

# **The Ruby in the Smoke Study Guide**

**The Ruby in the Smoke by Philip Pullman**

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# Plot Summary

'The Ruby in the Smoke' is a mystery story set in Victorian London. Sally Lockhart's father has just died and she has received a mysterious letter telling her to seek out Marchbanks and to avoid 'The Seven Blessings.' Sally begins to investigate and is soon drawn into two dangerous mysteries, one revolving around a much-desired Ruby, and the other concerning her father's death. By the end of the story, with the help of new friends, she manages to solve both mysteries.

Sally goes to the offices of her late father's shipping firm, Selby and Lockhart. She has received a letter that warns her about the 'Seven Blessings.' She asks the company Secretary about this and he immediately dies of fright. A boy called Jim overhears this and decides to help Sally with her mystery. Sally returns to Mrs. Rees' house, a distant relative whom she has been living with since her father died.

Sally receives a letter from Major Marchbanks, asking her to come see him in Swaleness. However, when she arrives he tells her that a dangerous woman called Mrs. Holland is in his house. He gives Sally an important parcel to read and then tells her to get away quickly. She does so, but is followed by Mrs. Holland. She sees a photographer on the pier and he agrees to let her hide in his tent until Mrs. Holland has gone. Sally opens Marchbanks' parcel on the train home. It is his diary. She reads an entry about him serving in India and seeing the beautiful Ruby of Agrapur. She then falls asleep and while she is sleeping, a man steals the diary, leaving only a page with a riddle on it.

Meanwhile, a man called Matthew Bedwell arrives in London and stays at Mrs. Holland's lodgings. Mrs. Holland becomes interested in some information he has, so she keeps him drugged on opium to stop him from leaving. Bedwell tells Mrs. Holland's servant Adelaide to contact Sally for him. Adelaide goes to Selby and Lockhart and talks to Jim, who passes the news on to Sally.

Mrs. Holland hires a man called Mr. Hopkins to rob Sally of the paper with the riddle on it. He steals the paper but is mugged and killed in the street afterwards. Sally is horrified and realizes that she has to move. She leaves Mrs. Rees and goes to her lawyer, where she draws out all the money from her account. She then seeks out the photographer from the beach, Frederick. He and his sister Rosa invite her to stay with them in return for her help with the business.

Frederick decides to help Sally with her mystery. They go to Oxford to find Bedwell's brother, who agrees to help them get Bedwell away from Mrs. Holland. Frederick takes Sally to an opium den to get some of the drug so they can wean Bedwell off it. Sally accidentally breathes in the smoke and sees a vision of her past.

Mrs. Holland, with a hired thug called Mr. Berry, tracks down the thief who mugged Mr. Hopkins, and retrieves the paper with the riddle. As she is doing this, Frederick and



Reverend Bedwell break in to her lodgings and manage to escape with Matthew Bedwell and Adelaide.

Bedwell recovers and tells Sally the truth about her father's death. He was murdered by a criminal called Ah Ling, head of the Chinese Triad called The Seven Blessings. Sally decides it is time to get a gun to protect herself.

Mrs. Holland finally manages to solve the riddle. She goes to the pub in Swaleness where the Ruby is hidden, but it is gone. Someone has already found it. Mrs. Holland is furious, and she retaliates by kidnapping Adelaide. Jim and Frederick immediately go after her. Jim manages to escape with Adelaide, but is caught again at King James's Stairs. There he and Frederick fight Mr. Berry, eventually defeating him. However, Mrs. Holland has left with Adelaide.

Meanwhile, Sally decides to take opium again to see more visions of her past. She does so, and suddenly understands the importance of the Ruby. Rosa admits that Jim found the Ruby a while ago, but hid it to keep Sally safe. Rosa gives the Ruby to Sally. Sally arranges to meet Mrs. Holland at London Bridge, where Mrs. Holland explains that the Ruby was promised to her long before the Maharajah gave it to Lockhart. Lockhart then exchanged it for Marchbanks' baby. Sally is actually Marchbanks' daughter. Sally throws the Ruby into the river, but Mrs. Holland dives after it and drowns.

