The Perfect Storm Study Guide

The Perfect Storm by Sebastian Junger

BOOKRAGS

Contents

Plot Summary

In September 1991, five fishermen and their captain boarded the *Andrea Gail*, a longliner boat used for sword fishing. Their plan was to head to the Grand Banks off the shores of New England from their fishing town of Gloucester, Massachusetts. Each fisherman expected to earn up to five thousand dollars, depending upon how many fish they caught.

Bobby Shatford and Albert Pierre are the only two fishermen with sweethearts. They spend the days before the voyage in long good-byes. The others are mostly loners who drink their farewells with fellow fishermen at a local bar called, "The Crow's Nest." At the last minute, two of the men decide not to go on the *Andrea Gail* - they each have a bad premonition about the voyage.

During the first three weeks, the fishing is yielding little for their efforts even though the crew is putting in twenty-hour workdays. Billy Tyne, the captain, is ready to turn back to Gloucester. He seeks help from his sister ship, the *Hannah Bolen,* the only fishing boat skippered by a woman. After a few good days of fishing, the *Andrea Gail* is loaded with 40,000 pounds of sword fish - enough to make it a financially feasible to go home.

The last week of October is a notoriously dangerous time for storms in the Grand Banks. The Banks are a great place for thriving marine life, but also a place noted for gale force winds and hurricanes. On October 27, the weather service issued a warning that a huge storm system is building. Even veteran meteorologists are watching this storm with enthusiasm and amazement. It looks as if three weather systems will converge and form "the perfect storm" - a storm that only happens perhaps once every one hundred years.

Captain Linda Greenlaw, on the *Hannah Bolen,* warns Billy Tyne about the approaching storm. He decides to keep heading home, even though this decision will put him in the center of the bad weather. His ice machine is not working and his fish will spoil in a matter of days if he does not make it home. Tyne talks with Tommy Barrie, the captain of the *Allison,* and is never heard from again.

Three weeks later, Greenlaw finds barrels marked "AG," and an ERIB from the *Andrea Gail* washes up on Sable Island. The ship probably sank after it was hit by a monster wave. After two weeks, searchers gave up locating the *Andrea Gail*.

During the same storm in nearby waters, several daring rescues took place. The captain and his two-woman crew from the yacht *Satori* were saved by Coast Guard rescuers. They were made to jump into the ocean and swim to a basket that hoisted them on the *Tamaroa,* a Coast Guard cutter. A Japanese fisherman was similarly saved on the *Tamaroa.* During that rescue, an Air National Guard helicopter fell into the ocean and stranded six highly trained jumpers. One of the jumpers died, but the others were saved by the crew of the *Tamaroa.* There are other stories of sea survival from Judith Reeves on the *Eishin Maru* about boats like the *Andrea Gail* caught in similar storms.

The Perfect Storm is full of nautical details about ocean waves, hurricanes, marine life, and shipbuilding. It also provides a complete history of the fishing industry in New England as well as the subculture of fishermen and their villages.

Foreword

Foreword Summary

The author gives his vision for *The Perfect Storm.* He wants the book to be "completely factual." If there are any direct quotes, every word was properly recorded in an interview he did with the principal. He does not make up any dialogue.

Junger says he uses the term "perfect storm" in a meteorological sense. He means no disrespect or insult to the people who died or to the families who lost loved ones in the tragedy.

Foreword Analysis

This genre of books is a mixture of journalistic reporting and literature created by Truman Capote in 1960 with his masterpiece, *In Cold Blood.* Many authors, such as Carl Bernstein and Robert Woodward, narrate whole conversations in direct quotations even though none of them were recorded. Junger also makes up whole conversations between characters but he does not put them in quotation marks.

Although Junger's intention of writing a completely factual book is noble, he not only makes up conversations, but also reconstructs the whole disaster by guesswork. Therefore, *The Perfect Storm* is not completely factual. No one survived the *Andrea Gail*. No one on board kept records. The crew was not in radio contact with anyone when it went through this disaster. Junger made up a version of events by talking to fishermen who survived similar storms. *The Perfect Storm* is a fictionalized account of true events.

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

In 1895, the crew of a mackerel schooner finds a bottle with a note in it. The bottle is floating off the coast of Massachusetts. The note is from a crewmember of the *Falcon,* which apparently sunk the previous year. "Our cable is gone ... our rudder gone ... God have mercy on us ..."

The *Falcon* was lost the year before. If her cable was off and her rudder gone, that means she was careening wildly when the crewmember wrote this note. It is a sad record of the last moments of the twenty men on board that ship.

Chapter 1 Analysis

This chapter, in all italics, is as if the author were reporting a dream or a memory. The author asks himself such questions as, "How do men act in a sinking ship? Do they cry?" He then proceeds to answer the questions he raises throughout the book. The tragedy of the *Falcon* foreshadows the tragedy of the *Andrea Gail.*

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

It is a rainy October day1991 in Gloucester, Massachusetts, a quaint town dominated by the fishing industry. Gloucester has been a fishing village since colonial days.

Bobby Shatford comes from a family of fisherman. Today he is getting ready to go on a sword fishing trip aboard the *Andrea Gail*. The trip will last a month. Bobby is separated from his wife, has two children and a new lover named Christine Cotter. His ex-wife is suing him for child support that his mother recently paid to keep him out of court. Bobby hopes that this latest trip will yield at least five thousand dollars - enough to pay for his divorce and remarriage.

Bobby's mother is a bartender at "The Crow's Nest." Gloucester is full of bars like "The Crow's Nest," The Irish Mariner," "The Green Tavern,"" Bill's," and others. The taverns are "orphanages" for local fishermen. They provide a sense of belonging and also some practical help to those who practice a dangerous and uncertain profession. For example, a good bartender will hold a fisherman's pay before he spends it all in a drunken spree. Most fishermen are young and single. When they are paid, they are paid in large amounts and typically become free spenders who pay drinks for the entire house, gamble on poker, and otherwise lose thousands in a spree.

Fishing is a dangerous unskilled profession. Although many Gloucester people say at fishermen's funerals, "He died doing what he loved to do," the truth is that most fishermen do not chose the profession. They wander into it because their friends, brothers, fathers and other men in their lives are in it. Gloucester men have been fishing since the early 1600's. The profession is largely unchanged although the equipment has improved over the years.

Fishermen are constantly telling each other survival stories.. Howard Blackburn survived three days at sea by rowing until his hands grew so frostbitten that they had to be amputated. David Sullivan more recently saved an entire crew. His boat, the *Harmony,* was tethered to another boat when it began to take in water. One January morning, "Sully" jumped into the icy Atlantic and woke up the crew on the other boat to untie it.

Fishermen tend to be a rough, hard working and hard drinking lot who cannot hold on to money. Christine Cotter did not want to be part of the local scene in Gloucester, nor did she want to fall in love with a fisherman. A divorced woman in her forties with two children, she fell in love with Bobby Shatford. When Bobby returns from sea after a month, the lovers plan to marry. Christine is a friend with Mary Anne Stratford, Bobby's sister, who introduced the couple. Christine is also close with Ethel Stratford, Bobby's mother, who has works at "The Crow's Nest."

Billy Tyne is captain of the *Andrea Gail*. He is assembling food and supplies for the next trip. The boat is seventy-five feet long and considered very safe and sea-worthy. Her owner is Bob Brown, who has taken in record-breaking loads of fish not only in the *Andrea Gail* but also in his other boat, the *Hannah Bolen*. Captain Linda Greenlaw is in charge of *Hannah Bolen*, and it is rare for a woman to do well in a man's profession. She is a college graduate and very successful at fishing.

Bobby Stratford, Dale "Sully" Sullivan and Billy Tyne make up only half the crew of the *Andrea Gail*. Bugsy Moran has wild hair and a crazy reputation in the local bars, but yet everyone loves him. His real name is Michael Moran. Dale Murphy is a big guy from Florida who has a three-year-old son and an ex-wife. "Murph" is devoted to his little boy who adores him. Alfred Pierre is from Jamaica, and is an extremely big man with a kind heart. Pierre is ambivalent about the trip.

Food in large proportions gets loaded on the *Andrea Gail*. They are taking fifty loaves of bread, a hundred pounds of potatoes and much more. An important component of the trip is ice - without ice there would be no possibility of keeping the fish fresh. "Cape Cod Ice" is an old Gloucester company that sells ice in fifty-pound blocks, and the crew is loading it on to the *Andrea Gail*.

Adam Randall is supposed to be a crewmember on the *Andrea Gail*. He and his father-in-law drive to Gloucester the day of the trip. Randall gets a "funny feeling" as they park the car in a lot near the boat. He has a premonition of disaster and believes he should not go on this particular fishing trip. Like many fishermen before him, premonitions are a natural part of fishing, and the trick is to know whether or not to act on them. Randall acts on it and Sully goes in his place.

Chapter 2 Analysis

This chapter, like most of the ones that follow, has a lot of encyclopedic material about the fishing industry and its history. The narrative of the crew of the *Andrea Gail* is secondary to the factual information. The author even gives a brief history of "The Cape Cod Ice Company. " These details are interesting to some readers but may be boring to other readers. Some of the research notes could have been discarded as irrelevant.

Junger foreshadows the disaster of the *Andrea Gail* by recounting the sinking of the *Falcon* and the story of Adam Randall's strange premonition. He also raises questions about Billy Tyne's competence, which is likewise disquieting. Billy Tyne's incompetence will contribute to the sinking of the *Andrea Gail.*

The author is using the literary trick of pulling the reader into the characters' lives and making them sympathetic, so that the reader cares about them as they go through their ordeal on the *Andrea Gail*.

The theme of the book, "fishing as a subculture," is also the theme of this chapter. The reader gets details of the fishermen's lives such as their bar room habits and how they spend their paychecks. The descriptions of the Crow's Nest are particularly good,

providing what is known as "local color." Another theme -that of "fishing is dangerous" again shows up in this chapter. Like circus performers and stunt pilots, fishermen are a superstitious lot who take into consideration things like lucky charms and premonitions.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

The *Andrea Gail* is ready to go to sea. Meanwhile, crewmembers are saying their last good-byes to friends and families. Billy Stratford and his girlfriend are using a friend's bedroom when they get a call from Sully that it is time for Billy to go. Alfred Pierre and his girlfriend come down from a room upstairs in the Crow's Nest. She has been crying.

Chris and Murph get a load of movies for the trip. Sully and Alfred are complaining to Bugsy that Sully has a bad premonition about this voyage. They have one last drink and file out the door. Bobby and Chris are talking in their car. Bobby says he does not want to go; Chris asks him why doesn't he just stay back? Finally, the entire crew is aboard and the *Andrea Gail* takes off.

The author now gives a long history of fishing in the New World. At first Europeans fished off Newfoundland with the most popular catch being codfish. In 1598, sixty French convicts were left on Sable Island as punishment, and by 1603 most of them were murdered by the others; only eleven were left. The King pardoned them upon their return.

In 1605 Champlain discovered Casco Bay and continued to explore New England. In 1623, the English settled in Beauport because of the abundance of cod. Although their financing company went bankrupt, some settlers continued to stay and joined with outcasts from Plymouth to form a new settlement at Gloucester. From early on, Gloucester had a reputation for bawdy behavior and lawlessness.

Many fishermen from Gloucester died, which lost four percent of its population every year at sea. Since 1650, more than ten thousand Gloucester fishermen died. Two of the most dangerous places to fish are the Grand Banks and Georges Bank, which are also home to some of the biggest populations of marine life. Sometimes whole fleets of ships were lost in one storm.

