

Mr. Midshipman Hornblower Study Guide

Mr. Midshipman Hornblower by C. S. Forester

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Plot Summary

Horatio Hornblower joins the British Navy as a midshipman at the somewhat advanced age of seventeen during 1793. He serves briefly aboard *Justinian* in an unhappy assignment and then transfers to *Indefatigable* where he has several incredible experiences and learns much. In 1796, he makes an audacious and successful attack on a Spanish galley and is made acting-lieutenant. In early 1797 he is captured and spends the next two years in a Spanish prison. He is released following a courageous rescue of Spanish seamen.

The novel opens with Hornblower as a tyro midshipman posted to HMS *Justinian*. He enters the service entirely ignorant, without any qualification, and seasick. His initial period of service—perhaps a few months in duration—is marked by misery and abuse without any real purpose. Hornblower is the butt of jokes amongst the established crew and the particular object of abuse of a failed midshipman named Simpson. Hornblower finds the situation untenable and erroneously concludes that suicide or death would be preferable. The naivety of youth leads him to engage Simpson in a duel. Hornblower intellectualizes the danger and calculates the odds, insisting on a peculiar form of duel to maximize his chances of success. The ship's captain intervenes secretly to prevent any harm to both participants and then transfers Hornblower to a frigate—not as punishment, but in effect to allow Hornblower an escape from the situation.

Within just a few months Hornblower has developed remarkably as a seaman—so much so, in fact, that he is placed in independent command of a prize. The situation is somewhat unfortunate, though, as the prize brig has sustained serious but unapparent damage and, within a few days, sinks. Hornblower goes through a period of self-recriminating introspection but finally moves on. He then leads a successful military operation in which he is directly responsible for the loss of at least one life. Once again, he subjects himself to a finite period of self-recriminating introspection. Hornblower thereafter takes a broader view of those he serves with and uses his newfound insight into humanity to save another shipmate from nearly certain death.

Hornblower then experiences several of the most distasteful aspects of warfare. He goes ashore in support of an attack on a French town and witnesses the collapse of military defenses due to an earlier focus on retributive executions. In the ensuing rout, he sees much needless loss of life and concludes ultimately that the entire military misadventure was an unfortunate and needless case of suffering shared among thousands. His next adventure finds him aboard a ship rowed by slaves chained to the oars and commanded by a whip-wielding enforcer. Hornblower has a visceral response to the slave ship and nearly single-handedly boards her, attacks the crew, and captures the ship.

Hornblower then moves on to acts of distasteful but necessary service in the navy. After nearly botching his examination for lieutenant, Hornblower boards a fire ship and in great personal danger steers it away from the British fleet and onto a deserted stretch of beach. His next adventure finds him in quarantine but commanding a supply brig full of



much-needed food. His final adventure finds him in detached command of a dispatch cutter which is captured. Making some fast but appropriate decisions, Hornblower protects the dispatches and is then hauled off to a Spanish prison where he spends two years. He eventually engages in a profoundly dangerous rescue operation to save some Spanish sailors. His personal bravery and service result in his release from prison, and the narrative concludes at that point.



Hornblower and the Even Chance

Hornblower and the Even Chance Summary

Horatio Hornblower joins the British Navy as a midshipman at the somewhat advanced age of seventeen during 1793. He serves briefly aboard *Justinian* in an unhappy assignment and then transfers to *Indefatigable* where he has several incredible experiences and learns much. In 1796, he makes an audacious and successful attack on a Spanish galley and is made acting-lieutenant. In early 1797 he is captured and spends the next two years in a Spanish prison. He is released following a courageous rescue of Spanish seamen.

Horatio Hornblower, born 1776, a newly enlisted midshipman in the Royal Navy, is seventeen—remarkably old for a new midshipman. He has taken passage on a tiny rowboat crewed by women, and is transported to HMS *Justinian*, Captain Keene, at anchor in Spithead during 1793. Hornblower is prostrated with seasickness and has to be fairly handed and hauled onto the ship-of-the-line. Hornblower reports to Lieutenant Masters, the officer of the watch. As to be expected, he forgets his dunnage, does not properly address the lieutenant, and walks awkwardly. Masters sends Hornblower below where he discovers the wardroom to be full of mostly older men. As the old hands make fun of him, Hornblower collapses from seasickness and wakes up several hours later, confused and disoriented. Over the next days, Hornblower realizes that *Justinian* is not a happy ship—the captain is dying of a wasting disease, the officers are mostly older, failed men, and the crew is discontent.

To make matters worse, Simpson, about thirty-four and the senior midshipman, has recently failed his examination for lieutenant. The normally lazy and tyrannical man is thus thrown into a particularly black mood and runs the mess room with fear and insults. Any who chafe under Simpson's black rule are soundly beaten by the physical man. Simpson takes a particular dislike to Hornblower and hazes him relentlessly. On one occasion Captain Keene sneers at Simpson's navigation ability and subsequently praises Hornblower's navigation skill. Simpson hazes Hornblower even more than before. Hornblower dwells constantly on suicide and desertion, finding life aboard the ship intolerable.

A few days later Simpson and Hornblower go ashore to assist in a press gang. During a lull, they engage in a game of whist with two seamen from another ship. The slow Simpson loses heavily and Hornblower, an excellent whist player, wins heavily. Simpson drinks heavily and becomes verbally abusive, insinuating that Hornblower is cheating. Hornblower sees his chance and demands an apology. Simpson refuses and Hornblower demands satisfaction. A startled Simpson refuses nonetheless to apologize. Back aboard *Justinian*, various people try to talk Hornblower out of the duel but he is adamant. He sees in the duel either an escape from his miserable existence or, at least, being rid of Simpson. As he considers his choice of weapons, however, he realizes that Simpson has the advantage.



Hornblower finally conceives a scheme whereby he will have at least an even chance of survival. The terms of the duel are thus pistols at point-blank range—yet only one pistol is to be loaded. Hornblower will thus either die instantly or survive without a wound. Even Captain Keene asks Hornblower to reconsider—yet Simpson refuses to apologize. So the duel comes about. Captain Keene insists that, given the peculiar nature of the duel, Lieutenant Masters act as referee. On the day of the duel Masters loads the pistols—presumably only one has ball and powder—and spins the coin. The choice falls to Hornblower and he selects a pistol, reflecting that if he has chosen poorly he is already a dead man. As pistols are pointed, Hornblower finds he is unwilling to kill Simpson outright, and thus places the muzzle of his pistol against the point of Simpson's shoulder. Simpson thrusts his muzzle firmly against Hornblower's chest. Masters counts out and both men pull the trigger.

Surprisingly, the loaded pistol misfires. Amidst the confusion, Masters sternly declares there will be no second shot—the honor of all parties has been satisfied. The men are whisked back to the ship, where Simpson is received into the mess room with acclaim by his fearful toadies. Hornblower quickly realizes that the duel has been handled—Masters loaded neither pistol. He speaks with Keene about Masters; Keene confirms that neither pistol was loaded; and confirms that the procedure was done upon his direct order. The impetuous Hornblower draws himself up and begins to demand satisfaction for such wretched treatment from his own captain. Keene cuts him off and delivers a fatherly lecture, noting that Hornblower is alive, young, foolish, and impetuous. He suggests Hornblower would be better served by transferring to HMS *Indefatigable*, a frigate shortly sailing. A stubborn Hornblower insists he will not abandon his duty whereupon Keene orders him to transfer ships.

Hornblower and the Even Chance Analysis

Chapter one introduces Horatio Hornblower, the protagonist and central character of the novel. This is, chronologically, the initial presentation of Hornblower in the entire series of eleven novels. Periodically throughout his later career, Hornblower will make obtuse references to himself as 'the recruit who was seasick at Spithead,' and here is the tale. He travels to the ship in a water transport and the conveyance is small and the ride bumpy. For anyone acquainted with seasickness, Hornblower's complete prostration is understandable. When he arrives on *Justinian* he masters himself in an impressive show of willpower, reports to the officer of the deck, goes below and reports to the wardroom, and then more or less collapses into a hammock where he remains for a prolonged period of time. The insinuation made about being seasick in protected waters while at anchor is that Hornblower, at seventeen, is simply too old and obviously not suited for a life at sea.

Justinian is an interesting ship. The captain is ill with an unnamed but apparently fatal wasting illness and the crew is composed mainly of pressed lubbers and failed warrant officers. In many ways, the ship is presented as a doomed ship. Whether or not this is the case, Hornblower perceives it as such. Service aboard a ship-of-the-line during the period discussed in the novel was most likely to consist of endless fleet-level blockade



duty. Such duty was tedious, boring, and almost always non-remunerative. Much more glamorous service was found aboard a frigate or sloop. These smaller ships were often sent on detached service where combat was much more likely and where the chances of taking a prize, hence earning prize money, was fairly high. Keene's transfer offer is therefore best viewed as a reward, not as some type of punishment.

The aggrieved party in any duel was allowed to set the terms of the duel. Hornblower selects the terms of his duel such that one of the two participants will die, but the other will be unharmed. The person who will be killed is selected at random. Thus, reasons Hornblower, he has 'an even chance' in the duel. He does not believe—and is probably correct—that he can improve his odds beyond that point. It is interesting and telling to note the mental state which Hornblower possesses as he enters the duel. In the end, he decides that he cannot take Simpson's life should he have the loaded weapon and he points the muzzle above Simpson's shoulder. Doubtless, those attending the duel witness that act.



Hornblower and the Cargo of Rice

Hornblower and the Cargo of Rice Summary

During a complicated engagement at sea, Indefatigable captures several merchant vessels necessitating the dispatch of several prize crews. One merchant ship, the brig Marie Galante, attempts to flee. Indefatigable fires a few cannon at the brig, causing it to heave to and surrender. Hornblower is assigned to command a prize crew of four men, including Matthews, Hunter, and Carson. They board Marie Galante. His orders are to take the brig into the nearest English port. The French crew and captain are secured in the forecastle. Hornblower appoints Matthews as an acting officer and sets the prize crew to work repairing the rigging damage caused by Indefatigable's cannon. Hornblower calculates his current position on captured charts and then lays off a course for England.

The night passes uneventfully but the brig seems to handle sluggishly as time goes on. Hornblower confers with Matthews and decides that the brig possibly had its hull holed by a cannon shot the previous day. They sound the ship's well, however, and find it completely dry—a rather remarkable occurrence as every ship leaks at least a little. Throughout the day weather comes in and the brig's sailing qualities continue to deteriorate. The next morning is calm and the French crew is paroled briefly to prepare and enjoy breakfast. During the parole the French captain comments on the brig's behavior. Hornblower assures the French captain that the well is dry; the French captain remarks that the cargo is a full load of rice. Hornblower suddenly realizes that any water leaking into the ship would of course be absorbed by the rice—obviously the well would be dry. Hornblower then goes over the side in slings and looks for a hole. After changing course, the ship heels over and he finds a ragged cannon shot far below the water line—the brig has been taking on water for nearly two days. The crew fothers a sail over the hole.

Hornblower goes below to consider his next move and hears bizarre noises from the ship—as if it were laboring under heavy weather. When he goes on deck the entire crew is startled by strange heaving motions and seams opening across the deck. Hornblower enlists the French crew's assistance and the combined crews begin to heave out the cargo of rice, bag by bag, and discard it into the sea. It is too late, however, and the swelling rice cargo puffs into the hold as fast as the crew can eject bags of rice. As the combined crew nears exhaustion the ship's decks begin to pop apart and heave away. Hornblower orders the combined crew to abandon ship and they take to the ship's single boat. Within just a few minutes, Marie Galante pops apart at the seams, rice bulging out from every opening, and sinks away.



Hornblower and the Cargo of Rice Analysis

Indefatigable snatches up as many prizes as possible; Pellew would certainly stand to gain not only prestige but quite a lot of money from the harvest. As a warrant officer of the ship, Hornblower would also enjoy a percentage of the prize money. It is therefore in everyone's best interest to capture as many prizes as possible. To gain remuneration, however, the prize must be delivered safely to an English port. This method of encouraging active military service might seem peculiar by today's standards but was entirely normal at the time. The capture of Marie Galante would deprive the French of a ship and her cargo. The delivering of Marie Galante to an English port would simultaneously provide a ship and the cargo to England, and personally enrich the officers and crew of Indefatigable.

Upon taking command Hornblower does indeed perform the various duties expected. He secures the French crew, examines the ship, repairs damage, sets a course, and so forth. He would have no realistic reason to scrutinize the hull for damage. When the ship begins to behave sluggishly he responds appropriately and sounds the well—which he finds dry. Although he knows this is remarkable, he does not know how to interpret it. Hornblower lacks the experience necessary to make an informed decision. It is typical that later on Hornblower reviews his actions in the light of hindsight and concludes that he is a horrible failure. A more appropriate response is that demonstrated later by Pellew who simply infers that the important things are the French loss and Hornblower's safety.