Just when Sally thinks it is all over, a coach draws up and a man called Van Eeden kidnaps her. He tells her that he is Ah Ling, the man who murdered her father for interfering in his illegal opium trade. He threatens Sally with a knife, but she shoots him and runs away.

Later, Sally receives a message to look in the clock tower at her old house. She finds ten thousand pounds that her father received for selling his share in Selby and Lockhart. She decides to put the money towards helping Frederick's business and finding the missing Adelaide.



# Chapter 1: The Seven Blessings, and Chapter 2: The Web

## Chapter 1: The Seven Blessings, and Chapter 2: The Web Summary

'The Ruby in the Smoke' is a story about Sally Lockhart, a recently orphaned sixteen-year-old girl living in Victorian London. When her father dies, she is quickly drawn into the dangerous mystery of a missing Ruby and an evil woman called Mrs. Holland who will stop at nothing, even murder, to get it. When Sally is robbed and her father's friend is killed, she is forced to seek shelter with new friends, where she begins work at their photography shop. Slowly they uncover more of the mystery, and the ruby is discovered. Sally manages to defeat Mrs. Holland, but is taken by the more dangerous man who had her father killed. She shoots him and gets away. With the money her father left, she manages to help her friends' business expand. However, their friend Adelaide, who was kidnapped by Mrs. Holland, is still missing.

Sally Lockhart visits the offices of Selby and Lockhart, a shipping company that her father was a partner of before his death. She talks to the company secretary, Mr. Higgs, and asks him if he has heard of a Mr. Marchbanks or 'The Seven Blessings.' When he hears the term 'Seven Blessings,' he is immediately afraid, and dies of a heart attack before Sally can do anything. The company's owner, Mr. Selby, comes in, and Sally explains what happened, leaving out the part about The Seven Blessings. On her way out, a boy called Jim who works for the porter tells her that he overheard the conversation. She decides to trust him and shows him a letter she received from her father. It was sent from the last port at which he was alive. It says to beware of The Seven Blessings and that Marchbanks will help her. It also mentions 'Chattam,' which Jim thinks must be a misspelling of Chatham, a place in Kent. Jim promises to help her if she investigates further.

Sally returns home to Mrs. Rees' house, a relation she has been put under the care of. Mrs. Rees does not treat Sally well and constantly complains that she is a burden to her.

Sally remembers the day her father left, when he warned her that he may be going into danger, but that he needed to sort out something very important concerning the shipping firm. She also thinks about a nightmare that she has once or twice every year, of heat and darkness and voices shouting in fear. She does not understand it, but it always makes her feel anxious and afraid.

Mr. Higgs' death is found to be caused by a weak heart and not suspicious. However, it has consequences that Sally is not aware of. First of all, a sad old man in a house by the sea reads about it in the paper and sees Sally's name. He begins to write a letter. Secondly, an old woman who owns a boarding house at Hangman's Wharf in Wapping,



London, is visited by a lawyer. He tells her that an agreement has been reached with a man in Swalesness about a ruby, which will be deposited in his bank account and go to her upon the man's death. Finally, a sailor called Mr. Bedwell goes to Mrs. Holland's lodging house. He is given a room, where he smokes some opium and falls asleep. He has something that is important to Sally.

## **Chapter 1: The Seven Blessings, and Chapter 2: The Web Analysis**

The first two chapters introduce the reader to the character of Sally, and to the Victorian world in which she lives. Sally is an unusually independent and confident girl for her age and for the time in which she lives. She is only sixteen years old, and in Victorian England she would be expected to remain ladylike, demure and submissive at all times. At this time society thought of women, and especially young girls, as weak and incapable of looking after themselves. They were considered to have a fragile disposition, meaning that they would be likely to cry or faint at the slightest shocking or upsetting thing. Sally is not like this at all. She gets upset in upsetting circumstances, as any normal person would, but she does not allow this to send her into hysterics or to stop her from thinking clearly. When Mr. Higgs collapses in front of her, she remains calm and level-headed. She is confident enough to approach the firm on her own, without a male chaperone, and quickly shows that she is capable of looking after herself without a man to help her. In these ways, Sally is more like a modern girl than a Victorian, and so is very ahead of her time. Because of this, she is much easier for the reader to like and sympathize with. She does not come across as pathetic or weak, but seems strong, determined, and interesting.