The *Andrea Gail*'s voyage is probably a lot like those of other longliners. On the week the boat travels up and the week that she travels back; most of her crew does little work and spends a lot of time sleeping. However, once the crew starts fishing, crewmembers put in twenty-hour workdays. Murph is the cook on this trip, and is paid extra to do it. The crew takes turn standing watch for fish, and everyone seems to have an idea of where they might be.

Billy Tyne is an excellent fisherman who grew up on Gloucester Avenue. He wanted to become a psychologist. He went from job to job until his wife Jodi encouraged him to go into fishing -he was a natural at it and seemed to have "radar" of finding fish. However, fishing took over his life and ruined his marriage. Jodi left him after asking him to choose between him and fishing, and he chose another fishing trip. She took their two

daughters to Florida. Once a year his daughters returned to Gloucester to visit their grandparent and Billy was able to see them.

After he moved to Florida, Billy got offered the chance to be captain of the *Andrea Gail* when his friend Charlie Reed stepped down. Billy gets to keep one-third of the share of the take.

The author goes back to a long discussion of sword- fish, which is part of the reason fishing is so dangerous. These fish use their long jaw extensions or "swords" to kill other fish. They can fight for three to four hours. A puncture wound from a "sword" means an instant infection. These fish have been known to put holes in ships and cause them to sink.

By September 26 the *Andrea Gail* is beginning its first "set." A set is when the crew actually lays out the lines, the bait and the gangions. Baiting is a dangerous job because it is easy to lose a hand to a hook. Men have been caught in hooks and thrown overboard. Since sword- fish feed at night, hooks are fixed with Cylume lightsticks that illuminate the bait. A fully baited line is worth thousands of dollars. For example, it will usually contain about $8,000 worth of buoys; $6000 worth of polyballs; and another $12,000 worth of hooks, lightsticks, gangions and bait.

Around 5 in the morning, before the sun comes out, the crewmembers work on "haul back." This means checking the line for weight or fish biting and then hauling in the fish on to the boat. It is very dangerous work. Often a crewmember needs to harpoon a sword-fish; sometimes he will have to shoot a shark in the head. Mako sharks can bite a man's leg off even after you cut off their heads.

A good day's catch is about ten to twenty swordfish, each which weigh about a hundred pounds. One day's catch can be about one ton of fish. The *Hannah Bolen* once caught 70,000 pounds of fish in seven days. For every good trip like that one, there are a dozen trips that are disappointments.

Sword fishing like any other fishing is highly regulated by the United States government. Captains must keep track of every set, every fish and every position they use to fish. This allows scientists to study fish and determine their health and population. In 1982, a scientist aboard the *Tiffany Vance* kept a detailed log of a fishing expedition that included descriptions of the *Andrea Gail*(one of the few written accounts of life aboard a longliner).

By the first week in October, the *Andrea Gail* is in the Grand Banks where the crew sees the *Mary T*, a boat whose captain is Albert Johnston. After a month at sea, the *Mary T* makes port in Fairhaven, Massachusetts, on October 12. It takes a day to unload the *Mary T.* Johnston has no desire to go back out because of storms.

On that day, the *Andrea Gail* takes a "hell of a wave," perhaps thirty feet high. The wave buries the boat in tons of water, but it rights itself. Billy Tyne talks to Johnston on the radio about it. That makes Johnston worry about him. The *Andrea Gail* fishes for

another week, but the catch is very bad. Billy Tyne takes the boat to 41 degrees west, almost off the fishing charts. The weather is turning bad.

Chapter 3 Analysis

Junger can write almost poetically about the sea and what it feels like to journey upon waters for days on end. This exemplifies writing style: "*The earth was without form and darkness was upon the face of the deep." Whoever wrote that knew the sea - knew the pale emergence of the world every morning, a world that contained absolutely nothing, not one thing.*

On the other hand, Junger's writing can be technical and full of scientific explanation and statistics that can be hard to plow through. *The high center of gravity reduces what is called the metacentric height, which determines the length of the righting arm. The lower the metacentric height, the less leverage there is to overcome the downward force of gravity.*

In this chapter Junger builds suspense by relating how the *Mary T*'s captain decided to move out of the dangerous waters during October storms. The *Andrea Gail* is left behind to contend for herself, again foreshadowing the tragedy.

The theme of "fishing as dangerous" is carried out in the long good-byes between the fishermen and their lovers. It is their last good-byes and they understand this possibility. Junger describes that baiting the lines is dangerous work. The reader understand that it is dangerous to take a fishing boat out in a hurricane, but the theme of "fishing as dangerous" is carried out in this chapter by showing that the mundane tasks of fishing can be dangerous.

Fishing is a subculture with a long history in New England. The fishermen on the *Andrea Gail* participate in this long history and the current subculture. Their tragedy becomes part of the history of Gloucester, just as the tragedy of the tens of thousands of others who died fishing is part of the history and subculture.

Junger tells the reader how much money is at stake with the cost of the fishing lines and bait as well as the cost of the actual fish they are hauling.. If Billy Tyne had decided to ditch his load of fish and his lines, it would have cost the company a lot of money. He would have also lost his salary.

Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

This chapter begins with a long history of sword-fishing in New England. It returns to the stories of the *Mary T* and the *Andrea Gail*.

New England sword fishermen, in the early 1800's, harpooned their fish. Things remained the same for decades until the invention of the longline ship and spotter planes. Spotter planes were first used in 1962 to locate fish. Canadians were the first to invent longline boats, also in the 1960s. The new boats created a boom in catching sword- fish that did not last long when the United States government detected dangerous levels of mercury in the fish.

It was not until 1978 that the United States government relaxed standards for mercury. This created another boom in the 1980's when hundreds of longliners were fishing and using millions of hooks. Soon officials began to worry about the ocean getting depleted and set new requirements for fishermen.

The Maguson Fishery Conservation and Management Act of 1976 extended national sovereignty to two hundred miles offshore. This meant fishermen could get government loans and set up big businesses. By 1988, government data was showing that sword-fish were being caught too young, so officials tightened up regulations even more. This meant that fishermen were working under quotas and racing through the season and against each other.

By October 17, Albert Johnston has the *Mary T*, and his crew is now fishing for tuna. Since Johnston has a wife and children, he becomes cautious and concerned about the odds of coming back from fishing expeditions. In 1983, Johnston's friend ran into a fall gale and almost lost his boat to an enormous wave. The gale wrecked the rest of the fleet.

Billy Tyne is having a bad trip with only 20,000 pounds of fish caught. r. He meets with Linda Greenlaw who helps him out by allowing him to take fuel from the *Hannah Bolen.* Billy wants to stay out long enough to make the trip profitable and needs more fuel. Billy's ice machine is also not working properly. The quality of the fish is dropping, a factor that may cost them as much as fifty cents a pound. His crew is getting cranky and tired. Billy is trying to t find enough fish even two good sets would make the trip profitable.

Billy has his own quarters on the *Andrea Gail,* but the crew share a room with bunk beds. The *Andrea Gail* has a large galley. Its engine has 365 horsepower and had been refurbished three years ago. The *Andrea Gail* carries a lot of spare parts and equipment so as to avoid repairs in Newfoundland, where fishermen are notoriously overcharged. The boat also carries diesel fuel in two 2,000-gallon tanks in the engine room. There is

a tool room, a fish hold, and the setting-out house, which provides shelter to crewmembers baiting the lines.

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Every boat can roll to an extent, and every boat can roll until it tips over. Gravity pushes down and buoyancy pushes up until the ship returns to even keel. The wider the ship, the more stable. The taller the ship, the more likely it is to keel over. Downflooding is the influx of water into the hold of the ship, and downflooding causes a boat to sink.

The *Andrea Gail* was overhauled and inspected in 1986, when its value was appraised at $400,000. In 1987 and 1990 surveyors asked for a few minor changes to bring the boat up to code. There were a few things wrong with the boat when Billy Tyne took it out in October 1991. The boxy construction meant the boat did not give much with the movement of the sea or during a storm.

The owner of the *Andrea Gail* had a mixed reputation in Gloucester. Bob Brown was known as a man who took risks, and made a lot of money. In 1986, he lost a crewmember in a boat named *Sea Fever.* An erroneous weather report endangered not only the *Sea Fever* but also another boat, the *Fair Wind.* Everyone was lost, except one mane, on the *Fair Wind*. The *Sea Fever* lost one crewmember, but managed to save the others. Some of the losses were blamed on Bob Brown, even though it was clearly not his fault.

Johnston on the *Mary T* is pulling in all kinds of large female fish (some up to 800 pounds) as the full moon approaches on October 23. There are a few other boats in the vicinity including the *Hannah Bolen, Laurie Dawn 8, Contship Holland, Allison, Miss Millie* and *Mr. Simon.* Meanwhile, Billy Tyne and the crew on the *Andrea Gail* are making up for lost time and pulling in swordfish at the same rate as Johnston. By the end of the month, he has 40,000 pounds. Billy is ready to go home on October 25.

The *Satori* is a big sailing boat manned by Ray Leonard. He and two women, Sue Bylander and Karen Stimpson, are heading for Bermuda. On October 26 Stimpson expresses her concerns about the weather to Ray Leonard. Billy Tyne has also heard the weather report as he tries to navigate home. A few degrees of wrong calculation can add extra days to the trip. He uses GPS or global positioning system which is accurate within fifteen feet. Billy will take the Great Circle route and not use the countercurrent between Sable Island and Nova Scotia. He will run a slot between the Gulf Stream to the south and Sable Island to the north, and the route will take about a week. Between October 24 and October 28, the *Andrea Gail* travels 460 miles. Billy Tyne reports his position to the Canadian Coast Guard.

On October 27, the weather report is really bad. There is a hurricane off Bermuda, a storm over the Great Lakes, and a cold front coming down off the Canadian Shield. Linda Greenlaw calls Billy Tyne and asks his opinion about the weather. Billy seems confident about proceeding, and she offers to give him supplies. The weather systems are starting to collide with one another

Chapter 4 Analysis

This chapter contains a lot of scientific information that includes many nautical terms. Some of the terms are not defined, which makes for difficult reading.

The author builds suspense with the three storms that are about to collide with one another as the *Andrea Gail* makes its way home. The reader is cheering for the crew of the *Andrea Gail* because so far they have managed to turn a bad situation into a successful fishing trip.

Junger uses the device of telling parallel stories to contrast the tragedy of the *Andrea Gail* with the successful rescue of the *Satori* and the uneventful return of the *Hannah Bolen* to port. While he implies that Linda Greenlaw's conservative personality played a part in getting her to safety, there is no guarantee that conservative choices can save a ship. Ray Leonard is uncooperative and overly confident: yet his choices do not condemn his crew. Billy Tyne does not listen to the warnings from the weather bureau or Linda Greenlaw, but instead, relies on his own abilities and the seaworthy design of the *Andrea Gail.* Junger is saying that while personality type can be a factor in the fate of a boat, fishing is so inherently dangerous that luck is also a factor.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

Most sword fishermen undergo a certain amount of denial about the dangers of their profession. They ignore weather reports, overload their ships, unplug emergency radios, stow life rafts in the wheelhouse of the boat and otherwise indulge in unsafe practices. Billy Tyne is no exception. Although, once a storm hits a boat at sea, the crew immediately begins to close every hatch, porthole and watertight door on board. They take everything off the deck and lash down things that could break loose.