The chapter is important in Hornblower's development because it is his first independent command and also his first highly visible failure. It will be quite easy for him to improve, after all. Later, even in the face of failure, Hornblower refuses to capitulate. Instead of heading for France and imprisonment, just hours away, Hornblower faces the open ocean in an open boat where he is outnumbered by his enemy by two or three to one. He is clearly made of stern stuff and will one day make a fine and demanding officer. Chapters two and three are unique within the novel in that they form a continuous narration of a single event. True, the event is long and complex, but it is nevertheless an atomic unit of text which could have been presented as a single chapter.



Hornblower and the Penalty of Failure

Hornblower and the Penalty of Failure Summary

Having lost his first independent command, Hornblower finds himself adrift in the Bay of Biscay, seasick, and supported by four English sailors opposed by a French captain and about a dozen French crewmen. Hornblower keeps his pistol handy, confines the French to the bow of the boat, and points a course for England, despite the strong remonstrations of the French captain. The situation escalates into a shouting match and Hornblower flatly states that any Frenchman interfering with the operation of the boat will be killed. The French captain then agrees to a shaky truce and everyone stands down—somewhat. The small boat travels for many hours and then sights a ship which bears down on them. It is the French Pique and within moments Hornblower, Matthews, and the other three Englishmen find the tables turned—they are now prisoners of war.

Pique is a French privateer commanded and owned by Captain Neuville; it was built as a slaver and the hold is large and empty. The English give their parole and are allowed a remarkably free reign of the ship. For many days Hornblower and the English seamen are prisoners aboard while the privateer cruises in search of prizes. Hornblower spends the time reading, in French, manuals on navigation and seamanship. Between struggling over French books, Hornblower relives the despair of losing his first command and repeatedly mentally itemizes all of the mistakes which he made.

After many days a strange sail is sighted and the privateer closes until it identifies a British warship—in fact, Indefatigable. Hornblower's hope of rescue surges briefly but Pique is much, much faster and more maneuverable and quickly begins to race away from the larger British ship. Hornblower goes below and fumes until he shortly conceives an audacious plan. Gathering together combustible materials he makes a pile near the storeroom which, he knows, contains a vast quantity of paint. He then lights the pile, ensures it is burning well, and returns to the deck. As Indefatigable sinks below the horizon the crew of Pique suddenly notices clouds of thick smoke issuing from the deck gratings. The ship's sailing is largely ignored as all hands rush to fight the conflagration. It continues to spread until it engulfs the back portion of the privateer. Meanwhile Indefatigable has closed and begins plying its own pumps on the burning privateer. After many tense hours the fire is controlled. Although badly burned, the French ship can still sail. The French captain clearly suspects Hornblower but can take no action, now himself a prisoner of war.

Later, Captain Pellew interviews Hornblower and notes down the details of Marie Galante's sinking, Hornblower's capture, and then the fire aboard Pique. Pellew rather believes Hornblower to have been responsible and finds the action creditable. Hornblower decides he must punish himself for losing his first independent command and declines any special knowledge of the fire, suggesting it to have been merely a fortunate accident.



Hornblower and the Penalty of Failure Analysis

Chapter three continues the story began in chapter two. As such, chapters two and three are unique within the novel; they form an atomic unit of text which could have been presented as a single chapter. The obvious choice for Hornblower is to point to France and seek the safety of land. True, he will be imprisoned by the French but at least he will survive. Instead he makes the morally correct choice and points the boat toward England, many days distant. Even under normal conditions, such a voyage would be fraught with peril. Outnumbered two or three to one, it is a monumental undertaking. Hornblower is spared of the effects of exposure in an open boat by capture.

As a prisoner of the French aboard *Pique*, Hornblower largely idles the time—as would be expected. The situation described is definitely of a different time when captured officers were treated with decorum and respect and a man's word was his bond. This same generous treatment will be repeated in the final chapter of the novel. Hornblower is given the run of the ship so long as he does not interfere with its operation. He borrows some books about seamanship—written in French—and attempts simultaneously to educate himself and better his rudimentary French. *Pique*, a once-slaver, has a strange hull configuration which plays a prominent role in the story. Instead of the usual compartmented space belowdecks, *Pique* has a single gigantic room where slaves were once penned. It is to this capacious room that Hornblower is sent when *Pique* is chased by *Indefatigable*. The sloop should, and does, easily outrun the *razé*. Hornblower is at his wits end, realizing that the flying ship is taking him away from rescue and a return to service—a service which a year earlier he had desired to leave through suicide. He conceives and executes an audacious and dangerous plan and starts a fire. Fire in a wooden sailing vessel was perhaps the most dangerous occurrence possible. When the blaze is discovered, it is already well advanced and all hands give up sailing the ship to fight the flames. The fire is still burning when *Indefatigable*'s boats pull alongside and they, too, fight the fire rather than engaging in a boarding action. The privateer is burned and seriously damaged but still navigable and, more importantly to the narrative, Hornblower is rescued. His first stint as a prisoner of war lasts perhaps a few weeks.

When Pellew interviews Hornblower he suspects that the fire aboard *Pique* was not an accident. He insinuates as much. But Hornblower, still punishing himself for his earlier perceived failure of losing *Marie Galante*, denies any special knowledge of the flames. Instead of claiming initiative, therefore, he appears as just a rather lucky young man.



Hornblower and the Man Who Felt Queer

Hornblower and the Man Who Felt Queer Summary

Indefatigable has chased Papillon, a French corvette, into an estuary. The smaller French ship anchors under the protection of a powerful battery of shore guns, safe from English attack. Indefatigable cruises back and forth beyond the range of the shore guns. After several hours, midshipman Kennedy informs Hornblower that he has been summoned to Captain Pellew's cabin.

In the captain's cabin, Captain Pellew lays out a plan for capturing the Papillon by a surprise attack using the ship's boats acting in concert. In brief, the larger ship's boats will carry in assault groups assigned to specific objectives. The ship's jolly boat has a different mission. It will be commanded by Hornblower and will arrive after the assault has gained a sure foothold on deck. Hornblower will board Papillon at the main chains and run aloft with his crew to loose and set topsails; they are to ignore any fighting on the decks. Hornblower's mission is crucial to the successful cutting out of Papillon, for the French ship must be got underway very quickly to avoid destructive fire from the shore batteries which will commence as soon as the assault is noticed. Hornblower listens to his assignment with a sick feeling—he is afraid of heights and not particularly capable in the tops. Instead of making an objection, he swallows his fear and worries about personal failure.

Detailed planning follows, and then the boats are prepared for their several assignments. Hornblower is assigned a crew and addresses them, placing Jackson second in command. Hornblower describes the attack in general to his men, then details their particular assignment. Hales, one of the assigned crew, states that he is not feeling particularly well. Hornblower ignores Hales' complaint and Jackson and the other men mock the seaman for being fearful and shirking duty. Hales insists he is not a shirker.

Late that night the boats launch and begin a prolonged voyage in line through a difficult route into the harbor. Hornblower follows the boat ahead; all have been cautioned that the passage will be very near shore batteries and silence is of the utmost importance. After many minutes of rowing, Hales has a seizure and collapses into the boat, making a considerable amount of noise. After more minutes, Hales begins to regain consciousness and sits up, then staggers to his feet and begins to talk out loud, bewildered by his surroundings. Hornblower realizes the lives of about a hundred men depend on utmost secrecy. As Hales begins to call out for his sister, Hornblower strikes the man over the head with the tiller handle, crumpling him into the bottom of the boat—knocked out or, possibly, dead.

The other boats close Papillon and successfully board her. At just the right moment, Hornblower closes the main chains and leaps aloft, followed by his men except for Hales who remains in the jolly boat. He gains the appropriate yardarm and squirms out



along it. Although shivering with fright, he performs his duties appropriately and quickly as do his men. As the fierce fighting on deck wanes the anchor cable is cut and Papillon heads to sea, under fire from the shore batteries. Hornblower slides to the deck to assist and, moving far too quickly, leaves the skin of both palms stripped off along the rough rope. Jackson bandages his hands and warns him about being foolish. Jackson then mentions that Papillon is towing all of the ship's boats except for the jolly boat which was left behind. Hornblower realizes that Hales has been left behind. Jackson urges Hornblower to not worry about the boat or Hales, noting "'Don't you fret about 'im, sir. 'E wouldn't never 'ave made no seaman, not no 'ow'" (p. 116).

Hornblower and the Man Who Felt Queer Analysis

The chapter features two main events. The first and most obvious is the exciting military expedition against Papillon. The technique of cutting out enemy ships from a safe haven as described in the novel was routinely used at the time and is therefore unremarkable as a tactic. It is nevertheless exciting and makes for one of the most action-packed segments in the novel. Pellew realizes that the enemy ship must be boarded in force and by surprise to have any chance of success. He also realizes that the shore batteries will immediately commence firing on the French vessel the moment they realize it is in English hands. Thus, it is critical to get Papillon in motion as early as possible in the conflict so that it can escape quickly without taking substantive fire. Hornblower is entrusted to run aloft with a few men and loose the main top sails and sheet them home. This will allow the ship to quickly gather her way. He is told to wait until the boarding parties have gained a foothold on the deck and then to approach at the mainchains from either side. Hornblower is afraid of heights but more afraid to admit it and thus, in a typical Hornblower moment, he spends the rest of the planning session worrying about being afraid instead of paying attention to the details.

In execution the plan is flawless. The boarding parties strike simultaneously, with complete surprise, and with overwhelming force. They capture the deck and Hornblower runs aloft with his party. Normally the yards have footropes slung beneath them to assist sailors in retaining a firm hold while scaling out to the end of the yards. They are not present on the ship, perhaps because such a cutting out expedition was expected. In any case, Hornblower nearly freezes with fear but masters himself and runs out along the yard smartly. The sails are set and the ship sails out of the harbor as planned. The mission is successful. All of the ship's boats have been secured somehow to the stolen ship and thus they are towed to sea—all but the jolly boat under Hornblower's command. The loss is minor but is definitely Hornblower's fault. As the mission is successful, however, no one will much blame Hornblower for the loss, as Jackson hastens to point out.

The second and subtle event of the chapter is the loss of seaman Hales. Early in the story he complains to Hornblower of feeling 'queer' in the head but offers only the vaguest of descriptions. Hornblower is highly distracted and assumes the man is indicating he is afraid. As the mission proceeds, Hales has some type of seizure and when he awakens he is confused and begins to call out. At this point, the boats are very



near to a land battery and if they are discovered they will all be killed by massed grape shot. Hornblower makes an instantaneous decision and, faced with the unfortunate situation, clobbers Hales into unconsciousness. The blow is so severe that Hornblower wonders if he has killed the man—in any event Hales falls as if he had been poleaxed. Later on, Hales remains in the jolly boat as the French vessel is attacked. Hales remains in the jolly boat when the ship sails from the port. He is thus either dead by Hornblower's hand or, perhaps worse, wounded and abandoned in an open boat to drift where he may.

This is a great moral development for Hornblower. He suddenly realizes that making command decisions may result in the loss of not only one's own life, but the lives of other men; not only the death of the enemy, but perhaps the death of one's allies. Hales is the first man lost under Hornblower's command but, of course, will not be the last. Hornblower, as usual, internalizes the situation and introspects over it for some time. He eventually masters the lessons and moves forward as discussed in the next chapter.



Hornblower and the Man Who Saw God

Hornblower and the Man Who Saw God Summary

The weeks pass into winter and gales become frequent. During weekly inspection, Hornblower notes that one of his men, Styles, has numerous sores on his face and arms, covered with plaster. Styles states them to be boils and claims he has received medical attention. The twittering of the other men alerts Hornblower that something is not right. Hornblower consults the ship's doctor and receives a lackadaisical lecture about the prevalence of boils on prolonged voyages.

Later Hornblower ascends to the mizzen top. He frequents the top for solitude, finding it a place to meditate and be alone. After some time he is joined by Finch, a sailor known to be somewhat mentally deficient. Finch is restless and keeps a sharp lookout toward the maintop, forward. Hornblower questions Finch and the sailor states that he is catching sight of God dallying around the maintop; Finch says that God plays in the tops throughout the day and the devil plays in the cable tier during the dogwatch. Hornblower wonders why the devil keeps to such a specific location and timetable and decides that Finch, though somewhat crazy, might be delivering valuable information. He decides to investigate the cable tier during the dogwatch.

The next dogwatch, Hornblower sneaks into the cable tier. He is surprised to find a gathering of men huddled around another man—Styles—who is fighting rats with his arms tied. Styles, arms bound, is covered with rats that are biting his face and arms; in turn he is killing the rats by biting them. As Hornblower watches, horrified, Styles kills six rats before time is called—and various bets are paid off. Hornblower steps forward and accosts the entire group of perhaps twenty men and petty officers. He demands that they cease such activities henceforth, stating that if such occurs again he will report it to higher authority. He then turns and walks away, surprised at his own authoritative presentation.

