French harbor, are entirely deflated. They offer little resistance and within moments the ship is secured, though Hornblower becomes personally entangled in hand-to-hand combat for a few moments.

As soon as the situation is taken in hand, Hornblower causes Flame, Porta Coeli, and Bonne Celestine to sail away from the remaining French gunboats. The superior handling of the larger vessels allows them to extricate from the melee and escape. The French ship carries many captive Frenchmen, and the Flame is still full of mutinous crew. But the ships' decks are cleared of enemy and the vessels are under the control of Hornblower's subordinates. As the ships draw away, Nathaniel Sweet—the leader of the mutiny—leaps over the railing and strikes out, swimming, for the nearest French craft. Hornblower coolly takes a musket from a nearby marine, sights in on Sweet, and shoots

the swimming man. He watches with mixed feelings as a pool of blood forms around Sweet, and as Sweet then sinks out of sight.

Chapters 6 and 7 Analysis

The exciting ship-to-ship combat described in these chapters concludes the initial action arc of the narrative. Hornblower has received nearly impossible tasks along with a wide degree of personal initiative. Against all odds, he has managed to successfully prosecute his orders to successful completion beyond any reasonable expectation. Not only has Flame been recovered, but nearly the entire mutinous crew has been captured, the ringleader has been killed at Hornblower's own hand, and two French ships have been captured in the bargain—one of them of considerable worth as a prize. In addition, news of the mutiny has been largely contained. By the time the mutiny becomes public knowledge, the mutineers will be captives and punished. Further, a decisive blow upon a major French port has been made, and several small French gunboats have been destroyed. All this has been accomplished at very light loss to the English. Hornblower has, once again, carried off a master stroke in the face of apparently insurmountable difficulties.

The capture-by-boarding scene is vivid and makes some of the most compelling reading in the novel. Porta Coeli boards Bonne Celestine from the rear quarter while she is simultaneously boarding Flame from her bows. The English, led by Hornblower, sweep Bonne Celestine clear from the stern forwards and then carry on to her bows and move up and onto the brig Flame. Their appearance there coincides with the apex of the fighting between the French and the mutinous English crew, and they make short work of carrying both ships by boarding. This type of action has a historical precedent in the nearly singular feat accomplished by Lord Horatio Nelson—a fact that is pointed out in latter chapters of the novel. It would be viewed, at the time, as a prodigious accomplishment and a nearly unparalleled feat of arms.

Chapters 8, 9, and 10

Chapters 8, 9, and 10 Summary

Hornblower surveys his miniature fleet composed of Porta Coeli, Flame, Bonne Celestine, and Caryatide. He allows himself to feel some measure of accomplishment and realizes that, back home, recent events will be viewed as consequential and positive. His musing is interrupted by the insistence of one Lebrun, a captive taken from the French Bonne Celestine. Hornblower acquiesces and Lebrun is led to him. Lebrun is fairly young and has an olive complexion and white teeth. Hornblower finds him oily, and Lebrun introduces himself as the "adjoint" of Baron Momas, the mayor of Le Havre. Lebrun had been dispatched to secure the capture of Flame and subsequently the return of Caryatide—her loss had been financially troubling to Momas's interests. After a wandering conversation full of innuendo, Hornblower insists that Lebrun come directly to the point. Lebrun states that Le Havre and the surrounding Bourbon lands are ready to declare for King Louis XVIII and stand in opposition to Napoleon Bonaparte. In exchange for this rebellion they would expect England to engage in profitable trade ventures with Le Havre and, specifically, with Momas's businesses. In brief, Momas is ready to defy Napoleon in exchange for English commerce and its attendant wealth. Hornblower mulls the offer and decides that he must pursue it in the interests of England's military operations. Perhaps the rebellion can lead to a larger revolution or even coup d'état; in any case, expanding English commercial interests, even if it proves ephemeral, cannot be harmful.

Hornblower fortunately needs crew for his ships and is thus free to pardon forty mutineers by necessity. He frees the French captives, places them in charge of Lebrun, and sets Bonne Celestine at liberty to return to Le Havre and foment revolt. He dispatches Caryatide for England with a prize crew, then sends off Flame, once again in the command of Chadwick, with messages. After several days, Hornblower receives reinforcements from the channel fleet and is overjoyed to learn that among others, Captain Bush with Nonsuch will support the operations. The fleet is gathered and captains and other military leaders meet with Hornblower. Plans are fully developed. After the final planning meeting, Bush, Hornblower, and Freeman remain together and chat. Freeman admits to being of partial gypsy extraction and offers to tell Hornblower's fortunes by reading cards. Freeman lays out the cards and recounts a surprisingly accurate history of Hornblower's life. Bush is amazed at the feat, but Hornblower is hardly impressed. Freeman then foretells the future; he sees for Hornblower a crown, danger, and a fair woman. Hornblower remains nonplussed and the jovial meeting ends.

On the day of action the fleet enters Le Havre with bold pomp. Hornblower assumes that Lebrun has done as promised and relies upon bold bluster and audacious speeches to carry the day. As the fleet enters the harbor they draw some minor fire but do not return fire—instead, Hornblower repetitively announces that hostilities are at an end; that Napoleon is no more; that King Louis has returned to the throne. The fleet lands and approaches the fortress where they are met with skeptical restraint.

Hornblower asks the French if they are not a free people and then insists they declare for King Louis. There is confusion and institutionalized resistance, but Hornblower's audacious approach, bold blustering, and demanding statements are persuasive enough to allow the fortress to be taken peacefully. Soon enough Lebrun and Momas arrive at the waterfront. The town has capitulated, the English have entered the harbor, and the rebellion has begun. Hornblower feels it to be a great moment for France.

Chapters 8, 9, and 10 Analysis

These chapters bridge the narrative elements of the first portion of the novel to those of the second portion. Hornblower left England to put down a mutiny and more-or-less inadvertently found himself in the midst of a revolt against Napoleon. He is insightful enough to realize the damage such a revolt will do to the French tyrant—surely a revolt of French citizens in an established French city of some importance must carry far more significance than a minor revolt amongst a conquered people on the far side of Europe. Hornblower realizes that the rebellion has little chance of enduring success, but simultaneously realizes it will be good for England regardless of how transient it is. It is interesting to note that historically a similar revolt took place in a relatively close city at nearly the same time as Hornblower's fictional rebellion at Le Havre. Both rebellions—the historic and the fictive—claimed the Bourbon cause and rejected Napoleon.

Hornblower little realizes at this point how significantly the revolt will impact his life. His erroneous assumption is that he will assist sparking revolution and then retire to England once again; at latter chapters will reveal, Hornblower's fate, and Bush's too, has become inextricably linked with the fate of the Le Havre revolt. Although Hornblower does not yet know it, he has traded the role of naval officer for that of governmental administrator. The narrative elements dealing with Hornblower's demeanor and supremely confident bearing during the seizure of the harbor at Le Havre are interesting reading and provide deep characterization of the protagonist. Note, too, his significant relief upon being joined by his long-time associate and singular confidant Bush, captain of Nonsuch. Thus, as Hornblower pursues Lebrun's scheme, he does so with the support of his closest friend.

Freeman's card "trick" forms an interesting narrative element. As Hornblower realizes, Freeman's retelling of Hornblower's past hardly requires magical gypsy efforts—Freeman merely recounts well-known events in Hornblower's life, framing them in mysterious-sounding language. What is far more interesting, however, is Freeman's uncanny ability to foretell the future. In essence, Freeman's brief statement of a crown, danger, and a fair woman block out the essential elements of the remainder of the narrative. The first symbol—a crown—forms the main topic of chapters eleven through fifteen, namely, Hornblower's governorship of Le Havre during the final days of Napoleon's first great effort.

Chapters 11, 12, and 13

Chapters 11, 12, and 13 Summary

Hornblower is appointed mayor of Le Havre and the city takes on the character of an occupied port. Endless administrative trivia consumes Hornblower's time. England sends only minor support to the revolt because her main effort focuses on Wellington's advances in Spain and the naval blockade of France. Thus, Hornblower spends several weeks becoming irritated at various trivial tasks and the minutia of administering a port city during a time of war. Hornblower's situation then becomes more complicated when England sends a French royal family member to officially take the situation in hand. The former-fugitive Duke d'Angoulême arrives from England. Hornblower finds him irritating and concerned more with the propriety of his station than the success of the revolution. Nevertheless, a variety of official functions are arranged to properly welcome the Duke in regal style. The Duke is the eldest son of the Comte d'Artois, and his mother is from the House of Savoy. He is married to Marie Thérèse, the daughter of Louis XVI.

After the rounds of etiquette are satisfied, Hornblower learns that the French are assembling a large force upriver from Le Havre. Having experienced the prolonged siege of Riga about eighteen months earlier, Hornblower has little stomach for the coming engagement. Hornblower thinks about the tactical and strategic situation, considers the accurate reports of the composition of the siege train, and reminisces about Riga. He begins to develop his counter-siege plans and then realizes that the French army is unlikely to guard their weakest point—the river which runs from Le Havre up to the French base. Hornblower's plan is fairly straightforward—a few hundred soldiers will board barges and head upriver, taking the French forces by surprise, and destroying siege cannon and other equipment. He hopes the surprise attack will result in a several months delay of the French attack.