On board the *Andrea Gail,* Billy Tyne is in charge of the engine room. He is the one who checks everything before a storm hits. He reads the weather faxes that say,: "Hurricane Grace is moving in and will develop into a dangerous storm. Winds 50 to 65 KTS and sees up to 32 feet." Before the hurricane hits, they will feel a "backing wind" which goes counterclockwise and is always a harbinger of rough weather.

Albert Johnston on the *Mary T* gets the same forecast and decides to head northwest into the cold water of Labrador Current. The *Contship Holland* is heading into the teeth of the storm. The *Eishin Maru 78* is going to Halifax harbor. Ray Leonard on the *Satori* stays on course to Bermuda. Billy Tyne has two choices: hang low for a few days and get out of the storm's way or stay on course to Gloucester. Most likely, because he has a full load of fish, Billy Tyne decides to keep heading home.

The Boston Office of the National Weather Service has the duty of reading the charts and reports from weather balloons to predict the storms. On October 28, meteorologist Bob Case is watching "a short wave trough aloft" coming in from the Great Lakes. This is building into a bad storm. A thunderstorm has enough electrical power to supply four days worth of electricity to the entire United States. A mature hurricane such as the one Case is watching now has the power to supply all the electricity the United States requires for three or four years. It is worth the combined arsenals of the United States and Soviet Union during the Cold War.

Ordinarily, Hurricane Grace should land near the Carolinas, but the short-wave trough aloft is blocking her path. Case believes Grace will collide with the cold front and move north, straight into the path of the short-wave trough aloft. It will become a "nor-easter" or what meteorologists call "bombs."

By October 28, the trough is moving east along the Canadian border to Montreal, then to northern Maine and into Nova Scotia. It is gaining strength as it nears Sable Island. A buoy maintained by Canada is recording no activity whatsoever seventy miles east of Sable Island, but within hours, it starts to jump. The *Andrea Gail* is heading straight into "meteorological hell." Even though the sea is calm all afternoon and early evening, the storm hits suddenly around 7 P.M.

Fishermen gauge a windstorm by the sound the wind makes. If it screams, it is a Force 9. If it shrieks, a Force 10. If it moans, a Force 11. But if a fisherman hears a deep tonal vibration like a church organ, it is a Force 12. The storm is growing stronger and creating a huge vacuum in its center. From 8 P.M. on, the height of the waves double every hour. It is a Gale Force 12.

Tommy Barrie is able to contact Billy Tyne on the radio that early evening. It is the last time anyone speaks to Billy Tyne. He says that the wind is blowing at eighty miles per hour, the seas are at thirty feet, and that he is 130 miles east of Sable Island. Billy Tyne changes course but does not tell the other boats nearby. He is no longer headed for Gloucester.

Leonard Ray and the two others on the *Satori* are beginning to feel the effects of the storm. Linda Stimpson is very frightened although Leonard believes they will be fine. By late that night Stimpson is sure they are going to be killed.

On the *Andrea Gail* Billy Tyne has probably taking over the helm with the rest of the crew down below. Bugsy, Murph and Billy have 34 years of experience at sea between them. Murph has had a premonition that he will die young at sea, and this may be the night. He has had three or four near misses at sea including the time when he was thrown overboard with a fishhook in his hand, and once when he was aboard a ship rammed by a British submarine.

By ten o'clock the wind speed is over forty knots and the sea is very high. Billy Tyne is probably fighting the tendency of the *Andrea Gail* to broach or to roll over into the water. By this time the waves are every nine seconds, and perhaps 50 feet high. It is impossible for the *Andrea Gail* to survive very long, so Billy Tyne probably decides to come around. "Coming around" means the *Andrea Gail* would be broadside to the waves for several minutes and may roll over. At this point the *Andrea Gail* is no longer headed for home, but just trying to survive the storm.

The *Andrea Gail*'s windows may break apart, she may use up her fuel too fast, and her bow may drag the boat leeward. The best Billy Tyne can do is keep the boat pointed into the worst of the storm and hope no freak wave keels her over. Meanwhile the *Contship Holland* is about two hundred miles away. She has abandoned course just to survive and lost 36 containers at sea.

Billy Tyne was supposed to have called Barrie. Barrie tries to get through to the *Andrea Gail* with no results. It may mean that this ship has already sunk or it may mean her antennae are lost. If the antennae were lost, Billy Tyne would have no radar, running lights, or capacity to communicate. Around midnight there is a small reprieve, but within a few hours the waves are back at 70 feet. No one knows if Billy Tyne got through this weather.

Chapter 5 Analysis

In this chapter the plot picks up- especially when the author writes about Murphy's background. However, he continually bogs down the narrative with encyclopedic analyses of hurricanes, gale winds, and so forth - although some readers may enjoy learning the intricacies of such details.

For all practical purposes, no one knows what happened to the *Andrea Gail* once it lost radio contact with the world. Billy Tyne's last radio broadcast was with Barrie on the *Allison* around 6 P.M., the night the storm first hit. The *Andrea Gail* may have been sunk within a few hours but yet the author keeps creating scenarios as to what happened to the boat during the entire night of the storm. Since the reader knows from the beginning that the entire crew and boat will be lost, any suspense left in the rest of the book is in the "how" and "when."

Billy Tyne's character comes into play in his fateful decision to keep heading toward Gloucester. Had he turned north and gone to England, he would have avoided the storm and saved his crew. He was thinking of the monetary gains of holding on to his load of fish and thus his salary, and also overly confident that the *Andrea Gail* was so seaworthy that she could survive the hurricane. There is no information as to whether the other crewmembers had a say in this decision. Junger clearly established in the first chapter that Bobby Shatford and Dale Murphy needed money, but nothing is known about the financial situation of the others.

The force of the hurricane and indeed, the powers of nature at sea, are in full play in this chapter. The descriptions of the waves and how the *Andrea Gail* may have broken apart are very frightening and effective.

Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

Albert Johnston aboard the *Mary T* recalled the night of October 28th. He said once he knew the weather forecast, he headed for colder waters because cold water is denser and therefore the waves may not be as high. Albert recalled that he personally saw only fifty-foot waves, not hundred feet as predicted. The *Mary T* crew synched the boat with the RPMs of the waves and rode it out.

About a hundred miles west of this boat, however, the waves were a hundred feet high- the largest waves ever recorded on the Scotian Shelf, and among the highest ever measured anywhere at any time. Not much is known about how such big waves really work. Scientists know that waves start off on the surface of the water as rough spots and die when the wind stops. However, there are waves that are not dependent on wind but gravity. They propagate by falling into the trough that precedes it.

During storms, the wave energy rises to the fourth power with wind speed. This means a forty-knot wind generates seas seventeen times as violent as a twenty-knot wind. Also objects in water do what the water they replace would have done. This means a boat becomes part of the curl of a wave. Even three-ton boats can get lifted on to shore during a violent storm.

There is some scientific evidence that changes in the ecology of the ocean, such as petroleum being dumped in it, are affecting the seas and making them rougher. This means more ships are coming against waves and stresses that are greater than their ratings. South Africa's coast between Durban and London has a lot of these freak wave "monsters" that frequently overwhelm ships.

The biggest freak wave ever recorded was in 1933, when a 478-foot Navy tanker encountered a 112-foot wave. This wave and others like it may be several ordinary waves that "pile up." Most people do not survive encounters with waves like these. However, in the 1960's, an Englishwoman recorded a wave so big it looked like a wall of water. It flipped over her 46-foot boat near Cape Horn.

If such a wave took out the windows on the *Andrea Gail*, it would be like one of those. In that case the boat would have filled up with water and crewmembers could be electrocuted. If they survive, they have to bail out the wheelhouse first then they have to head into the storm and hope they don't take any more freak waves and that the engine keeps going.

Billy Tyne would have radioed for help if his equipment were still operative. In that case the Coast Guard would have sent out a rescue swimmer/helicopter team. Since the Coast Guard never received a call from the *Andrea Gail*, it probably meant the radios were not working. If the radios were working, Billy Tyne may have believed that the

Andrea Gail had a chance in the storm - even though waves took out their windows, causing the ship to flood and begin to sink.

If the crew knows that the ship is going down, they usually continue working and do not think about the disaster much. There is too much to do to keep the boat going. They cannot be rescued in the pitch dark or use a lifeboat in high seas. Bobby Shatford must have thought about how he almost did not go on this trip. Perhaps he recalled how he and Christina watched a World War 2 movie last winter, and that he told Christina that he wanted to be buried at sea. Now he is getting his wish.

Meanwhile the Japanese longliner, the *Eishin Maru*, is struggling two hundred miles away. Judith Reeves is a Canadian with the job of making sure the boat complies with Canadian fishing regulations. Around 8 PM, a wave blows out a window and water cascades into Reeves's room. The *Eishin Maru* is twice as big as the *Andrea Gail* but is completely buried in water. Another wave blows out four more windows. The electric circuits go out. Reeves talks to the Coast Guard who wants to know if they need help. The *Eishin Maru* is in the eye of the storm and taking huge waves broadside, turning around in complete circles. Reeves is sure she will drown with the ship. She tells a radio operator that they are in terrible trouble. The boat is sure to capsize and go down.

After Billy Tyne talked to Barrie at 6 PM, the *Andrea Gail* may have gone another two or three hours toward Sable Island (also known as the "graveyard of the Atlantic"). It is a twenty-mile sandbar often used by mariners during storms. They drive their boats on it, but that usually does not save them because they are pounded by waves. Over five thousand men have drowned there. Today there are two lighthouses, a Coast Guard station, a weather station and some oil wells there.

With his navigation equipment conked out, Billy Tyne would have had to navigate toward Sable Island by "dead reckoning." Nothing is known for sure about the *Andrea Gail* except one thing - around midnight on October 28th, the storm was at its worst and something horrible happened on that ship.

Chapter 6 Analysis

The author keeps the tension high with descriptions of the storm and the probable fate of the *Andrea Gail*. He intertwines the story of the *Eishin Maru* and the other boats so that the reader gets a picture of what was going on at sea - how high the waves were, how fast the wind was blowing, how even large ships were struggling against the force of this storm.

The use of direct quotes from survivor Judith Reeves are particularly effective in creating a sense of what it feels like to be on board a ship during a hurricane with the distinct possibility of imminent death. He creates poignancy when he recalls how Bobby Shatford wanted to be buried at sea and how he cried with his girlfriend. There is a lot of tragic irony in the fact that two men avoided the trip because of premonitions and others on board had "a feeling" that they too would die at sea.

At this point in the narrative, Billy Tyne must have realized he had made the wrong decision to go into this storm, which actually became a deadly combination of three storm systems in collision.

The incredible image of a desperate sea captain trying to maneuver his fishing boat on to a tiny island in the middle of a terrible storm is very dramatic and effective. Amid one-hundred foot waves, the *Andrea Gail* is trying to save herself by crashing into a small sandbar.

Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary

This chapter contains has long passages of factual information about the mechanics of how ships go down at sea and the science of human drowning.

About forty years ago, the United States Navy was experimenting with detonating nuclear bombs in the ocean. The experiments were called off because of dangers to undersea landmasses. The Navy conducted experiments to determine how much stress and force their ships could handle before sinking. These were done using model ships.

It was determined that ships can flip over if their bows get caught in the crests of a large enough wave. This is called "pitch-poling." "Floundering" is a series of waves that can drive a ship underwater.

The *Andrea Gail* probably "pitched-poled" or "floundered" the night of October 28th. If this did not occur, there was a chance that the boat may have survived until dawn. The crew must keep the engines and pumps going for the ship to survive.

