The Man with the Golden Gun Study Guide

The Man with the Golden Gun by Ian Fleming

BOOKRAGS

Contents

Plot Summary

This book is described on the cover and on its liner as "the last James Bond novel that [his creator] the late Ian Fleming wrote". A fast-paced, suspenseful novel of action, violence, suspense, and unexpected metaphoric depth, it tells the tale of an intensely personal confrontation between British secret agent James Bond and the internationally notorious assassin Scaramanga. Themes relating to the nature of murder and to the multi-faceted mirror imageries of life thread through its tersely written narrative.

The novel begins with a two-chapter prologue in which British secret agent James Bond, believed by his superiors to have been killed while on assignment, returns to London. As those superiors question Bond's identity and the motivations behind his return, narration indicates that Bond's thought processes have been altered by enemy Russian agents for purposes that are at first unknown but soon become clear when Bond attempts to assassinate the head of the British Secret Service. The attempt is foiled and Bond is rehabilitated, sent almost immediately on another mission that should, in the mind of his boss, prove his loyalty once and for all.

That mission leads Bond to Jamaica, where he picks up the trail of the internationally feared assassin-for-hire Scaramanga, and where he is also unexpectedly and happily reunited with his former secretary, Mary Goodnight. Goodnight supplies him with the information and resources he needs to track Scaramanga, whom Bond soon confronts in a brothel run by the spirited Tiffy. Bond convinces Scaramanga that he is not a police officer, but rather a specialist helping a plantation owner who's having trouble with security around his estate. Scaramanga hires Bond to provide security on his own establishment, The Thunderbird Hotel, during an important business meeting.

Upon arrival at the hotel, Bond quickly comes to understand that it is a front for a startling collection of illegal activities—industrial sabotage, drug dealing, money laundering, and more. Scaramanga demands that Bond assist in making the arrangements for the meeting, which Scaramanga claims is for investors in the hotel but which Bond soon understands is actually for a group of internationally connected gangsters.

As the meeting progresses, one of the gangsters disagrees with Scaramanga and is shot for it. Another is revealed to be an agent for the Russian KGB who knows about Bond's mission and who eventually becomes aware of Bond's true identity. Bond, with the help of Mary Goodnight, manages to keep that identity secret from Scaramanga, but not for long—soon, he and the other gangsters are making plans to end Bond's life. Their attempt takes place on a train ride to the other side of the island. On the ride, a shoot-out results in one of the gangsters being killed, Scaramanga and Bond both being wounded and jumping off the train in pursuit of each other, and the rest of the gangsters being killed by a bomb set on a bridge by Bond's CIA allies.

Bond pursues Scaramanga through the swampy morass, eventually coming across him as he's leaning up against a tree and eating a snake he'd just killed. When Bond steps

out to confront him, Scaramanga pleads for a bit of time to make his peace with God. As he's praying, however, he stealthily reaches for his gun and fires at Bond, wounding him. Bond instantly fires back and kills his opponent. Later, while recovering in hospital, Bond receives word through Mary Goodnight that the superiors at the Secret Service are pleased with him and are offering him significant honors. Bond, however, realizes that a public life of honor and respect is not something he's interested in, and rejects the offer. He accepts, however, Mary Goodnight's offer to let him recuperate from his wounds and his adventures at her home.

Chapters 1 and 2

Chapters 1 and 2 Summary

This book is described on the cover and on its liner as "the last James Bond novel that [his creator] the late Ian Fleming wrote." A fast-paced, suspenseful novel of action, violence, suspense, and unexpected metaphoric depth, it tells the tale of an intensely personal confrontation between British secret agent James Bond, and the internationally notorious assassin Scaramanga. Themes relating to the nature of murder and to the multi-faceted mirror imageries of life thread through its tersely written narrative.

When telephone operators at the top-secret Ministry of Defense take a telephone call from a man calling himself James Bond, they forward it to Captain Walker, who tests Bond's claims of identity. After Bond passes these tests, Walker consults a superior, his comments revealing that for several months the Ministry believed Bond was dead. Walker is instructed to direct Bond to meet Major Townsend, the so-called "Soft Man". Meanwhile, narration describes how Bond is acting on the instructions of Colonel Boris, "who had been in charge of him for the past few months after he had finished his treatment in the luxurious Institute on the Nevsky Prospect in Leningrad".

After leaving his hotel, Bond travels to where he is to meet Townsend, and is both watched and photographed along the way. As he arrives at the disguised Defense building, he is also x-rayed, his coat is taken to be examined, and he is again photographed. As Bond and Townsend converse about whether Bond is who he says he is (making references to Bond's apparent death and his past relationship with secretary Mary Goodnight), narration again reveals that Col. Boris gave Bond all the information he would need to pass the interview. After a while Townsend leaves the interview, consults with a superior who's apparently been listening in on the conversation, and is told that Bond should be allowed to see M, the chief of the defense staff.

The Chief of Staff attempts to convince him to not see Bond, repeatedly suggesting that Bond is not himself and should be checked out, medically and psychologically. M, however, is resolved to see Bond and tells the Chief of Staff to usher him in as soon as he arrives. Before the Chief of Staff leaves, however, M confirms with him that a mysterious device in the ceiling is functioning.

As the Chief of Staff leaves, he discovers Bond in the outer office conversing with M's secretary, Miss Moneypenny. As the Chief of Staff shows Bond in to M, Miss Moneypenny tells the Chief of Staff that something is wrong with Bond—who is, at that moment, greeting M. Conversation between the two men reveals Bond's story—after his most recent assignment, during which he was apparently killed, he was found in Russia suffering from amnesia. He says he was then taken to the headquarters of the KGB (the Russian Secret Service), where he says he was treated well and was convinced that the time had come to work for peace. As he and M argue over whether peace is even possible, Bond casually reaches for the gun in his pocket, and M, just as casually,

reaches for a button under his desk. Bond suddenly pulls the gun, M just as suddenly pushes the button, and the poison shooting from the gun splatters over a wall that suddenly drops from the ceiling (this seems to be the mysterious device referred to earlier). Instantly, the Chief of Staff and other security personnel rush in and subdue Bond. M orders him to be taken to see the on-duty medical officer, and issues orders that Bond is to be handed over to the Ministry's expert in removing brainwashing. He also orders that the press be told that Bond has returned (in order to let the Russians know, albeit indirectly, the situation), and that plans are to be made to send Bond after a notorious Russian agent, Scaramanga.

Chapters 1 and 2 Analysis

This section of the book might, under some circumstances, be considered a prologue, or an introduction to the main story that follows. Most prologues, however, contain narrative elements that in some way or another introduce, define, illuminate, or foreshadow the action to come. These two chapters, by contrast, don't perform any of those functions, except to a somewhat limited degree. They introduce the main character (Bond), refer to important secondary characters (M, Mary Goodnight), and at the end of chapter two, M's reference to Scaramanga sets the rest of the story in motion. Ultimately, however, the action of these two chapters is essentially self-contained. It could be argued that the distracted, re-conditioned mental state in which Bond finds himself here foreshadows the glimpses of unaccustomed introspection Bond experiences later in the book, but the connection is tenuous at best. All in all, it might be more appropriate to consider this section in gastronomic terms—as an appetizer before the main course, a separate dish with hints of the flavors to come, but which is intended more to trigger interest rather than define, at least to some degree, what the diner/reader is to be interested in.

The key "flavor", or component of this "appetizer" that links it to the rest of the book is the reference to Russia and the KGB. Throughout the main body of the novel, Russia is a shadowy, mysterious, malevolent entity—a literary manifestation of the way Russia was viewed by the west (mainly the USA and Britain) at the time the book was written. In other words Russia, in western life and art of the time, was a kind of evil empire, an evil that essentially defines the vision and nature of Bond's life—it is the evil over which he must triumph on any terms and at any cost. This makes Bond's reference to peace with the Russians here an ironic one, to say the least, giving the appetizer a sharp flavor of bitterness and edge. Bond, both as an icon of popular culture and as a character in this and other books, is symbolically and personally opposed to everything Russia apparently stands for. The fact that he speaks here in positive terms about Russia serves ultimately to turn M, and Bond himself (once he's recovered from being brainwashed), even more strongly against "the evil empire". It awakens in the reader the desire for Bond to win, to triumph over "the bad guys" who attempted to turn such an iconic "good guy" against not only himself, but against what most readers of the time would think of as the good of mankind.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

After a brief narration of how M breaks up his usual, comfortable lunch routine by unusually ordering a full bottle of wine and of how he ponders his recent decision to put Bond back into service, this chapter focuses on the character of Scaramanga, as portrayed in various reports read by M at his desk. These reports describe Scaramanga as a highly skilled assassin-for-hire with a reputation for exceptional marksmanship and sexual prowess. They also describe him as being a kind of anti-hero, popular because of the outrageous nature of his assassinations and his ability to evade the law. Other reports detail his psychological history, exploring why he became the killer he did, and also offer suggestions that because he's so obsessed and identified with his gun, he's perhaps not as sexually successful as his reputation would suggest. Finally, the various reports suggest that Scaramanga should be eliminated, "if necessary by the inhuman means he himself employs". M signs the last report, but is described by narration as wondering "if he had signed James Bond's death warrant".