Hornblower's plan is carried out. Under the direct command of Bush, hundreds of soldiers board the barges and sally forth to Caudebec. While they are gone, Hornblower reads the newspapers from home and is troubled by an article describing the action against Flame, and which compares Hornblower to Nelson. Hornblower frets about the plans and then drifts off to sleep. Later he is awakened by assistants that tell him there has been a distant but enormous explosion, heard from many miles away. They believe it must be related somehow to Bush's mission. Hornblower finds the news disconcerting and worries about Bush's safety.

Over the next days, fragments of the attacking force return to Le Havre. Hornblower interviews them to discover that the attack did not go as planned. After the initial actions were successful, an unexpected gigantic detonation of a huge powder store had shattered both the defenders and the attackers. Most of the English force was thus destroyed in a single moment. Hornblower inquires specifically about Bush, only to learn that his dearest friend is dead—and not only dead, but nothing is left behind of his body. Hornblower is devastated and ignores the signal victory the English have won—it is not

worth the loss of his devoted friend and comrade. Later in the day, Hornblower signs the court martial papers to hang the mutineers. Even so, he feels the sentence unnecessarily harsh for twenty men and he therefore appeals to the Duke to commute the sentences, rationalizing that such an act of clemency would not prejudice naval discipline. The Duke refuses. Hornblower angrily plans to send the Duke back to England and complain that he has been uncooperative. The Duke's advisors intervene to smooth the situation—the Duke commutes the sentences and remains in Le Havre. Hornblower feels joy at saving the lives of twenty men, but, still, Bush is dead. The loss weighs heavily on him.

Chapters 11, 12, and 13 Analysis

Hornblower's appointment to mayor of Le Havre seems a normal enough result of his intervention in the localized rebellion—but it takes him by surprise. He is quickly mired in endless administrative trivia and finds the daily routine irritating and unrewarding. This period of Hornblower's life is atypical of the military action in which he typically excels, and although he is a competent administrator, he is an uninspiring government leader. The Duke's arrival merely complicates Hornblower's life.

The French response to Le Havre's revolt is slow but inevitable. A large siege train gathers upriver. In events described in a previous novel, Hornblower had experienced a protracted French siege of the Russian city of Riga. He does not look forward to repeating the experience. He realizes that, short of something miraculous, Le Havre will be recaptured with great loss of life and hardship. His plan is to forestall, or at least delay, this eventuality. Bush takes soldiers upriver on an amphibious attack of the assembling siege forces. Because the French are so used to land combat, they have a blind eye for water transport of troops. Hornblower, the consummate naval officer, has used this to advantage before and again uses it to advantage at the present. Bush does indeed take the French forces by surprise, but in a tragic accident, the main French magazine is detonated and the explosion kills most of the English force, including Bush, who is vaporized. The explosion also utterly destroys the French siege train and thus spares Le Havre from the horrors of prolonged siege. Hornblower's early fretting about Bush's safety heavily foreshadows Bush's death.

The final action in this segment of the narrative concerns Hornblower's intrigue to save twenty English mutineers from hanging. He realizes that any personal action or official action to commute their death sentence would prejudice discipline in the wider British fleet—if some mutineers are forgiven, certainly future mutineers would expect the same. He therefore appeals to the Duke to commute the sentences, reasoning that the celebration of the return of some of France to the Bourbons should allow for clemency that would not be expected to be repeated. The Duke's refusal shows how far Hornblower's egalitarian ideals are from the politics of the era. Hornblower intrigues further, however, and secures the pardons.

Chapters 14, 15, and 16

Chapters 14, 15, and 16 Summary

The Duchess, Marie Thérèse, wife of the Duke d'Angoulême, arrives in Le Havre. Various ceremonial celebrations are executed upon her arrival. The Duchess is remarkably forward in greeting Hornblower and seems to harbor a surprise for him—indeed she does, and at an early moment, she presents Barbara. Hornblower is entirely unaware of his wife's presence and is as shocked as he is hesitantly pleased. Richard remains at home, but Barbara plans to remain in Le Havre. Over the next several days, political functions and diversions are held—Hornblower finds them irritating and meaningless, but Barbara revels in the atmosphere of privilege. Then arrives the news that Bonaparte has suffered a major setback at Soissons; the date being March of 1814. Throughout all the festivities and official functions, a strange coldness develops between Hornblower and Barbara—he ultimately decides that it is improper and deleterious for a serving military man to have his wife close at hand. Although the distance between them is primarily of Hornblower's manufacture, he mistakenly blames Barbara for the coldness in the relationship.

As the weeks go by, a large militia arrives to bolster the defenses of Le Havre and also to commence a limited offensive in the area. The militia is of course largely a disorganized rabble, without discipline. They cause much contention with the local populace. Hornblower and his military advisors plan an advance upon Rouen along the route of the Seine River. As the plan begins to take shape, news arrives that in fact the French military has completely abandoned Rouen. The militia quickly advances upon the news and finds no resistance upon the way. Clearly, Napoleon's military force is rapidly dwindling away. Hornblower plans a theatrical entrance into Rouen and he causes Porta Coeli to embark the Duke and his entourage and then sails the brig up the Seine River and into Rouen. Handling the ship up river proves difficult, but Freeman is up to the task. At Rouen, however, there is no enthusiastic greeting. Instead, Hornblower goes ashore alone, meets with the mayor, and demands an immediate welcome of the Duke and a declaration that the town is for King Louis. Although the mayor finds it a bitter pill, he realizes there is no viable option and he causes the town to join the Le Havre revolt. Several days later, the news arrives of Blücher's defeat of Napoleon in a series of engagements—in fact, Blücher has captured Paris. Napoleon has abdicated—it is peace, April, 1814. Hornblower and Barbara rejoice, even though their relationship has grown distant.

Hornblower remains in France as an administrator for several weeks. During this time he receives notice from home that his signal duty has resulted in elevation to the peerage. Lord Hornblower of Smallbridge is now a baron of the United Kingdom. He feels a sense of, finally, accomplishment but also feels squeamish about entering a social sphere in which he has always been uncomfortable. With Barbara, he attends various functions of state. At one gala event, Hornblower is stunned to meet Lucien Antoine Hector Savinien de Ladon, Comte de Graçay, and Mademoiselle Marie la

Vicomtesse de Graçay. Hornblower knows them both intimately—indeed, Marie is a former lover—from a time when he was an escaped prisoner of war in France. The meeting is both pleasant but awkward and Hornblower introduces Barbara to the count and Marie. For many days, the social events continue. He vituperates the society but Barbara revels in it with enthusiasm—thus, the coldness and distance in their relationship continues to increase. A major Congress is announced in Vienna; the Vienna Congress will determine the disposition of post-war Europe. Barbara is invited to attend the Vienna Congress as a hostess for England, and she accepts with enthusiasm. Hornblower refuses to attend her, however. The coldness that has evolved in their relationship thus leads to an informal rupture; Barbara goes to Vienna for an extended period, and Hornblower returns to England, where he lives with his child Richard at Smallbridge.

Chapters 14, 15, and 16 Analysis

These chapters bridge Hornblower's participation in the rebellion of Le Havre to the concluding segment of the novel. Like earlier chapters, these chapters are set on land in France where Hornblower's time is largely consumed by administrative minutia. Against expectations, the revolt at Le Havre not only persists but escapes retaliation from the French government of Napoleon. As the rebellion gains momentum, it spreads. Faced with imminent defeat, Napoleon strips all forces from the area, and thus the Bourbon revolution claims major cities such as Rouen with little resistance. Several events described in the chapters are historical events, and thus these segments of the novel can be easily dated to even months within 1814.

Early in this portion of the narrative, Hornblower is thrown off base by the unannounced arrival of Barbara. Clearly, the English consider the Le Havre situation to be well in hand, and Barbara visits her husband. He is of course pleased, but he is also unable to simultaneously play the dual roles of local potentate and doting husband. Eventually he comes to erroneously blame Barbara for interfering with his perceived duty and reacts by pushing her away. Their estrangement becomes fairly serious over the weeks as Hornblower holds Barbara at a distance and, curiously, blames her for their relationship problems. In any event, Barbara turns to the social life around her and is constantly engaged in attending social and political functions, which she enjoys as much as Hornblower detests.

The chapter fifteen description of the sailing of Porta Coeli from Le Havre to Rouen upon the Seine River is technical and instructive. The author is clearly a master of sailing processes and terminology and the tack-by-tack description of difficult evolutions is engaging, accurate, and enjoyable. It is indeed the best writing in the entire novel, and for at least his one brief interval between politics, Hornblower is again happy and in his element.