Several days pass without incident. One dawn Indefatigable raises and closes a strange sail; it is a French warship. Hornblower takes his station in the mizzen top and mans a swivel gun. Joined by Finch, Hornblower is dismayed by Finch's flat statement that there, in the maintop, beside Midshipman Bracegirdle, seaman Oldroyd, and others, is God. The ships close and exchange cannon fire. At a proper range Hornblower discharges his swivel gun and sees men on the enemy quarterdeck fall. He begins to reload and then the mizzen mast is shot away below, and Hornblower hangs on to the swivel gun as the mizzen topmast collapses forward into the main yards. Hornblower and Finch hang on but the other men fall away to the deck or the ocean. The mizzen topmast balances precariously against the main yards. Hornblower has only moments to escape—he takes several audacious leaps and reaches the main yard safely. Finch is too terrified to move. Hornblower remonstrates with him and then remembering Finch's peculiarity calls out "'The maintop! God's there, Finch! Go along to God, quick!'" (p. 137). Finch leaps and runs into the maintop moments before the mizzen topmast



rolls away and crashes to the deck. Hornblower regains his nerve and looks around to discover the fighting has ended—the French ship has been carried by boarding. Later, shipmates congratulate him on his unlikely but lucky survival.

Hornblower and the Man Who Saw God Analysis

Finch is an interesting character. He is a capable sailor and can communicate effectively—but he is obviously not completely mentally sound. He is either mentally defective or has visual hallucinations—or both—and believes that he is constantly catching glimpses of God. Presumably, God is flitting about in the rigging or pacing in the maintop. This preoccupation does not prevent Finch from performing his duties and does not notably irritate Hornblower which is somewhat unusual. Finch makes one statement Hornblower thinks significant. After talking about God's propensity to roam the upper rigging at all hours, Finch states that the Devil frequents a specific location on the ship during a certain time. Hornblower decides this might be significant and decides to inspect the cable tier during the dogwatch. At the close of the chapter, Hornblower uses his personal acquaintance with Finch to save the man's life. When Finch is paralyzed with fear, Hornblower calls out to him using his own hallucinations as an incentive, urging Finch to run up to God in the maintop. The presumably religious Finch forgets his fear and scampers from a falling yard toward the safety offered by God, above.

Earlier in the chapter one of Hornblower's men appears with numerous sores on his face and neck. He claims they are boils, and he has in fact sought medical treatment. Although his explanation seems likely enough, the sniggering reactions of some of the other crew make Hornblower suspect Styles is not telling the truth. Upon follow up, however, Hornblower learns that Styles explanation is quite likely and that he has really visited with medical staff. Hornblower's visit to the cable tier sets matter aright, though. Styles is, oddly enough, a substitute for a rat-killing dog. He has his arms lashed and then several rats are released on him. He writhes about and catches the rats in his mouth and then kills them by gnashing them with his teeth—an interesting sport to be sure. Meanwhile many crewmen stand around and bet on his performance much like they would bet on a ratting terrier's performance in a rat baiting pit. Such behavior aboard a Royal Navy ships is improper, obviously, and gambling was prohibited. When time is called Styles is found to have killed six rats—there is some dispute as to what constitutes a 'kill'—must it be immediate or simply a mortal wound such as a broken back? The critical distinction is never resolved, however, because Hornblower intervenes. In a show of restraint he dismisses the men, says the incident will not be reported, but insists it never recur. Whether it does or whether Hornblower again visits the cable tier during the dogwatch is not discussed in the narrative. Note the subtle pun involved with having Styles act as an observed ratting terrier during the dogwatch.



Hornblower, The Frogs, and the Lobsters

Hornblower, The Frogs, and the Lobsters Summary

Indefatigable is assigned to transport and support a contingent of British soldiers led by His Lordship, the Earl of Edrington, a major. Edrington's forces augment a larger but less disciplined French loyalist force led by The Marquis of Pouzauges, a Brigadier General of His Most Christian Majesty Louis XVII. As Hornblower speaks some French, he is assigned to be the liaison between Edrington and Pouzauges. The men are loaded onto Indefatigable and other transports and cross the English channel, landing at Quiberon. The forces debark and unload considerable equipage, including a guillotine. They then march overland to the village of Muzillac where they are joined by additional forces.

Hornblower finds the relative sizes of the invading forces to be particularly small and wonders how success can be achieved. Nevertheless, he accompanies the forces ashore, assists them in unloading and transporting, and then acts as liaison between the small British supporting regiment and the larger French forces. Edrington is a disciplined and demanding leader; he reconnoiters the surrounding area and positions his men in a strong defensive position along a river crossing, sending out a guard picket. Pouzauges enters the Muzillac where he is to destroy a bridge and hold the town; he is less interested in military preparations than Edrington. Hornblower accompanies Pouzauges to Muzillac and sets up a few artillery pieces to defend the bridge. Hornblower and Bracegirdle then cross over to the bridge's central arch support and place demolition charges. Their explosion is successful and the central span of the bridge falls into the river below.

When Hornblower returns to town he finds the French forces idling about and the guillotine in rapid operation. A stack of headless bodies is piled in the town square, and additional 'traitors' are beheaded even as a sickened Hornblower watches. Hornblower then goes to sleep in a bed—a rare luxury for a young naval officers—and wakes up early in the morning. At dawn, the French forces of Napoleon Bonaparte reach the demolished bridge and opposing French forces begin a desultory fire. Hornblower is assured by Pouzauges that the local situation is well in hand, and he thus travels down the road to consult with Edrington. Edrington is surprised at the news, fearing that a lack of committed assault indicates a large flanking maneuver must be taking place. He accordingly redeploys the British troops and awaits events. Soon enough the entire French invading force streams in rout—they have indeed been flanked and, caught by surprise, the entire defense of Muzillac has collapsed.

Edrington instructs Hornblower to remain next to him and then he orders the British soldiers through a series of exacting evolutions. Disciplined volley fire drives the enemy French forces back and allows the friendly French forces to escape. Edrington then



slowly withdraws his soldiers in an orderly fashion. At the beach he holds the line while the retreating French are ferried to the Indefatigable and waiting barges, then performs an ordered withdrawal to the British ships. Hornblower and Bracegirdle are among the last to leave the beach, and they take the opportunity to discharge the longboat's 4-pounder, loaded with canister, into the advancing French forces. Hornblower reflects that history will not remember the minor defeat of Muzillac, even though it was intense and barbarous.

Hornblower, The Frogs, and the Lobsters Analysis

The chapter title is constructed from mild pejoratives in common use at the time of the novel. Englishmen commonly referred to Frenchmen as 'frogs,' presumably for their tendency to eat amphibians. English sailors commonly referred to English marines as lobsters because of their red coats and stiff bearing. Thus, the story is about Hornblower acting as a liaison between a group of Frenchmen and a group of marines. The title of the chapter contrasts humorously with that of chapter nine. Chapter six is fairly unique in the novel in that it focuses nearly entirely on an on-shore engagement which does not involve ships or boats. Hornblower reflects on his experiences afterward and concludes that warfare is often insensible and ridiculous. This chapter, along with the subsequent chapter, strongly forms the novel's theme of Hornblower considering the nature of warfare.

At the time of the events described, France was undergoing a violent and prolonged revolution led, eventually, by Napoleon Bonaparte. Having seized power from the monarchy, these forces were seen—by Britain at least—as revolutionary and undesirable. The form of government the revolutionary forces advocated, at least in theory, was a republic. Such a revolutionary republic was of course a threatening concept to a nation ruled by an absolute and hereditary monarch. Not all French forces were on the side of the revolutionaries, however. One such French force, termed a loyalist group for their loyalty to France's displaced royalty, forms the group Hornblower interacts with during the narrative. On the theory that 'the enemy of my enemy is my friend', such forces were considered to be allies of England. They were also very rare. In any event, they convince the English government that their presence in France will be so destabilizing that hordes of Frenchmen will rush to their aid and thus the republic will be overthrown. Obviously this is optimistic thinking, but after all England has very little to lose if such a venture is unsuccessful.

To support the small French forces, Edrington is sent along with a regiment. He is a mid-twenties young man of incredible resoluteness and he apparently has no qualms about taking fire. Throughout the story he is entirely exposed to enemy fire and takes no notice of it. Such coolness inspires similar resolve in his men and this aspect of Edrington's personality is one of the most memorable characterizations in the entire novel. Because Hornblower speaks French, he is sent along with Edrington to act as a liaison with the French forces. The French forces seize the small fictional town of Muzillac. But instead of acting like an armed body, the leaders become concerned with taking tea and finding suitable lodging and then spend their efforts on rounding up the



local citizenry and guillotining the men. Obviously such behavior will not cause hordes of Frenchmen to rush to their aid. But such an event is never possible because within one day the revolutionary French army counterattacks with a simple flanking maneuver. While any basic combat leader would have observation posts in place to detect against such a flanking maneuver, the French forces apparently do not. They are encircled and routed with great loss of life and within just a few minutes their entire forces breaks ranks and flees pell-mell toward the beach. Edrington covers the rout with aplomb and his disciplined withdrawal under fire is the epitome of the reliable Royal Marines in action.



Hornblower and the Spanish Galleys

Hornblower and the Spanish Galleys Summary

Indefatigable guards a small British fleet and is in a Spanish port when Spain makes peace with France. A Spanish envoy comes aboard with a sealed letter for Captain Pellew which announces the news. The envoy also informs the English they must immediately depart. As they leave the harbor they are escorted by two peculiar ships—Spanish galleys, propelled by two hundred slaves chained to the oars and manned by thirty-odd sailors. The galleys have a few large cannon and obsolescent warships. If the wind dies, they are obviously far superior to a sailing vessel. Indefatigable sails to sea, the galleys return to port, and the afternoon comes on. Unfortunately for the British, the wind dies away into a dead calm. A few minutes later, the Spanish galleys emerge again from the harbor and head for the becalmed merchant ships, ostensibly guarded by the British warship. The Spanish clearly intend to capture the merchants during the period of calm. Pellew, realizing that Indefatigable will not be able directly to support the scattered merchant ships, orders the marines and armed men into the ship's boats to close with the merchants and support them. Hornblower arms himself and leaps into the jolly boat, intending to travel to a merchant ship and reinforce her crew with a few men.

As Hornblower covers the distance to the action he sees the longboat engage a galley in combat. The longboat discharges a bow-mounted 6-pounder without much effect and thereafter the galley turns and rams the longboat, destroying the vessel and spilling the English sailors into the brine. Hornblower becomes frantic with anticipation and shrieks at his men to pull on the oars with all their might. The galley then turns to the jolly boat and attempts to ram but the lighter, nimbler craft manages to evade. Upon Hornblower's vehement orders, one of the jolly boat's crew, Jackson, then throws a grapple aboard the stern of the passing galley and the jolly boat is thus taken in tow. A Spaniard attempt to sever the grappling line and Jackson shoots him. Hornblower causes the jolly boat crew to pull in the line as far as possible—they close to within twenty yards of the galley and then exchange musket fire with the Spanish rear guard. The English get the best of the exchange and then Hornblower takes the audacious step of traveling the grapple line, hand over hand, and thus gains the rear cabin of the Spanish galley, followed by several of his men.

They briefly group and then surge upward to the rear deck. A brief fight ensues and the Spaniards, stunned more than surprised, all meet their deaths. Hornblower surveys the ship ahead—hundreds of naked, bearded slaves with shaggy heads rowing in rhythm, a few Spanish overseers forward, and the stench of chained humanity wallowing in their own filth. Hornblower is in a nervous frenzy of rage and, alone, strides forward toward the remaining Spanish crew. They are taken aback by his insistent demand of immediate surrender and after a few moments of observing his flourishing pistol—amazingly—they surrender. Hornblower causes the colors to be hauled down and the ship to be stopped. Only then does he master himself enough to look around and see how bizarre the situation is. A handful of English men have boarded a Spanish galley



and taken it rather more by force of personality than by force of arms. Within minutes another English boat comes alongside and a larger prize crew, led by a lieutenant, relieves Hornblower.

Hornblower reports to Pellew. Pellew receives the report with restrained amazement and views Hornblower in a new light. He comments that Soames has been killed—rammed by the galley—and Indefatigable is thus short a lieutenant; Hornblower is made acting lieutenant.

Hornblower and the Spanish Galleys Analysis

Chapter seven presents a major turning point in the novel when Hornblower is appointed to be an acting lieutenant. This means a change in wardroom, moving from the warrant officers' berth to the commissioned officers' berth, and of course greatly expanded responsibility with a concordant increase in freedom to make decisions. Likewise, Hornblower is now the peer of the lieutenants and advanced over the midshipmen. The acting appointment must be confirmed by the Admiralty which will entail an examination, as discussed in chapter eight. However, should the appointment be confirmed, it will in effect be 'back dated' to the day of the appointment. This is significant because a lieutenant's rank among other lieutenants is judged entirely upon their seniority as determined from their date of promotion. The senior lieutenant—even if senior by a single day—outranks the junior lieutenant.