Chapter 3 Analysis

On a technical level, this chapter performs two functions—it serves as a transitional chapter between the prologue and the rest of the book and provides detailed information about the principal antagonist Bond is about to face. As the writing here fulfills this latter function, it takes on an additional level of meaning, in that many of the characteristics attributable to Scaramanga can also be attributed to Bond. These include his marksmanship, his sexual prowess, his being regarded as a hero (which Bond is, to both other characters and to readers), and the fact that he should be eliminated, which the Russians want. In short, this chapter introduces and develops one of the book's key themes—the appearance of parallels between characters. It's interesting to note that the idea that Scaramanga isn't as sexually powerful as his reputation suggests isn't developed further in the rest of the book—it might have been an interesting subtext or psychological aspect of character motivation to explore.

Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

Bond arrives at an airport in Jamaica and fills time before his next flight by looking at his horoscope, which forecasts a pleasant surprise and advises him to seize a "golden" opportunity with both hands. He then looks through the local newspaper, which advertises a sale at 3 ½ Love Lane in a local community called Savannah del Mar. Finally, out of habit, he glances through a pile of messages left for travelers to see if there's anything for him and discovers a message left for Scaramanga. He opens it and discovers that there's to be a rendezvous at 3 ½ Love Lane the following day. He replaces the message and calls the office of a Ministry of Defense contact, where he's happily surprised to talk with Mary Goodnight, his former secretary who is now working in Jamaica. After a bit of flirtatious banter, he asks her to get him a car, some money, and information about both Love Lane and the owner of an estate nearby. After arranging to meet later, Bond checks into a hotel, naps, and showers. Narration at this point describes the process he went through to have the Russian brainwashing removed from his psyche, and how at the conclusion of the process he hated the Russians and everything the KGB stood for more than ever.

That evening, Bond has a playfully sexy reunion with Goodnight, who is described as having a "golden" tan and who gives him the money he asked for, tells him she's found him a car, tells him the estate near Love Lane is owned by a man named Tony Hugill. She also offers information about Hugill's business dealings and those on the rest of the island, which are fundamentally based in the volatile and competitive sugar market, in which Russia and Cuba are both involved. She adds that Hugill's business has been being sabotaged, which she suggests is the result of Cuban attempts to ruin Jamaica's sugar crop so that they (the Cubans) can step in and pick up the slack. She also explains that Bond's contact, a man named Ross, has been missing for some time—ever since he went on a mission to track down Scaramanga. Finally, and with some embarrassment, she tells him that she's discovered that 3 ½ Love Lane is a brothel.

Chapter 4 Analysis

The first element to note about this chapter is its rather blatant use of foreshadowing in the form of Bond's horoscope. The "pleasant surprise" clearly foreshadows the appearance of Mary Goodnight on the scene, while the reference to the "golden" opportunity foreshadows both Goodnight (whose appearance is frequently described as being "golden") and, more ironically, the conflict with Scaramanga (who, of course, has a "golden" gun). The second noteworthy element relates to the discovery of the message for Scaramanga, which could at best be seen as coincidental and at worst as highly unlikely. In other words, the reader might justifiably question whether a man as notorious as Scaramanga functioning in such dangerous circumstances would do something as foolishly risky as have messages left for him in a public place. This is an

example of a problem that arises in a number of similar, plot/suspense driven narratives—logic often gives way to convenience and/or necessity.

Other elements of foreshadowing can be found in the information offered by Mary Goodnight. The reference to the missing agent foreshadows the revelation in chapter nine that that agent has been killed by Scaramanga, while her commentary on the sugar trade foreshadows the revelation, also in chapter nine, that Scaramanga and his allies are involved in corrupting the trade. Finally, the reference to Love Lane foreshadows Bond's journey there in the following section.

The third noteworthy element of this section is the explanation of how Bond became clear of the Russian brainwashing and emerged with an even greater hatred for all things Russian. This explanation is essential, but creates a sense of suspense that isn't capitalized upon in the same way as the reference to Scaramanga's sexuality remains unexplored. Might it not have made for an even more suspenseful story if the reader had, in his mind, questions of whether Bond was fully recovered or whether he might suddenly (and uncontrollably) have reverted to his revised ways of thinking?

Finally, the novel's authorial (social?) point of view manifests again in this section, as the author portrays Bond as being more anti-Russian than ever. In other words, Bond's attitude shift here evokes and manifests western society's perspective on Russia, and arguably that of the reader of the time—at this point, one is arguably more aligned with Bond than ever.

Chapters 5 and 6

Chapters 5 and 6 Summary

The opening of this chapter describes the countryside of Jamaica visible to Bond and Mary Goodnight as they travel to Savannah La Mar. After their arrival, Bond sends Goodnight back home in a rental car and wanders through town in search of 3 ½ Love Lane. When he finds it, he talks with the manager, a beautiful young mixed-race woman named Tiffy, who explains that there are girls upstairs if Bond wants to spend time with them. Bond tactfully refuses, and then watches with amusement as Tiffy feeds a pair of large black birds. She's in the process of giving them a second helping, paid for by Bond, when quiet footsteps come downstairs. Tiffy immediately becomes fearful, telling Bond that the man coming down has a bad temper and that he should just go along with everything he says. Bond turns to look at the man when he comes into the room, and is inwardly surprised when he recognizes Scaramanga, who immediately becomes suspicious of a stranger in town and tries to intimidate him. When Bond doesn't respond in the way Scaramanga seems to want, Scaramanga pulls his gun. Narration describes two shots being fired . . . and then describes how the two black birds explode in a cloud of flesh and feathers, and how Tiffy collapses in hysterical tears. Scaramanga again tries to intimidate Bond, and is a little put out when again Bond doesn't respond.

After comforting Tiffy, Bond sits down for a conversation with Scaramanga, explaining that he's not a police officer as Scaramanga repeatedly accuses him of being, but that he's an insurance investigator come to the island to look into claims of sabotage on the Tony Hugill estate. Scaramanga asks if he carries a gun, and when he admits that he does and describes it, Scaramanga seems impressed. After giving Tiffy a hundred dollars to compensate her for her upset, Scaramanga turns back to Bond, offering him a thousand dollars to use his "investigative" skills to ensure that a set of business negotiations he is about to undertake are secure. These negotiations, he explains, are to convince investors in a hotel he's building to put up more money in spite of the operation being in considerable trouble. Bond considers his options and then agrees to accept the offer. Scaramanga offers to drive Bond to his car, saying that he Bond can accompany him to the hotel he owns, The Thunderbird Hotel, where the negotiations are to take place. Again Bond accepts, and Scaramanga goes out. Bond tells Tiffy to tell anyone looking for him that he's at the hotel, and she urges him to be careful, saying that Scaramanga's "the worstest man [she] ever heard tell of" and adding that he also deals in marijuana. As Bond joins Scaramanga, and as they drive down the coast, he Bond wonders if he's doing the right thing.

Chapters 5 and 6 Analysis

These two chapters introduce and develop the actual conflict between protagonist (Bond) and antagonist (Scaramanga), with the tension and competitiveness between the two forming much of the subtext to the action throughout the novel. A key

component of this subtext is the thematically relevant idea that they are, in many ways, very similar—but in one very significant and different way.

On a technical level, the writing here is skillfully suspenseful, as it introduces Scaramanga and, even more suspensefully, narrates the shooting of the birds. This particular event is written in such a way as to create a sense of uncertainty in the reader's mind as to who was shot, Tiffy or Bond or Scaramanga. The birds aren't really a possibility—that is, until the narrative makes it clear that they are in fact the reality.

Also in technical terms, this section, particularly chapter six, is filled with information and events that lay the groundwork for the action that follows. In other words, the action of this section moves the plot into a higher gear, its sense of momentum heightened by the previously discussed establishment of the personal tensions between Scaramanga and the man he thinks of as his security operative but who is, in fact, anything but interested in his security.