Napoleon's defeat and abdication stuns Hornblower and indeed the world. For his entire adult life, Hornblower has known nothing but war. And now, finally, the war ends. He doesn't know how to react, nor does anyone else. Of course there is happiness that the

slaughter has ended, but at the same time Hornblower feels displaced and foggy about the future. His long years of service are rewarded with his elevation to the peerage. Now as Lord Hornblower, Barbara derives her title through her husband rather than, as previously, her father. These facts are all pleasant to Hornblower, but not overly significant. In fact, Brown's immediate and unfailing adoption of "Lord" when addressing Hornblower is the most notable result of the advance. The Congress of Vienna, which Barbara attends, was a historical event running from November of 1814, to June of 1815. Barbara's function as an English hostess is not official, but is nevertheless critical to England's interests. Hornblower's refusal to attend is obviously within character, particularly so because he feels so diffident about his relationship with Barbara.

Chapters 17 and 18

Chapters 17 and 18 Summary

Hornblower returns to England but grows restless after two months—the Congress of Vienna drags interminably on. Hornblower decides to return to France and visit his old friend, the Comte de Graçay, and his old lover, the Comte's daughter-in-law Marie. Hornblower enlists Brown's service for the long trip, and throughout the preparations and voyage Brown seems unusually animated. Previously, Hornblower and Brown had both been fugitives as prisoners of war and had both been sheltered from Napoleon's police and agents, along with Bush, by the Comte at his estate. During that time they had both gained a certain fluency in French. On the voyage Hornblower introspects about his motivation; although he will not admit it directly, he knows that his principle motivation in the voyage is to once again engage the lovely Marie in sexual intercourse.

Hornblower and Brown arrive at the Château of Graçay and receive a warm welcome. Hornblower attends to the Comte and Marie, while Brown vanishes into the society of the servants. Hornblower and the Comte, with Marie, enjoy a prolonged evening of talk, card-playing, and company. Late in the evening they separate to their respective quarters; within moments Hornblower subtly and secretly makes his way to Marie's bedroom and they have a sexual reunion. This situation persists for several months.

After many days, Brown approaches Hornblower in an uncharacteristically abashed manner. Brown announces his desire to marry Annette, a local girl. Brown has saved considerable prize money and wages, obtained while serving with Hornblower, and states vague plans of opening an establishment in perhaps Rome. Hornblower wholeheartedly gives permission for the union, as later does the Comte. Marie and Hornblower find pleasure in the atmosphere of excitement as the wedding is planned, readied, and carried off. Both Hornblower and the Comte donate financially to ensure the wedding is a gala affair. On the evening of the wedding, after the festivities, the Comte confides in Hornblower that strange news is afoot—rumors circulate that Napoleon has returned to France and has gained power once more. Both of the men are stunned at the unhappy news. Over the next few days the news and rumors continue to circulate. First, Napoleon is said to have suffered setbacks, then advances. The weather makes flight for Hornblower very difficult, and in any case Napoleon's triumph is uncertain. Then comes the fateful news that Napoleon has seized absolute control and enforced a new draft of soldiers—Hornblower and Brown are fugitives, and the Comte and Marie are in danger also.

Hornblower, Brown, the Comte, Marie, and Brown's bride Annette hastily pack meager necessities and ride away for the closest city of Nevers, where they are surprised to see a white Bourbon flag still displayed. They enter the city and are greeted by the Duchess—she tells them that large regions of Southern France have declared for the King and against Napoleon. She appoints the Comte as the Lieutenant-General of the King in the Nivernais; Hornblower refers to the process as an uprising and thereby draws the

disdain of the Duchess, who considers her husband the only legitimate political authority. After an emotional exchange, Hornblower decides he must remain with the Comte and assist him to lead the local defense against Napoleon—as Hornblower thinks, "[t]he campaign of the Upper Loire was begun" (p. 273).

Chapters 17 and 18 Analysis

These two chapters make the final major transition during the often-rough and episodic narrative. The novel starts with Hornblower suppressing a mutiny, moves to the rebellion of Le Havre and Hornblower's involvement in it, then to the estrangement of Hornblower and Barbara, and finally to the Château of Graçay, where Hornblower engages in a prolonged and disgraceful extramarital affair. The action has been set against the dramatic backdrop of Napoleon's eventual defeat and abdication; but as history records, the April, 1814 unconditional abdication of Napoleon was followed by his return to power at the end of March of 1815. Hornblower and Brown are thus once again wanted fugitives and the Comte is once again in danger for harboring fugitives and being unsympathetic to Napoleon's cause. Hornblower, once a Knight of the Order of the Bath, has become a Baron of the United Kingdom—a Lord. Politically and socially, Barbara and Hornblower are at the pinnacle of success; personally, their interpersonal relationship has fallen apart.

As Hornblower reflects throughout the central portion of the novel, he has been shaped by decades of war into a naval officer. He feels at home only on the tumbling deck of a warship, in the terrible isolation of command, and with the simple rough fare of the British navy. Life without conflict, happenstance, and caprice is insipid to him. Society, politics, and intrigue are irritants. Stripped of European conflict, Hornblower is left largely without a tenable function in life. As there is no exterior turmoil or conflict, Hornblower creates his own internal conflict. His entire life he has dreamed of retiring to a life of ease with Barbara—when that presents, he flees from it and commences upon a course of personal dissipation and social ruin. It is interesting to note that Hornblower's relationship with Marie causes Hornblower to feel a deep foreboding about Marie's future; this foreboding is in fact narrative foreshadowing of Marie's death in chapter twenty.

Much of the action in these two chapters is fully understood only in light of a previous volume in the series of novels. At one point, Hornblower's ship had been destroyed and his command captured. He, Bush, Brown, and others had been imprisoned; Bush grievously wounded by the loss of a foot. Hornblower and Bush were then transported towards Paris to be executed as war criminals—Brown, previously a coxswain, had attended as a personal servant. En route they had escaped and taken refuge with the sympathetic Comte. Hornblower, Bush, and Comte had become fast friends during their several-months' hiding. Hornblower and Marie had conducted a sexual liaison, though Hornblower was married at the time. Unbeknownst to Hornblower, Brown had also become engaged with one of the local working class. Finally, spring allowed their escape back to England. During the stay, Hornblower and Brown had become proficient in French. These details are provided in the present novel but in a scattered way. Thus,

Hornblower's return to the Comte's house is understandable in that he seeks to return to old friends and an old lover. Brown's strange optimism upon undertaking the trip is also understandable—he, too, is returning to old friends and an old love interest.

The primary plot development at this point of the novel concerns Napoleon's historic return to power. Unfortunately for Hornblower, he happens to be in France at the time. Had he remained in England or traveled to Vienna with Barbara, his future would have been, clearly, an immediate return to command of a ship or flotilla engaged in wartime activities. On land, however, his fate will be far different. It is fairly uncharacteristic for the resolute Hornblower to delay an immediate departure for England upon hearing the news. Perhaps his sexual affair with Marie holds more sway over him than he readily admits. In any case, he delays until successful flight is nearly impossible. It is then that news arrives that not only are the rumors true, but Napoleon is firmly in command of France's armies and central government. After a period of brief confusion, the Comte is appointed the military power of the region and Hornblower agrees to serve as his advisor. Thus, Hornblower is firmly embroiled in the upper Loire's rejection of Napoleon. His participation in this campaign rounds on the few remaining chapters of the novel.

Chapters 19 and 20

Chapters 19 and 20 Summary

The rejection of Napoleon comes only at a high price—within days, the Comte and his followers are fugitives, surviving only by hiding and moving in stealth. In effect, they fight a losing guerrilla war against Napoleon's forces, which have been sent to obliterate them. After only a few weeks, the Comte's forces dwindle through desertion to scarcely more than a score of individuals. Placards posted about invite the Comte's followers to clemency if they will desert the hopeless cause—clemency for all, that is, except Hornblower, Brown, the Comte, and Marie. Even the few loyal followers are exhausted, starving, and destitute. The small party makes a prolonged forced march through hostile territory to gain a virtually unknown river crossing which promises a brief respite. However, rains swell the river so that when it is ultimately reached, the crossing is unusable. The small party thus finds itself cornered against the river and bound on all sides by thousands of professional soldiers. Discipline breaks down with morale and everyone seems instinctively to realize the end has come. The invitation to clemency seems irresistibly appealing; oddly, Hornblower notes in the narrative that the final day of the insurgent effort is Sunday, June 18, 1815. Hornblower gathers the few men and women left and dismisses them, urging them to accept the offer of clemency and thus save their own lives. Hornblower, Brown, the Comte, and Marie then set off alone as true fugitives. Brown briefly argues that his wife, Annette, should accompany the group, but Hornblower demands that he leave her and thus give her a chance at living. Brown reluctantly agrees. The four hapless fugitives then continue a forced march through a driving rain.

The party nears collapse and their horses begin to fail. Realizing that their only chance to escape capture and execution lies with crossing the river, they begin to search for a boat. They arrive at a remote homestead and meet the owner—he is not immediately hostile but will not provide much assistance. His boat has been wrecked by the soldiers, but Hornblower and Brown set about fixing the boat enough to afford a single river crossing. Their work, however, is interrupted after only about an hour by the arrival of French soldiers. Faced with interrogation, the local farmer gives them up. Within moments, Hornblower and his associates are surrounded by French soldiers and pinned down amidst a tumble of rocks.