Ernie Hazard was caught on the Georges Banks in 1982 in a storm that laid his ship on its back. He recalls a monster wave that forces the boat upside down. He finds a small air pocket but fully expects to drown. He is able to get out and swim away from the boat. Something similar could have happened to the crew of the *Andrea Gail*.

If the *Andrea Gail* "pitch-poles" or otherwise gets driven down, this is the "zero-moment" point. The crew would trip the EPIRB as objects come crashing around them and the water comes into the boat. The electricity would short out. The boat fills with water about fifty degrees in temperature and there would be absolute darkness.

Water comes up to the men's ankles and then waists. They have an instinct not to breathe in water. The crewmembers would not inhale until they were about to lose consciousness as they choose "voluntary apnea." When it is no longer possible not to breathe, water enters the mouth and nose. This water triggers "larnynospasm" or a contraction of the muscles of the larynx and the person suffocates, without water entering his lungs.

A Scottish doctor once survived drowning during a hurricane at sea in 1892. He wrote about how he could not stop himself from inhaling, and he felt as if he were in a dream. Right before he lost consciousness, the sensation was pleasant, like a pleasant dream. When he came back to life on land, he fell asleep for three hours. Upon waking he had a terrible diarrhea from the sea-water he ingested. Laryngospasm probably prevented water from entering his lungs.

The crew of the *Andrea Gail* would have suffered about two minutes or less until they went unconscious. Their hearts would slow down, their metabolism would lower, and

blood would pool toward the heart and skull in a temporary hibernation. This is called the "diving reflex." Mammals can survive for up to an hour or so especially in very cold waters through the "diving reflex." The crew of the *Andrea Gail* may have had an extra five or ten minutes of life because of this reflex. Most likely, all six crewmembers drowned.

Chapter 7 Analysis

There is some excellent writing in this chapter as Junger tries to reconstruct what may have happened to the crew of the *Andrea Gail*. There are wonderful passages like, "*He'd have his whole life ahead of him; he'd have every choice in the world. And he wound up sword fishing. He wound up, by one route or another, on this trip, in this storm, with this boat filling up with water."* Here Junger shows that he can write beautifully and has the imagination of a fiction writer. Some of the passages lift the book into literature and out of the realm of journalism.

The problem is mixing truth with fiction. For example, Junger writes, "The drowning person feels as if it's the last greatest act of stupidity in his life." The crewmembers of the *Andrea Gail* had little choice in the matter of their drowning; after all, a hurricane is not an act of human stupidity.

The last moments of the crew of the *Andrea Gail* must have been horrible. Junger's elaborate scientific explanations of human drowning and the diving reflex do not soften the reality of what they must have suffered.

It is interesting how Junger juxtaposes dramatic literary writing about how a certain man must have felt in his last moments before death with the science of human drowning. These are two different realities - the death of one person and the universal physical process that any person will endure in drowning - a process that obeys the laws of physics and biology. *The Perfect Storm* is about this juxtaposition of individuals aboard the *Andrea Gail* and what they personally endured during one particular storm as work as the universal laws of science that determine all human fates in any storms anywhere at any time.

Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary

This chapter is about what went on the other ships in the vicinity of the *Andrea Gail*. The passengers and crew on these ships managed to survive the storm, but not all the rescuers made it back home.

Albert Johnston is on the *Mary T,* when the winds become so strong that they take out the anemometer that is supposed to measure them. Johnston's goal is to stay in "heavy" cold waters and avoid the Gulf Stream.

Early in the morning of October 29th, Johnston is aware that Hurricane Grace is colliding with the cold front and then running into the Sable Island storm. When this happens, the gale winds are over a hundred miles per hour almost instantly. The two weather systems "function like huge gears that catch the storm between their teeth and extrude it westward." This only happens every hundred years or so. This storm is a "perfect storm."

The sailing yacht, the *Satori,* is starting to lose its battle to stay above water. Its skipper Leonard had predicted the storm would subside; he is wrong. Sue Bylander and Karen Stimpson, the only other two people on board, are terrified. Stimpson cannot control the boat. A wave puts the *Satori*'s mast underwater. Stimpson wants to abandon ship. She and Bylander collect supplies only to realize that their life- boat is gone. Leonard is against her calling in a "May day." She calls for help anyway.

The Coast Guard cutter, the *Tamaroa,* will rescue them, even as a small Falcon jet is sent to the *Satori.* Since it will take twelve hours for the cutter to get to them, Bylander must get the engine going and keep the yacht afloat, but this is against Leonard's wishes. The Falcon can't rescue them, but it relays messages from the *Tamaroa.* Two helicopters and another Falcon jet arrive. The Coast Guard declares the voyage of the *Satori* to be a "manifestly unsafe" one, which gives it the legal authority to rescue Leonard, who is still uncooperative.

It is decided to remove the *Satori* crew from the yacht and to shuttle them to the *Tamaroa* on inflatable rafts called Avons. Rescue workers on an Avon fling survival suits to the crew on the yacht. Unfortunately, the three people on the Avon take a large wave that kills their engine.

Dave Moore, aboard the helicopter, jumps into the water but has to be pulled up in a rescue basket. The basket breaks off but Moore gets it tethered again. Everyone on the *Satori* will jump in the water. Moore takes them one by one out of the water and into the basket to be hoisted in the helicopter. Later Stimpson recalls that Moore and others on the rescue team were so happy to save them and had prayed for them the day before.

Meanwhile, another Coast Guard team rescues the crew of a Florida longliner that spent the night under a raft on the beach of Norman's Island. When they arrive back in Cape Cod, Bylander and Stimpson give an interview to television reporters with Dave Coolidge, the Falcon pilot. Stimpson explains that Leonard did not want to leave the yacht because it is his home. During the interview everyone gets the news that a rescue helicopter has gone down fifty miles offshore. Five National Guardsmen are in the water.

Chapter 8 Analysis

This chapter is plot-oriented and less full of scientific facts. It is a detailed description of the rescue of the *Satori.*

Junger apparently had to add a long paragraph giving Leonard's side of the story. Perhaps Leonard complained or even threatened to sue for libel, especially since Stimpson and Bylander talked to the press immediately after the rescue. In any event, Leonard maintains that the *Satori* was strong enough to survive the storm, partly because it was made of fiberglass and not wood. He was not in favor of a Coast Guard rescue, and says he was forced off his boat because the two crew- members were "inexperienced and terrified." He shows no gratitude to his rescuers.

Junger keeps up with his theme that fishing is dangerous. In this case the rescue people suddenly find themselves in just as much danger as the people they are trying to save. There is tragic irony in that. The *Eishin Maru* and the *Tamaroa* are not in as much danger as the smaller ships like the *Satori* and the *Andrea Gail*, but yet Junger implies that their survival is also at stake.

Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

This chapter is about a perilous rescue at sea, and the mourning of the families who lost men on the *Andrea Gail*.

Christina Cotter has not heard from Bobby Stratford in three days. She has a nightmare that he is dead. On October 30th, Susan Brown, wife of the owner of the *Andrea Gail*, tells Chris that they cannot get the *Andrea Gail* into radio contact. Christina goes to the Crow's Nest where two of Bobby's sisters, his mother and his brother are drinking. Everyone is getting drunk and fearing the worst for the *Andrea Gail*.

Bob Brown, the owner of the boat, has radioed Linda Greenlaw on the *Hannah Bolen.* She and her crew have survived the storm, but no one has heard from the *Andrea Gail*. Brown calls the Coast Guard. There have been no EPIRD signals. There are news reports on television about the *Andrea Gail*. Other ships like the *Allison* and *Eishin Maru* are in radio contact. Bob Brown is unsure who is on the boat, but Doug Kostco knows. Doug is someone who should have made the trip, but did not go because of a bad premonition.

Meanwhile the Air National Guard is facing a rescue crisis. A Japanese sailor named Mikado Tomizawa is going down on a sailboat near the Jersey Coast. An H-60 helicopter and C-130 tanker plane set out to rescue him. It will be a "sporty" mission. Sporty in this sense means dangerous. The Air National Guard trains "PJs" or jumpers who go down in the sea, on glaciers, in the jungle and anywhere a rescue is needed. About 90 percent of PJ's do not complete training. It is an elitist unit, something like the Green Berets.

During this rescue John Spillane will be the PJ who goes after Tomizawa. Spillane along with Rick Smith will go into the sea, which looks like it is rising too fast to save anyone. They ride around in the helicopter for about a half hour, just deciding what to do. Maybe it would be better to let Tomizawa stay with his boat. Dave Ruvola is the pilot. He goes down for a refueling, but the wind is so bad that the aircraft gets batted around the sky. Despite numerous attempts, Ruvola cannot line up his aircraft for refueling. He has to shut down his engine to avoid burnout. They issue a "May Day," and contact the *Tamaroa.*

Jim Mioli, Smith, and Spillane ditch the helicopter; Ruvola and his copilot Graham Buschor remain on board, but then Buschor has to ditch. They jump, and it feels like "being shot out of a cannon." Spillane fractures three bones in his right arm, four ribs, and ruptures a kidney as he hits the water at fifty miles per hour. Spillane is barely conscious and spends the next hours in total agony.

Spillane makes it over to Ruvola and Mioli, who are roped together in the water. Ruvola barely escaped the helicopter. It landed upside down in complete darkness and filled with water.

Within minutes of the helicopter's falling into the water, the Air National Guard is sending help. But helicopters as rescue vehicles do not work under these conditions. The *Tamaroa* will have to rescue the PJs in the water. A Falcon jet arrives but cannot find anything at first. Finally he picks up a signal of a human body in the sea. A helicopter gets within a hundred yards of the three men in the water and sends down a basket. Finally the pilot has to give up.

The *Tamaroa* reaches the area and finds Buschor first. After many attempts, Buschor is able to swim to a rope ladder and get aboard. There are still four more men to rescue, and the captain considers aborting the rescue out of concerns for the safety of his crew. Spillane, Ruvola and Mioli are not strong enough to swim the way Buschor did. The *Tamaroa* sends out mesh ropes and catches the men like big fish. With their combined weight and waterlogged clothing, they weigh over 600 pounds. It takes tremendous effort during the storm to get them aboard.

Rick Smith is still out there. He is among the fittest of the PJ's, and therefore could survive up to five days in the sea by himself before dying of thirst.

Chapter 9 Analysis

This chapter makes the major point that it is just as dangerous to be a rescuer as the person being rescued. A few minutes can change a situation. One minute Spillane is a hero rescuing a Japanese sailor, the next minute he himself is a struggling swimmer with broken limbs trying to save himself.

The captain of the *Tamaroa* had to make the difficult decision to rescue the swimmers at the peril of his crew. If things had gone badly, he would have had to accept the consequences of that decision. His decisions were just as risky as Billy Tyne's.

Junger returns to his theme of scientific realities such as the physics of the rescues with the more human realities of the mourning of the families of the fishermen. He acknowledges that some things such as nightmares about loved ones' deaths cannot be explained by science.

Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary

The "perfect storm" that took the lives of the crew of the *Andrea Gail* is now wreaking havoc on the towns along the coast of New England.

The wind hits October 30th at hurricane force. People cannot walk. Houses float out to sea: over one hundred are destroyed in Scituate. The Hudson River backs up to Albany; the Hudson and the Potomac both flood. Damage is estimated at over a billion and a half dollars. People are still searching for the lost diver, Rick Smith, as well as the *Andrea Gail*. Coast Guardsmen find the lifeboat dropped by Mioli's helicopter and one abandoned by the *Tamaroa.*

On October 31st, a Coast Guard plane spots Day-Glo green dye in the water, which may have been dropped by Rick Smith as a signal. The pilot thinks he sees Smith in the water. He did not see Smith - he actually saw a life raft. Smith's wife Marianne goes to Suffolk Airbase as the others from her husband's unit reunite with their wives. She is convinced that her husband is dead. Nine days later, the Coast Guard stops searching for him. Spillane believes Smith was killed by impact.