Sally may be unusually strong for a Victorian girl, but she is not afraid to use the prejudice of her society to her own advantage. When Mr. Selby seems to be suspicious of her, she pretends to cry, dabbing her eyes with a handkerchief. He quickly dismisses her as a pathetic and hysterical young girl who couldn't possibly be a threat to anyone. What he does not realize is that Sally is a lot cleverer than he thinks, and that she is merely putting on an act. Sally knows that she can manipulate people in this way by making them see what they expect to see. However, she is also perceptive enough to see that this will not work with Jim, who had already seen through her ladylike image. Jim admires Sally's strength and quickly decides to help her. Sally shows that she is also a good judge of character when she decides to trust him. In the same way that she knows she should be cautious around Mr. Selby, she knows that she can confide in Jim. This shows that she has good instincts to back up her strong and confident manner.

Sally is unusual in other ways too. She carries a gun in her bag and knows how to shoot it. Her father taught her, and told her to always be prepared in case she needs it. This is another way in which Sally can look after herself if she needs to. Sally's upbringing and education has not been like that of other Victorian girls, which explains why she is so different. Her father allowed her a great amount of independence and freedom, and taught her things that he thought she would find useful in life. As a result, she knows a lot about tactics, book-keeping, the Stock Market, riding and shooting, and she has a



working knowledge of Hindustani. However, she knows nothing about the subjects that respectable young Victorian women are expected to be familiar with, such as English Literature, French, Art, Music and History. This is what makes Mrs. Rees despair of her, as she does not have the right knowledge to be able to become a governess. Now that Sally is an orphan, she will have to survive on her own somehow. A typical role for a girl of her social class would be a governess, teaching and looking after the children of a rich household. Sally is hardly typical, however, and this role will not suit her at all. Mrs. Rees hates all these things that make Sally unusual. To her, Sally is only just barely respectable, and will likely bring shame on her if she stays in her house. Victorians were extremely concerned with what was considered respectable, and middle class and upper class young girls had to be particularly careful how they behaved in order not to be shamed. If Sally leaves Mrs. Rees' house, she will have to find friends or a family as unique and independent as she is, if she is to be accepted.

The first two chapters also set up the mystery of the book, as well as some foreshadowing of what is to come. On the first page the reader is told that Sally will soon kill a man. This turns out to be an accident. Mr. Higgs had a weak heart and could not take the shock and fear when she mentioned *The Seven Blessings*. However, this comment also foreshadows the end of the story, as Sally will literally shoot a man. The mention of the gun kept in her bag also foreshadows this end, though it will be a different gun that is actually used to do the deed. *The Seven Blessings* itself is obviously important, if it caused such an extreme reaction in Mr. Higgs. Sally's mysterious letter, which seems to be from her father but is not in his writing, hints that *The Seven Blessings* is dangerous to her. It also tells her to find Marchbanks, who will help her. Meanwhile, unknown to Sally, the death in the newspaper and the mention of her name have caught the attention of a man who lives near the sea. An old woman has arranged for a ruby to be willed to her, and a sailor has entered the old woman's lodgings. The reader is informed that this sailor has something that is very important to Sally. The reader is also told that all these people are connected, and that they have something to do with the mystery that Sally is now investigating. These are the first clues, setting up a web of people and events that are connected to Sally through the ruby. All of this will become very important to the plot. For now, the reader is left in confusion and suspense, waiting for the mystery to unravel.