For half an hour the French troops continue to arrive and surround the party. Then they begin a slow advance and the two groups exchange gunfire. After a few French soldiers are shot, a French officer advances under flag of truce and offers a guarantee of safety if they will surrender. Hornblower declines and the gunfire is again commenced. Marie is shot in the leg and begins to rapidly bleed out. Hornblower forgets everything and attempts, unsuccessfully, to staunch her bleeding. As the French charge into the position, Hornblower realizes Marie is dead—she has bled to death in his arms. Hornblower is struck unconscious, nearly insensate already with grief. Likewise, Brown and the Comte are struck down by rifle butts. Hornblower, Brown, and the Comte are all

packed off like common criminals and are transported on horseback to a nearby stockade.

The men are brought before the local magistrate, who flatly states that Hornblower has been previously found guilty of capital war crimes and that the Comte has been previously found guilty of treason. The men are thus to be shot the next morning. Hornblower boldly asserts that Brown is a British seaman serving under direct orders and must thus be accorded the treatment of a prisoner of war. For the moment, at least, it appears that Brown will not be executed. The men are then cast into a dungeon. Hornblower demands clean clothing and personal toiletries. After a shave and change of clothes, he feels better, but strangely detached. He wonders what will become of his English friends, and wonders how his final actions will be interpreted by Barbara and Richard. Likewise, he feels a great remorse about Marie's death. Hornblower spends the night in an exhausted and tumultuous frame of mind; when the dawn arrives, he dreads the inevitability of a firing squad. When finally summoned, however, he is informed that Napoleon has suffered a tremendous defeat at the hand of Wellington—Barbara's brother and Hornblower's brother-in-law—and Blücher. Because of this defeat, Napoleon is expected shortly to again abdicate and, thus, the local magistrate has deemed it inadvisable to carry out the execution. Hornblower will shortly be released to return to England, Barbara, and Richard.

Chapters 19 and 20 Analysis

The novel concludes with Napoleon's second downfall. History records that after abdicating in April of 1814, Napoleon was banished to an island where he lived for several months. He returned to France in March of 1815, and regained national control within a few days when the army recognized him as the emperor. He ruled for what is often referred to as "100 days" before suffering a catastrophic defeat at Waterloo. Wellington was as historical person, but Barbara—and of course Hornblower—are fictional components of the narrative. It is indeed an interesting narrative component, one which weaves historical events into the lives of fictional characters. When Hornblower and the Comte's small guerrilla band reach the river and find it impossible to cross, they basically give up all hope of success. Hornblower then dismisses the men and few women and continues on with only the Comte, Brown, and Marie. He oddly notes in the narrative the date of June 18, 1815—this seemingly insignificant detail allows the informed reader to realize that, simultaneous with the disbanding of the Comte's guerilla forces, Napoleon is suffering a catastrophic defeat at Waterloo. Then, two days later, when Hornblower faces a firing squad, news of Napoleon's crushing defeat reaches the locale and Hornblower is spared death by a forward-looking local magistrate. Presumably, the Comte will return to his castle and resume his local reign; Brown will be free to reunited with Annette and pursue their joint life; and Hornblower will return to England. Only Marie has paid the ultimate price.

The guerrilla activity of the Comte and Hornblower does not receive detail in the narrative. For about a three-month period they prosecute a war against Napoleon by causing upheaval and social dissent. Their primary goal is to cause Napoleon to send

troops to suppress or capture them, thus removing those troops from front-line combat in significant theaters. In this they are entirely successful, for thousands of troops are organized to search for them; had they not been present, these troops presumably would have been at Waterloo and may have turned the tide of battle. In this they are successful. At first, the Comte probably expects more success, but Hornblower certainly does not. In an unusual moment of subtle humor for the series of novels, the character "old Fermiac" is presented as a strange blend of patriotism, senescence, and loyalty. His shout of "In the name of God! I come with you now" (p. 287) is memorable. It is also noteworthy that nearly all of the action in the novel's concluding several chapters is conducted in the French language.

In modern terms, the final capture seems unlikely. The French soldiers rush across open ground and capture Hornblower, Brown, and the Comte, subduing them with rifle butts. Recall, however, that the men are armed with muzzle-loading weapons capable of only short-range accuracy and perhaps only three shots per minute due to complicated reloading. Thus, the French have only to wait for a discharge before being assured of nearly absolute safety during the final rush. Additionally, Hornblower was combat-ineffective at the final moment due to Marie's death. All in all, Hornblower, Brown, the Comte, and Marie make a grand final stand and the French obtain their capture only at a high price. The final lengthy introspection of Lord Hornblower as he faces imminent death is strongly in character and epitomizes the nature of the character.

Characters

Lord Horatio Hornblower

Captain Horatio Hornblower is a captain and commodore in the British Navy during the Napoleonic wars. During the time of the novel he is thirty-eight to thirty-nine years old; he is very educated and joined the naval service fairly late at the age of about seventeen. He estimates he has spent only several months ashore during his decades of naval service. Hornblower is an exceptional navigator, captain, and seaman, although he is nervous and constantly plagued by internalized self-doubt. He regards himself as cowardly and dishonest, yet all who know him regard him in exactly the opposite way. His powerful drive to unqualified success masks his internal turmoil in icy reserve and even his closest friends barely know him. An introspective and lonely man, Hornblower is married to Barbara and has one surviving child—Richard—from a previous wife who died during childbirth. Two other children died of smallpox.

Hornblower is entirely tone deaf and finds music irritating and incomprehensible. Although he speaks French and Spanish with fluency, his tone-deafness ensures he speaks them both with a heavy accent. He is somewhat prone to seasickness, abhors many of the normal usages of naval life, declines strict discipline achieved through flogging, and preferentially passes his time in isolation, either reading or occasionally playing whist. He enjoys daily bathing—an unusual practice which excites comments. Hornblower's lengthy previous career is mentioned casually during several scenes in the novel; he is accomplished and distinguished. He has been, on two occasions, a prisoner of war—once in Spain and once, briefly, in France. Hornblower expects much from his subordinates and when occasion demands it is a relentless taskmaster. His leadership qualities are grounded in the reality of always expecting more from himself than he does from his subordinates. He enjoys great popularity among his subordinates, and the English public views his exploits as nearly legendary. He is described physically in only vague terms—of apparently average height and weight, he finds his bulging middle and thinning hair unacceptable. His fingers are long and apparently delicate, though he considers them bony.

Hornblower is the dominant figure throughout the novel—even more so than in other volumes of the series. Indeed, the narrative structure can be viewed as primarily an in-depth and prolonged characterization of Hornblower as he moves through a difficult transition in his life from active-duty captain to decorated civilian. For Hornblower, the transition is as difficult as it is unwelcome.

Lord St. Vincent

Lord St. Vincent appears in the opening sequences of the novel, when he attends church alongside Hornblower and dozens of other naval dignitaries. Dressed in his resplendent clothing as a Knight of the Bath, Lord St. Vincent cuts an impressive figure

regardless of his age and gout. He interrupts the church service upon receiving news of the mutiny of Flame and directly seeks out Hornblower to quell the mutiny. Lord St. Vincent gives Hornblower a wide degree of personal latitude in dealing with the mutiny. After starting off the novel's events, Lord St. Vincent fades into the background and becomes a minor character. It is interesting to note that Lord St. Vincent is a lightly fictionalized version of the historic Lord St. Vincent, so-named due to a great naval victory under his command.

Lieutenant Freeman

Freeman, captain of Porta Coeli, is square, stocky, and swarthy. He wears his dark hair long and in ringlets, belying his part-Gypsy heritage. Freeman is a capable captain, and is intimately familiar with the channel coastal waters. Hornblower comes to rely heavily upon Freeman's seamanship early in the novel. Freeman displays an unusual characteristic for a Royal Navy captain when he predicts Hornblower's future by using a pack of cards. After the capture of Flame, Freeman becomes a minor character during Hornblower's governance in Le Havre, and thereafter vanishes from the narrative. However, in the early portions of the novel, Freeman is the closest approach to friendship enjoyed by Hornblower.

Brown

Brown is Hornblower's servant, though rated a coxswain. He joined Hornblower's personal entourage from the general crew rather through chance in a previous volume of the series. He speaks native English but has learned to speak French with a passable accent during events described in a previous volume of the series. He is in his mid-twenties, very powerfully built, and an intelligent man who is more than capable at virtually everything—a quality which Hornblower grudgingly admires, subtly envies, and simultaneously finds irritating. Brown has the peculiar mix of salty sailor, capable domestic, and masculinity which makes him able to wholly support Hornblower while still remaining virtually entirely in the background. Brown is present throughout the novel—the only character so omnipresent save Hornblower—but is usually in the background and seldom becomes a narrative focus. He heroically defends Hornblower during the boarding of Flame, works as a capable domestic servant free of intrigue during the period of revolt in Le Havre, and accompanies Hornblower home to England and subsequently back to France. Hornblower finds Brown's enthusiasm about returning to France peculiar until, several months after arrival, Brown requests permission to marry Annette, a local French girl. Brown then follows Hornblower throughout the entire guerrilla campaign and is captured with Hornblower at the novel's conclusion. Brown is an entirely likable character and adds a touch of humanity and believability to a novel otherwise dominated by Hornblower's rather sterile life.