The galleys presented are an interesting but obsolescent type of ship. The earliest galleys were Roman triremes and as late as perhaps 1300 AD this type of ship was widely used. By the time of the novel they were virtually non-existent and had been replaced by sailed vessels. The main weapon of the galley was the ram; the Spanish galleys described have also been fitted with bow-chaser cannon. The construction of the galley and the necessity of oars prohibit the use of broadside-mounts. In any 'even' match, the galley would be hopelessly outclassed. However, without wind a sailing vessel cannot maneuver whereas a galley can. Thus, while Indefatigable is becalmed the galleys hope to close with and seize the nearby English merchants, claiming them as prizes. If necessary, the galleys could maneuver onto an opponent's quarter and deliver point-blank cannon fire without suffering a reply. Thus in the nearly unique situation described in the chapter, a galley becomes useful.

The chapter presents a description of the galley's construction and operation but Hornblower focuses mainly on the slave labor used to drive the ship. Two hundred men are chained to the oars and live in their own filth. They have huge great beards and shaggy unkempt hair; otherwise they are naked or nearly so. Many have welts on their shoulders and backs from the overseer's lash. The most prominent feature of the galley is the stench of chained working men besmeared with filth and surrounded by feces and urine. These slaves lead a horrid existence. Something about their plight enrages Hornblower. His original intention to assist in the defense of a merchant ship is disregarded upon close approach to one of the galleys—and he mounts an insane assault. After being towed behind the galley rather like a modern water-skier,



Hornblower climbs the grappling line into the galley's aft cabin and, supported only by a few men, assaults the afterguard, clears the rear decks, and casts about. Realizing that the ship is still nominally controlled by the foreguard he stalks forward supported only by Jackson and a pistol and icily demands the Spaniards' capitulation. Simply by force of personality he gains their submission. Realizing that once the shock wears off they will counterattack, he tries to act lighthearted but the frightened Jackson is unable to play along. It is with great relief, then, when additional British forces board the ship. The scene is bizarre—there stands a young acting lieutenant and a cringing seaman in control of a score of Spanish prisoners on the decks of a medieval vessel in a calm sea.



Hornblower and the Examination for Lieutenant

Hornblower and the Examination for Lieutenant Summary

Indefatigable anchors for a time in Gibraltar Bay. Pellew sends Hornblower to stand for his examination for lieutenant. If Hornblower passes the examination, his acting lieutenancy will be confirmed and official, post-dated to the day of his acting appointment. If he fails the examination he will be sent back to sea as a midshipman for at least six months. After many hours of studying and preparation, he joins about forty other midshipmen aboard the examination ship—they discuss their relative chances, noting that perhaps a dozen or so will be selected. The hours drag by slowly as Hornblower waits his turn. As each candidate completes the examination they return to the waiting room to send in the next candidate and report on their experience. Hornblower's turn finally comes and he enters the cabin and presents himself to the three captains who compose the board of examination.

They begin to ask him fairly rapid questions and Hornblower becomes nervous and stammers, his mind a blank. Just as it becomes obvious that Hornblower must shortly be failed and dismissed, a commotion is heard about the ship and the captains arise and look out the stern windows—in the distance the glow of several burning ships can be seen. They are Spanish fire ships—old vessels set on a point of sail into the British harbor and then set aflame and abandoned. If they run into, or even pass close by, a British ship the fire will spread and the destruction amidst the anchored British ships could be indeed great. The three captains forget the examination and rush to the deck where they seek passage to their own commands. Captains Hammond, Foster, and Harvey hail the single available boat and commandeer it. Hornblower leaps into the boat with them and they pull for Calypso as Hammond is the senior captain. As the boat pulls along a fire ship runs very close to her and Foster determines to board the blazing hulk and attempt to steer her away from the anchored ships. Hornblower states his intention to assist.

The boat pulls alongside and Hornblower and Foster leap to the burning ship and climb up to the deck. As Foster stands at the side and calls commands, Hornblower steers the ship around the anchored vessels in the fleet. The flames devour the burning hulk and clouds of smoke and showers of burning ash cover both men. After a few exciting moments, the fire ship has been guided past the anchored English ships; Hornblower points the flaming hulk toward the distant beach just as the steering cables burn away. Foster and Hornblower, driven back by the flames, leap into the sea. Both men are weak swimmers and fear they must drown—but they are picked up at the last moment by a boat. Moments after rescue they are both horrified to realize the boat is crewed by Spaniards—the erstwhile crew of the fire ship. They are prisoners of war, but only briefly



for soon enough British patrol boats close and capture the Spanish boat. They learn that the fire ships did no substantive damage to the fleet.

Finally the boat with Captains Hammond and Harvey appears. Foster is infuriated at having been abandoned and flatly states Hammond and Harvey to be incompetent. Harvey takes offense and demands an apology which is not forthcoming. An amazed Hornblower watches the two men arrange a duel. Minutes later Hornblower accompanies Foster back to the English fleet. Foster comments on Hornblower's poor performance on the examination, notes that he will have to await another examination opportunity, and notes that—perhaps after all—the fire ships were a fortunate diversion for Hornblower.

Hornblower and the Examination for Lieutenant Analysis

By any standard Hornblower botches his formal examination for lieutenant. He enters the room tired and overwrought and stutters out his own name only upon demand. He thinks about his poor appearance and hears the various examination questions without much comprehension—and he does not respond. The board, looking for reasons to reject applicants, is clearly about to send Hornblower back to sea as a midshipman, a move which would be catastrophic to his career. Fortunately for Hornblower, the Spanish intervene on his behalf. Hornblower's official examination is thus suspended indefinitely and, in point of fact, is never resumed. He is confirmed as lieutenant *en absentia* during his lengthy imprisonment in Spain—probably on the advocacy of Kittie Cobham.

The fire ships are a potentially devastating weapon. Old or crippled smaller ships are packed with flammable material, sailed close to an enemy harbor, pointed in on a good wind, and set aflame. The crew abandons ship at a safe distance and the flaming ship runs into the enemy port where it hopefully crashes into one or more enemy vessels, transferring fire to them and thereby causing much destruction. Their efficacy varies, of course, depending upon their point of impact. The Spanish send in three fire ships—two apparently wide of the mark but the third heads straight for the prison hulk where Hornblower takes his examination. As with the Spanish galley slaves, Hornblower again sees the lives of hundreds of hapless men threatened—this time by the fire ship. Locked up as prisoners, if the prison hulk is set aflame the inmates will surely perish by burning or drowning. Hornblower takes decisive action, aided by the redoubtable Captain Foster, to obviate the threat. The action is exciting but not difficult to follow. Hornblower risks his life to divert the ship to an isolated stretch of sand.

The fire ship's original crew captures Hornblower—his second stint as a prisoner of war. He is almost immediately rescued, however, and then a brief but sharp exchange between two captains ensues and ends in the promise of a duel. Hornblower finds this inexplicable and yet only a few years earlier he himself had found exhilaration and intense meaning in his own challenge and duel. The recurring echo illustrates how far Hornblower has developed as a young man. Now twice a prisoner of war, Hornblower's



ultimate fate in the novel is foreshadowed heavily. His obvious concern for imprisoned men will, as these things go in heroic fiction, ensure that he will be well treated when his turn comes around.



Hornblower and Noah's Ark

Hornblower and Noah's Ark Summary

Acting-lieutenant Hornblower takes a boat ashore with Mr. Tapling. They land in the Gulf of Oman with a load of golden guineas to exchange the money for cattle and ships' stores with which they will resupply the English fleet. The local potentate is far removed from commerce and thus they anticipate lengthy delays and political intrigue. As they await an official messenger, they observe the super-heated dock areas. A rat emerges in broad daylight and staggers briefly about—they consider the behavior insolent. Later a man staggers by and collapses, apparently drunk. Meanwhile, for several hours they engage in conversation with Mr. Duras, the fat and sweating official representative of His Highness the Bey. Tapling refuses to release the money to Duras until the supplies are delivered. Duras worries about losing his head if he offends the Bey. Eventually a long line of slaves emerges from the city, each one staggering under a heavy sack of grain. A huge herd of animals is driven to pens by the shore. One of the slaves collapses under the sack of grain and does not move. As the stores are piled, Duras begins to haggle over price with Tapling. Duras is obviously unwell and, mid-sentence, staggers and collapses. In a sudden moment of clarity, Tapling realizes he is witnessing the effects of the bubonic plague.

The slaves and local peasants flee the area in droves and the city's gates are shut. The English sailors want to immediately flee the area. Hornblower and Tapling confer and realize that, having been exposed, they must necessarily stand a three week's or longer quarantine before they will be allowed to rejoin the fleet. In any event, the supplies on the beach are of incredible importance to the blockading British fleet. After consideration, Hornblower organizes the men and the supplies are loaded onto transports. Hornblower hauls out to *Indefatigable* and addresses *Pellew* over an expanse of water. *Pellew* orders the crew of *Caroline*—the supply transport—evacuated. Hornblower takes command of the ship and organizes her loading. The work is difficult and further hampered by the small short party, now isolated in quarantine. After many difficult hours it is accomplished. Meanwhile, *Indefatigable* sails away to rejoin the fleet.

Caroline then spends three weeks—the requisite quarantine period—sailing about trying to remain hidden from any Spanish or French ships. Fortunately no disease emerges among the crew and Hornblower slaughters one beef each day to feed his tiny crew. Most of the men have never before enjoyed a beefsteak. Near the end of the quarantine period a Spanish ship stumbles upon *Caroline* and closes with her. An infuriated Hornblower realizes he may shortly be captured. He orders his men to heavily arm themselves and then to hide on the deck. The unsuspecting Spanish guard ship approaches, assuming they are closing with a Spanish cattle transport. At the last moment Hornblower—himself unarmed—leads a mad surprise dash across *Caroline's* sides and onto the Spanish ship. The surprised Spanish crew surrenders nearly immediately. At the end of the quarantine period, Hornblower sails into Gibraltar Bay



with the much-needed supplies intact and a prize to boot. He is reprimanded by the harbor quartermaster for allowing his men to eat fresh beef.

Hornblower and Noah's Ark Analysis

The Judeo-Christian account of Noah's Ark can be found in Genesis, chapters 6 to 9; it also occurs with some variation in the Qur'an and similar myths are found in many—perhaps most—of the world's cultures. Here the ark serves as a symbol of life via animals and the reliable Hornblower acts as a humorous type of Noah, his crew naturally being symbolically composed of Shem and Ham. Midshipman Bracegirdle laughs about Hornblower's service and makes the metaphor, but not in a mean-spirited way. The title makes the chapter read something like a mythic voyage. In this sense Hornblower is the mythic hero who is educated by Tapling; together they face the doom of Oran but come off conquerors. They make their lengthy sojourn through the wilderness of the Mediterranean and finally bring home the fruits of their labors to a needy civilization. It makes an interesting read of an otherwise rather banal episode and places Hornblower in the company of some rather exalted sailors.

As related in chapter seven, Spain has recently become the ally of France and the enemy of England. This has rendered Spanish ports unavailable to England for refitting and supply. England has thus been forced to the extremity of obtaining supply for the Eastern end of the Mediterranean. Hence, Hornblower finds himself in the Gulf of Oran purchasing skinny cattle at elevated rates; war makes for strange adventure. After being potentially exposed to the Plague, Hornblower, Tapling, and the rest are unable to return to the fleet—a sensible precaution. They are placed under quarantine which segregates them for three weeks after the final signs of disease. As none of the sailors demonstrate any illness, the entire period of quarantine amounts to the three-week waiting period. During this time, Hornblower sails around rather aimlessly, his primary goal being to spend time, his secondary goal being to avoid capture. Caroline makes an attractive prize and would be easy enough to capture. The vessel is slow, top-heavy, and sails like a pig. Hornblower manages to avoid all enemy ships until nearly at the end of his voyage when a small Spanish coastal guard ship approaches—it is captured by stratagem. Hornblower has clearly learned the tricks of the trade. Gone is the naïve youth who lost a ship to expanding rice; he has been replaced by a canny captain who takes the initiative and makes instantaneous decisions which are essentially correct.



Hornblower, the Duchess, and the Devil

Hornblower, the Duchess, and the Devil Summary

Indefatigable has captured the sloop *Le Reve* and Acting-lieutenant Hornblower takes the prize into Gibraltar Bay. Hornblower reports to the port admiral who decides to purchase *Le Reve* into the service. A few hours later, Hornblower is pleasantly surprised to receive orders to command *Le Reve* on a dispatch-carrying voyage to Plymouth. He is also invited to Government House for an afternoon fête with Their Excellencies, Major-General Sir Hew and Lady Dalrymple. Hornblower attends and is his usual nervous and fidgety self. He is introduced to Her Grace the Duchess of Wharfedale. Wharfedale was once a young serving maid who married an aged Duke who died shortly thereafter. She is coarse in manner and speech and has a startlingly heavy Seven Dials accent. Hornblower finds her difficult and then learns, much to his dismay, that she will accompany him upon *Le Reve*, taking transport to England.