The character of Tiffy is, like the other female characters in the book, more reactive than active, serving to support and aid Bond in an essentially submissive way. There have been a number of criticisms levied at the many Bond books over the years, suggesting they are essentially misogynist and sexist. While the portrayals of female characters in the novel don't necessarily fit into either of those descriptions in that the women do contribute positively in ways other than the sexual, there is certainly a degree of patronization about the writing associated with them. None of them (Moneypenny, Goodnight, Tiffy) is presented or portrayed with a significant amount of either status or stature, and the book's final chapter does contain a quite negative view of female qualities, the implications of which are discussed in that context. Finally, chapter ten contains an extremely vivid portrayal of female sexuality (and male views of it) that might be seen as contributing heavily to the perception of the Bond books general attitude to the female gender. It must be remembered, however, that the books were written during a period in which the process of female empowerment was just beginning. This is not to say that the books views on women were/are justified, but it might serve as at least a partial explanation of why those views are what they are.

Chapters 7 and 8

Chapters 7 and 8 Summary

Narration describes how Bond, following Scaramanga, arrives at The Thunderbird Hotel in the middle of the night, how his car is taken and parked for him, and how he's shown to his room where he unpacks, undresses, has a shower, has a stiff drink, thinks about Scaramanga, and tests his gun. Bond then falls asleep but is awakened by a nightmare in which he is the lone defender of a large fort against an attack by Scaramanga, an attack which culminates in the landing of an ever-expanding cannonball. The following morning Bond strolls out for a swim and notices two important things—Scaramanga exercising strenuously, and the fact that what exists of the half-constructed hotel is mostly façade, apparently constructed to impress the investors. Bond swims more than usual, in order to bring his condition up to Scaramanga's, searches out his car and makes sure it's got enough gas for a fast getaway, returns to his room for a shower and change, and then meets Scaramanga. Together they investigate the room where Scaramanga's negotiations are to take place, and Scaramanga reveals that it's already been bugged—by him, so he can record the conversations scheduled to take place there. He then gives Bond a list of the men he's negotiating with, beginning with a Dutch investor named Hendriks. Narration describes how other names on the list sound to Bond like gangsters, leading him to drop hints about their identity to Scaramanga, who becomes angry and tells Bond to mind his own business. Scaramanga leaves to make further arrangements, and Bond contemplates the name of Hendriks, which he thinks is a false name. At that moment, Mr. Hendriks arrives.

The action flows continuously into the next chapter, as Scaramanga's other guests arrive. As Bond notes details about each of them, Scaramanga orders him to be in the bar at twelve, adding that he's going to be introduced as his (Scaramanga's) personal assistant. Bond takes a pointed jibe at him, which unsettles him. Narration comments that Bond "proposed to needle [Scaramanga], and go on needling until it came to a fight . . . there would come a moment . . . when his vanity would be so sharply pricked that he [Scaramanga] would draw. Then Bond would have a small edge . . ."

When Bond returns to his room, he discovers it has been searched, but so well that most people would never know. He gets himself ready for what's to come next, at one point scrutinizing himself in the mirror. He joins Scaramanga in the bar where he's introduced and ordered to pass around drinks. He makes conversation with all the investors, but has a particularly uncommunicative time with Mr. Hendriks—who, Bond notices curiously, takes Scaramanga into a corner of the room and speaks quietly but firmly with him. Hendriks, it seems, is one man who has power over Scaramanga. At lunch, Bond sits between two of the other investors, who discuss their reluctance to continue investing in the hotel. After lunch, while Scaramanga and the investors are retiring to their rooms, Bond strolls around the hotel grounds, settles down in the shade of a tree, and falls asleep, imagining the "ivory-and-gold" shape of Mary Goodnight, her "golden hair" damp with sweat. Suddenly he rouses himself, and returns to the hotel

where he's met by the manager, who addresses him by the name of Bond and insists that he go into the office. There Bond is happily reunited with an old colleague, calling himself on this occasion Felix Leiter. Narration describes Leiter as having a hook instead of a right hand.

Chapters 7 and 8 Analysis

If the first section of the novel might be described as an appetizer, this section might be described as the sorbet course, the phase of an old-fashioned multi-course meal in which the palate is cleansed (by a light, faintly acidic sorbet) to enable full enjoyment of the rich flavors of the main course to follow. In other words, these chapters are transitional, laying groundwork for the action to come, tantalizing the reader with the occasional spicy detail, but not revealing too much of what's about to happen. Those spicy details include the appearances of Hendriks and of Leiter, allies on either side of the Scaramanga/Bond conflict that also function as manifestations of one of the novel's key themes, that of mirror imagery and parallel existences.

Another manifestation of this theme can be found in the reference to Bond looking at himself in the mirror, one of the very few and unusual moments of reflection (pun intended) that the author allows his otherwise highly active central character. This, combined with the two lapses into imagination (the dream of the cannonball and the fantasy about Goodnight) might possibly be interpreted as manifestations of an uneasy mental state following brainwashing, but this narrative possibility is never explored by the author. If this was in fact his intent, to link this introspection with Bond's condition in the prologue, he leaves it up to the reader to draw the inference.

Meanwhile, yet another tantalizing narrative thread left undeveloped by the author is the reference to Leiter's hook, which is never referred to elsewhere in the book except in passing. It's interesting to pause for a moment and consider why this and other intriguing narrative ideas are left undeveloped. An obvious answer is that the author wanted to streamline his story, keep it as narratively clear and suspenseful, as forward-moving, as possible. If that's the case, though, why does he allow Bond his moments of introspection and/or imagination? It could be argued that he does so to suggest, as previously discussed, that Bond hasn't fully recovered from his brainwashing—but again, this particular narrative thread is undeveloped. Ultimately, it seems as though all these possibilities, as interesting as they might be to the reader, were ultimately and simply, uninteresting to the author; it is, after all, the author who is running the show.

Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

The narrative picks up a short time after Bond's encounter with Leiter as the meeting between Scaramanga and the investors begins. Bond, in his disguise as Scaramanga's personal assistant, is posted outside to keep anyone else from coming in. He eavesdrops as the meeting begins, with Mr. Hendriks warning Scaramanga and the others that an agent named James Bond has been dispatched to kill Scaramanga. Scaramanga, however, laughs Hendriks off, saying that he's already killed another agent, Ross and fed him to the crocodiles on the foot of the hotel property.

Hendriks then goes on to talk about the sugar situation. His statement reveals that the other investors, including Scaramanga, are involved in profiteering on the sugar crisis, a situation that he (Hendriks) and his unnamed superiors are unhappy with. Scaramanga explains how the profiteering scheme works and claims that he and the other investors have the right to make as much money as they can. Hendriks accepts his explanation, comments that his superiors won't be happy, and then turns the discussion to the hotel. At this point narration describes Bond's attention as drifting, returning to the meeting he had in the office with Leiter (now described as working for Pinkerton's security agency) and the hotel manager (now revealed as Nick Nicholson, an electronics expert working for the CIA). It's also revealed here that Hendriks is an operative for the KGB, that both Leiter and Nicholson know that several of the other "investors" are connected to organized crime, and that all three agents agreed to stay out of the way of each other's missions but help out if need be.

Bond's attention returns to the meeting just as Scaramanga is calling for additional investment. All the investors but one agree, with the dissenter being suddenly shot by Scaramanga, who calmly says that the dead man will be fed to the hungry crocodiles. The other investors agree to stay quiet about what happened, but one nervously asks about the man Scaramanga described as his personal assistant—Bond. Scaramanga confidently says he (the "assistant") is unimportant and temporary, and that even if he's the James Bond Hendriks warned him about, he'll be gone soon enough. "Those crocs", he says, "have a big appetite".

As the investigators leave the room, Scaramanga tells Bond to seal off the room and then arrange for drinks, dinner, and a party. As Scaramanga goes, Bond realizes he has a very clear picture of what's going on at the Thunderbird Hotel.

Chapter 9 Analysis

This chapter marks the turning point of the novel, the point at which both the reader and Bond, as the author writes at the chapter's conclusion, have a clear picture both of what's going on and of the risks faced by Bond as he becomes more deeply involved.

As such, the content of the chapter is essentially plot and information driven, with everything spoken of and/or done by Scaramanga and the others increasing the narrative pressure on Bond as he strives not only to complete his mission but figure out how he's going to do it. In particular, the sudden shooting of the recalcitrant investor points out to Bond just how ruthless Scaramanga is, and it's in this moment that the author, perhaps unexpectedly, develops one of his key themes.

Throughout the book, the author paints a very clear picture of an essential difference between Bond and his adversary—the latter kills without reason, while the former only kills with one. The shooting of the investor dramatizes this key difference between the two men with vivid efficiency.