## Chapter 3: The Gentleman of Kent, and Chapter 4: The Mutiny

### Chapter 3: The Gentleman of Kent, and Chapter 4: The Mutiny Summary

The next day Sally receives a letter from Major Marchbanks, who lives in Swaleness. He tells her to come see him, as he has important information for her and she may be in danger. She sets off on the train and arrives at a small town by the sea. There is no-one about except a photographer who is taking a picture of the beach. Sally asks him where the house is and then talks to him briefly.

When Sally reaches the house, Major Marchbanks steps out and greets her, and takes her to a veranda round the side of the house. He tells her that he has an enemy called Mrs. Holland who is now inside his house, and that this woman is now Sally's enemy too. She asks him about The Seven Blessings and her father's death, but he knows nothing about them. She asks if he used to live in Chatham and he says he did, so she knows that this is the man her father had intended her to find. However, before Marchbanks can explain anything, a servant appears and tells him that Mrs. Holland is now in the garden. Marchbanks gives Sally a parcel that he says will explain everything, and then tells her to get away quickly.

Sally is confused, but she does as he says. As she is leaving the house, she sees the shape of an old woman dressed in black following her. She quickens her pace, and when she reaches the town she looks for somewhere to hide. She sees the photographer and asks if she can hide inside his tent. He agrees. When the old woman stops to ask if he has seen a young blonde girl go by, he tells her that Sally went to the Swan to catch a coach. Mrs. Holland thanks him and leaves. The photographer tells Sally that it is safe to come out of the tent, then asks her name. He offers to come back on the train with her, but she declines, as she is embarrassed.

Sally opens the package on the train and finds that it is Marchbanks' diary. She begins to read. Marchbanks tells how he was engaged in political discussions with the Maharajah of Agrapur in India. The Maharajah showed them a beautiful, flawless ruby one day. It was called the Ruby of Agrapur and was famed for its perfection. Marchbanks was entranced by it. Later that year, the Mutiny broke out, and the Maharajah was murdered by his subjects. Marchbanks says it was a terrible time, but that four people managed to survive: himself, Captain Lockhart, and Sally. He does not mention who the fourth person was. He also says that the Ruby of Agrapur survived, but has been lost.

Sally puts the journal down and thinks about this. A man enters her carriage and she looks out of the window instead, the journal on her lap. A little later she wakes up and





realizes that she must have fallen asleep. The man and the journal are gone, and Sally realizes that he must have stolen it.

## Chapter 3: The Gentleman of Kent, and Chapter 4: The Mutiny Analysis

In these chapters, the reader gets to see a more vulnerable side of Sally. She is still brave and independent, going to Swalesness alone on the train, which she herself points out is a bit odd for a young woman in these times. She stays calm even though she seems to be in danger, and shows that she can be quick-thinking and resourceful even in a crisis when she has the idea to use the photographer's tent to hide in. She also shows how easily she can get others on her side. Jim instantly warmed to her and wanted to help her in the previous chapter, and the same happens here with the photographer. Sally has a likeable, trustable and engaging personality, and it seems that she can make friends easily simply by being herself. However, this is where Sally's vulnerability starts to show, as she does not realize this herself. She does not see that by being herself she can make friends easily, and instead worries about how she acts. She is actually not very confident when dealing with people in a non-business environment. When she wants Frederick, the photographer, to like her, she seems to say the wrong thing. She wants to pay him for the use of his tent to show him that she respects him, and perhaps also to prove that she is not a pathetic girl who needed saving. She wants to show that she can pay her way and look after herself. However, as soon as she says this she realizes that she may have offended him, and worries that she came across as childish and naive. Although Sally likes to use the 'weak girl' prejudice of her society to get what she wants from others, she does not want to do this with Fred. This is not how she wants Fred to see her.

Sally still feels like a young, inexperienced girl at times, and she is a little lost without her father's guidance. A lot of her confidence is actually bravado or a determination to not give up. She is still afraid and unsure and too young to know exactly how to act with certain people. She admits that her upbringing was often quite solitary. For all her strength of character, which other girls her age do not have, unlike the other girls her social skills are still very awkward and underdeveloped. Talking to Fred reminds her of this, making her feel foolish and embarrassed. This reminds the reader that Sally is not a super-woman; she is still young and vulnerable, and she is going to need some help if she is to solve the mystery and avoid the danger. This does not make her weak; it makes her human.