The next morning Wharfedale and her assistant board *Le Reve* and move into the captain's cabin. *Le Reve* weighs anchor and begins the journey. In the afternoon, a heavy fog rolls across the water. Hornblower consults his charts. Instead of making a direct line for Plymouth, Hornblower decides he must be more cautious because of the thick fog and alters course a little to the west. It is a minor but prudent decision which will have a profound influence on his future. In the early morning the fog is still visually impenetrable but Hornblower and his men hear the sounds of other ships around them. They eventually realize with horror that they are in the middle of a great Spanish fleet. Hornblower tries to sneak away but the fog begins to break and lift. Eventually he is spotted and a frigate is detached to close *Le Reve*. In the distance, Hornblower hears the sounds of the remainder of the huge Spanish fleet engaging the British main fleet in battle off the Cape of St. Vincent.

Hornblower carries two packets of important dispatches on deck and begins to weight them with lead. Wharfedale intercedes with Hornblower. She states that as a Duchess she will not be imprisoned or even searched. Instead she will be sent by transport to England in comparative safety. She offers to take the packets of dispatches and secure them on her own person, under her petticoats, and once in England to deliver them to the admiralty. Hornblower vacillates and then decides to allow Wharfedale to assist. He watches as she secures them under her clothing. A few minutes later warning shots are fired and Hornblower finally heaves to. As the Spanish boats come alongside, Wharfedale confides to Hornblower that she is in actuality Kitty Cobham, an aged stage actress posing as Wharfedale to secure preferential treatment and free transport. Such deception was made necessary, she claims, by the French capture of the town where she was staying and her subsequent overland escape. A startled Hornblower wonders what to do and considers demanding the return of the dispatches. He locks eyes with Cobham and sees her intensity and determination, and allows her to continue with the plan.



Hornblower and his men are taken into captivity and transported to a prison at Ferrol. He languishes for weeks and then receives a letter from Kitty Cobham which, using vague language, informs him that the dispatches were delivered and the admiralty approved of his handling of the situation. Hornblower is then summoned to the prison's Commandant. The Commandant informs Hornblower that he has been confirmed in his appointment—he is a lieutenant with many months seniority. As a commissioned officer, he will receive half-pay from the Spanish government and be allowed a daily two-hour parole. He is also moved into the officers' quarters at the prison. Hornblower spends nearly two years in prison. He takes his daily parole and usually wanders along the beach by himself, staring out to sea and occasionally catching a glimpse of a passing ship. He applies himself to learning Spanish but is otherwise unengaged and despondent.

One day while on parole he watches a gale coming in and then sees a small Spanish ship fleeing from a larger English warship. The Spanish ship closes with the shore at reckless abandon amidst the building weather. She tacks at the last moment around a rocky headland but a freak gust of wind separates the seams of her mainsail and within moments she founders and is driven onto the rocks. Her hull is shattered but she remains upon the rocks wearing into pieces as the surf continues to pound on her. The English ship turns about and claws off to sea. The Spanish garrison, alongside Hornblower, watches the Spanish ship disintegrate.

When Hornblower sees a few men crouching on the deck of the devastated ship he begs permission from the Commandant to mount a rescue mission. Permission is given and Hornblower takes to a small open boat with a few handpicked rowers. They make a difficult and nearly suicidal passage through the rocky coast to the vessel and manage to take off three survivors—a fourth jumps toward the boat but falls short and vanishes into the creaming sea. The rescue party is too exhausted to regain the short and so they set a scrap of sail and reach out to sea. They spend an uncomfortable night in huge seas and one of the rescued men dies from exposure. In the morning the weather breaks and they spot Syrtis, an English frigate, which rescues them. Hornblower requests a decent burial for the dead man. The English captain then states his intention to press the Spanish sailors. Hornblower informs the captain that they were performing rescue operations and therefore legally are immune to capture and the impress. Captain Crome finds Hornblower insubordinate but reconsiders and decides he is correct and decides to return the Spanish sailors to Spain. Hornblower then ruefully notes that he is under parole and must therefore also return to Spain.

The next day Syrtis closes with a Spanish fortress and sends ashore a boat under a flag of truce. Hornblower is immediately returned to prison at Ferrol where he is greeted as something of a hero and a definite gentleman of his word. He languishes for a few more months and is then once again summoned before the Commandant. The Spanish Commandant reads out a loquacious letter which, in brief, states that Hornblower's exceptional bravery and honesty have been recognized by His Most Catholic Majesty and in exchange for honorable rescue service rendered the crown he is set at liberty without terms of parole—that is, he is free to return to England.



Hornblower, the Duchess, and the Devil Analysis

Chapter ten is the longest chapter in the novel by quite a bit—nearly twice as long as most other chapters, in fact. The adventure described has a fairly complicated plot that requires a substantial amount of setup, but the narrative structure is handled flawlessly. Like the remainder of the novel, the chapter functions best when read as a short story rather than as a chapter in a novel. The introductory passages position Hornblower in command of a captured French vessel that is handy at sea and a fast swimmer.

Through various improbable but believable arrangements he is obliged to take on board a passenger—a woman. He finds the task odious but unavoidable and, thankfully, he is mistaken in his judgement, for the passenger ultimately assists him and probably secures his promotion to lieutenant.

After leaving Gibraltar, Hornblower points the ship directly toward England until a thick fog rolls in. This necessitates caution and instead of continuing toward a lee shore with no visibility Hornblower wisely points a little out to sea to gain some space until visibility improves. This course alteration takes him—quite ironically—off Cape St. Vincent on February 14, 1797. The Cape of course being the site of the remarkable English victory over the Spanish fleet on the very day on which Hornblower is captured. Indeed, he hears the sounds of distant massed cannon fire without realizing what it is, even as he is taken prisoner. His wandering course through the thick fog and black of night puts him accidentally into the direct center of the gigantic Spanish fleet. He attempts to sail away with nonchalance but is of course spotted and chased. Shortly to be captured, he prepares to weight down dispatch pouches and discard them into the sea to prevent their interception. Instead he allows Wharfedale to secure them about her person: "the appalled Hornblower saw a gleam of white thigh above her stocking tops before he tore his glance away" (p. 272) is the most humorous line in the novel when one considers Hornblower's character. When he learns that Wharfedale is no Duchess at all, but an aged stage actress, he rethinks his plan in an agonized moment. In the event, however, Cobham proves reliable and delivers the dispatches to the Admiralty. She reports back to Hornblower in a letter that reaches him some months later after passing through diplomatic channels.

Hornblower's imprisonment at Ferrol is not unpleasant. He is billeted as an officer and even receives his half-pay for being a beached lieutenant. He is allowed two hours every day on parole—his word and reputation being his guarantee to decline escape. The primary torture for Hornblower is one of inaction. He sees ships passing by and returns to his cell—unable to contribute to his country's defense. While imprisoned he learns Spanish and gains more fluency in that third tongue than he possesses with French. His nearly accidental acquisition of Spanish will serve him very well in future novels—indeed, it is a central plot point in several novels.

The final episode of the novel illustrates the complete education Hornblower has acquired. He sees men—enemy sailors—in mortal peril and takes pity upon them. He uses his Spanish to cajole others into assisting him. He uses his leadership and seamanship to navigate out to the imperiled sailors; he rescues them and then spends



the night at sea. He then demonstrates complete honesty and a fidelity of morals rarely seen in literature of any kind when he requests the English captain—who has rescued him—to return him to incarceration in Spain. As he is on parole, he has given his word that he will not escape. Regardless of the torture of inaction, regardless of the lure of rejoining the Royal Navy, Hornblower is a man of his word. The honorable lieutenant therefore returns to the Spanish prison and spends more weeks in inactivity. However, this time the mature Hornblower does not engage in prolonged self-criticizing introspection: he knows he has done the right thing. He is prepared to pay the price of honor. The novel opens with an immature Hornblower squeaking about a satisfaction of honor for a paltry offense and willing to hang up his life in the event; the novel closes with a mature Hornblower stalwartly preserving his honor against all the vicissitudes of war.



Characters

Horatio Hornblower

Horatio Hornblower, born July 4, 1776, is the protagonist of the novel and is the central figure in virtually every scene in the narrative. The narrative is told from Hornblower's point of view. Hornblower, the son of a poor father, enters the Royal Navy in 1793 as a midshipman at the age of seventeen—several years beyond the average typical age of perhaps twelve. His first position is to HMS *Justinian*, a ship of the line which remains in harbor. Hornblower's duty station is miserable and he is tormented by another midshipman who is much older and larger. Hornblower determines his situation is untenable and seizes upon an insult to demand a duel. His captain secretly intervenes and Hornblower is spared harm and then assigned to HMS *Indefatigable*, a frigate frequently on detached service.

Hornblower serves aboard *Indefatigable* under Captain Pellew for about four years. He is a midshipman for about three and one half years and is then made acting lieutenant. Early during his service on *Indefatigable*, Hornblower is placed in charge of a prize crew and ordered to take *Marie Galante* to the nearest English port. During the capture *Marie Galante* sustains hull damage and takes on water which expands her cargo of rice. Hornblower thus loses his first independent command when the ship literally pops apart under the pressure of the rice. Hornblower later masters his fear of heights and nervous nature to lead a small contingent of men on a daring cutting out raid against the French corvette *Papillon*. Later, he uses his wits, some quick thinking, and daring acrobatics to survive a lethal situation during a ship-to-ship slugging match between *Indefatigable* and a French frigate. A later assignment sees Hornblower ashore, acting as the liaison between a British infantry regiment and a French infantry group—the French in this case opposed to the revolutionary Napoleon Bonaparte. Hornblower accompanies the infantry ashore where an abortive attack is launched. He watches the French forces rout and the British forces withdraw in good order and finds the entire experience on land distasteful.

Hornblower then demonstrates his ability for audacious action and courage. During a calm period, the merchants under the nominal protection of *Indefatigable* are attacked by Spanish galleys—rowed ships not dependent upon wind for movement. Hornblower boards the galley with just a few men in support and, nearly alone, captures the ship—more through force of personality than through force of arms. His notable success is rewarded by his promotion to acting lieutenant. Several weeks later he takes his examination for lieutenant, to confirm his acting rank. The nervous Hornblower, however, goes blank before the examination committee and stutters out unintelligible responses to their rapid-fire questions. Moments before failing, however, Hornblower's career is salvaged by a Spanish attack on the harbor. Hornblower and a captain intercept a Spanish fire ship and safely guide it onto a deserted stretch of beach. Although his commission is not confirmed due to the interruption, he is not rejected either.



Hornblower returns to service with *Indefatigable* and travels to Oran where he assists in the purchase of supplies for the fleet. While ashore he, along with his men, is possibly exposed to bubonic plague. They therefore must spend three weeks in quarantine on a supply ship, the *Caroline*, Hornblower's second independent command. After passing the time, they take a prize by stratagem and rejoin the fleet successfully. Hornblower is then dispatched in temporary independent command of *Le Reve*, a captured French sloop. Due to a freak circumstance, Hornblower is captured and spends the next two years in a Spanish prison. While incarcerated he learns Spanish, learns that his commission has been confirmed *en absentia*, but otherwise languishes. Upon witnessing a shipwreck, he risks his life to rescue two Spanish sailors. His selfless bravery earns the respect of the Spanish government and after a few months more of imprisonment he is released free of parole, free to return to England.

Simpson

Simpson is an older midshipman, age approximately thirty-four, who has failed to pass the lieutenant's examination. He is rather stupid and very embittered and passes his time by tormenting the younger midshipmen such as Hornblower. Simpson enjoys being intoxicated, bullying, and gambling. He is described as physically large and powerful and Hornblower, at least, finds him to be very imposing. Simpson torments Hornblower until the younger man demands a satisfaction of honor. At the duel, Simpson is visibly afraid but participates, intending to kill Hornblower if possible. Simpson is a central character in chapter one but does not appear thereafter.

Matthews

Matthews is an able-bodied seaman aboard *Indefatigable* and plays a minor role during the novel. He is described as heavily tattooed and adorned with a thick, graying pigtail. He is assigned to the prize crew of *Marie Galante* where Hornblower appoints him as second in command due to his seniority. Matthews is a fully-capable but unimaginative sailor and carries out Hornblower's orders to the best of his ability. Matthews is often portrayed as performing some routine seaman's duty without any oversight and, often, without any direct order. Nevertheless, when the well sounding comes up entirely dry, Matthews misses the vital clue—as does Hornblower—that leads to the loss of the *Marie Galante*. Matthews is a minor character in the novel.