No sign of the *Andrea Gail* can be found until the afternoon of November 5th. An EPIRB washes up on Sable Island. Its switch is off, meaning it could not signal even it if hits the water. Rumors circulate around Gloucester that Billy Tyne actually used the EPIRB to signal for help, but the Coast Guard switched it off to protect itself. Even so, it would have most likely been too late to rescue the crew even if Billy Tyne had managed to use the EPIRB.

The crew of the *Hannah Bolen* found fuel barrels marked "AG" two days later. After searching for two weeks, the Coast Guard stopped looking for the *Andrea Gail*.

It was hard on the families and loved ones of the men who died on the *Andrea Gail*. One thing that made it hard was they simply disappeared. Both Debra Murphy (Murph's ex-wife) and Christina Cotter had dreams about Murph and Bobby Shatford dying at sea. Murph's small son had a similar nightmare about his father.

Bob Brown sent the families of crew- members a formal letter saying that he had no responsibility for the tragedy. This had the effect of uniting the families against them. They proceeded to sue him under the "Death in High Seas Act" for causing the deaths of these men by poor maintenance of the *Andrea Gail*. The lawsuit settled out of court.

A few eerie things happened in the connection with the tragedy. A man who looked exactly like Bobby Shatford showed up at "The Crow's Nest" and spooked everyone in attendance. A psychic convinces people at Suffolk Airbase to renew the search for Rick Smith. This distresses his wife, who is in a mourning process. He is never found. Finally, Adam Randall, one of the two men who did not go aboard the *Andrea Gail* because of a

bad premonition, died at sea anyway. He died when a tuna longliner named the *Terri Lei* went down in February in only moderately bad weather.

Chapter 10 Analysis

What may appear to be a series of coincidences to any normal person becomes an eerie part of Gloucester legend. A man with a deadly premonition is killed. People have nightmares in which dead sailors speak to them. Thus the strange culture of the fishermen gets perpetuated.

This chapter gives the book finality even though the *Andrea Gail* was lost forever.

Characters

Billy Tyne

Tyne is the captain of the *Andrea Gail*, and therefore is entitled to one-third of its profits. As an adolescent, he did not know which profession to choose as his life's work and floundered in one job after another. His wife, Jodi, suggested he try fishing. Fishing became his life and true vocation. Ironically, fishing broke up his marriage to Jodi. She wanted him to give it up and spend more time with her and their two daughters.

Although Billy Tyne was born and reared in Gloucester, he was operating out of Florida where his ex-wife and daughters live. When his friend Charlie Reed quit as captain of the *Andrea Gail*, Billy moved to Gloucester and took over the *Andrea Gail* for owner Bob Brown. His daughters spend their summers in Gloucester.

Billy Tyne had many personality quirks. For example, he did not like to stay in radio contact with others during his voyages. This may have been a dangerous practice during the voyage described in *The Perfect Storm.* He apparently did not even trigger his EPIRD, an emergency device used to signal for help, when the *Andrea Gail* was sinking.

From his actions aboard the *Andrea Gail*, Billy Tyne seems to have been a headstrong captain who did not listen to advice or heed the warnings of the weather bureau or his cohorts like Linda Greenlaw. He kept on course to Gloucester instead of adjusting to avoid the storm. Factors in his decision were getting home on time and not losing the thousands of dollars in fish which were loaded on the *Andrea Gail* - factors that outweighed the safety of his men. A more cautious man may have made different decisions.

Bobby Shatford

Shatford is one of the six crew- members of the *Andrea Gail*. He is in his early forties and separated from his wife and two children. His ex-wife is harassing him for child support money. In the past his mother has paid this bill, but it is outstanding when he signs on the *Andrea Gail*. He needs the money to avoid a court battle with his ex-wife, and also to pay for his divorce so that he may marry Christina Cotter. He is somewhat of a romantic, and tells friends he can't bear to be more than ten feet from Christina.

Shatford is one of six boys in a family of men who mostly became fishermen. Like most of his ancestors, he was born and reared in Gloucester among men who worked in the fishing industry. Fishing is his life. Even his mother and sisters are part of the fishing subculture. His mother is a bartender at "The Crow's Nest," and his sisters date fishermen.

Whenever Bobby returns from a fishing trip, he usually spends his time in the bars in Gloucester such as "The Crow's Nest." He has no real home, and has to borrow a friend's house to use to spend intimate time with his girlfriend, Christine Cotter.

Like Murph and Adam Randall, Bobby seems to have had a foreboding sense of his own death. He once told his girlfriend that he wanted to be buried at sea after they watched a sad movie about soldiers dying in World War II.

David Sullivan

Also known as "Sully," Sullivan replaced Adam Randall as the final crew- member of the *Andrea Gail*. Randall had a bad premonition of the trip and cancelled out. Randall actually took the place of Doug Kostco, who had a similar bad premonition and likewise backed out of the trip. Sully, therefore, seems marked from the start.

Sully is twenty-eight years old and an extremely brave and well-trained sailor. He once saved the crew of the *Harmony.* The *Harmony* was tied to another ship during a terrible storm. The other ship was pulling the *Harmony* into the ocean, even as everyone on board was sleeping. Sully jumped into the icy Atlantic and cut the cords to save his ship, and then woke up everyone on the other ship.

In the movie version of *The Perfect Storm,* Sully has an ongoing feud with Bugsy Moran. They have frequent fistfights in bars and on the *Andrea Gail*. They end their feud when Sully pulls Moran out of the ocean. None of this happens in the book.

Dale Murphy

Called "Murph" by everyone who knows him, Murphy is a crewman and who also cooks on the *Andrea Gail*. He is devoted to his three-year-old son, who adores him back, and still connected to his ex-wife, Gail. Murph is six feet two and weighs 250 pounds. He has tattoos and is very tough. Once he had to be rescued by the Coast Guard helicopters after a shark chewed his arm. Another time he took a hook in his hand and was pulled overboard. Another time he was aboard a boat that was accidentally rammed by a British submarine. He told his mother once that he was sure he would die young at sea. A devoted cook, he carried *The Joy of Cooking* with him to the *Andrea Gail*.

Linda Greenlaw

One of the most financially successful and the only female captain of a swordfish boat, Greenlaw is in charge of the *Hannah Bolen.* An intelligent woman and a college graduate, Greenlaw has set some records for the largest catches in Gloucester history. She frequently helps Billy Tyne survive his trips because he is always living on the edge. During this fateful trip, Greenlaw supplies fuel to the *Andrea Gail*. She is able to get the *Hannah Bolen* and her crew safely back to Gloucester.

Christine Cotter

Christine is Bobby Shatford's fiancye. In her early forties, she is divorced and has three children of her own. She told herself she would never get involved with a fisherman because of the danger and uncertainty of the profession, but nevertheless fell in love with Bobby after meeting him through his sister, a friend of hers.

After Bobby Shatford goes down with the *Andrea Gail*, Christina has dreams of him dying happily and telling her how much he loves her as he disappears beneath the sea.

Ray Leonard

Leonard is the owner of the *Satori,* a large pleasure boat that he is sailing to Bermuda when Hurricane Grace hits. He is one of the only characters in the book that is presented in a bad light. He argues in favor of staying below in the boat and riding out the storm instead of calling in the Coast Guard for rescue. During his rescue, he gave the Coast Guard a hard time and made them take legal measures to remove him from his boat. After his rescue, he is ungrateful and still argues for his own position, maintaining that since the *Satori* managed to stay in tact, the crew could have ridden out the storm.

Bugsy Moran

Born Michael Moran, Bugsy is one of the six crewmen on the *Andrea Gail*. He is considered a wild man but is immensely popular in the subculture of fishermen in Gloucester. He frequents the bars and is unmarried.

Alfred Pierre

Pierre is an easy-going Jamaican fisherman and the only black crew -member of the *Andrea Gail*. He is devoted to his girlfriend. Nothing much is written about him or how he died.

Karen Stimpson

An experienced mariner in her own right, Stimpson is aboard the *Satori* on her way to Bermuda when the hurricane hits. She panics and insists they call the Coast Guard, which results in a daring rescue of her, Bylander and Leonard.

Sue Bylander

Bylander is the final crew- member of the yacht owned by Leonard. She is terrified during the storm and sides with Stimpson that they should call the Coast Guard and abandon ship.

Albert Johnston

Johnston is captain of the *Mary T,* a boat that travels near the *Andrea Gail* during the October storms on the Grand Banks. However, Johnston is able to get his boat to safety when he discerns the danger of the storms and takes safety measures. Billy Tyne's actions alarm Johnston as foolhardy.

Judith Reeves

Reeves is a Canadian aboard the Japanese longliner *Eishin Maru*. Her job is to make sure the crew complies with Canadian government fishing regulations. She gives an exciting account of their survival of Hurricane Grace. She and the others have near-death experiences when huge waves knock out five windows on the ship.

Ethel Shatford

Ethel is Bobby Shatford's mother. She has been a bartender for eleven years at the Crow's Nest. Born in Gloucester, she has four sons who are fisherman and two daughters who date fishermen.

Mary Anne Shatford

Mary Anne Shatford is the older sister of Bobby Shatford. She likes to take care of him. She is a girlfriend of Christine Cotter and introduced the couple.

Doug Kostco

This rough and ready sailor was supposed to serve on the *Andrea Gail*, but he had a bad premonition about the trip and cancelled. He was replaced by Adam Randall.

Adam Randall

Adam Randall was a fisherman who once considered becoming a hairdresser or nurse. Randall was supposed to go on the *Andrea Gail*'s next trip. While parking his car in Gloucester, he had a premonition about tragedy and told his father-in-law he decided

not to go a few hours before the ship was to embark. Later he was killed aboard the *Terri Lei* during a terrible storm similar to the one that took the *Andrea Gail*.

Harold Blackburn

Blackburn is a legendary fisherman of Gloucester who managed to save himself by manning the boat through January storms. His fingers got so frostbitten during the effort that he had to have them amputated.

Charlie Reed

Reed is the former captain of the *Andrea Gail* and a friend of Billy Tyne. He gets Billy to take over the *Andrea Gail*.

Bob Brown

He is the owner of both the *Andrea Gail* and the *Hannah Bolen.* He does a slipshod job of maintaining the ships, although this is standard industry practice. After the *Andrea Gail* goes down, members of the families of those who died in the tragedy sue Brown for negligence and receive a monetary settlement.

Thomas Barrie

Barrie is the last person to talk to Billy Tyne or for that matter, anyone on the *Andrea Gail*. He has a radio conversation with Billy at 6 PM October 28th. Barrie is aboard the *Allison*, a fishing boat about two hundred miles from the *Andrea Gail*. Barrie asks about fishing conditions and promises to call Tyne later in the night. He never gets through.

Dave Moore

A twenty-five year old rescue worker with no experience, Moore jumped into the Atlantic and saved the three-crew -members of the *Satori*. He pulled them one by one out of the water and hoisted them into a basket that took them up into a Coast Guard helicopter.

Mikado Tomizawa

Tomizawa was a Japanese sailor who was stranded in the hurricane and rescued by the Air National Guard.

Rick Smith

This was the only rescuer to die in the hurricane of October 28-29. Smith was jumped into the ocean and presumably drowned or died of thirst.