More of the mystery is introduced in these chapters as the diary of Marchbanks explains about the Ruby of Agrapur. Marchbanks describes it as having chasms and depths that a person could almost fall into, and likens it to the madness of opium addiction. This strongly foreshadows some of the main elements of the plot in which opium addiction becomes very important, as well as the ways in which opium and the Ruby are tied together. Now Mrs. Holland has also been properly introduced as Sally's main enemy. The reader can begin to piece together some of the clues from the last four chapters. The man who read the paper and then wrote a letter must have been Marchbanks



writing to Sally. He saw her name and decided to tell her something important. This seems to have something to do with the Ruby, which is also what Mrs. Holland wants. In the previous chapters, Mrs. Holland was talking to a lawyer about arrangements being made for the Ruby to come to her in someone's will. It seems likely that this person is Marchbanks, and that he now wants to keep Mrs. Holland from getting the Ruby. He has entrusted Sally with information about the Ruby and what happened to it after the Maharajah was killed. This has something to do with Sally herself, as she was present at the time of the Mutiny in Agrapur. Now Marchbanks' diary has been stolen from Sally, and it seems likely that Mrs. Holland arranged this. However, this particular mystery does not seem to have anything to do with Sally's father's death, or the meaning of The Seven Blessings. There is still a lot left unknown. How did the Ruby get out of India, who has it now, and why does Mrs. Holland want it? What does this all have to do with Sally? Why should she beware of The Seven Blessings and why is Mrs. Holland her enemy? These questions draw the reader in, encouraging speculation and participation in the mystery of the story.



# Chapter 5: The Ceremony of the Smoke, and Chapter 6: Messages

## Chapter 5: The Ceremony of the Smoke, and Chapter 6: Messages Summary

Sally looks out of the compartment but the man has gone. She notices that there are some pieces of paper on the floor, which have obviously fallen out of the journal without the thief noticing. One of them has a riddle on it, cryptically telling Sally where to find something. Some of the words are written in Latin, which Sally cannot read.

Meanwhile, in Wapping, Mrs. Holland's servant-girl Adelaide is bringing the sailor, Mr. Bedwell, some more opium. Mrs. Holland quickly realized that the man talks while on the drug, and she is interested in what he has to say. It has something to do with the Lockharts, and Mrs. Holland thinks she can make a fortune from this information. She therefore keeps the man constantly drugged up, meaning to kill him when he is no longer useful. He is too addicted to get away. As Adelaide tends to him, he tells her that he has a message for Sally from her father, and that he must find her. Adelaide agrees to search for Sally and not to say a word about this to Mrs. Holland.

Adelaide goes to the shipping firm and asks for Miss Lockhart. Jim overhears and talks to her. She tells him about Mr. Bedwell and what he said, and Jim promises to tell Sally. She leaves, and Jim writes to Sally.

The next day Sally meets Jim and he tells her what Adelaide said. Sally is determined to talk to Mr. Bedwell, but they know they cannot do this until they get him away from Mrs. Holland. Jim tells her that Mr. Bedwell has a brother who is a reverend, and Sally thinks he might be able to help them.

Mrs. Holland sends a blackmail letter to Mr. Selby mentioning the name of Lockhart's ship, the Lavinia, and a man called Ah Ling. She then talks to Mr. Hopkins, the man she sent to steal the book from Sally. She shouts at him for missing the pages that fell out, and instructs him to get them from Sally. She also tells him to make sure Sally has 'an accident' so that she will not get in their way again.