Captain Pellew

Captain Pellew is the post captain of HMS *Indefatigable*. He is physically average in most ways but is a keen seaman and has fine insight into the mind of the enemy. Pellew, during the novel, is literally never wrong and makes few, if any, mistakes in the execution of his duties as frigate captain. Hornblower holds Pellew in very high regard as, apparently, do most of the crew. He sails and fights his ship as an expert and places great trust in his subordinates. Pellew is not afraid to recognize achievements and never



fails to credit his subordinate officers as they deserve. Pellew is a strong presentation of the best qualities of the Royal Navy. Pellew is a recurrent and significant character in the narrative, but makes only brief appearances.

Pellew is a lightly fictionalized representation of the real-life Edward Pellew, first Viscount Exmouth, born 1757 and died 1833. Pellew, during the historical period of the novel, was indeed captain of a historical ship named HMS *Indefatigable*, though the various exploits described in the novel are wholly fictional. The historical Pellew died an Admiral and was widely respected for his skill, courage, and leadership.

Hales

Hales is a young British sailor who suffers from seizures—probably epilepsy. He is assigned to a small group of sailors commanded by Hornblower during a stealthy cutting out mission. Just prior to entering the small boat, Hales complains of feeling strange in his head; the other sailors ridicule him for cowardice and Hornblower, inexperienced, dismisses Hales' comments as nonsense. Hales performs his duty well enough until he collapses in seizure. Hornblower pushes Hales into the bottom of the boat and tries to muffle the sounds of the seizure. Hales begins to regain consciousness just as the boat is passing near a French fortress in the dark. Silence is mandatory but the disoriented and confused Hales begins to speak nonsensically and then begins to call out for his sister Mary. Hornblower clubs Hales over the head with the tiller handle to knock him out and quiet him. The blow indeed drops Hales to the bottom of the boat and Hornblower wonders if he has killed Hales. Hales remains in the boat throughout the boarding process and is then left in the boat when it drifts away. He is thus either lost at sea or, at best, recovered by the French. Hornblower worries about Hales briefly but then the unfortunate sailor is forgotten. Hales is a memorable but minor character in the novel.

Finch

Finch is an older British sailor who suffers from some type of mental deficiency—perhaps he is mentally retarded or perhaps he is just stupid and uneducated. He also has visual hallucinations and believes that he sees God flitting about the main top during the day. Finch informs Hornblower, rather obtusely that, while God is often in the maintop, the Devil walks the cable tier during the dogwatch. Acting on Finch's rather subtle information, Hornblower discovers a semi-illegal gambling and rat-fighting activity which meets on the cable tier during the dogwatch.

Several weeks later Hornblower, Finch, and some other sailors take their position in the mizzen top where they man a swivel gun and muskets during a ship-to-ship action fought between *Indefatigable* and a French frigate. Although *Indefatigable* carries the French ship by boarding, she sustains heavy damage in the exchange of broadsides and the mizzen topmast is shot through and collapses into the main yards. Hornblower and Finch hold on to the swivel gun but the other men fall away to the deck or the sea.



The mizzen topmast balances precariously but rolls along with the heave of the ship. Hornblower knows they have only moments to escape and quickly leaps for the main yards. Finch, however, is too paralyzed with fear to move until Hornblower shouts out to him that God is in the main top and commands Finch to hurry up and go to God. Finch then nimbly leaps to the main yard and races to the main top, seconds before the mizzen topmast rolls away and crashes into the sea. Finch does not recur in the narrative.

His Lordship the Earl of Edrington

His Lordship the Earl of Edrington is an infantry major in the British army. Edrington is in his mid twenties and is described as physically fit and prodigiously strong. He is incredibly calm under fire and has his entire wits about him at all times. Indeed, of all the characters in the novel, Edrington is perhaps the most imperturbable and collected. He leads his regiment in support of a landing on the French coast near the town of Muzillac. The French counter-revolutionary forces which he supports take and garrison the town of Muzillac but then are far more interested in guillotining the locals and eating French food than they are in military matters. Thus, they are entirely surprised and quickly routed when the revolutionary French forces attack.

Edrington on the other hand has scouted the surrounding terrain and established defensive positions and sent out flanks and pickets. He calmly watches the routing French troops and then leads his men in formation to a counter-attack which halts the revolutionary French forces. While his routed allies debark into transports, Edrington withdraws under heavy attack, holds the beach, and debarks his troops in an orderly fashion. Hornblower watches Edrington's calm behavior and precise orders with admiration and awe. Edrington's firm command and resolute determination save the combined forces from annihilation and allow an orderly and successful amphibious retreat. Edrington is a memorable but minor character in the novel and does not appear outside of chapter six.

Jackson

Jackson is a young British seaman of some experience who is frequently assigned to Hornblower's command. Jackson goes with Hornblower on the mission to cut out the Papillon and serves there with bravery and some distinction, earning Hornblower's confidence enough to urge him not to worry about the abandoned Hales. Jackson later accompanies Hornblower during an attack on a Spanish galley. Jackson delivers a fatal and critical musket shot to a Spaniard attempting to sever the grappling line connecting the galley to Hornblower's boat. He then follows Hornblower aboard the galley and assists in the capture of that vessel. Jackson is mentioned from time to time elsewhere in the novel, but does not appear again in a significant role. He is a resolute and brave seaman and demonstrates all of the qualities which make a fine English sailor, though he is not much of a conversationalist. Jackson is the most prominent common sailor in the novel but is nevertheless a relatively minor character.



Captain Foster

Captain Foster commands *Dreadnought*, probably a ship-of-the-line. He is nicknamed *Dreadnought Foster* in the fleet, but whether this is for his ship's name or his command style is not specified. Foster is one of three captains who form an examination board during Hornblower's abortive examination for a commission as a lieutenant. Foster and Hornblower make a rather unlikely pair as they clamber aboard a burning Spanish ship, steer it safely around several anchored British vessels, and land it on a deserted stretch of beach. Foster and Hornblower are then briefly captured by the Spanish after nearly drowning but are liberated by British patrol boats. Foster then angrily insults Captains Black Charlie Hammond and Harvey, and a duel is demanded as a satisfaction of honor. Foster is a memorable but minor character in the novel and does not appear outside of chapter eight. His ultimate fate in the duel is not considered.

Mr. Tapling

Mr. Tapling is in the employment of the Royal diplomatic services and is sent from Gibraltar to Oman to purchase a vast quantity of food for the English fleet. He is entrusted with 7,000 golden guineas with which he hopes to purchase 400 cattle and 1,500 fanegas of barley grain (that is, about 2,350 bushels). He is sent ashore in a ship's boat with Hornblower and several English sailors in support. Tapling has a keen understanding of the local workings of politics and market exchange and is prepared for long delays, unreasonable demands, and extended haggling. He greets all of these supposed difficulties with a dry humor and keeps up a funny but somewhat insulting monologue throughout the early parts of the first day ashore in Oman.

As Tapling and Hornblower wait on the docks, Tapling makes several observations about Oman which indicate something not quite correct is occurring, but Tapling does not realize what they mean. He is then fairly surprised to quickly reach agreement on a reasonable purchase price and even more surprised to see how quickly the supplies are delivered to the docks. Tapling finally realizes what is wrong after Duras collapses and declares Oman to be infected with the Plague—the Black Death. Tapling claims to have prior experience with the epidemic. After obtaining the supplies and being ensconced in quarantine aboard *Caroline*, Tapling becomes resigned to his situation and serves as cook's mate for three weeks. Tapling does not appear outside of chapter nine and is a somewhat minor, but very memorable, character in the novel.

Her Grace the Duchess of Wharfedale

Her Grace the Duchess of Wharfedale first makes Hornblower's acquaintance at Gibraltar where she is passing the time in the company of senior government leaders. Wharfedale dresses impeccably and appears, to Hornblower, to have been a great beauty. She has bold blue eyes and is probably in her mid-forties. Wharfedale comports herself well and moves with a certain grace but is quite abrasive in speech, demonstrating a particularly heavy Seven Dials accent and using various colloquialisms.



Rumor has it that Wharfedale was a simple serving maid who, when obscenely young, married an aged Duke who shortly thereafter died. As the surviving Duchess she apparently has traveled the world; as a Duchess, she is well-received in spite of her crassness of speech. Hornblower is instructed to offer her passage from Gibraltar to Plymouth aboard his temporary command *Le Reve*. Wharfedale and Hornblower spend only a few hours in each others' company but after his initial surprise at her mannerisms, Hornblower finds her open and likable.

When *Le Reve* is in danger of imminent capture, Hornblower readies to sink his dispatch pouches per regulations. Wharfedale intervenes, noting that as a Duchess she will be offered safe passage home and will certainly not be searched. Hornblower gives her the dispatch pouches and she hides them on her person—Hornblower gets a shocking eyeful when Wharfedale hikes up her petticoats and shoves the pouches into her intimate clothing in broad daylight. Moments later Wharfedale quietly admits that she is no Duchess at all—in fact, she is Kitty Cobham, once a stage actress. She had been traveling in France when hostilities resumed and had fled, penniless and desperate, to a neutral country. There, she had posed as nobility to receive preferential treatment and passage. She has no ulterior motive in her façade except to return to England. She explains that her stage training allows her to pass as a Duchess. She selected Wharfedale because she knew something about the real Wharfedale and because it was an unlikely, and therefore credible, selection. Hornblower briefly vacillates but then allows Cobham to retain the dispatches.

Cobham reaches England and delivers the dispatches while Hornblower is imprisoned. She later sends him a letter informing him of events. Cobham, as Wharfedale, is the only female character presented in any detail in the novel. She is a unique and credible character and is easily one of the most memorable individuals presented in the narrative. She does not appear outside of the first part of chapter ten.



Objects/Places

HMS Justinian

Justinian, commanded by Captain Keene, is Hornblower's first appointment as a midshipman. The ship-of-the-line is crewed by a mean-spirited lot of dubious seamen and Hornblower's existence aboard is miserable. After several weeks, Keene arranges for Hornblower to be transferred to *Indefatigable*, an active frigate.

Marie Galante

Marie Galante is a French merchant ship carrying a full cargo of rice. She is hulled during capture and thereafter turned over to a prize crew commanded by Hornblower. The prize crew does not discover the hole in the hull for two days and during that time seawater rushes into the ship and expands the cargo of rice. By the time the hole is discovered it is too late and Marie Galante literally pops apart at the seams as Hornblower and the men abandon ship.

Pique

Pique is a French privateer—once a slaver—that captures Hornblower after he abandons Marie Galante. Pique is a fine and fast sailor and, after encountering *Indefatigable*, easily runs away from the much-heavier ship. Pique is halted when Hornblower sets a fire in the paint locker. The subsequent blaze severely damages the ship which is subsequently overhauled and captured by *Indefatigable*.

Papillon

Papillon is a French corvette. Papillon is chased by *Indefatigable* but escapes into the shelter of a French harbor guarded by several shore batteries. Pellew responds by sending in the ship's boats on an audacious surprise cutting out raid. Hornblower masters his fear of heights to lead a small group of men aloft to the main top during the fighting, where he sets the sails which allow the ship to leave the harbor under fire from the shore batteries. Papillon is one of Pellew's many prizes captured during the novel.

Mizzen Top

Each mast on a frigate—the foremast, mainmast, and mizzen—has a fighting platform, or top, at a certain distance above the ship's deck. The tops, perhaps eighty or one hundred feet in the air, are fairly large platforms capable of holding a dozen or so men along with small swivel guns and other equipment. During ship-to-ship fighting,



sharpshooters are often stationed in the tops to shoot down on the decks of the enemy ship.

Muzillac

Muzillac is a small French town near the coast and astride a river. The town's strategic importance lies in the bridge over the river and its supposed counter-revolutionary sentiment. The town is seized and briefly held by counter-revolutionary forces landed by British transports but, after a few hours, is re-taken by the French army. While the counter-revolutionary forces hold the town, they spend more time guillotining the citizens than preparing military defenses.

Spanish Galleys

Two Spanish Galleys appear in chapter seven. They are long, narrow boats propelled by slave oarsmen and feature twenty-five banks of oars with two hundred slave oarsmen. In addition, the galleys have two heavy cannons in the bows and a small crew. The ships' primary advantage lies in their ability to move without wind; they are otherwise obsolescent and relatively ineffective against even a frigate capable of maneuver. The galleys sally forth during a period of calm and attempt to make prizes of some English merchant ships. Hornblower captures one galley by casting a grappling line onto it from his boat and, after a brief tow, clambering along the line to gain the galley's after cabin. Joined by a few men he audaciously captures the galley.