The only other non-plot element developed here is the novel's thematic focus on mirror imagery and/or parallel existences and relationships. This manifests in the way the author parallels the conversation between Scaramanga and his allies (i.e., Hendriks) with the conversation between Bond and his (i.e., Leiter).

Chapters 10 and 11

Chapters 10 and 11 Summary

This chapter begins with a brief narration of the conversation between Bond, Leiter, and Nicholson about their plans for the rest of the evening—to observe and document the action when the body of the dead investor is fed to the crocodiles in order to secure evidence to try and convict Scaramanga and, hopefully, Hendriks. Shortly afterwards, Bond attends the dinner Scaramanga is hosting for his investors, finds it boring, and attempts to leave. Scaramanga tells him, however, that it's his responsibility to make the evening a success. Bond, against his better judgment, accepts his challenge. First, he expertly shoots the pineapple-shaped headdress off a bored singer, and then tells the leader of the calypso band to spice things up. As the band starts playing raunchy music, including the song "Belly-Lick", a group of dancing girls performs an increasingly erotic series of dances, which they conclude by inviting the investors onto the dance floor for a samba. It's at this point that Bond leaves, fully aware that Hendriks is watching him.

Bond returns to his room, showers, and lies down to rest. He's awakened in the wee small hours by the arrival of Mary Goodnight, who tells him she tracked him down through Tiffy and brings news of an urgent message that came to her from the Ministry—that a KGB agent named Hendriks is in the area, and that Bond is to evade him at all costs. Bond tells Mary he and Hendriks have already crossed paths, but adds that there are two CIA agents around and that they're working together. He realizes that the situation has changed drastically and prepares to take action, telling Mary she has to leave. As they're preparing to go, however, a voice from the darkness tells them to surrender.

The action of this chapter picks up immediately following the action of the previous one, where the mysterious intruder is revealed to be Scaramanga who, Bond quickly discerns, came through a secret door in the back of his wardrobe. Bond and Mary, thinking quickly, manage to persuade Scaramanga that Mary is Bond's fiancé, that she tracked him down through Tiffy, and that she was just leaving. Scaramanga lets her go, and then confronts Bond with his suspicions about his identity. Bond, letting irritation show, convinces Scaramanga that he is who he says he is. Scaramanga tells Bond he's responsible for the arrangements for the social activities the following day (a train ride through the hotel's grounds), and leaves.

The next day, while Scaramanga is exercising, Bond sneaks into his room and removes some of the ammunition from the golden gun. He then has a quick conference with Leiter, who has overheard a telephone conversation between Hendriks and his Russian superiors, from which he has learned that Hendriks knows Bond's identity and has been ordered to kill him. Bond and Leiter arrange for Bond to leave and for Leiter to disrupt the afternoon train trip. Bond then returns to his room, where he spends the morning contemplating the possible events of the day.

Chapters 10 and 11 Analysis

On a narrative level, the action of these two chapters once again increases the obstacles against which Bond must struggle to achieve his goal. On a thematic level, developments in these two chapters again explore the similarities between Bond and Scaramanga, with Bond's demonstration of marksmanship suggesting that he too is a "man with a golden gun". Further exploration of the differences between the two men develops later.

Outside of those two elements, the main item to note about this section is the way it portrays the women who appear here, the dancing girls and Mary Goodnight. The former are seen as purely sexual objects, with the narration of the erotic dances being described in sexually graphic terms that, while never crude, suggest that at least in the minds of the men watching, sexual exploitation is the only real reason to have women around. It's possible to argue, given the lack of significant contributions to plot and story of the women in the novel and also the misogynist tone of portions of the final chapter, that this (woman as sexual object) is also the attitude of the author. It must be noted, however, that while the language may be patronizing, Bond's appreciation of Goodnight's cleverness helping him outwit Scaramanga is genuine. In other words, it seems that Bond values women for more than their sexuality, but only to a point. It would be reasonable for a reader to wonder how representative of the author's personal perspective this is—it was, as previously discussed, the pervading attitude of much of society at the time.

The second noteworthy item here is the sense of suspense created in the final moments of chapter ten, among the most effective of the many such moments in the book—there are many possibilities for who the voice in the dark could be, and the reader is almost irresistibly drawn to turn the page to find out who it is. The beginning of chapter eleven, however, contains another moment of apparent illogic—if Scaramanga has been listening to the conversation between Bond and Goodnight, he'd know not only that they're lying their faces off to him but that Leiter and Nicholson aren't who they claim to be. The action, however, suggests that he hasn't heard the conversation at all—he lets Goodnight go and takes no steps to remove Leiter and Nicholson from the picture. The reader can only assume that Scaramanga, from the other side of the door, only heard voices, not what they were saying. But again, given what the reader knows of the duplicitous Scaramanga, this doesn't make sense—wouldn't he logically listen to gain as much information as he can, rather than simply listen to unclear mutterings? It seems that once again, logic is sacrificed to suspense—a situation which, as previously discussed, tends to occur in novels of this genre.

Chapters 12 and 13

Chapters 12 and 13 Summary

Bond goes into the conference room where Scaramanga's meeting with Hendriks is scheduled to take place. He gives the impression of doing his "job" as a security advisor, making sure the room is clear of listening devices, and then greets both Hendriks and Scaramanga as they come in. Both men look at him coldly, and then close the door. Bond listens at the door through a champagne glass, the open end of which he places on the door and the bottom end against his ear. The conversation between Hendriks and Scaramanga confirms that they both now know who Bond really is, and that Scaramanga plans to kill him that afternoon. Conversation also reveals how the men are also involved in an illegal weapons trade, are planning to get involved in the drug trade, working towards establishing a casino to get them into the gambling trade, and how they're ultimately working towards political and economic de-stabilization of the entire area. This, they suggest, will create enough instability that profits made through participation in all these trades will increase exponentially. As they leave the conference room, they pass Bond, with "their expressions," the author writes, "were vaguely interested and reflective. It was as if he were a bit of steak and they were wondering whether to have it done rare or medium rare".

Bond, Scaramanga, Hendriks and the rest of the "investors" gather in the lobby of the hotel for their train ride. Scaramanga outlines the route for their trip and their schedule of activities, and then loads them all into cars for transport to the train station. In the back of the car, Bond feels a sense of elation in spite of what he knows to be the possibility of his impending death. Upon arrival at the station, Scaramanga positions everyone carefully—Bond at the front of the train, himself at the back, Hendriks and the others between. As they start on their journey, Bond surveys them all and realizes that the other investors have been told the truth of his identity. He continues, however, to play the part of the foolish Englishman. Soon after their journey begins, the engineer slows down—there's something across the track in front of him, something that Bond soon discerns is "a naked pink body with golden blonde hair!" Scaramanga's ironic comment is that it's "the girlfriend" of James Bond, Mary Goodnight. "'If only that fellow Bond was aboard now'", he taunts, "'I guess we'd be hearing him holler for mercy'".

Chapters 12 and 13 Analysis

The title of chapter twelve refers to the champagne glass Bond uses to eavesdrop on the conversation between Scaramanga and Hendriks—specifically, to the "dark" news he hears about his impending death. Other than that, the key element of chapter twelve is the way it layers on the potential, and actual, crimes about to be committed by Hendriks and Scaramanga. On one level, the sheer multitude of activities comes across as almost comic. On another level, however, the list can be seen as another

manifestation of one aspect of authorial intent—to paint the so-called bad guys (i.e., the Russians and those affiliated with them) as being as dark, corrupt, and evil as possible.

On a narrative level, both chapters twelve and thirteen function effectively to create increased suspense. There is the sense that the story itself is on a kind of train trip, building up a head of steam, moving at a more emotionally intense pace, developing a sense of momentum as it races towards the inevitable, final confrontation between Bond and Scaramanga. A key element in this sense of escalating tension, here as in many other books of this genre, is the employment of a series of climaxes, high points of emotional intensity that themselves become increasingly intense as the action continues to build. The climaxes in the novel begin with the relatively tame confrontation between Bond, Scaramanga, and Hendriks outside the conference room, and continue with the substantially more exciting and mysterious discovery of what appears to be Mary Goodnight's body on the train tracks. The series of climaxes continues into the following two chapters, building momentum and suspense until the final confrontation, uniting the book's plot and thematic points can no longer be avoided or delayed.