Captain William Bush

Bush is Hornblower's particular friend and the only man in the entire novel, aside from perhaps the Comte, with whom Hornblower could be said to be intimate. Bush and Hornblower served together as lieutenants before Hornblower was appointed captain, whereupon Bush served as Hornblower's first lieutenant on numerous adventures. Due to Hornblower's influence and recommendation, Bush was advanced to captain in his own right. As captain, Bush continued as Hornblower's right-hand-man after Hornblower's appointment as commodore.

Bush is physically imposing and powerfully built. He possesses a nearly incredible constitution and withstands weather, sleeplessness, and combat stress with seemingly no ill effects. He has spent nearly his entire life aboard ship and is a consummate sailor and naval warrior. His face is craggy and masculine and his only physical defect is a missing foot—lost while serving as a lieutenant under Hornblower's command. Bush seems disinterested in relationships with women and spends most of his pay supporting some sisters in England. Aside from warfare and the sea, he has little interest in anything else except perhaps a good meal. He is a fully capable but unimaginative captain, deficient in mathematical skills and incapable of learning French, but fierce in combat and nearly an unequally seaman. Hornblower has forced him to become a competent, if uninspired, card player. In many respects, Bush is the man Hornblower aspires to be—entirely and utterly devoid of fear, free of self-criticism, capable of enjoying dirty weather and frightful combat, free of any maudlin attachments, and physically perfect. Bush's lack of imagination and mental aptitude makes him the perfect foil for Hornblower—indeed, the two men compliment each other nearly completely.

Bush appears in the narrative when he first joins Hornblower's command just prior to the capture of Le Havre. He subsequently performs his duties to perfection for several weeks before leading a surprise attack up river to Caudebec, where English forces strike a blow at the assembling French siege train. Bush's party, tasked with destroying the French magazine and cannon, somehow accidentally detonates the magazine prematurely and Bush, with hundreds of sailors, dies instantly in a gigantic explosion which is felt for miles around. Needless to say, Hornblower is devastated by the loss of Bush—even more so because Bush's body vanishes entirely within the explosion. When Hornblower later passes through Cuadebec, he views the wrecked town and hopes vaguely that it will remain forever in ruins as a penance for the loss of Bush.

Lieutenant Augustine Chadwick

Chadwick is captain of Flame both before and after the mutiny aboard that brig. Years previous to the novel, Hornblower served with Chadwick as a midshipman and knows Chadwick to be fairly incompetent and possessed of a vicious streak. When Hornblower learns of mutiny aboard Flame, he is hardly surprised and rather sympathizes with the mutineers as he imagines the living hell which service under a captain such as Chadwick likely entails. Nevertheless, after capturing Flame, Hornblower puts Chadwick

back in temporary command—the only possible action due to naval etiquette. Chadwick, angry but abashed, probably realizes his career is over and makes virtually no statement beyond glowering at Hornblower. Chadwick represents the worst of the Royal naval tradition and is otherwise a minor and forgettable character.

Nathaniel Sweet

Sweet, officially bosun's mate, is the ringleader of the mutiny aboard Flame. Lord St. Vincent notes that of the entire crew, Sweet is the only person with any record of prior trouble—having once been dismissed from service for drinking. Sweet's mark, or signature, along with Henry Wilson's and William Owen's, is one of the few named marks on the mutineer's written demands, though Lord St. Vincent comments that nearly the entire crew has made a mark upon the document. Sweet is an older man—though his age is unspecified, he is of long service and his hair is white and long.

When Hornblower first boards Flame, Sweet arrogantly and defiantly presents himself as captain but will not admit to having participated in any mutiny—clearly an untenable position for Hornblower to commence any sort of negotiation. Sweet appears collected and presents himself as firmly in control, yet he refuses to allow Hornblower to address the crew at large, which is surely a sign of weakness. In any event, Sweet refuses to bargain in any meaningful way, which fairly seals his doom. He has already been in contact with the French, which must be seen as abject treason.

After Hornblower captures Flame by boarding, Sweet jumps overboard and swims toward a French ship. Hornblower takes a musket, makes careful aim, and shoots Sweet in the back as he swims. Saddened but determined, Hornblower watches Sweet's whirling white hair sink into a growing splotch of red. The English newspapers make much propaganda about Sweet's death at Hornblower's hand. After the recapture of Flame, Sweet is hardly mentioned again in the narrative. He represents the extremities to which men might be driven under the harsh tyranny possible on a British warship of the period.

Lucien Antoine Hector Savinien de Ladon, Comte de Graçay

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

During events alluded to in the novel but well-developed in a previous volume of the series, the Comte harbored Hornblower, Bush, and Brown when they were fugitives and escaped prisoners of war. They remained in his care for several months while Bush recovered from the loss of his foot and Brown and Bush constructed a boat with which the three men made good their eventual escape. During this time, Hornblower and the Comte became fast and intimate friends; the relationship having the additional flavor of a sort of father-son relationship. The two men, along with Bush and Marie, the Comte's widowed daughter-in-law, enjoy playing cards and holding conversation.

As described in the novel, after the end of the war, the death of Bush, and the loss of Barbara's intimacy, Hornblower returns to the Comte's castle to seek refuge and support from his old friend. As is only to be expected, the Comte welcomes Hornblower as a returning friend and allows him exceptional access to his house. When Napoleon then returns to power, the Comte accepts a grandiloquent appointment from the Duchess d'Angoulême as the Lieutenant-General of the King in the Nivernais. In actuality, this means his is the figurative leader of the anti-Napoleonic forces of the region; these forces never amount to more than a symbolic guerrilla force. In the latter chapters of the novel, the Comte leads a dwindling band of guerrilla fighters with the primary objective of holding thousands of French soldiers in the area on a prolonged search. Eventually, the Comte is captured and sentenced to death for treason. The execution is not carried out, however, because news arrives of Napoleon's catastrophic defeat at Waterloo. The Comte is a sympathetic character who is surprisingly under-developed; his presence runs throughout the latter third of the narrative and lends a stability to Hornblower, which is much needed and appreciated.

Mademoiselle Marie la Vicomtesse de Graçay

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

During events alluded to in the novel but well-developed in a previous volume of the series, the Comte harbored Hornblower, Bush, and Brown when they were fugitives and escaped prisoners of war. They remained in his care for several months while Bush recovered from the loss of his foot and Brown and Bush constructed a boat with which the three men made good their eventual escape. During this time, Hornblower and Marie became secret lovers and enjoyed a sexual relationship for several months. Although Marie deeply loves Hornblower, she is intelligent enough to realize that her

love is not reciprocated—Hornblower is a man incapable of wholehearted devotion to any woman.

As described in the novel, after the end of the war, the death of Bush, and the loss of Barbara's intimacy, Hornblower returns to the Comte's castle to seek refuge and support from his old lover. When Napoleon then returns to power, the Comte accepts a grandiloquent appointment from the Duchess d'Angoulême as the Lieutenant-General of the King in the Nivernais and Marie is declared a traitor to France. She accompanies the Comte throughout his guerrilla activities. Eventually, Marie is killed by gunfire during the final capture of Hornblower, the Comte, and Brown. Marie is shot through the leg and bleeds to death in Hornblower's arms within moments of being shot. Her body, along with a few French soldiers, is nearly discarded into an unmarked rural grave. Marie's death leaves Hornblower depressed and, momentarily, nearly catatonic.

Lady Barbara Hornblower

Lady Barbara Hornblower née Wellesley is the aristocratic younger sister of two militarily and politically successful brothers. Her oldest brother, Wellington, is a lightly fictionalized character based upon a historic person of great importance. She comes from an established, respected, and powerful British family and has spent considerable time in India and is familiar with the practices of the sea, though not with military ships and actions. She has known Hornblower for years and the two were quickly attracted to each other upon first meeting. Both have been previously married and widowed. Wellesley is described as attractive but not overly pretty. She has brilliant white teeth, long fingers, and a highly arched nose. She has a willowy and graceful figure, however, and a youthful intensity and a joy of life which is infectious. Highly educated, she demonstrates a natural intelligence and a gift for putting others at ease.

She is keenly insightful and easily influences men, moving among them with a casual confidence and enjoying easy successes among them. Her social ability and natural grace quickly win the affection of most. Barbara joins Hornblower after the situation at Le Havre becomes generally safe—her arrival is a surprise. Hornblower quickly sours on the idea of having Barbara present to complicate his life as an active military officer. Hornblower is simply unable to adapt to the dual role of husband and commander. By the time Napoleon abdicates, the relationship between Hornblower and Barbara has grown distant and cold. Barbara receives an important but unofficial political appointment to act as the English hostess at the critical Congress of Vienna—she accepts, though Hornblower refuses to accompany her. She travels to Vienna and essentially vanishes from the narrative while Hornblower pursues an extramarital affair with a past lover. Barbara's eventual disposition toward Hornblower is not considered in the text.