Fire Ship

A fire ship is an unconventional weapon utilized occasionally during the period of time considered by the novel. In brief, an aging ship is sacrificed in an attempt to damage or destroy enemy ships. The sacrificial ship is sailed into position, then the sails are set and the wheel is lashed down, pointing the ship in the direction of one or more enemy vessels which are usually at anchor or docked. The sacrificial ship is then set afire, the skeleton crew abandons ship, and the fire ship runs down toward the enemy vessels. With any luck, the fire ship will collide with one or more enemy vessels and set them also afire. The weapon was unreliable but potentially could cause the destruction of numerous enemy vessels, particularly when they were densely anchored in a supposedly safe harbor.

Noah's Ark, or, Caroline

Caroline is Hornblower's second independent command and he receives it rather by necessity. The ship is a supply brig fitted to carry cattle and grain. When Hornblower and Tapping purchase the food, they are inadvertently exposed to disease. They are therefore quarantined for three weeks during which time Hornblower and his few men are placed in charge of Caroline. The ship sails around the Mediterranean for three



weeks trying to stay as anonymous as possible. After the mandated quarantine, Hornblower takes Caroline into Gibraltar and delivers the food. The appearance of the ship—the deck crowded with animal pens crammed with cattle—leads Midshipman Bracegirdle to compare it to the Biblical Noah's Ark.

Ferrol Prison

This nondescript prison near or in Ferrol, Spain, housed Hornblower for about two years and is not specifically named. Hornblower notes only that it is a typical prison and that it is in the locality of Ferrol. It appears normal in most respects, save that it is clean, free of torture, and apparently well-supplied with food and other necessities. There are separate and presumably superior quarters for commissioned officers.



Themes

Growing Up

The novel is an abbreviated but typical coming of age story and presents Hornblower first as a confused and seasick adolescent without a dominant drive or even a defining character. By the end of the novel he is a commissioned lieutenant, trilingual, confident, and a leader of men. He has killed other men in combat, led combat squads on desperate missions, and made adaptive decisions contrary to established usages but appropriate in the instance. The novel begins with Hornblower as a timid seventeen-year-old and ends with him as a resolute and self-confident twenty-three-year-old.

Much of the initial chapter of the novel is devoted to a consideration of growing up in the Royal Navy, though the theme is subtle. When Hornblower enters his first warship cabin he is greeted by a group of other midshipmen and warrant officers who look him over and ridicule him for commencing a naval career at the advanced age of seventeen—they suggest that something like twelve would be more appropriate. Hornblower is then cast as a type of overgrown infant. Of course the reader must realize that among those insulting him are some of the opposite extreme—the mid-thirties Midshipman Simpson is the most-developed example. Simpson is incompetent as a lieutenant and has been sent back among the 'young gentlemen' to serve out the remainder of his career as a midshipman. Simpson is then cast as a type of infantile adult. Fortunately for Hornblower, Captain Keene has the insight to determine that Simpson is a loss whereas Hornblower offers great promise—if he can survive his first few months at sea.

Hornblower next serves alongside a few other named midshipmen who form his peer group. They include, for example, Midshipman Kennedy and Midshipman Bracegirdle. These two men are not presented in substantive detail in the narrative, but they are clearly not as capable as Hornblower. They are serving aboard *Indefatigable* as midshipmen while Hornblower is serving as an acting lieutenant and commander of independent commands. Clearly Pellew has seen the same capability in Hornblower as Keene. The essential differences amongst Hornblower's peer group is most fully illustrated in the early portion of chapter eight when Hornblower sits with about forty other midshipmen and considers their wide range of behavior and capabilities. In general, the novel is a narrative of growing up and this theme is subtly but consistently developed in all chapters of the text.

Military Adventures on the High Seas

The novel's principle setting is the high seas during a time of war; Napoleon Bonaparte's military adventures threaten the British Empire and only a strong naval presence keeps the revolutionary French aggressor at bay and ensures the survival of the empire. While Napoleon's armies appear invincible on land, the combined French and Spanish Navy is met and mastered by the English Navy. As a tyro midshipman of



the Royal Navy, Hornblower's sworn and obvious duty is to assist his captain to engage the enemy at every opportunity. He carries out this duty while serving aboard H.M.S. *Justinian* and, later, H.M.S. *Indefatigable*.

The novel relates a series of sea voyages during the years 1793 and 1797, as well as an approximately two-year stint in a Spanish prison; although the voyages are fictional, they contain many historical elements and the maritime combats described are derived from several historical accounts including the notable Battle of Cape St. Vincent in early 1797. The ships mentioned represent fictionalized ships of historically appropriate type, though the crews are nearly entirely fictional. One notable exception is Captain Edward Pellew of HMS *Indefatigable*—both man and ship are fictionalized representations of historical significance. All aspects of the novel are related to sea adventure; most of the action takes place at sea and even the action which takes place on land generally relates to the sea.

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

The Nature of Warfare

The novel is distinctive from the larger series of novels in that Hornblower spends much time considering the very nature of warfare. As a midshipman at the beginning of his career, Hornblower has not been exposed to prior military activities and combat situations. Naturally, he does not know how he will react when faced with violence nor has he previously considered the nature of warfare. The novel opens with Hornblower facing a personal form of combat—a duel. Although terrified of death, he approaches the event with a certain calmness of mind and a firm resolve. Later on, Hornblower is faced with containing prisoners who are obviously unhappy about their confinement. He does not hesitate to present the threat of death as a means to control his prisoners.

Later still, Hornblower must choose between personally injuring one man or allowing that man to expose a larger mission. Hornblower acts to save the lives of many of his comrades at the expense of allowing a single man, Hales, to be seriously injured and then abandoned to either death or capture. Although the decision is difficult, Hornblower makes it and then abides by the results. He has moved from facing decisions about only his own life to making decisions about the lives of others. He further witnesses the vicissitudes of warfare in the French town of Muzillac, then experiences and is enraged by brutal slavery. He intercepts a fire ship and saves the lives of many hundreds of prisoners by risking his own life. Later he is exposed to the plague but does not let fear master him. He has grown from a timid midshipman to an acting lieutenant trusted with independent command. His development concludes with a lengthy prison term where he has sufficient time for lengthy introspection. In all, a dominant theme of the novel

considers the nature of warfare and Hornblower's exposure and reaction to warfare in all of its many guises.

Style

Point of View

The novel is told from the third-person, limited, point of view. The narrator is entirely effaced, unnamed, and completely reliable. Hornblower, the main character, is the protagonist and central figure in all of the scenes in the novel. The narrator divulges internal thoughts of the protagonist, but not of other characters. The majority of the story is told through action and dialogue; revealed thoughts are frequent but generally are used for characterization rather than plot development. The novel, originally published as a series of short stories, retains the same point of view throughout, which assists in narrative continuity and an evenness of tone.

The third-person point of view allows Hornblower to be presented in a highly sympathetic manner. For example, the narrative structure portrays a young Hornblower's fear in leaping onto a burning ship as intense but mastered. The narrative also allows portrayal of Hornblower's life situations as difficult but not pathetic. For example, in the opening chapter, Hornblower's conflict with Simpson is presented in a fairly neutral way—Hornblower does not come across as entirely ridiculous, nor does he come across as entirely foolhardy. In this way, the choice of narrative view is appropriate and successful. Indeed, the structure of the novel and the method of plot development nearly require the use of a third-person point of view. Finally, the frequent appearance of minor characters is allowed through the point of view selected; it is carried throughout all of the novels of the series and is accessible and successful.

Setting

The novel features two primary types of settings. The first and by far the most significant is shipboard on a warship of the British warship. The first chapter takes place aboard the HMS *Justinian*, a ship of the line, and the remaining chapters generally take place aboard or close to HMS *Indefatigable*. When not aboard these ships, Hornblower is usually aboard some ship of the Royal Navy—perhaps the prison hulk in chapter eight or the supply brig *Caroline* in chapter nine. One of the novel's notable achievements is the presentation of shipboard life as something intriguing and even desirable while simultaneously presenting a realistic view of the hardships endured. *Indefatigable* is the most significant ship in the novel. She is a 44-gun *razé*, commanded by Captain Sir Edward Pellew, a fictionalized representation of the historical ship's historical captain. Originally a ship-of-the-line, the aging *Indefatigable* has had the upper deck removed, reducing her overall weight and sacrificing about twenty guns. The rationale for so altering a ship is fairly complex and not addressed in the novels.

The second setting presented in the novel is diffuse and consists of numerous ports, cities, and coastal landings along the Atlantic coast of France and the Mediterranean. In general, these settings are transient, poorly described, and thought of—at least by



Hornblower—as temporary locations of little importance. These include the, for example, the coast and town of Muzillac, the Gulf of Oman, and Oman.

Language and Meaning

The novel's language is generally simple 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 or historic events. It is notable that the novel was originally written and published in England and uses standard English punctuation and spelling styles which may be somewhat unfamiliar to American readers. Many of the British sailors speak with accents represented in the text by words with original spellings—the Duchess of Wharfedale, in the final chapter, is a good example of this. Occasional Spanish and French words are presented in the text—more often than not they are English words changed into putatively foreign words by imaginative English sailors.

The novel becomes linguistically complex when dealing with nautical events—a somewhat complicated specialized language is used that 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. In any event, the novel can be enjoyed without an understanding of the nautical language.

Structure

The 310 page novel is divided into ten numbered and named chapters of roughly equivalent length; the shortest is twenty-two pages, the longest fifty-five. 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. References to previous events infrequently occur 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 novel is part of a series of novels; specifically, it is chronologically the first novel in a series which extends to eleven volumes. However, the novel was the sixth-published of the series. The novel is constructed from a collection of previously-published short stories which are lightly strung together to form a somewhat disjointed narrative. Many of the principle characters presented in the novel are recurring characters. The chapter divisions make the original publication segments easy to distinguish. 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 in the period of time used as the novel's setting; namely, the war between England and France from 1794

onward. Thus, the novel's language, technology, politics, geography, et cetera, are all based upon historically accurate representations. For example, Hornblower's capture aboard *Le Reve* occurs simultaneously to the Battle of Cape St. Vincent, and can therefore be dated to February 14, 1797.



Quotes

"A January gale was roaring up the Channel, blustering loudly, and bearing on its bosom rain squalls whose big drops rattled loudly on the tarpaulin clothing of those among the officers and men whose duties kept them on deck. So hard and so long had the gale blown that even in the sheltered waters of Spithead the battleship moved uneasily at her anchors, itching a little in the choppy seas, and snubbing herself against the tautened cables with unexpected jerks. A shore boat was on its way out to her, propelled by oars in the hands of two sturdy women; it danced madly on the steep little waves, now and then putting its nose into one and sending a sheet of spray flying aft. The oarswoman in the bow knew her business, and with rapid glances over her shoulder not only kept the boat on its course but turned the bows into the worst of the waves to keep from capsizing. It slowly drew up along the starboard side of the Justinian, and as it approached the main chains the midshipman of the watch hailed it." (p. 3)

"The ship lurched again at that moment, and he clung onto the table.
'Gentlemen,' he began, pathetically, wondering how to say what he had in mind.
'My God!' exclaimed somebody at the table. 'He's seasick!'
'Seasick in Spithead!' said somebody else, in a tone in which amazement had as much place as disgust." (p. 9)

"When he came back with the lantern he shone it on the coiled sounding line hanging beside the pump, so that Hornblower recognized it at once. He lifted it down, inserted the three-foot weighted rod into the aperture of the well, and then remembered in time to take it out again and make sure it was dry. Then he let it drop, paying out the line until he felt the rod strike the ship's bottom with a satisfactory thud. He hauled out the line again, and Matthews held the lantern as Hornblower with some trepidation brought out the timber to examine it.

'Not a drop, sir!' said Matthews. 'Dry as yesterday's pannikin.'
Hornblower was agreeably surprised. Any ship he had ever heard of leaked to a certain extent; even in the well-found Indefatigable pumping had been necessary every day. He did not know whether this dryness was a remarkable phenomenon or a very remarkable one. He wanted to be both noncommittal and imperturbable.
'H'm,' was the comment he eventually produced. 'Very good, Matthews. Coil that line again.'" (pp. 54-55)

"Look'ee there, sir!' said Matthews suddenly.
In the broad light of day a small grey shape was hurrying along the weather scuppers; another one followed it and another after that. Rats! Something convulsive must be going on down below to bring them on deck in daytime, from out of their comfortable nests among the unlimited food of the cargo. The pressure must be enormous. Hornblower felt another small shock beneath his feet at that moment, as something further parted beneath them. But there was one more card to play, one last line of defence that he could think of.



'I'll jettison the cargo,' said Hornblower. He had never uttered that word in all his life, but he had read it. 'Get the prisoners and we'll start.'" (pp. 66-67)

"Hornblower looked round the bare quarters in which he was to suffer lonely confinement, lit by a dim glimmer of light from a swaying slush lamp.

'Could I have something to read?' he asked.

Neuville thought for a moment.

'I fear there are only professional books,' he said. 'But I can let you have Grandjean's Principles of Navigation, and Lebrun's Handbook on Seamanship and some similar volumes, if you think you can understand the French in which they are written.'