Chapters 14 and 15

Chapters 14 and 15 Summary

Bond hauls back on the train's accelerator, shoots Hendriks, watches helplessly as the engineer is shot by a stray bullet from one of the "investors", grimaces in pain as a shot from Scaramanga rips through his shoulder, and stares in disbelief as the train plows through the body on the tracks, revealed to be a mannequin. He immediately speeds the train up again to throw Scaramanga and the "investors" off balance, and suddenly realizes Scaramanga has been shot. As he's wondering how it happened, Leiter steps up from behind Scaramanga and orders the other investors to throw their weapons over the side. Bond realizes that Leiter had been hidden on the back of the train all along, and playfully teases him about waiting so long to make himself known. Leiter urges him to jump, and fast. Before he does so, the "investors", terrified and gun-less, beg him to help them. He doesn't respond, but merely jumps into "the Morass", where he's sucked into the slimy, smelly, swampy-ness. He sees Leiter jump, followed immediately by Scaramanga, who Bond realizes must have been faking the seriousness of his wounds. A few moments later, as the train passes over it, a bridge explodes, destroying the train and the lives of those left on board. Bond, meanwhile, finds Leiter, who has broken a leg in his jump from the train. Bond pulls him into a place of relative dryness and safety, and then takes off in pursuit of Scaramanga. He's momentarily distracted by the pain in his injured shoulder and by a hallucination of the extravagant lunch that awaits the now-dead passengers at the end of the train ride, but he manages to bring himself back to reality and resume his pursuit. He slogs his way through the morass, fighting mosquitoes and more hallucinations, when he suddenly stops—he heard a quiet cough.

Bond waits, and when he doesn't hear the cough again, eases quietly forward. He discovers Scaramanga, lying on the ground with his back against a tree, bleeding heavily. He watches as a large snake approaches and is killed by the watchful, still very much alive Scaramanga. Scaramanga then cuts off the head of the snake and throws it at the mouth of a crab hole, clearly expecting the crabs to come out and have a feast. The crabs, however, remain hidden. Bond watches as Scaramanga cleans the snake and starts eating it—and then, when Scaramanga's hands are full, he steps out of his hiding place and confronts him. Scaramanga, to Bond's surprise, remains calm, first saying that Bond is as much of a killer as he is, attempting to bribe him, and taunting him with the suggestion that he's too English and too proper to kill a vulnerable, unarmed man. Bond, feeling his strength and resolution draining, raises his gun. Scaramanga, claiming that he's a good Catholic, asks for a few moments of prayer. Bond agrees, and is lulled into a distracted, wounded haze by the soft, droning chant of Scaramanga's prayer. Scaramanga takes advantage of Bond's distraction to slowly ease his hands to where he's concealed his gun. Suddenly he grabs the gun and fires, hitting Bond in the side. As he advances, however, Bond gets off five quick shots. Scaramanga falls dead. "After a while", the author writes, "the land crabs came out of their holes and began nosing at the scraps of the snake. The bigger offal could wait until the night".

Chapters 14 and 15 Analysis

On a narrative level, the chain of increasingly intense climaxes continues to grow throughout these chapters. The fast-paced, intuitively enacted series of events on the train give way to the slower paced, more thoughtful, but no less emotionally intense chase and confrontation in the morass, all of which build to the final face-off between Bond and Scaramanga. This climax may lack the pure visceral intensity of, for example, the confrontation in the hotel room or the appearance of the "body" on the railway—it is, on the other hand, emotionally and ideologically intense.

A particular aspect of the earlier climaxes plays a thematically relevant part foreshadows that particular sort of intensity, and also the ideology behind the confrontation. This is the pleading of the investors for Bond's help and Bond's subsequent consideration, and rejection, of them. Bond's decision is essentially grounded in his moral position on murder, a position directly opposed to that of Scaramanga and his investors. This opposition, in turn, is part of what defines the final, fatal encounter between the two men as something more than just a shoot-out between good guy and bad guy.

On one level, the conflict between Bond and Scaramanga is certainly one of ego—which man with high self regard and a strong competitive streak is going to win out over the other? On another level, it's a conflict of willpower—who can, and will, transcend his pain, keep his wits about him, and triumph? On this level, the narrative suspensefully suggests that the winner will be Scaramanga. Not only does he kill the snake with as skill and determination (two aspects of his personality which, it could be argued, characterize the killing of his human victims as well), he has his wits about him enough to lure Bond into a place of almost inevitable victimization. But on a third level, the final confrontation between protagonist and antagonist is also morally and thematically evocative.

Throughout the book, Bond has been portrayed as a killer with a conscience, his victims meeting their end as the inevitable consequence of themselves being killers without a conscience—the sort of killer Scaramanga, and by extension the Russians who support and command him, seem to be. It might not be going too far to suggest that, in the author's perspective, the confrontation between Bond and Scaramanga (throughout the book as well as in this climactic section) is one between justice and pure, psychopathic greed.

Chapters 16 and 17

Chapters 16 and 17 Summary

The chapter begins with a brief narration of Bond's time in hospital, during which a conversation between an intern and a nurse reveals several important points—that Scaramanga's bullets were tipped with snake venom, that those bullets missed Bond's internal organs by millimeters, and that immediate attention to the wounds from a Jamaican doctor saved Bond's life. The next section of the chapter narrates a visit paid to Bond by several Jamaican officials, Mary Goodnight (who takes notes of the visit), and Leiter. On this visit, a Jamaican judge details the official, politically correct, legally uncomplicated, and diplomatically manipulated version of the events at the hotel and on the train (as opposed to the real version). He asks Bond and Leiter to confirm whether that version is true. When they do, the judge awards them both a medal and leaves, along with the rest of the officials. Alone with Bond, Leiter banters briefly about whether Bond will return to the Ministry of Defense and leaves. Bond, strained by the events of the day, lapses into unconsciousness.

Some time later, Bond is frustrated at still being in hospital when Mary Goodnight arrives with a coded message from M—Bond, the message says, is to be congratulated on the successful completion of a difficult mission, and offered a knighthood by the queen. Bond receives the news with a mixture of emotions—pleasure at M's congratulations, irritation at being fussed over, and certainty that he's going to reject the honor offered him. He recalls being invited into "the fraternity of ex-Secret Service men that went under the name of The Twin Snakes Club", a group that meets regularly to relive their glory days in the espionage game. His distaste for these meetings reinforces his determination to reject the knighthood, and he dictates a sometimes facetious cable for Mary to send back to M—a cable in which he, Bond, officially but graciously rejects the knighthood. Mary is shocked, but agrees to do what she's told. As she's about to leave, she invites Bond to finish his recuperation at her home, hinting at a future of domesticity. The author writes, "Of all the doom-fraught graffiti a woman can write on the wall, [hints of domesticity] are the most insidious, the most deadly". And yet, the author writes, Bond accepts her offer, knowing full well that ultimately, full-time domesticity "was not enough".

Chapters 16 and 17 Analysis

This section of the book is notable in several ways. On a structural and narrative level, it functions as an epilogue, tying up necessary loose ends in the plot. Bond, it seems, is the ultimate "man with the golden gun"—he has again accomplished his mission successfully.

On the level of characterization, this section defines an essential aspect of Bond's character—he is a loner, doing what he must do in the way that he must do it. A side

note to this aspect of the book is the narrative's perspective on Mary Goodnight's offer of domesticity, which many readers might see as unbearably misogynistic. It's certainly patronizing, and does carry with it a very clear sense of distaste for what a woman seems, at least in the author's mind, to represent. It's essential to note, however, that the comment occurs in narration, and is not placed in either Bond's thoughts or words—as previously discussed, Bond has immense gratitude and respect for what Goodnight has done for him and for what she's offering. As the previous point about his loner-ness makes clear, however, she and what she's proposing is not right for who he is. Readers may argue that the analysis splits hairs, but there is nevertheless a fine but clear line between what an author says and what his characters say and do—in other words, Bond is not a misogynist, only limited. The question of his creator's views, at least in terms of this book, is up for debate.

On a symbolic level (one rarely explored in books of this genre and in this book in particular), it's interesting to consider the metaphoric references that can be found in "The Twin Snakes Club". The image of two snakes immediately brings to mind several alternative meanings. In Tarot, for instance, two snakes each biting each other's tail is often seen on the card representing The World, an evocation of unity, wholeness, and cyclical activity (i.e., in each beginning is an ending). In Greek mythology, on the other hand, a pair of snakes entwined itself around the staff of the god of healing, Hermes, is an image that has, over the years, been an accepted symbol of individuals involved in the healing arts. In Christian imagery, there is the image of the treacherous snake in the Garden of Eden. There are echoes of all three images in the reference here—which, on levels of meaning unique to this book, can also be seen as evocative of the relationship between Bond and Scaramanga.