Objects/Places

Flame

Flame is a brig, or two-masted ship of slight draft and fairly light tonnage. She is flush-decked with a single gun deck sporting sixteen carronades. Two long guns are mounted as bow chasers. All aspects of the ship's design focus on enabling her to carry a maximum weight of weapons in a vessel of shallow draft. Comfort is entirely sacrificed to efficiency. Prior to the opening of the novel, Flame's crew has conducted a mutiny against the sadistic Captain Chadwick. Hornblower is sent out to capture Flame and suppress the mutiny—in this, he is remarkably successful. After being retaken, Flame plays only a minor role in the novel.

Porta Coeli

Porta Coeli, like Flame, is a brig, or two-masted ship of slight draft and fairly light tonnage. She is flush-decked and has a single gun deck, about five feet high. The lack of a quarterdeck initially throws Hornblower off his stride—he is used to pacing the quarterdeck away from the hands; on this ship, no such comfort affords. Hornblower's cabin, the most-spacious cabin aboard, measures only 6' x 6' x 4'10" in height. The crew's compartment is about the same height and sleeps about fifty men. The ship bears sixteen carronades and two long guns as bow chasers. Her name translates as "Gate of Heaven" and she is named for a destroyed Spanish privateer of redoubtable bravery; such naming, at the time, offered honors to the bravery of the enemy ship. The crew generally refers to the ship as the "Silly Porter", an obvious corruption of her given name.

Chassee-marée (Bonne Celestine)

During a general ship melee, several French gunboats put out from Le Havre to engage Flame. The largest of these gunboats is a French vessel of a type known as a chassee-marée, or tide-chaser. 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 dangerous ships within their sphere of influence. The chassee-marée, Bonne Celestine, is captured by Hornblower by boarding. Later, the ship is returned to Le Havre under the control of Lebrun, who promises a rebellion against Napoleon.

French West Indiaman (Caryatide)

Indiaman was the colloquial name for ships traveling from the Far East, usually laden with rich stores of food, spices, or other marketable commodities. Early in the novel, Hornblower captures a French West Indiaman—that is, a merchant ship returning from

the West Indies—named Caryatide. The prize is returned to England where it is sold, fetching Hornblower and his crew some welcome prize money.

Carronades

A carronade was a light, short, smoothbore cannon used by the British Navy until about 1860. They were designed as short-range cannons. Light-weight and devoid of many of the features of long guns, carronades were devastating at short ranges but notoriously inaccurate beyond pistol-shot ranges. Porta Coeli and Flame are each fitted with sixteen carronades as their primary armament. A carronade weighed approximately one-fourth as much as a long gun, throwing an equal weight of metal.

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—several 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 enormous flocks of splinters to spall 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.

Hornblower's Silk Scarf

Upon Hornblower's first days at sea in the novel he wears a silk scarf—a gift from Barbara, embroidered by her. It is simply a square of silk but Hornblower estimates its worth at considerably more than any other single possession. During his early seasickness in dirty weather, the scarf keeps Hornblower warm and is a symbol of the strong relationship he enjoys with Barbara. The scarf is not mentioned again in the novel—symbolic of the sad failure of their relationship.

Bourbons

The Bourbons, more properly the House of Bourbon, was an important European royal house throughout the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries. King Louis, a Bourbon, ruled France until the French Revolution unseated him. Thus, the Bourbon cause behind which Hornblower throws his energy is a conservative, pro-King faction which stands opposed to Napoleon's reign. After Napoleon's defeat, the Bourbon kings were again established in France for several years. Within the novel, the Duke and Duchess of d'Angoulême represent the official Bourbon royalty and the Comte supports the Bourbon cause.

Le Havre

Le Havre is a French city and port of some import during the period described by the novel. It is located on the estuary of the Seine River. It is somewhat isolated of access by land and, due to the success of the English blockage, has suffered financially during the Napoleonic wars. For this reason, Le Havre is ready to support the Bourbon dynasty if England will grant trade concessions. The city becomes important in the novel when it successfully revolts from Napoleon's rule and becomes the focus of a local rebellion, which is ultimately successful.

Château of Graçay

The Château of Graçay is a smallish castle in the rural French countryside near Nevers and on the upper banks of the Loire River. It is the hereditary home of the Comte of Graçay, Hornblower's close friend. After Napoleon abdicates, Hornblower travels to the Château of Graçay where he is made a sudden fugitive by Napoleon's incredible return to power. The castle is described in some detail in several scenes of the novel; it is virtually the only setting ashore where Hornblower finds a measure of happiness.

Themes

Coming Home from War

Hornblower, by any standard the dominant character in the narrative, makes several transitions between peaceful life and life at war. Upon the novel's opening, he is at home attending church services during a time of war. As expected, within a few hours he is aboard a military ship heading into probable combat. After a brief but intense period of conflict, Hornblower again goes ashore—this time as a mayor of a French city which has defected from Napoleon's France. Here, Hornblower is joined by his wife and faces the daunting task of playing the dual role of husband and military commander. Finally, the war ends and Hornblower goes home—but only briefly, as he finds life at home during a time of peace untenable. Shortly thereafter, he is back in France, seeking an extramarital affair. Once again, war breaks out and Hornblower is immersed in his role as leader of combat troops. After leading a guerrilla force for several weeks, he is captured and faces execution. The execution is not carried out, however, as news comes again of Napoleon's utter defeat at Waterloo.

Throughout these many transitions, Hornblower never has difficulty assuming the role of military commander. Even when facing the daunting task of reclaiming a mutinous ship, he proceeds quickly toward his goal, never straying from the path leading to success. Although plagued by internal doubts, he is always essentially correct in his analysis of military situations and combat soldiers. This capability evaporates nearly entirely, however, when he attempts to move into the role of civilian. Simply stated, twenty years of military life have rendered Hornblower unsuitable to idle as a country gentleman. He must have action, and he yearns for combat. The novel was originally published in 1946 at a time when many millions of men were returning from combat roles in World War II to resume their civilian lives. Like the fictional Hornblower, they often found the process of coming home from war difficult. The novel's preeminent success comes from the credible portrayal of Hornblower as "everyman" coming home from war.

Devoted to Duty

Hornblower, by any standard the dominant character in the narrative, is entirely devoted to his duty as a naval combatant 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 that the Flame mutineers' ultimate fate must be death in order to set an example of discipline throughout the navy. He accepts this even though, personally, he views the mutiny as understandable and feels the men were acting in self-preservation. Yet, the self must yield to duty. For this reason, Hornblower personally executes Nathaniel Sweet, the ringleader of the mutiny, as he attempts to escape to a French vessel. On the one hand

he sees Sweet as a victimized aged man; but his profound call to duty necessitates a swift and ultimate justice be served.

This theme is echoed by the other major characters in the novel, as well as by many minor characters. Lord St. Vincent has dedicated his life to duty; Freeman and Brown serve in their roles with distinction; Bush even gives his life in service to duty. Among civilian characters, the Comte and Marie sacrifice all for their patriotic duty to France while Barbara clearly enjoys performing her duty to England. Those characters that do not perform their duty are routinely despised by Hornblower—he finds Sweet and the other mutineers guilty of failure of duty. He even finds Lebrun to be odious because Lebrun's motivation is financial rather than honorable.

Military Adventure

The novel's principle setting is coastal France during a time of general 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 British Empire. As an officer of the Royal Navy, Hornblower's sworn and obvious duty is to foil the interests of the French and promote the security of England. He carries out his duty by utilizing the ships, interests, and men under his command in a variety of both standard and atypical methods.

The novel relates Hornblower's experiences during the years 1814 and 1815; although Hornblower's experience is fictional, it contains many historical elements and the various conflicts and combats described are derived from several historical accounts. The ships and weapons mentioned represent fictionalized objects of historically appropriate type. Some of the French and English individuals introduced in the novel are fictionalized versions of historical people. Most aspects of the novel are related to sea or coastal adventure; much of the action takes place at sea, or at least within cannon-shot of the sea, and even much of the action which takes place on land generally relates to the sea in some way.

The strength and popular appeal of the novel is undoubtedly due to the nature of nautical 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 and tactics, the text is presented in an accessible and friendly manner, allowing the reader to figuratively descend to deck-level and enjoy the excitement of days past.

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. A notable exception to the novel being constructed of direct action or dialogue concerns the scene in which Hornblower learns Bush has been killed—this entire event is related second-hand by a hapless survivor of the successful but costly attack at Caudebec. Further, it is related many, many hours after the action. This masterful technique allows the reader, like Hornblower, to feel the event from a disturbing distance and disjointed time.

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's setting shifts widely during the various portions of the plot. The novel opens in England but moves rapidly to the Bay of the Seine, where Hornblower pursues and captures the mutinous brig Flame. This coastal area is familiar nautical terrain and has the feel and texture of the open seas and coasts of France and is quite enjoyable as a setting. The novel's plot then moves ashore to the French city of Le Havre, where Hornblower spends a considerable amount of time shut up in an office, which is particularly nondescript. The setting of Le Havre is surprisingly undeveloped in detail, given its central position within the text. From Le Havre, various actions spread out geographically to include first Caudebec and later Rouen, both on the Seine River. As with Le Havre, neither of these localities is particularly well developed. From Rouen, Hornblower returns to Le Havre and then to the town of Smallbridge in Kent, England. Smallbridge receives virtually no development in the novel, but is developed in previous novels in the series. In any event, Hornblower spends only six lonely weeks in Smallbridge before setting out on a two weeks' voyage to the Château of Graçay. This

castle is located in a very rural region on the upper Loire River. The nearest named locality is Nevers which, in the novel, is a fairly small city. The castle is probably the best developed setting within the novel, and yet even this structure receives light treatment. From the castle, Hornblower then moves throughout the region of France bounded on the north by the Loire River during a guerrilla campaign until his capture.