John Spillane

A "PJ" or jumper with the Air National Guard, Spillane almost dies in the Atlantic when he is forced to ditch a helicopter during Tomizawa's rescue. He survives despite six broken bones and several hours in the water.

Objects/Places

The Andrea Gail

One of two ships owned by Bob Brown, the *Andrea Gail* was lost during a terrible storm in 1980, the subject of the book. Built in 1978, this boat was used for sword fishing and was 72 feet long with 365 horsepower. It was a relatively new boat and considered very strong and seaworthy.

Gloucester, Massachusetts

A fishing town dating back to the 1600's, Gloucester lies between Portsmouth, Maine, and Boston, Massachusetts, along the Atlantic coast. It is a center for sword fishing and has been since Colonial times.

The Hannah Bolen

This is a longliner owned by Linda Greenlaw, who used it to catch some of the largest loads of fish in Gloucester history. This boat supplied the *Andrea Gail* with fuel on its ill-fated trip and was in the waters when the hurricane struck.

The Satori

The *Satori* is a large schooner owned by Ray Leonard. On board the night of the hurricane were Linda Stimpson and Sue Bylander. The *Satori* crew left a "May Day" signal and was rescued in time by the Coast Guard.

The Eishin Maru

The *Eishin Maru* is a large Japanese longliner that was fishing in the Atlantic and got caught in Hurricane Grace.

The Contship Holland

The *Contship Holland* is a big ship of 540 feet and 10,000 tons that got caught in Hurricane Grace the same night the *Andrea Gail* did. This ship had to change course to survive the storm.

The Mary T

The *Mary T* is near the *Andrea Gail* in the Grand Banks in October. However, her captain takes her to Fairhaven, Massachusetts to unload. He gets concerned about Billy Tyne's decision to stay out on the Grand Banks during storm weather.

The Falcon

A fishing boat lost in 1896. One of its crew -members left a bottle with a note that related their final struggles against the sea.

The Tamaroa

The *Tamaroa* is a large Coast Guard cutter that was sent to rescue the *Satori* the night of October 28/29th. It ended up rescuing not only that crew but also five Air National Guardsmen stranded in the Atlantic.

EPIRB

This means Emergency Positioning Indicating Radio Beacon. It is a device on board ship that you can trigger in an emergency. It helps rescuers find your position.

Swordfish

Technically known as *Xiphias Gladius,* swordfish are known for their extended upper jaws which form "swords" as long as five feet. They can weigh up to five hundred pounds.

Set Out

A fishing term, to "set out" means to set out the long lines of bait, bobbins and hooks.

Set

In fishing, a set is the catch from one "set-out."

Haul back

To "haul back" in fishing means to haul in the fish. When fishing for swordfish," haul backing" is very dangerous because the fish are enormous and do attack as they are

put into the boat. Sometimes sharks get hauled back at the same time and they also are dangerous.

Cylume

Since swordfish are caught at night when they feed, bait is lighted with Cylume.

Longliner

This is a term used for swordfish boats and refers to the long lines on either side of the boat.

Deepload

To "deepload" a boat means to load so many fish on it that it is in danger of capsizing.

Sable Island

This is where the French king dumped some sixty convicts in 1598, who became some of the first settlers in New England. Only eleven survived to be released. It is actually a twenty-mile sandbar that is sometimes called "the graveyard of the Atlantic" because sailors try to land their boats there when they are desperate during storms. Billy Tyne may have tried to dock the *Andrea Gail* there October 30, 1991.

Grand Banks

A distinct stretch of the Atlantic Ocean near Newfoundland where there are large populations of swordfish. However, the Grand Banks can be a very dangerous place during October storm season.

Avon

An Avon is a 21-foot inflatable raft. These were used to rescue the crew -members of the *Satori.*

Social Sensitivity

The Perfect Storm, like Arthur Miller's classicplay, Deathofa Salesman, focuses the attention of the general public on the least noticed members of society, in this case the fishermen of Gloucester. The recurring phrase in Miller's work is "attention must be paid" to the life and death of Willy Loman, the salesman of the title who is a "low man" in his profession and in his life, an unimportant cog in a large mechanism that serves the interests of others. Whether consciously or not, Junger follows Miller's model of forcing us to pay attention to the common man, in this case the men who put fish on our tables, the usually anonymous workers in an extremely hazardous and low-paying industry whose agonies when things go wrong are rarely explored in the mass media. The Perfect Storm employs a wide variety of techniques to make sure that "attention is paid" to fishermen and their families; by its insistence on viewing its characters as complete human beings with full and complex lives, it forces readers to regard the loss of men at sea as more than just a filler news article on the inside pages of the newspaper.

The Perfect Storm begins with a two page chapter titled "Georges Bank, 1896," a short recapitulation of the despair a fisherman went through on a doomed boat in the nineteenth century. For most readers, recollections of the Rudyard Kipling Captains Courageous literary tradition remain vivid enough to sustain an awareness of how dangerous fishing was in the days of sail and oar, and Junger does describe some historical losses of vessels and men off Georges Bank and the Grand Banks. However, his point in doing so is the opposite of what readers might expect, not to celebrate twentieth century progress in safety but rather to show how fragile and tenuous modern safeguards actually are. A loss of electronics quickly sends a boat back to the nineteenth century, leaving its sailors unsure of their true location and completely ignorant of the changing conditions around them. While fishing boats are equipped with automatic distress signals known as EPIRBs, the device on the Andrea Gail, the boat whose loss is explored in The Perfect Storm, fails to function as it should. Sideband radio, weather faxes, even cellular phones serve to inform the fishing fleet of danger and to link individual boats into a network, but these communication devices which are so sturdy on land are far more vulnerable at sea. When an extraordinary storm puts men and machines under stress, the battle to survive the sea reverts to timeworn nautical strategies rather than to high-tech solutions.

The Perfect Storm also establishes how cavalier government and industry oversight of the fishing fleet can be. The Andrea Gail is a well set-up boat, but she has been modified to carry more fuel and supplies without benefit of testing or analysis of how these changes will affect her seaworthiness.

An extended and carefully written disquisition on why and when boats founder makes readers appreciate how dangerous casual modifications to fishing boats can be, and even worse, how stability can be affected by where gear is stowed, how fish are stored in the holds, and how a captain and crew react to fairly trivial breakdowns in equipment. The seeming strength and safety of steel-hulled boats is somewhat of an illusion; in fact, while they will endure far more pounding than will wood boats, whose seams eventually

open, steel boats turn over and founder more readily than wooden ones. Unlike, say, trucks or airplanes, which are fairly standardized and therefore fairly predictable in their handling, fishing boats can be modified by "eyeball engineering" and then loaded in perilous fashion, making them potential disasters in challenging conditions.

Given the level of unpredictability in vessels and equipment, it is not surprising that fishing is still among the most dangerous of occupations, just as it was in the days of dories rowed out to Georges Bank. Then, the Gloucester fishing industry lost several hundred men a year to drowning, or four per cent of the town's population. A large storm could result in half a dozen ships and hundreds of men lost overnight, with bodies littering the beaches of Newfoundland. In fact, an estimated ten thousand Gloucestermen have perished since 1650; Junger points out that going out to sea to fish has been far more perilous to Gloucestermen than journeying abroad to fight in foreign wars. Given such technology as global positioning by satellite pinpointing a space smaller than an average suburban house, readers can be forgiven for thinking of offshore dangers as distant and dated as frontier gunfights, but in fact, fishing remains the most dangerous occupation in the United States: more fishermen are killed per capita than police, taxi drivers, or convenience store clerks. While fishing gear, electronics, and helicopter rescue have revolutionized some aspects of the trade, it remains inherently perilous, especially when out of reach of the shore (helicopters can carry only about four hours worth of fuel) or during bad weather, which can wipe out communications with electronic "noise." The day-to-day life of a fisherman offers multiple chances to be swept overboard by a "rogue" or freak wave, to be bitten by a dead shark hauled on deck (the reflex survives death), or to be pulled underwater by a fishing line paying out rapidly (baiters put squid on large hooks which are clipped to the "longline" drifting behind the boat; a second's inattention is paid for by being hooked through the hand and dragged down, a death sentence unless a shipmate notices and reacts within seconds). One horrendous scene describes a fisherman gone overboard being pulled on deck with a gaff, just like a fish, the damage done by the gaff secondary to saving his life in a rough sea.

Why would men (and today, some women) put themselves at such risk in such a thankless trade? While a share of the profits of several weeks of fishing can amount to several thousand dollars, normal life is suspended while at sea, and many in the profession spend a good deal of their earnings in compulsive celebrations when they arrive back home. Junger is at pains to deconstruct the romance of fishing: "Most deckhands have precious little affection for the business. . . for them, fishing is a brutal, dead-end job that they try to get clear of as fast as possible." The young men of Gloucester fish to make money fast, to get themselves out of financial trouble. In The Perfect Storm, for example, Bobby Shatford has a bad feeling about his current berth on the Andrea Gail and wants desperately to stay with his new love, Christina Cotter, but forces himself to make the trip to keep up his alimony payments. The working class people who end up on fishing boats have sometimes made a bad bargain between immediate necessity and long-term benefit, but once in the life, they find it hard to return to the far less lucrative forms of manual labor that are a safer alternative.

Junger makes us feel the reluctance of a crew to return to sea, as well as the brutal economic forces that require them to do so again and again. The fishing life often leads to alcohol abuse, divorce, and reckless behavior on shore; these consequences of having normal life routines suspended for weeks at a time make the practitioner of the trade even less able to seek other forms of work.

At least miners and factory workers are protected by unions and government agencies; workers offshore tend to be individualistic free spirits, contracting their persons and their labor for short periods and trusting their captains and boat owners to treat them decently. They operate offshore, beyond the psychological and sometimes even legal attention paid to onshore workers, and Junger's goal is to make their lives visible and affecting.

Techniques

Junger organizes his narrative around both spatial and chronological principles.

The spatial development takes the reader out of Gloucester onto the open sea and then the narrative attention ranges widely across the North Atlantic, encompassing the swordfishing fleet, the sailing yacht Sartori, various freighters caught up in the storm, Sable Island and important coastal points, and even Caribbean weather systems which will eventually impact the North Atlantic. The chronology follows the last days of the Andrea Gail, but also goes back in time to the days of dory fishing off Georges Bank and literary and historical references from the nineteenth century (for example, to Moby Dick). Junger also courageously interrupts both spatial and chronological development with learned technical disquisitions on how waves form, how people drown, how boats turn over, and so on.

These mixed developmental patterns and disquisitions are held together by a clear, forceful prose that nevertheless conveys great human feeling for the doomed fishermen whose story it records.

Junger also occupies a position somewhere in between pure factual reporting (as mentioned, he does not consider himself a journalist) and a novelist writing a dramatized version of a historical event. The author steadfastly resists the temptation of fictionalizing the last hours of Billy Tyne, Bobby Shatford, and the others, instead relying on parallel situations, both historical and contemporary, to establish what "undoubtedly" happened. Aware of his obligation to living relatives and friends, Junger records only what someone highly informed about the sea and shipwrecks believes transpired. He acts as a form of advocate for the missing men, giving them voices and imagining their fate (sometimes by offering alternate possibilities) but never shying away from the fact that they are truly dead. In a sense, Junger is helping the relatives come to term with the deaths by making their last hours concrete and imaginable, the absence of bodies or debris notwithstanding.