Characters

James Bond

James Bond is one of the most famous fictional characters in the history of contemporary narrative, thanks to a succession of commercially successful novels and a string of even more successful films. Effort must be made, therefore, to separate the Bond of popular culture and the Bond of this particular book, who is in some ways similar to the other Bond and in other ways quite different. Both Bonds work for a secretive government intelligence agency, both Bonds are clever, quick-witted and deadly with a gun, both Bonds have a powerful sexuality, and both Bonds are almost always successful in achieving their mission. Where the Bond of Golden Gun differs with the iconic image of the pop culture Bond is in his depth of character.

While it's true that multi-faceted, multi-leveled characterization is neither the strong point nor the focus of this book, there is the sense that Bond here has perhaps one or two more facets to his personality than he has in either the other books in which he figures or in the films in which the character has starred. This is not to suggest that he is particularly sensitive or emotional, but Bond here is troubled, haunted by bad dreams that may or may not be an indirect result of either the brainwashing he experienced prior to the book's opening chapters or the treatment he received to break him of the brainwashing. There is also a sense that he is, or becomes as the result of events, a shade more self-aware. This manifests in two ways. First, in confronting Scaramanga Bond is in some ways confronting himself, realizing both who he is (a killer) and who he isn't (a cold-blooded, motiveless killer) in ways he doesn't necessarily face in his other narrative incarnations. The second manifestation of Bond's self-awareness emerges in the book's final chapters, when, in spite of the narration's misogynistic tone, it becomes clear that Bond is fully aware that he is a loner, a solitary man who both needs and wants to do what he must do alone.

Scaramanga

Scaramanga is the titular "man with the golden gun", portrayed throughout the book as cold-eyed and cold-hearted, a mercenary and ruthless killer whose focus in life, and in the trail of death he leaves behind as he lives that life, is on money and profit. Chapter three contains a detailed description of his character, a description he lives up to throughout the book—although it must be said that the conclusions drawn by the report about Scaramanga's sexuality remain, for the most part, undeveloped in the action. Scaramanga is, in literary terms, the book's main antagonist, the character who confronts and challenges Bond, the protagonist. It's important to note, however, that the challenge offered by Scaramanga is not simply physical—their confrontation is not merely who will shoot whom first. On some level, Scaramanga is Bond's evil twin, doing the same sort of thing (killing on command) as Bond does but without Bond's level of conscience and morality.

Mary Goodnight

Goodnight is an administrative operative in the Jamaican branch of the British Ministry of Defense. There are hints that she has worked, and perhaps has been been emotionally or sexually involved with Bond in the past, but specifics are never provided. In terms of her narrative purpose, she functions on a few important levels—she provides Bond with information, she provides a degree of comic relief, and she supplies that shiver of sexual tension without which a James Bond narrative, either literary or cinematic, would not be complete. Perhaps most importantly, she is also the catalyst for one of Bond's previously discussed moments of self-awareness. Her barely suppressed desire for at least a degree of domesticity with him triggers his awareness that he is a lone wolf—he has to do what he must do alone. Yes her desires and his response to those desires are expressed in misogynistic terms that to contemporary readers may border on the distasteful. But if viewed in terms of intent and meaning rather than in terms of the words, they constitute significant contribution to the development of Bond's character.

Colonel Boris

This character is never actually portrayed in the book but is referred to several times in narration as the Russian operative who seems to have been in charge of Bond being brainwashed while he was in captivity behind the Iron Curtain.

Captain Walker, Major Townsend, the Chief of Staff

These three characters are among the first who Bond encounters when he returns to London after being presumed dead. All three characters are suspicious of his changed manner, and indeed of his unexpected return. All three grudgingly accept who he is but with reservations and suspicions. Those suspicions are proved correct when Bond attempts to assassinate M, his boss.

M

"M" is the code name given to the head of the highly secretive intelligence division of the British Ministry of Defense. He is, in short, James Bond's boss. He is portrayed here as someone whose instincts may appear to his more cautious underlings as dangerous and unwise, but eventually correct—there is the sense that Bond never would have re-assumed his true identity if M hadn't risked his own life to find out the truth of what had happened to him while he was in Russia.

Miss Moneypenny

Moneypenny is M's secretary, portrayed here as being just as sensitive to changes in Bond as other members of the ministry staff, but in more emotional terms. In other words, she feels and intuits something is wrong, rather than intellectually assuming it as the males around her do.

Russians and the KGB

Russians as a group are portrayed in this book as the puppet masters, the behind-the-scenes manipulators of the international war/drug/gambling/espionage rings confronted by Bond throughout the book. It's important to note that Golden Gun was, like the other Bond novels, written during the so-called Cold War, a period in which military and political tensions between east and west, between Communist and Democratic governments/philosophies, were at their highest. Russia, or the Soviet Union as it was properly called, was regarded by the west (particularly the USA and Britain) as a profoundly dangerous source of essentially pure evil. Bond's hatred of Russia, Russia's deviousness in sending him back to England brainwashed, the portrayal of the Russian gangster Hendriks all are narrative manifestations of the prevailing socio-political-cultural environment of the time. The KGB was the shorthand name of the Russian Secret Service, responsible in life as in fiction for international espionage and national security. They were, in the eyes of the west, the agents of Russian evil around the world.

Tiffy

Tiffy is a young Jamaican woman who provides Bond with important information, whom he protects to some degree from the dangers of Scaramanga, and whom he reassures after Scaramanga terrorizes her by shooting a pair of beloved birds. She is portrayed as charming and sexy, but ultimately and alternately frightened and fierce.

Mr. Hendriks

Hendriks is the investor/mobster of highest status summoned to Scaramanga's hotel for what amounts to a summit meeting. Narration reveals that he is an agent of the KGB, and performs the narrative function of increasing the pressure on Bond as he draws closer to fulfilling his mission of eliminating Scaramanga. He is portrayed as being devious, aggressive, and unencumbered with a conscience.

Felix Leiter

Leiter is, perhaps, a counterpart to Hendriks—where the latter is an ally to Scaramanga, Leiter is an ally to Bond, an American agent sent by that government's security service

to investigate the summit meeting between Scaramanga and his investors and to, hopefully, prevent that meeting from causing any further destructive plans. As was the case with Mary Goodnight, there is the sense that Leiter and Bond have a history together, but the narrative doesn't provide details. Leiter is portrayed as having a hook where one of his hands used to be, but interestingly enough he is never actually portrayed as using it in any effective, unique way.

Objects/Places

The British Ministry of Defense

This is the organization for which Bond works, responsible for espionage and security. It is, to all appearances here, a highly secretive and intelligent organization, with an extensive information gathering network and powerful technological resources.

Scaramanga's Gun

The "golden gun" of the title, this gun is Scaramanga's weapon of choice, a symbol of his power, ruthlessness, and authority. A report presented to M also describes it as either a manifestation of sexual power or a compensation for sexual inadequacy, but the narrative never explores this symbolism.

Bond's Guns

Bond uses two guns in this book. The first is a strange weapon apparently supplied by the Russians who brainwashed him, loaded with poison with which he is meant to kill M. This gun can be seen as symbolic of the "poisonous-ness" of Russian influence and/or socio-political philosophy. Bond's second gun is his usual weapon of choice, a symbol of his power, moral authority, and experience. Later in the book, when he uses it to kill Scaramanga, it takes on the additional value of symbolizing the moral authority of western democracy, conscience, and morality.

M's Shield

Instants before Bond fires a shot of poison at him, M activates a shield in his office that crashes down from the ceiling and blocks the poison. On a symbolic level, the shield, like Bond's gun, represents the protective power and righteousness of the West's socio-economic and moral philosophy.

Jamaica

This tropical island is the setting for much of the novel's action, with its heat, beauty, and lushness providing a peacefully contrasting backdrop for the sometimes shocking violence of the action.

Bond's Horoscope

In Chapter four, Bond kills time in a Jamaican airport by looking through a local paper where he finds a horoscope forecasting a pleasant surprise and a chance to seize a golden opportunity. Both comments are clear uses of foreshadowing.

3 ½ Love Lane

This Jamaican brothel (whorehouse) is the setting for Bond's initial encounter with Scaramanga, where the two gunmen take each other's measure and end up in a mutual "bond" of mistrust and suspicion.

The Thunderbird Hotel

The hotel is the setting for much of the novel's action, an unfinished shell of a building serving as the front for many of Scaramanga's illegal activities.

Scaramanga's Train

This small train travels across the Jamaican island, and is the setting for the second last of the novel's many climaxes—the shootout between Bond, Leiter, and Scaramanga's gang of gangster/investors.