'I'll try,' said Hornblower." (p. 83)

"'Is that all understood?' asked Hornblower harshly; it was his mental stress that was making his voice grate so.

Everyone nodded except one man.

'Begging your pardon, sir,' said Hales, the young man who pulled stroke oar. 'I'm feeling a bit queer-like.'

Hales was a lightly built young fellow with a swarthy countenance. He put his hand to his forehead with a vague gesture as he spoke.

'You're not the only one to feel queer,' snapped Hornblower.

The other men chuckled. The thought of running the gauntlet of shore batteries, of boarding an armed corvette in the teeth of opposition, might well raise apprehension in the breast of a coward. Most of the men detailed for the expedition must have felt qualms to some extent.

'I don't mean that, sir,' said Hales indignantly. 'Course I don't.'" (pp. 102-103)

"Jackson saw the bleak look in his face.

'Don't you take on so, sir,' he said. 'They won't 'old the loss of the jolly boat agin you, not the captain and Mr. Eccles, they won't.'

'I wasn't thinking about the jolly boat,' said Hornblower. 'I was thinking about Hales.'

'Oh, 'im?' said Jackson. 'Don't you fret about 'im, sir. 'E wouldn't never 'ave made no seaman, not no 'ow.'" (p. 116)

"'What the devil's the matter with you, Finch?' he rasped at last, patience quite exhausted.

'The Devil, sir?' said Finch. 'It isn't the Devil. He's not up here, begging your pardon, sir.' "hat weak mysterious grin again, like a mischievous child. A great depth of secrets lay in those strange blue eyes. Finch peered under the topsail again; it was a gesture like a baby's playing peep-bo.

'There!' said Finch. 'I saw him that time, sir. God's come back to the maintop, sir.'

'God?'

'Aye indeed, sir. Sometimes He's in the maintop. More often than not, sir. I saw Him that



time, with His beard all a-blowing in the wind. 'Tis only from here that you can see Him, sir.'" (p. 121)

"The starboard side mizzen topmast shrouds still survived; they, as well as the topmast, were resting across the main yard, strained taut as fiddle strings, the mainyard tightening them just as the bridge tightens the strings of a fiddle. But along those shrouds lay the only way to safety—a sloping path from the peril of the top to the comparative safety of the mainyard.

The mast began to slip, to roll, out towards the end of the yard. Even if the mainyard held, the mizzen mast would soon fall into the sea alongside. All about them were thunderous noises—spars smashing, ropes parting; the guns were still bellowing and everyone below seemed to be yelling and screaming." (pp. 135-136)

"'I'd like to see him laying aloft on a stormy night,' muttered Kennedy. 'D'ye think he could take the main tops'l earring?'

'These lobsters!' said Midshipman Bracegirdle.

The scarlet lines stood rigid, all five companies, the sergeants with their halberds indicating the intervals—from halberd to halberd the line of faces dipped down and then up again, with the men exactly sized off, the tallest men at the flanks and the shortest men in the centre of each company. Not a finger moved, not an eyebrow twitched. Down every back hung rigidly a powdered pigtail.

The mounted officer trotted down the line to where the naval party waited, and Lieutenant Bolton, in command, stepped forward with his hand to his hat brim.

'My men are ready to embark, sir,' said the army officer. 'The baggage will be here immediately.'" (pp. 141-142)

"He entered the main street of the town and rounded the slight bend to the central square, to see something that made him, without his own volition, tug at his reins and halt his horse. The square was full of people, townsfolk and soldiers, and in the centre of the square a tall narrow rectangle reached upwards towards the sky with a glittering blade at its upper end. The blade fell with a reverberating thump, and the little group of men round the base of the rectangle dragged something to one side and added it to the heap already there. The portable guillotine was at work." (p. 157)

"Hands were aloft loosing sail ready to sheet home, while the clank of the capstan told how other men were heaving the cable short, and Hornblower was standing on the portside gangway with Mr. Wales the carpenter, looking over at the white houses of one of the most beautiful cities in Europe.

'I've been ashore there twicet,' said Wales. 'The wine's good—vino, they calls it—if you happen to like that kind o' muck. But don't you ever try that brandy, Mr. Hornblower. Poison, it is, rank poison. Hello! We're going to have an escort, I see.'" (p. 183)

"'This ship carries her way well, Jackson, doesn't she?' he said, and he made himself



laugh as he spoke, as if everything in the world were a matter of sublime certainty. 'Aye, sir, I suppose she does, sir,' said the startled Jackson; he was fidgeting nervously with his pistols.

'And look at that man there,' went on Hornblower, pointing to a galley slave. 'Did you ever see such a beard in your life?'

'N-no, sir.'

'Speak to me, you fool. Talk naturally.'

'I—I dunno what to say, sir.'

'You've no sense, damn you, Jackson. See the welt on that fellow's shoulder? He must have caught it from the overseer's whip not so long ago.'

'Mebbe you're right, sir.'

Hornblower was repressing his impatience and was about to make another speech when he heard a rasping thump alongside and a moment later the gig's crew was pouring over the bulwarks. The relief was inexpressible. Hornblower was about to relax completely when he remembered appearances. He stiffened himself up.

'Glad to see you aboard, sir,' he said, as Lieutenant Chadd swung his legs over and dropped to the maindeck at the break of the forecastle." (pp. 206-207)

"'Well sir?' said a stern voice. 'Report yourself. We have no time to waste.'

'H-Hornblower, sir. H-Horation H-Hornblower. M-Midshipman—I mean Acting-Lieutenant, H.M.S. Indefatigable.'

'Your certificates, please,' said the right-hand face.

Hornblower handed them over, and as he waited for them to be examined, the left-hand face suddenly spoke. 'You are close-hauled on the port tack, Mr. Hornblower, beating up-Channel with a nor'easterly wind blowing hard, with Dover bearing north two miles. Is that clear?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Now the wind veers four points and takes you flack aback. What do you do, sir? What do you do?'

Hornblower's mind, if it was thinking about anything at all at that moment, was thinking about rhumb lines; this question took him as much aback as the situation it envisaged. His mouth opened and shut, but there was no word he could say.

'By now you're dismayed,' said the middle face—a swarthy face; Hornblower was making the deduction that it must belong to Black Charlie Hammond. He could think about that even if he could not force his mind to think at all about his examination.

'Dismayed,' said the left-hand face, with a smile like Nero enjoying a Christian's death agony. 'With Dover cliffs under your lee. You are in serious trouble, Mr.—ah—Hornblower.'

Serious indeed. Hornblower's mouth opened and shut again. His dulled mind heard, without paying special attention to it, the thud of a cannon shot somewhere not too far off." (pp. 217-218)

"He was being borne along on a wave of the highest exaltation; the roar of the fire was intoxicating, and he knew not a moment's fear. Then the whole deck only a yard or two forward of the wheel opened up in flame. Fire spouted out of the gaping seams and the



heat was utterly unbearable, and the fire moved rapidly aft as the seams gaped progressively backward.

Hornblower felt for the loop of line to lash the wheel, but before he could do so the wheel spun idly under his hand, presumably as the tiller ropes below him were burned away, and at the same time the deck under his feet heaved and warped in the fire. He staggered back to the taffrail. Foster was there.

'Tiller ropes burned away, sir,' reported Hornblower.

Flames roared up beside them. His coat sleeve was smouldering.

'Jump!' said Foster." (p 223)

"'Sir—' began Hornblower to Tapling, and the two men looked at each other with the same awful thought occurring to them at the same moment.

Duras began to say something; with one hand on the withers of the donkey and the other gesticulating in the air it seemed that he was making something of a speech, but there was no sense in the words he was roaring out in a hoarse voice. His face was swollen beyond its customary fatness and his expression was wildly distorted, while his cheeks were so suffused with blood as to look dark under his tan. Duras quitted his hold on the donkey and began to reel about in half circles, under the eyes of Moors and Englishmen. His voice died away to a whisper, his legs gave way under him, and he fell to his hands and knees and then to his face.

'That's the plague!' said Tapling. 'The Black Death! I saw it in Smyrna in '96!'" (p. 241)

"'Hullo, Noah, how are Shem and Ham?' asked Mr. Bracegirdle.

'Shem and Ham have taken a prize,' said Hornblower. 'I regret that Mr. Bracegirdle can't say the same.'

But the chief commissary of the squadrom, when Hornblower reported to him, had a comment to which even Hornblower was unable to make a reply.

'Do you mean to tell me, Mr. Hornblower,' said the chief commissary, 'that you allowed your men to eat fresh beef? A bullock a day for your eighteen men? There must have been plenty of ship's provisions on board. That was wanton extravagance, Mr. Hornblower. I'm surprised at you.'" (p. 254)

"A duchess, no less! Hornblower poked forward his padded leg, pointed his toe, laid his hand on his heart and bowed with all the depth the tightness of his breeches allowed—he had still been growing when he bought them on joining the Indefatigable. Bold blue eyes, and a once beautiful middle-aged face.

'So this 'ere's the feller in question?' said the Duchess. 'Matilda, my dear, are you going to hentrust me to a hinfant in harms?'

The startling vulgarity of the accent took Hornblower's breath away. He had been ready for almost anything except that a superbly dressed duchess should speak in the accent of Seven Dials. He raised his eyes to stare, while forgetting to straighten himself up, standing with his chin poked forward and his hand still on his heart.

'You look like a gander on a green,' said the Duchess. 'I hexpects you to 'iss hany moment.'" (p. 258)



"It says—"We, Carlos Leonardo Luis Manuel de Godoy y Boegas, First Minister of His Most Catholic Majesty, Prince of the Peace, Duke of Alcudia and Grandee of the First Class, Count of Alcudia, Knight of the Most Sacred Order of the Golden Fleece, Knight of the Holy Order of Santiago, Knight of the Most Distinguished Order of Calatrava, Captain General of His Most Catholic Majesty's forces by Land and Sea, Colonel General of the Guardia de Corps, Admiral of the Two Oceans, General of the cavalry, of the infantry, and of the artillery,"—in any event, sir, it is an order to me to take immediate steps to set you at liberty. I am to restore you under flag of truce to your fellow countrymen in recognition of—"your courage and self-sacrifice in saving life at the peril of your own."

'Thank you, sir,' said Hornblower." (pp. 309-310)

Topics for Discussion

Hornblower arranges a duel in which only one pistol will be loaded; he calculates his chance of surviving the duel at an even half—"the Even Chance." Discuss the rationale behind engaging in a duel where one is fifty per cent likely to die.

After losing Marie Galante, Hornblower engages in lengthy and bitter introspection about his behavior upon assuming his first command. He eventually concludes that any half-wit midshipman would have done a better job. Do you agree? Why or why not?

While a prisoner on Pique, Hornblower starts a fire in the paint locker. The fire threatens to burn the ship to the waterline but is eventually contained, although Pique is subsequently captured by *Indefatigable*. In an after-action interview Hornblower avows no special knowledge of how the fire came about. Why do you think he refused to take credit for disabling the French privateer?

Prior to a dangerous mission, sailor Hales complains of feeling "queer-like" (p. 103). Hornblower disregards the comment and later Hales has a seizure and subsequently is abandoned. How does Hales' fate impact Hornblower?

Fitch confides in Hornblower that he occasionally catches glimpses of God flitting about the maintop. Hornblower concludes Fitch is hallucinating. What explanations can you offer to perhaps explain why Fitch thought he was seeing God in the maintop? Was Fitch simply crazy?

Chapter six is entitled *Hornblower, the Frogs, and the Lobsters*. Who are the 'frogs'? Who are the 'lobsters'? Why would a British sailor, such as Midshipman Bracegirdle, use such terms?

Hornblower finds the Spanish galleys, rowed by slave power, disgusting and infuriating. As he boards one of the galleys he is overcome by rage and hate. What aspects of the galley do you think caused such a visceral reaction in the young midshipman?

Hornblower proves himself a capable seaman, a competent leader of men, an innovative thinker, and a brave warrior. Yet when he goes to face an examination board, he becomes a stammering mute. What aspects of the verbal examination for lieutenant probably caused Hornblower's nervous reaction?

When Hornblower brings the supply brig *Caroline* into Gibraltar Bay, Midshipman Bracegirdle sarcastically refers to the ship as Noah's Ark and the crew as Shem and Ham. How does the *Caroline* resemble the fabled naval vessel described in the Bible?

As Hornblower's dispatch vessel is being captured, he ignores standing Admiralty orders and entrusts secret dispatches to Duchess Wharfedale. At this point, was



Hornblower's action a mistake? Moments later, Wharfedale discloses that she is not really nobility but simply an aging stage actress posing as nobility to secure passage and board. Even so, Hornblower allows her to retain the dispatches. At this point, was Hornblower's action a mistake? Do not consider the final successful delivery when discussion your opinion.