Themes

Themes

Like a good novel, The Perfect Storm returns to a series of general ideas evoked by the particular situations endured by its characters. The main theme might be summed up in the old cliche, "men against the sea," but Junger imbues this venerable idea with numerous contemporary relevancies. Primary is the aforementioned stress on the unchanging danger of fishing at sea and the unrecognized continuity between the days of sail and modern steel and diesel technology. Quotes from Samuel Johnson, Melville's Moby Dick, and the Bible make this point by linking the ancient and the new: the human risks and terrors endured by fishermen have changed little if at all. Nature is still unconquerable by the pitiful efforts of men; though the connection is established only indirectly, the confidence and even arrogance that declared the Titanic unsinkable is still at work in captains like the owner of the Sartori, who insists his small sailboat can survive hurricane force winds and waves. In the case of Bob Brown, the owner of the Andrea Gail, such confidence in human power is entangled with the profit motive, which dictates scores of small decisions (Should stability be risked against extra fuel-carrying capacity?) which cumulatively can put a boat in an irrecoverable situation. Part of Junger's argument against the conventional idea that "fate" governs deaths at sea is that in fact fate is shaped by countless small choices, most of which seem trivial at the time they are made.

Like Brown, captain Billy Tyne is sure of his boat and his ability to find a way out of peril; however, he risks his own life as well as those of his men if he goes a step too far.

All the crewmen are putting themselves at risk to escape poverty or dysfunctional lives on shore; Junger asserts that none would choose fishing if other options were available. A mitigating factor, however, is the camaraderie enjoyed by the fishermen at work and onshore, for, once in the life, they seem unable to escape each other's company even in barroom celebrations. Fishing provides a powerful identity and gives pride to men who have little education or privilege.

This identity, however, can be the despair of the wives and families. Divorce is common among men who spend weeks and months at sea, and the women who love them are both attracted to their toughness and uncomplaining competence and terrified at the prospect of becoming widows, unsure even if their loved ones are truly dead. For the most part, fishermen simply disappear; there are often no bodies to bury and funerals to signal their end.

Junger is very good at capturing the farflung effects of the storm. Just as tiny ripples in the Caribbean can eventually become hundred-foot waves off New England, so the human consequences, personal and social, can have effects far distant from their source. The general theme of the interconnectedness of nature is thus applied to human nature as well: "Like a war or a great fire, the effects of a great storm go rippling

outward through webs of people for years, even generations. It breaches lives like coastlines and nothing is ever again the same."

Another theme is the casual heroism of rescue workers. Parajumpers, pilots, rescue swimmers, and aircrews, all train for years to go to the aid of complete strangers under appalling weather conditions. By following the actions of a couple of rescue operations during the storm, and by briefly sketching some of the life stories of the crews, the book allows the reader to form a picture of the kind of people who would choose such careers and the enormous sacrifices some make. This kind of heroism is rarely celebrated in popular culture, and Junger sees his task as making readers understand its nature.

Factual Reality vs. Human Reality

Junger's book has a strong narrative quality, but the story of the *Andrea Gail* is only a small part of the book. Most passages in the book are factual and about either science or history.

Junger gives a long detailed history of the fishing industry in New England. He goes as far as to trace obscure governmental regulations and their effect on fishermen. He is interested in the history of Sable Island. In one part of the book the author recounts how convicts were left there; in another section, he gives details about ship-wrecks and deaths of sailors on that island. Yet Sable Island is only a small part of the story of the *Andrea Gail*.

There is a lot of science in *The Perfect Storm.* Junger gives long explanations about the mechanics of wave energy, calculations about how large a wave must be to take down a certain size boat, and many other nautical facts. There is a lot of meteorological data in the book about storm systems and hurricanes; how they form; how they proceed and dissipate. There are pages and pages about the mechanics of human drowning and the effect of taking in water upon the human body that read like pages out of a medical journal.

Many of the quoted passages in the book are also technical. These passages are juxtaposed with the human realities of one crew's tragic deaths. Some things cannot be explained by science alone. Fishermen get terrible premonitions and decide not to travel on certain boats. Relatives of loved ones on a ship have dreams about their deaths at sea. A sea captain can make an irrational decision based upon his finances and not storm conditions. These human realities contrast with the technical and scientific passages in the book, demonstrating that there is more to human experience than science and technology. The juxtaposition of the physics of drowning with the actual drowning deaths of the crew of the *Andrea Gail* is particularly chilling.

Man vs. Nature

Before reading *The Perfect Storm,* the average person may be unaware of the dangers of a fisherman's life. After reading this book, there is no doubt in a reader's mind that fishing is the most dangerous profession of all.

Over and over again, Junger emphasizes that fishermen are not in control of their destinies once they are out at sea. Nature is in control. For example, the crew of the *Andrea Gail* had only the choice between bad and worse, once the storm came up. Their only real choice in terms of their personal survival would have been to avoid the Grand Banks in October, which are notoriously dangerous that time of year. Even rescue efforts are dangerous. One of the rescue people died and others were thrown into the sea in the middle of a hurricane.

Junger implies that all the knowledge of storm and experience at sea is not enough to save a crew when a "perfect storm" hits. The crew of the *Andrea Gail* had perhaps fifty years experience between them and the ship was very seaworthy. So much of what happens in fishing is luck.

Fishermen not only die in storms, they also can die in mundane accidents. For example, Junger writes how fishermen can die getting their hands caught on a hook as they put out bait. Because fishing is so dangerous, fishermen tend to be superstitious. Like circus performers, they have lucky charms and follow their premonitions. Two men did not go on the *Andrea Gail* because they had "bad feelings" about the trip.

Ultimately, *The Perfect Storm* is about man versus the forces of nature. Junger teaches the reader that there is nothing more dangerous than a hurricane at sea with forces equal to atomic bombs.

Society of Subcultures

One theme of *The Perfect Storm* is that people who participate in fishing as a profession also participate in a subculture that has its own rules and structure.

The six crew- members of the *Andrea Gail* are similar personality types: physically big men with loner personalities. They are men who live by their own rules, not society's. Billy Tyne does not like to talk on the radio, therefore he does not bother keeping in contact with the owner of his ship. He does as he pleases and may or may not heed warnings from the Weather Bureau.

None of the six crewmen is married; only one is in a stable relationship; even Bobby Stratford's relationship with Christina Cotter would not be one sanctioned by conventional society. His current relationship is so far only short-term. He is still married to another woman.

Fishermen spend months at a time at sea and therefore do not have the means to develop stable relationships or family lives. Their pay is uneven and based on the amount of fish they catch. Therefore, they cannot plan for their financial futures in any meaningful way. Some of the crewmembers were living in rented rooms over the bar.

The town of Gloucester is a subculture in itself. The men there have been fishing for centuries and condone this way of life. The town is full of bar rooms that cater to fishermen. They congregate there and substitute the people who frequent the bar for family. Bartenders protect clientele by helping them hold on to their money before they can blow a month's work in one drunken spree. When it is time to mourn the death of other fishermen, men and women drink together in the morning when regular people are at their offices.

The rescue men are also part of another interesting subculture. They spend years of their lives in intensive training that they hardly ever use. Their profession is incredibly dangerous and yet most of what they do is wait.

The Perfect Storm is an interesting glimpse into the lives of people who have little connection to the average suburban lifestyle.

Style

Points of View

Junger often writes from a third-person knowledgeable point of view. Many passages read like articles from an encyclopedia on sword fishing methods, Coast Guard practices, the history of Cape Cod, currents in the Gulf Stream, and other esoteric topics. When he writes about these topics, he writes from a factual journalistic point of view.

Junger can also put himself in the place of the characters in the book, especially the men on the *Andrea Gail*. Whenever he can, he uses actual records of their conversations so that he can tell us exactly how much fish they were catching, where they were on certain days, and other facts about the journey. However, he has to turn to accounts from other mariners facing similar disasters to describe how his characters fight for survival on the *Andrea Gail*, even as they are facing certain death. He uses factual information to recreate the psychology of the moment.

Junger gives certain characters in the book a lot of space, even though their stories are not as important as other characters' ordeals. This is no doubt because those people were willing to grant him long interviews. Those who granted interviews had their points of view in the book.

For example, many pages are devoted to the story of John Spillane, one of six rescue jumpers who landed in the ocean. There is very little about the others involved in the same ordeal. Linda Greenlaw gets a lot of play in the book but not Bob Brown. Ray Leonard did not cooperate with the author, so the story of the *Satori* is from the point of view of Bylander and Stimpson, who no doubt did cooperate. There is a lot from the points of view of Christina Cotter, Ethel Statford, and Murphy's ex-wife who supplied details about Dale Murphy and Bobby Statford. Yet there is almost nothing about the personal lives and families of Bugsy Moran, Billy Tyne, Albert Pierre, and Dale Sullivan.

Setting

The Perfect Storm has three fascinating settings: the *Andrea Gail*, the ocean, and the subculture of fishermen in towns like Gloucester and New Bedford.

The ocean itself is very much part of the story. Junger goes into how the ocean changes in form from place to place. Just as a desert is different than a forestland, so the seas around Sable Island differ from those near Florida. Ocean waves are very much part of the story: if they get too big, they will take down a ship of a certain size but yet certain bigger ships will survive. He gives even mathematical models of gale force winds and their effect on the sea. He also includes on marine life within the ocean and how fishermen know where to fish.

The *Andrea Gail* is a place where much of the action of the book takes place. Junger describes it in such detail that the reader is privy to its structure down to square footage of the galley. The compact living quarters have an effect on the men working aboard - living so crammed together; they always want to go home. The boat becomes a player in the storm. The reader knows just how much stress the *Andrea Gail* will take before pitch-poling, and this adds to the suspense of the action.

Finally, much of the book is set in the fishing towns along the Atlantic Coast. Both the men and women in these towns live in a subculture that tolerates excessive drinking and gambling, unstable marriages, erratic incomes, strange living arrangements, and extreme life-threatening dangers of the profession.

Language and Meaning

Junger has two modes of writing. Most of the book is written in a factual journalistic style with long passages of history and science. About a fourth of the book is pure literature, full of metaphor and beauty of language.

For example, Junger can write about a human being's drowning in the most technical, medical terms: "Chemical sensors in the brain trigger an involuntary breath whether he's underwater or not. This is called the 'break point;' laboratory experiments have shown the break point to come after 87 seconds. ... Until the break point, a drowning person is said to be undergoing 'voluntary apnea.'"

Contrast that technical writing with this lyrical passage on the same subject: "He'd have his whole life ahead of him ... he'd have every choice in the world. Instead he wound up sword fishing. He wound up, by one route or another, on this trip, in this storm, with this boat filling up with water and one or two minutes left to live. There's no going back, no rescue helicopter that could possible save him. All that's left is to hope it's over fast."

Parts of the book are extremely slow, because Junger includes so much arcane information. There are mathematical models of waves and how boats tip over. When he writes about rescue workers, he gives an entire history of the Air National Guard training program. Some of the information included may be irrelevant and uninteresting to certain readers. It's as if Junger could not throw out any of his research material.

Structure

The author uses the story of the sinking of the *Andrea Gail* as the "spine" of his book, but most pages are filled with encyclopedic information about different aspects of the fishing industry, meteorology, oceanography, the subculture of fishing, a history of fishing in New England, the physics of human drowning, and other arcane topics.

Junger tells the story of the *Andrea Gail* in mostly chronological order, beginning in Chapter 1 with the six fishermen saying their good-byes at "The Crow's Nest." The crew leaves on their trip and is lost at sea. Their story ends there, but yet the book is only

half-finished. Junger goes on to relate the rescue stories from the *Eishin Maru,* the *Tamaroa*, the *Satori*, and the Air National Guard jumpers who landed in the ocean after their rescue attempts went badly. He finishes the book by writing about the grief and aftermath experienced by the survivors.