The Morass

The train above travels across a morass, or swamp, of mangrove trees, rushes, and sludge. Bond jumps from the train into the morass to avoid what Leiter suggests is imminent danger (the train and the bridge that it's crossing explode spectacularly shortly after Bond, Leiter, and Scaramanga leap from it). The morass is the setting for the final climactic confrontation between Scaramanga and Bond, and perhaps can be seen as representing the "morass" of immorality in which the corrupt Scaramanga wallows and which the more morally upright Bond strives to avoid.

The Stabbed Snake

This snake, with apparently harmless intent, investigates the wounded Scaramanga and is killed and eaten by him. It can be seen as representing his many innocent, or perhaps not so innocent victims, and the way their lives are destroyed by him. The fact that both the dead Scaramanga and the dead snake are, at least for a while, left for scavenging crabs supports this symbolic identification of the one with the other.

Themes

Mirror Imagery / Parallel Existences

There are several examples of parallels between characters, incidents and situations in The Man with the Golden Gun. First and foremost are the parallels between Bond and Scaramanga. Both men are killers, both men are excellent shots, and both men are regarded highly by those who make use of their skills. It might not, in fact, be going too far to suggest that they are both men with golden guns—Scaramanga's gun is literally gold (or gold plated), but Bond's is gold in a metaphorical way, in that his missions always succeed. Perhaps his record is more literally golden than his gun, but the symbolism is nonetheless there. The difference between the two men, as carefully defined in the book, is that Bond has a conscience, where Scaramanga does not.

On a more literal level, the theme of mirror imagery/parallel existences manifests in the moment of Bond's confrontation with his reflection. Here Bond, quite literally confronts the mirror image of his brainwashed, pro-Russian self, and realizes that as the result of his accepting a mission more attuned to his essential moral character he has become more of who he truly is. In other words, he is no longer living a parallel existence—in the mirror he sees himself again, his true identity and morality as opposed to that which has been imposed upon him by the so-called "bad guys".

Gold

Another manifestation of the novel's thematic sensitivity to and exploration of parallels can be found in the frequent narrative references to gold. There is gold on both sides, defined principally by descriptions of Scaramanga's gun on the one hand and of Mary Goodnight on the other, who is repeatedly described as having "golden" hair and "golden" tones in her skin. The contrast between the two could not be more marked—the "good" gold and the "bad" gold. In fact, an astute reader might reasonably draw the conclusion that, because there are so many references to gold in relation to Goodnight, she is going to turn out to be allied with the man with the "bad" gold, Scaramanga. In literary terms, this might be described as a symbolic red herring, or a deliberate choice made by the novelist to create and/or utilize a metaphor that leads the reader to draw a particular conclusion, thereby distracting the reader from realizing the truth. The technique is applied frequently, but more often in terms of information rather than symbol, in mystery/thriller novels such as Golden Gun.

On another level, however, there is also the possibility that gold for both Scaramanga and Bond represents temptation, and therefore danger. Scaramanga's golden gun is perhaps a clearer manifestation of this thematic idea, in that it's so obviously a tool for gaining what attracts him (money, power, sex, reputation. In Bond's case, however, narration in the latter chapters of the book seems to suggest the "golden" Mary Goodnight is a temptation away from what has previously been discussed as his nature

—a moral, conscious-driven, avenging loner. In other words, gold for both men is a lure—in Scaramanga's case, towards what he desires, and in Bond's case towards what he doesn't.

The Nature of Murder

Repeatedly throughout Golden Gun, the author draws attention to a fundamental difference between Bond and Scaramanga and, by extension, Hendriks and the other investor/mobsters with whom Scaramanga associates). The former, narration suggests, kills with some moral and/or avenging purpose—Bond cannot, or at least feels reluctant to, kill without it. Scaramanga, on the other hand, kills for what seems to be a combination of selfish motivations—greed, power, or just plain fun. Because the two men are so clearly aligned with the great socio-political-military rivals of the time, the democratic west and the communist east, it seems reasonable to see their differences in attitude as manifestations of the author's thematic/moral intent—to portray the west as ethical, conscience-filled and right, and the east as unethical, conscience-free, and wrong. This thematic/moral conflict is developed throughout the book—there is the pervasive sense that their confrontation is as much about personal morality, and by extension political ideology, as it is about who's going to shoot whom first. This theory is supported by the way in which the climactic face-off between Bond and Scaramanga is narrated. Bond is described, as he has been before, as reluctant to simply shoot Scaramanga, and while his moral uncertainty clearly gets him into trouble (i.e., he lets himself be distracted by Scaramanga's prayer), eventually it does prove triumphant—Bond shoots only after Scaramanga deviously shoots first. In other words, Bond, and by extension the west, do what they do only in self defense against the evil posed by Scaramanga and the east.

Style

Point of View

There are two aspects of point of view to consider here. In technical terms, Golden Gun is written from the third person subjective perspective—an omnipotent voice recounts the story from the point of view of the book's central character, James Bond, including references not only to what he says and does but to what he thinks, feels, understands, wonders, and fears. This voice occasionally injects itself into the narrative, as in the borderline misogynist comments about Mary Goodnight in the book's final chapters. These interjections, on occasion, become an almost distracting commentary on the action, interfering with the straightforward narrative flow of events and experiences. In other words, narration occasionally veers into opinion.

The second aspect of point of view relates to previously discussed issues of context—specifically, the socio-political-philosophical-military context in which the novel, and the other James Bond novels, were written (the late 1950s and early-to-mid 1960s). During this period, popularly known as "The Cold War", tensions developed between the west (essentially America and Britain) and east (essentially Russia, East Germany, and the Eastern Bloc countries). These tensions grew out of fundamental differences in social philosophy—between democracy and totalitarianism, liberty and oppression, capitalism and communism. Bond was, and in this book is a symbol of the west and its positive values. Scaramanga is a symbol of the east and its negative ones. In other words, the action and characters of Golden Gun are a manifestation of a cultural point of view, filtered through the narrative technique (and presumably the shared point of view) of the author.

Setting

After a brief opening section set in London England, the majority of the book's action is set on the Caribbean island of Jamaica. There is, in fact, a noteworthy contrast between the two settings. England, and specifically the Ministry of Defense (the setting for most of the action in the first section), are defined as constructed, man-made, riddled with technology, cool and grey, and somewhat impersonal. Jamaica, on the other hand, is portrayed as being less constructed (The Thunderbird Hotel, the setting for about half the novel, isn't even completed), and rich with lush natural beauty. This is manifested with particularly vivid detail during the sequence in chapter ten, in which the carefully tasteful singing and dancing of the band at the investors' banquet is replaced by freer, more sensual dancing that the investors seem to believe is connected to the true nature of the island. There is also less technology, to a degree, in Jamaica—while Scaramanga employs electronic listening devices, Bond, agent of sophistication and technology that he apparently is, is forced to employ the less reliable, and undoubtedly old fashioned, trick of listening through a glass placed on the wall. Finally, the cool of England is colorfully contrasted with Jamaica's heat, humidity, and lush, raw, sensual beauty, which

all play important roles in the narrative. There is the very clear sense throughout the novel that tensions and emotions run higher because the people experiencing them are playing them out in an environment to which they're not accustomed. In other words, their unease in a setting unfamiliar to them intensifies their feelings of being on edge, uncomfortable and uncertain, aspects of character that always lend an intriguing edge to suspense/spy novels of this sort.

Language and Meaning

The author's language throughout the novel is quite consistent. There is a clear sense of broad vocabulary tersely shaped into relatively short sentences, a narrative style that functions on two levels. Primarily, it fulfills what seems to be the novelist's narrative purpose—to create a fast-paced, narratively engaging and effective story in a particular genre, in this case that of the spy-action novel. On another level, language choice infuses and supports the fundamental nature of the novel's central character. For the most part, terseness of language and style evokes Bond's overall air of no-nonsense decisiveness. It's important to note, however, that when that aspect of Bond's character becomes less dominant—when he loses focus, when he allows himself the infrequent sexual fantasy, when he even more infrequently allows himself the luxury of reflection—that aspect of language changes as well. In other words, narrative style changes with the content of experience—when he's on the job, so is economy of language. When Bond's mind takes a break, the language becomes more expansive and evocative.

Language also reinforces a key aspect of the book's thematic and/or contextual intent. Specifically, the author's choice of words to describe Scaramanga, Hendriks, and other affiliates of the Russians and/or the KGB consistently reinforce the sense that representatives of the east are evil, devious, and must ultimately be destroyed—the pervading philosophical belief of the time.