The settings of the novel thus propel the episodic and uneven texture of the narrative and force the novel into a reading more akin to a series of short stories, or novellas, rather than a more-traditional novel. It must be noted, however, that many of the settings—notably the Bay of the Seine and the Château of Graçay—have been well-developed in other volumes of the series. Finally, and fortunately, the success of the novel and the development of plot are scarcely dependent upon any developed setting and instead rely far more heavily upon external events beyond the control of Hornblower or any other character.

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 style,s 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 dialogue and 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 probably not particularly familiar to modern readers. The technical language is accurate and interesting and a reference to a general sailing encyclopedia will assist in a careful reading and complete understanding of the text. Second, the novel makes frequent reference to various events which occur prior to the novel's opening—this is a standard construction technique and 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 ninth.

Structure

The 322-page novel retains English spelling and grammar but uses standard American punctuation. The text is divided into twenty 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 is somewhat disjointed and lends a sort of episodic feel to most of the major plot development in the novel.

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

The structure is further complicated by adherence to historical events. In broad terms, events in the novel are fictional or fictionalized events which could have occurred, or did occur, in the period of time used as the novel's setting; namely, the waning Napoleonic war between England and France during the years 1814-15. Based on textual statements and links to historic events, the novel can be accurately placed as having transpired between October of 1814 and July of 1815. As such, the novel's principle timeline is considerably longer than the timeline of other volumes in the series. Thus, the novel's language, technology, politics, geography, and more, are all based upon historically accurate representations. Some of the political entities discussed are no longer obtainable and may be unfamiliar to modern readers.

Quotes

"The chapel stall of carved oak on which Sir Horatio Hornblower was sitting was most uncomfortable, and the sermon which the Dean of Westminster was preaching was deadly dull. Hornblower fidgeted like a child, and like a child he peered round the chapel and at the congregation to distract his mind from his physical troubles. Over his head soared the exquisite fan tracery of what Hornblower soberly decided was the most beautiful building in the world; there was something mathematically satisfactory in the way the spreading patterns met and re-met, a sort of inspired logic. The nameless workmen who had done that carving must have been far-sighted, creative men.
"The sermon was still going on, and Hornblower feared that when it was finished there would be some more singing, more of those high-pitched noises from the surpliced choir boys which would distress him painfully again, more painfully than the sermon or the oaken stall. This was the price he had to pay for having a ribbon and star to wear, for being a Knight of the Most Honorable Order of the Bath; as he was known to be on sick-leave in England—and fully convalescent—he could not possibly evade attendance at this, the most important ceremonial of the Order." pp. 3-4

"'Heave-to! Get the fore tops'l in! Set the main t'mast stays'l. Quartermaster, bring her to.'
"'Bring her to, sir.'
"The furling of the fore topsail eased her, and the staysail steadied her, and then she came to the wind. Until now she had fought against it; now she yielded to it, like a woman giving way at last to an importunate lover. She rose to an even keel, turning her starboard bow to the choppy seas, riding and falling to them with something of rhythm instead of her previous unpredictable plunges over the quartering waves. The starboard mainshrouds gave something of a lee to Hornblower where he stood against the starboard bulwark, so that even the force of the wind seemed to be a little moderated." p. 36

"Nowadays Hornblower could contemplate with a certain equanimity the possibility of being discussed by other people. There were undeniable achievements on his record, solid victories for which he had borne the responsibility and therefore deservedly wore the laurels. His weakness, his seasickness and his moodiness, could be smiled at now instead of being laughed at. The gilded laurels were only tarnished to his own knowledge, and not to that of others. They did not know of his doubts and his hesitations, not even of his actual mistakes—they did not know, as he did, that if he had only called off the bomb-vessels at Riga five minutes earlier, as he should have done, young Mound would be still alive and a distinguished naval officer. Hornblower's handling of his squadron in the Baltic had been described in Parliament as 'the most perfect example in recent years of the employment of a naval force against an army'; Hornblower knew of the imperfections, but apparently other people could be blind to them. He could face his brethren in the profession, just as he could face his social equals. Now he had a wife of beauty and lineage, a wife with taste and tact, a wife to be

proud of and not a wife he could only gloweringly dare the world to criticize—poor Maria in her forgotten grave in Southsea." pp. 44-45

"But contact had to be made with the mutineers—that was clearly the first thing to do—and there was at least no harm in trying to make that contact at a point as advantageous as possible. Some miracle might happen; he must try and put himself across the course of wandering miracles. What was that Barbara had said to him once? 'The lucky man is he who knows how much to leave to chance.' Barbara had too good an opinion of him, even after all this time, but there was truth in what she said." pp. 53-54

"The Porta Coeli gathered way and headed for the southeastern exit of the harbor, the Indiaman close at her stern. For several long seconds there was no sign of any interest being taken in these movements. Then came a hail, apparently from the cutter which had brought the officials aboard. It was so long since Hornblower had heard or spoken French that he could not understand the words used.
"'Comment?' he yelled back through the speaking-trumpet.
"An irascible voice asked him again what in the name of the devil he thought he was doing.
"'Anchorage—mumble—current—mumble—tide,' yelled Hornblower in reply.
"This time the unknown in the cutter invoked the name of God instead of that of the devil.
"'Who in God's name is that?'
"'Mumble mumble mumble,' bellowed Hornblower back again, and quietly to the helmsman, 'Bring her slowly round to port.'
"Carrying on a conversation with the French authorities while taking a vessel down an involved channel—however well he had memorized the latter on the chart—taxed his resources.
"'Heave-to!' yelled the voice.
"'Pardon, Captain,' yelled Hornblower back. 'Mumble—anchor cable—mumble—impossible.'
"Another loud hail from the cutter, full of menace.
"'Steady as you go,' cried Hornblower to the helmsman." pp. 78-79

"'Come on!' yelled Hornblower—it was desperately important to make sure of the Flame before a defense could be organized.
"The brigs stood higher out of the water than did the chasse-marée; this time they had to climb upward. He got his left elbow over the bulwark, and tried to swing himself up, but his sword hampered him.
"'Help me, damn you!' he snarled over his shoulder, and a seaman put his shoulder under Hornblower's stern and heaved him up with such surprising good-will that he shot over the bulwarks and fell on his face in the scuppers on the other side, his sword slithering over the deck. He started to crawl forward towards it, but a sixth sense warned him of danger, and he flung himself down and forward inside the sweep of a cutlass, and cannoned against the shins of the man who wielded it. Then a wave of men burst over him, and he was kicked and trodden on and then crushed beneath a writhing body

with which he grappled with desperate strength. He could hear Brown's voice roaring over him, pistols banging, sword blades clashing before sudden silence fell round him. The man with whom he was struggling went suddenly limp and inert, and then was dragged off him. He rose to his feet.
"'Are you wounded, sir?' asked Brown.
"'No,' he answered." p. 96

"The church offered them a grateful shelter—like the figurative shelter she had to offer to all sinners, thought Hornblower, in a moment before he was engulfed in affairs again. He took his seat behind the Duke; in the tail of his eye he could see Lebrun, who was intentionally stationed there for Hornblower's benefit. By watching him Hornblower could see what had to be done, when to stand and when to kneel, for this was the first time he had ever been in a Catholic Church or attended a Catholic ceremony. He was a little sorry that the activity of his mind prevented him from observing everything as closely as he would have liked. The vestments, the age-old ceremonial, might have appealed to him, but he was distracted by thoughts about what sort of pressure Lebrun had put on the officiating priests to get them to risk Bonaparte's wrath in this fashion, and by his wonderings about how much this scion of the Bourbons would wish to take a real part in the campaign, and about what was the exact significance of the reports which had begun to dribble in to the effect that at last imperial troops were moving on Le Havre." pp. 149-150

"Here was the Morning Chronicle expatiating on his capture of the Flame across the decks of the Bonne Celestine. There was only one example in history of a similar feat—Nelson's capture of the San Josef at Cape St. Vincent. Hornblower's eyebrows rose as he read. The comparison was quite absurd. There had been nothing else for him to do; he had had only to fight the Bonne Celestine's crew, for hardly a man in the Flame's company had raised a hand to prevent the vessel's recapture. And it was nonsense to compare him with Nelson. Nelson had been brilliant, a man of lightning thought, the inspiration of all who came in contact with him. He himself was only a fortunate plodder by comparison. Extraordinary good fortune was the root of all his success; good fortune, and long thought, and the devotion of his subordinates. It was perfectly horrible that he should be compared with Nelson; horrible and indecent. As Hornblower read on he felt a disquieting sensation in his stomach, exactly as he felt during his first hours at sea after a spell on land, when the ship he was in slid down a wave. Now that this comparison with Nelson had been made the public and the service would judge his future actions by the same standard, and would turn and rend him in their disappointment should he fail. He had climbed high, and as a natural result there was a precipice at his feet. Hornblower remembered how he had felt as a king's letter boy, when he had first climbed to the main truck of the Indefatigable. The climbing had not been so difficult, not even the futtock shrouds, but when at the masthead he had looked down he felt dizzy and nauseated, appalled at the distance below him—just as he felt now." pp. 161-162