The above narratives take up only around one-fourth of the pages of the book. Junger gives very little personal information about each of the fishermen. For example, the reader learns almost nothing about Albert Pierre or Bugsy Moran. Junger has no way of knowing how the fishermen actually behaved during the disaster, so he relates what other fishermen did in similar situations and then can only speculate what probably happened on the *Andrea Gail*.

Three-fourths of the book is information about topics related to the above story. This material started out as a magazine article that had to be expanded into a book. Perhaps this is the reason Junger added all the factual information at a later time.

Quotes

I wanted to write a completely factual book that would stand on its own as a piece of journalism. On the other hand, I didn't want the narrative to asphyxiate under a mass of technical detail and conjecture. Foreword, pg xi

How do men act in a sinking ship? Do they hold each other? Do they pass around the whisky? Do they cry? Chapter 1, pg 3

Between the towers is a sculpture of the Virgin Mary, who gazes down with love and concern at a bundle in her arms. This is the Virgin who has been charged with the safety of the local fishermen. The bundle in her arms is not the infant Jesus; it's a Gloucester schooner. Chapter 2, pg 27

The Grand Banks in October is no joke and everybody knows it. There won't be half a dozen boats out there form the whole East Coast fleet. Chapter 2, pg. 38

Dawn at sea, a grey void emerging out of a vaster black one. "The earth was without form and darkness was upon the face of the deep." Whoever wrote that knew the sea - knew the pale emergence of the world every morning, a world that contained absolutely nothing, not one thing. Chapter 3, pg 54

Of course there's the question of odds. The more you go out, the more likely you are never to come back. The dangers are numerous and random: the rogue wave that wipes you off the deck; the hook and leader that catches your palm; the tanker that plots a course through the center of your boat. Chapter 4, pg 70

Once you're in the denial business, it's hard to know when to stop. Captains routinely overload their boats, ignore storm warnings, stow their life rafts in the wheelhouse, and disarm their emergency radio beacons. Coast Guard inspectors say that going down at sea is so unthinkable to many captains they don't even take basic precautions. Chapter 5, pg 95

A scream means the wind is around Force 9 on the Beaufort scale. Force 10 is a shriek. Force 11 is a moan. Chapter 5, pg 105

"It was a confused sea. All the waves were coming from different directions. The wind was picking up the tops of the waves and slinging them so far that when the search-and- rescue plane arrived, we couldn't even see it. ... We were completely upside down." Chapter 6, pg 130

I was thinking, "This is it. Just take a mouthful of water and it's over." It was very matter-of-fact. I was at a fork in the road and there was work to do - swim or die. It didn't scare me. I didn't think about my family or anything. It was more businesslike. Chapter 7, pg 139

The process is filled with desperation and awkwardness. "So this is drowning," a drowning person might think. "So this is how my life finally ends." Chapter 7, pg 142

The two vessels pass by each other without a word or a sign, unable to communicate, unable to help each other, navigating their own courses through hell. Chapter 8, pg 148

Meteorologists see perfection in strange things, and the meshing of three completely independent weather systems to form a hundred-year event is one of them. My God, thought Case, this is the perfect storm. Chapter 8, pg 150

When he gets there, he says, "Hi, I'm Dave Moore your rescue swimmer. How are you?" It was very cordial. ... And he grabbed her by the back of the survival suit and skimmed back across the water. Chapter 9, pg 162

Everybody was drunk because that's what we do, but the crisis made it even worse, just drinkin' and drinkin' and cryin' and drinkin', we just couldn't conceive that they were gone. ... This is my love, my friend, my drinking partner, and it just couldn't be. Chapter 9, pg 168

The risk is becoming totally uncontrollable. We can't get fuel, we're going to end up in that roaring ocean, and we're not gonna be in control anymore. I know the chances of being rescued are practically zero. Chapter 10, pg 183

It was the hardest decision I've ever had to make, to put my people out there and rescue that crew, Brudnicki says. Because I knew there was a chance I could lose some of my men. If I'd decided not to do the rescue, no one back home would've said a thing. Chapter 11, pg 198

Adaptations

The Perfect Storm was made into a film of the same name which premiered the summer of 2000. Bill Wittliff's screenplay focuses efficiently on the main ideas of the book, while state-of-the-art visual effects by Industrial Light and Magic translate a surprising amount of Junger's descriptions onto the screen. The film was directed and produced by Wolfgang Petersen and stars George Clooney, Mark Wahlberg, Diane Lane, and Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio.

Key Questions

Even Sebastian Junger was surprised at the success of his book, a project which might seem unpromising if described in a publisher's proposal: a nonfiction work, part narrative, part history, part technical description, which dramatizes the effects of a major storm which hit New England a decade earlier. For all the mixture of genres and approaches, Junger grounds his discussion in a number of traditions, including the sea disaster story and a narrative which celebrates a way of life, but also relies on carefully written set pieces about wave actions, weather phenomena, and fishing boats. It is the artful combination of these elements that brought success to the project.

1. How does Junger locate his discussion in the tradition of the sea disaster story?

What reminders to the reader show the long history of disasters at sea?

2. Much popular fiction is escapist fare which avoids reminding readers of unpleasant realities. Junger goes in exactly the opposite direction, focusing on working class labor and tragic events.

How does he create reader interest in an industry lacking almost all the qualities that make a profession dramatic or romantic?

3. How does Junger create sympathy for the gritty, sometimes pub-crawling fishermen whose lives he traces?

4. The book builds slowly, like the storm itself, before it gathers rhetorical force and sweeps its many subjects together.

Trace this development by listing the general topics each chapter covers.

Where is the climax of the book? Is this climax identical with the climax of the storm?

5. One writing problem Junger faced was an unhappy ending known from the start of the book. How does he handle this problem? Does he provide any ameliorating elements which might lessen the effect of this unhappy ending?

6. Junger's prose is highly informed and sometimes a model of technical description. Choose the passage you think best describes a difficult technical question then decide what techniques the author uses to convey complex information in interesting and comprehensible ways.

Give examples to make these techniques clear.

7. Another way The Perfect Storm goes against the grain of current practice is in its depiction of real heroism, as opposed to the superhero antics of Hollywood action stars. What does heroism consist of in this book? What personal and psychological qualities are involved?

Topics for Discussion

What parts of *The Perfect Storm* cannot possibly be "completely factual?"

Discuss the ethics of reconstructing events and dialogues that took place among people who have died or who otherwise cannot be reached for comment.

Why do you think that people continue to become fishermen in towns like Gloucester? Discuss the disadvantages of the profession; such as its dangers and low pay scale, as well as the advantages and irrational reasons people have to choose the profession.

What could have Billy Tyne done to save his crew? Did he have viable alternatives?

A crisis such as a Force 11 storm brings out the best and worst in people. Which characters in *The Perfect Storm* showed courage and nobility under pressure? Which characters did not live up to their human potential?

Do you believe the Coast Guard disengaged the emergency radio beacon from the *Andrea Gail* to protect itself from legal and public relations repercussions? Or do you believe that crew members failed to use the signal? Discuss why you think the way you do, and back up your choice with facts from the book.

There are scientific realities to a storm such as wind speeds and wave energies. There are human realities to a storm such as how a person feels when he is about to drown. Do you think the author succeeds in describing both scientific and emotional truths? Did you like this juxtaposition? Why or why not?

Did you enjoy the scientific and historical facts presented in *The Perfect Storm* or did you think that these passages bogged down the narrative flow of the book? Discuss your answer with examples of specific passages lifted from the book.

Literary Precedents

The Perfect Storm is in the tradition of the disaster story. Sometimes written as fiction, sometimes as researched historical fact, these stories trace the development of a natural disaster and give a precise accounting of its human costs.

Walter Lord's A Night to Remember (1955) is one of the most influential of modern disaster stories. It provides a chronological, moment by moment recreation of the sinking of the Titanic based on interviews of surviving passengers, so that readers experience a gripping you-are-there account of the last moments of the seemingly unsinkable great ship. Lord captures the ironies in details—a falling funnel that, while almost hitting a lifeboat, knocks it thirty yards away from the wreck, and thereby saves it from being sucked into the foundering ship's downpull; a survivor calmly riding the sinking vertical boat down until he can step into the sea without even getting his head wet while waiting to be successfully rescued.

Lord's cold logic, dry, bitter wit, and meticulous scholarship set a high standard for others to follow.

Following in Lord's tradition A. A. Hoehling's They Sailed into Oblivion (1959) dramatically recounts more than twenty great sea disasters that shocked the world while William Hoffer's Saved! The Story of the Andrea Doria, the Greatest Sea Rescue in History (1979) recreates the events of the collision between the Stockholm and the Andrea Doria that left the latter sinking and put the lives of hundreds of passengers at risk.

Shortly after Lord's influential novel, John D. MacDonald set another fictive standard in his Murder in the Wind. Therein, five sets of characters try to outrun a hurricane in western central Florida and finally seek refuge in an old house only to have the forces of nature overcome them. The storm itself, based on a hurricane that hit Florida in the late 1940s, becomes a violent, destructive character. Twenty years later in Condominium (1977) MacDonald again captures the destructive fury of a hurricane, as he tells what happens to Golden Sands, a "dream" condominium built on a weak foundation in a bad location, the result of secret real estate swindles, political payoffs, shoddy maintenance, and construction in violation of building codes.

Related Titles

A number of recent titles concern disasters at sea. Among them are John Protasio's To the Bottom of the Sea: True Accounts of Major Ship Disasters (1990), Edgar Haines's Disasters at Sea (1992), Rhoda Nottridge's Sea Disasters (1993), Keith Eastlake's Sea Disasters (1999), editor Logan Marshall's The Sinking of the Titanic & Great Sea Disasters (1998), William Allen's Accounts of Shipwreck and Other Disasters at Sea (Notable American Author Series-Part I, 1998), editor Phyllis Raybin Emert's Shipwrecks: The Sinking of the Titanic and Other Disasters at Sea (Perspectives on History Series, 1998), and Michael D. Cole's The Titanic: Disaster at Sea (American Disasters, 2001).

However, the most striking recent parallel with Junger's book is Jim Carrier's The Ship and the Storm: Hurricane Mitch and the Loss of the Fantome (2000). The Ship and the Storm tells the story of a 282-foot steelhulled, four-masted schooner, the Fantome, which, in October 1998, disappeared at sea with its thirty-one crew members (mainly twenty-year-old West Indians) during Hurricane Mitch, a savage storm with 180 mileper-hour winds and fifty-foot seas. Hurricane Mitch devastated Honduras and left 18,207 people dead or missing. Carrier interviewed the crew members' families, National Hurricane Center authorities, the Windjammer cruise company passengers and staff, and Honduran survivors of the storm, among others, and conducted onsite research to bring to life of story of pride, courage, and the overwhelming forces of nature. His story alternates between the National Hurricane Center, shipboard, research planes in the eye of the storm, cruise company headquarters, and island and coastal villagers who struggled to survive the storm surges. The Fantome disappeared completely. Possibly following Junger's lead in bringing to life a real disaster, Carrier questions the seaworthiness of the vessel, plays the dangerously exposed Caribbean coastline off against the wisdom of the captain putting to sea in the face of the storm, and predicts what experiences a ship like the Fantome might endure when it crosses the eye of the worst hurricane in two hundred years. The result is riveting forensic journalism and real-life drama.

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