Structure

Like the use of language described above, the novel's structure gives the clear sense of fulfilling the author's intent to write a fast moving, action packed narrative. In particular, the novel's structure fills the need for suspense, essential in novels of this genre. As short, action-filled chapter follows a short similar chapter, many chapters end on a high point of mystery, the posing of intriguing, danger filled questions. What's going to happen to the brainwashed Bond in chapter two? What's Bond going to encounter after accepting Scaramanga's job offer in chapter six? Who's holding the gun on Bond and Mary Goodnight in chapter ten? Is Bond going to let Mary Goodnight die in chapter thirteen? The use of this narrative technique effectively, perhaps inevitably, draws the reader further and further into the action.

Ultimately, the book's structure follows a practice established in this and other sorts of books that fall under the category of "popular fiction", in which formula and/or familiarity (of author, character, structure, narrative style, perhaps at times even of plot) are as

much a factor in reader appeal as the story itself. This is not necessarily a negative, in that it's perfectly valid for a book to function as entertainment and/or escape as it is for it to be enlightening, informative, or thought-provoking—and in the realm of narrative there's little that's as encouraging to a safe escape than that which is familiar, or known to be safe. That said, even within the structural and/or narrative framework of the familiar/formulaic, there is joy and intrigue in discovering the variations on familiar formulas, the little twists (such as, for example, Bond's infrequent and unfamiliar detours into introspection) that manage to make the formula newly intriguing without jettisoning it completely.

Quotes

"James Bond frowned. He didn't know that he had frowned, and he wouldn't have been able to explain why he had done so." Chap. 1, p. 4

"'There was always something odd about 007's death. No body. No solid evidence. And the people on that Japanese island always seemed to me to be playing it pretty close to the chest. The stone-face act. It's just possible.'" Chap. 1, p. 5

"It was an expensive setup, but it is the first duty of a secret service to remain not only secret but secure." Chap. 1, p. 8

"'[Bond's] got an odd sort of glazed, sort of faraway look, and the 'scope shows that he's carrying a gun in his right hand coat pocket - curious sort of contraption, doesn't seem to have a butt to it. I'd say he's a sick man.'" Chap. 1, p. 11

"A storm of memories whirled through his consciousness like badly cut film on a projector that had gone crazy. Bond closed his mind to the storm. He must concentrate on what he had to say, and do, and on nothing else." Chap. 2, p. 15

"[Scaramanga] has thus become something of a local myth and is known in his 'territory' as The Man with the Golden Gun - a reference to his main weapon which is a gold-plated, long-barreled, single-action Colt .45." Chap. 3, p. 27

"'It is a Freudian thesis, with which I am inclined to agree, that the pistol . . . has significance for the owner as a symbol of virility - an extension of the male organ - and that excessive interests in guns . . . is a form of fetishism." Chap. 3, p. 33

"It was all very fine to be told to 'eliminate' the man, but James Bond had never liked killing in cold blood and to provoke a draw against a man who was possibly the fastest gun in the world was suicide." Chap. 4, p. 46

"[Bond] knew that he hadn't heard the full story. He also knew that it was odd, to say the least of it, for this man to hire a complete stranger to do this job for him . . . [but] clearly, he must make the gamble. In so many respects it was a chance in a million." Chap. 6, p. 71

"James Bond got into the car behind Scaramanga and wondered whether to shoot the man now, in the back of the head - the old Gestapo-KGB point of puncture. A mixture of reasons prevented him - the itch of curiosity, an inbuilt dislike of cold murder, the feeling that this was not the predestined moment, the likelihood that he would have to murder the chauffeur also . . . he knew that he was not only disobeying orders, or at best dodging them, but also being a bloody fool." Chap. 6, p. 73

"In general appearance [the investors] were all much of a muchness. Dark faced, clean shaven, around five feet six, hard-eyed above thinly smiling mouths, curt of speech to the manager. They all held firmly to their briefcases when the bellboys tried to add them to the luggage on the rubber-tired barrows." Chap. 8, pp. 86-87

"[h]e remembered the dull, lackluster eyes that had looked back at him when he shaved after first entering The Park . . . now the grey-blue eyes looked back at him from the tanned face with the brilliant glint of suppressed excitement and accurate focus of the old days. He smiled ironically back at the introspective scrutiny that so many people make of themselves before a race, a contest of wits, a trial of some sort. He had no excuses. He was ready to go." Chap. 8, p. 89

"This was always happening . . . you were looking in the dark for a beetle with red wings. Your eyes were focused for that particular pattern on the bark of the tree. You didn't notice the moth with cryptic coloring that crouched quietly nearby, itself like a piece of the bark, itself just as important to the collector. The focus of your eyes was too narrow. Your mind was too concentrated." Chap. 9, p. 94

"It was many years since James Bond had accepted a dare . . . what he had drunk had made him careless - perhaps wanting to show off . . . stupidly, he wanted to assert his personality over this bunch of tough guys who rated him insignificant. He didn't stop to think that it was bad tactics, that he would be better off being the ineffectual limey." Chap. 10, p. 108

"Like a dozing hound chasing a rabbit in its dreams, or like the audience at an athletics meeting that lifts a leg to help the high-jumper over the bar, every now and then [Bond's] right hand twitched involuntarily. In his mind's eye, in a variety of imagined circumstances, it was leaping for his gun." Chap. 11, p. 126

"James Bond smiled grimly to himself. He was feeling happy . . . it was a feeling of being keyed up, wound taut . . . he had been after this man for over six weeks. Today, this morning perhaps, was about to come the payoff he had been ordered to bring about . . . he was more heavily forearmed than the enemy knew. But the enemy had the big battalions on their side." Chap. 13, p. 139

"James Bond stood up in the cabin, not listening to the voices supplicating [him]. These men had wanted to watch him being murdered. They had been prepared to murder him themselves. How many dead men had each one of them got on his tally sheet?" Chap. 14, p. 150

"Each one of Scaramanga's actions, every fleeting expression on his face, had been an index of the man's awareness of his aliveness . . . in Bond's judgment, Scaramanga . . . was still very much alive. He was still a most formidable and dangerous man." Chap. 15, p. 158

"The left hand behind [Bond's] back was clenched with the horror of what he was about to do. He forced himself to think of . . . the others that this man had killed, of the ones he would kill afresh if Bond weakened." Chap. 15, p. 162

"'Pest control. It's got to be done by someone. Going back to it when you're off the orange juice? . . . Of course you are, lamebrain. It's what you were put into the world for. Pest control . . . all you got to figure is how to control it better.'" Chap. 16, p. 175

"[Bond] had never been a public figure, and he did not wish to become one . . . there was one thing above all he treasured. His privacy. His anonymity. To become a public person, a person, in the snobbish world of England, of any country, who would be called upon to open things, lay foundation stones, make after-dinner speeches, brought the sweat to his armpits." Chap. 17, p. 180

Topics for Discussion

Consider the book's key theme, or recurring motif, of parallels between Bond and Scaramanga. What other parallels are there between the characters and their situations? Consider the characters' relationships with women, their use of allies, the nature of the agencies that direct their activities, or any others.

Consider the socio-political-military context in which the book was written and within which its action plays out. What echoes are there in contemporary culture and society? What are manifestations of similar philosophical conflicts?

Debate the question of whether the so-called Cold War (between east and west, communism/capitalism, democracy/totalitarianism) is truly over. If no, how does it continue? If yes, how are the ways it's being fought differ from those portrayed in this book—or do they?

Obtain and view a copy of the film based on this book, and list the differences between the two. Discuss whether changes made to the narrative for the film were necessary and/or valid and/or improvements. In what ways does the film continue and/or devalue the book's thematic perspective?

In the book's final chapter, it refers to Bond's attendance at a meeting of "The Twin Snakes Club", a gathering of espionage agents. Taking into account analysis of the image in chapters sixteen and seventeen, the prominent role played by a snake in the book's climax, the book's narrative and thematic focus on mirror imagery (i.e., between Bond and Scaramanga, between the west and east), discuss potential symbolic and/or metaphoric meanings in the name of the Club.

What moral and/or thematic meaning might there be in the setting of the final confrontation between Bond and Scaramanga in a place called "The Morass"? Consider the characteristics of this setting, as well as other connotations of the word "morass".

Over the years, James Bond has become an icon of popular culture. Discuss the concept of "icon"—what is an icon? What other fictional characters have become icons? What are common characteristics of various icons? What is the difference between an icon and an archetype? How is an icon similar to an archetype? Is James Bond an archetype? If so, of what?

Consider the quote from chapter three, p. 33, drawing a relationship between a gunman's firearm and possible sexual dysfunction. To which character might it refer? Discuss what is meant by "Freudian", and the relationship of the term to the thesis discussed in the quote, relating both the term and its meaning to the character you believe the quote refers to.