"Livingstone withdrew, and the door had hardly closed upon him before Hornblower regretted having let him go with such chary words of commendation. The operation had been brilliantly successful. Deprived of his siege train and munitions, Quiot would not be

able to besiege Le Havre, and it would probably be a long time before Bonaparte's War Ministry in Paris could scrape together another train. But the loss of Bush coloured all Hornblower's thoughts. He found himself wishing that he had never conceived the plan—he would rather have stood a siege here in Le Havre and have Bush alive at his side. It was hard to think of a world without Bush in it, of a future where he would never, never see Bush again. People would think the loss of a captain and a hundred and fifty men a small price to pay for robbing Quiot of all his offensive power, but people did not understand. Hornblower experienced a sensation as if he were momentarily gifted with piercing clairvoyance. He seemed to see clearly that he was fated to bring death to all with whom he came in contact; not a Midas touch of gold but a Midas touch of death. A man in a fighting service should be ready to see his friends taken from him at any time, but to Hornblower it appeared that the dice of Fate were loaded against him. Bush, Maria, everyone closely associated with him, was doomed. His skin felt cold, so that he shuddered, and the shudder shook him out of the morbid mood. He made himself try at least to appear normal." pp. 175-176

"'Easy with that there portmanteau,' said Brown to one of the seamen. 'That's no barrel o' beef you're handling. Handsomely, now. Where shall we put her ladyship's trunk, sir?'
"'Leave it against the wall there, Brown, if you please,' said Barbara. 'Here are the keys, Hebe.'
"It seemed quite fantastic and unnatural to be sitting here watching Barbara at the mirror, watching Hebe unpack the baggage, here in a city of which he was military governor. Hornblower's masculine narrow-mindedness was disquieted by the situation. Twenty years of life at sea had made his lines of thought a little rigid. There should be a time and a place for everything." p. 193

"It was an insane thing to say to a woman about to walk into a royal reception, on the very point of setting her foot across the threshold, but Hornblower was sublimely unconscious of the offence. Yet he had at that last moment the perspicacity to realize—what he had not realized before—that this was one of the great moments of Barbara's life; that when she had been dressing, when she had smiled at him in the mirror, her heart had been singing with anticipation. It had not occurred to his stupidity that she could enjoy this sort of function, that it could give her pleasure to sail into a glittering room on the arm of Sir Horatio Hornblower, the man of the hour. He had been taking it for granted that she would extend to these ceremonies the same sort of strained tolerance that he felt.
"'Their Excellencies the Governor and Milady Barbara 'Ornblor,' blared the major-domo at the door.
"Every eye turned towards them as they entered. The last thing that Hornblower was conscious of, before he plunged into the imbecilities of a social function, was that he had somehow spoiled his wife's evening, and there was some angry resentment in his heart; against her, not against himself." pp. 199-200

"Hornblower felt a little unsteady. It was impossible for him to analyze his feelings, for he had no data from which to begin his deductions. He had joined the navy as a boy, and

he had known war ever since; he could know nothing of the Hornblower, the purely hypothetical Hornblower, who would have existed had there been no war. Twenty one years of frightful strain, of peril and hardship, had made a very different man of him from what he would have become otherwise. Hornblower was no born fighting man; he was a talented and sensitive individual whom chance had forced into fighting, and his talents had brought him success as a fighter just as they would have brought him success in other walks of life, but he had had to pay a higher price. His morbid sensitiveness, his touchy pride, the quirks and weaknesses of his character, might well be the result of the strains and sorrows he had had to endure. There was a coldness between him and his wife at the moment (a coldness masked by camaraderie; the passion to which both of them had given free rein had done nothing to dispel it) which might in large part be attributed to the defects of his character—a small part of it was Barbara's fault, but most of it was his." pp. 203-204

"This was where Bush died; Hornblower stood silent in tribute to his friend. When the war was over he would erect a little monument on the river-bank there above the quay. He could wish that the ruined town would never be rebuilt; that would be the most striking monument to his friend's memory—that or a pyramid of skulls.
"'Mains'l sheets! Jib sheets!' roared Freeman.
"They had come to the head of the reach, and were beginning the long turn to starboard. Jibing a big brig in a narrow river was no child's play. The flattened sails roared like thunder as they caught the back-lash of the wind from the heights. The brig's way carried her forward, and she rounded to, slowly, round the bend. Letting out the mainsail sheet gave them the needed push and steerage-way; the farther she came round the flatter the sails were hauled, until at last she was close-hauled on a course almost opposite to the one by which she had approached Caudebec, sailing close-hauled up the new reach which presented itself to their gaze." pp. 208-209

"'There is news from Belgium,' said the aide-de-camp. 'The Emperor has been defeated in a great battle. At a place called Waterloo. Already Wellington and Blücher are over the frontier and marching on Paris. The Emperor is there already and the Senate are demanding that he abdicate again.'
"Hornblower's heart was pounding so hard that he was still incapable of speech.
"'His Excellency the General,' went on the aide-de-camp, 'has decided that in this case the executions are not to take place this morning.'
"Hornblower found speech at last.
"'I will not insist,' he said.
"The aide-de-camp went on to say something about the restoration of His Most Christian Majesty, but Hornblower did not listen to him. His mind was suddenly engrossed with the past. One morning as a child, when all hedgerows in the fields had seemed to be full of birds in song; the roadstead at Panama, with Barbara coming on board to request passage to England; the almost personal struggle with Bonaparte in the Mediterranean. Then he began to wonder about Richard. And Barbara." p. 322

Topics for Discussion

The novel opens with the consideration of a mutiny aboard a British ship of war. Even though Hornblower realizes the mutiny was caused by the abusive captain of the ship, he feels that the mutineers must be dealt with harshly—though not as harshly as most other military leaders. Discuss the necessity of harsh military discipline in a time of war. Why would mutineers typically be hanged or, at the very least, flogged around the fleet?

Under Hornblower's guidance, the crew of Porta Coeli boards Bonne Celestine and carries the French gunship before carrying on across her bows to the Flame, which is also captured. This nearly singular accomplishment is later compared, in the English press, to a similar feat performed by Horatio Nelson. Hornblower is shocked and troubled by the comparison. Why do you think he reacted in this way?

Just prior to a major military venture, Captain Freeman tells Hornblower's future by drawing and cutting cards. In point of fact, Freeman's fortunetelling is shockingly correct—he predicts a crown, danger, and a fair woman. What aspects or events of the subsequent novel match the symbols of a crown and of danger? Who is the fair woman?

Lebrun, a captured French citizen, offers to spur the city of Le Havre toward open rebellion in exchange for special concessions in English trade. Hornblower finds Lebrun 'oily' and views the exchange as distasteful, yet wholeheartedly accepts the deal and prosecutes it to his ability. Discuss the strategic significance of the rebellion in Le Havre within the broader context of the Napoleonic wars.

After the revolt of Le Havre, Hornblower is made the mayor of the city. He finds the job full of tedium and political minutia and in general is irritated by the necessities of the work. Yet he does an exceptional job and attempts to remain impartial, firm, and fair. Do you think Hornblower could ever find peaceful and acceptable employment as a government official in a time of peace? Why or why not?

During the waning days of the war, Barbara joins Hornblower at Le Havre. At first he is happy to see and entertain her, but as the days pass he finds her presence difficult, and a coldness develops between them. Ultimately, they separate and Barbara goes on to the Congress of Vienna while Hornblower returns to England. The narrative states that Hornblower is primarily at fault for this separation—yet Hornblower blames Barbara. Discuss their relationship and consider why it might have been strained by the situation obtaining at Le Havre and Rouen.

After separating from Barbara, Hornblower travels to France and stays with his close friend the Comte. Probably for more than any other reason, Hornblower returns to resume his sexual affair with Marie, the Comte's widowed daughter-in-law. During the sexual reunion, Hornblower often feels a sense of foreboding for the future welfare of

Marie. By the end of the novel, Marie has been forced from her home, forced into hiding as a fugitive from the law, and is ultimately killed in a gunnery exchange with French soldiers. Discuss the aspect of narrative foreshadowing constructed by Hornblower's sense of foreboding about Marie.

During the guerrilla activities in the upper Loire, Hornblower realizes that ultimate success is impossible. Yet he holds the French fighters together as long as practicable. What is Hornblower's goal in doing this? Why does he insist that the fighters remain together past their ability to effectively wage warfare upon Napoleon's forces?

Consider Hornblower's situation at the conclusion of the novel. Where do you think he would go next? What type of activity is he likely to engage in? Do you think Hornblower and Barbara's personal relationship survives the novel? Why or why not?