## Chapter 5: The Ceremony of the Smoke, and Chapter 6: Messages Analysis

In these chapters it becomes apparent that there are actually two mysteries, connected by Sally but otherwise separate. One mystery revolves around the location of the Ruby, why Mrs. Holland is so desperate for it, and what it has to do with Sally. The other mystery concerns Sally's father's death, The Seven Blessings, Bedwell, and whatever Mrs. Holland is blackmailing Mr. Selby about. Mrs. Holland has become involved in both



mysteries, beginning by trying to procure the Ruby, then discovering the second mystery through the drug-induced ranting of Mr. Bedwell. Sally has suddenly been thrust into danger and intrigue, and now has to unravel the many confusing threads of these two mysteries. It seems that Marchbanks wants her to have the Ruby, but Mrs. Holland will stop at nothing to get it. Meanwhile, Bedwell has information that is important to Sally, but she cannot get this until she finds a way to liberate him from Mrs. Holland's clutches. All of Sally's options include going up against Mrs. Holland, who has already decided that Sally is an enemy who needs to be killed. Sally will have to be very careful as she proceeds.

Mrs. Holland demonstrates how evil she can be in these chapters. She is keeping a young girl called Adelaide, who should be at school, as her personal servant. Adelaide tells Jim that she is absolutely terrified for her life, fully believing that Mrs. Holland will kill her and bury her in the garden with the previous servants if she misbehaves. Mrs. Holland clearly does not care about Adelaide at all, and given how easily she orders Sally's murder, it is very likely that she has indeed killed her previous girls and will do the same to Adelaide with little thought. Mrs. Holland also keeps Bedwell prisoner in her house, deliberately supplying him with opium so that she can keep him in a permanently drugged state. She knows that this is having a terrible affect on him, but she does not care. She only wants the information he is giving her, and will do anything to get what she wants. When Bedwell is no longer useful, she fully intends to drown him. Until very recently she had never met Bedwell before, and he had never done any harm to her. She does not hate him; she simply thinks of him as something to be used and then thrown away. Clearly she has no respect for human life, and only cares about her own goals. Marchbanks was terrified of her, and even large, hardened criminal men like Mr. Hopkins are afraid, allowing themselves to be ordered around by her. At the end of these chapters Mrs. Holland orders Sally's death as if she is sending Mr. Hopkins out for groceries. In these ways, Mrs. Holland has already been painted as a force to be reckoned with, as a cruel and ruthless woman who will stop at nothing, even murder, to get what she wants. Now she is Sally's enemy and wants her dead, and the reader can see the great danger that is beginning to close in around Sally. Suspense heightens as the reader feels anxious for Sally's safety.



# Chapter 7: The Consequences of Finance, and Chapter 8: The Passions of Art

## Chapter 7: The Consequences of Finance, and Chapter 8: The Passions of Art Summary

The next day Mr. Hopkins sees a story in the newspaper about Major Marchbanks' death, and how he is implicated. He realizes that Mrs. Holland will make sure he hangs for a murder he did not commit if he does not obey her and kill Sally. He goes to Mrs. Rees' house and speaks to her maid Ellen, who has always disliked Sally. He pretends to be a policeman investigating some letters stolen from an important family. He explains that he suspects Sally and needs access to her room that night. Ellen agrees to help him.

Later that night Ellen lets Mr. Hopkins in and he goes up to Sally's room. He sees the papers lying on the floor, as well as Sally's gun, and decides to take both. He does not have the heart to kill Sally, so he leaves her sleeping. However, he does not get far from the house before he is mugged and killed. His attacker takes the papers, the gun, and Mr. Hopkins' diamond pin.

At breakfast the following morning Sally tells Mrs. Rees that she has been robbed. Mrs. Rees reacts angrily, thinking Sally is accusing her servants. Sally decides she cannot take any more of Mrs. Rees' behavior and insults, so tells her that she is leaving.

Sally goes to see Mr. Temple, her father's lawyer. She asks him how much money she has, and he tells her what shares she currently has. She instructs him to sell some of the shares and invest in other companies of her choosing. She asks where the income is being paid, and he tells her that it is going to Mrs. Rees. She tells him to pay it into her own bank account from now on. She withdraws twenty pounds from her current account. Mr. Temple is impressed with her business-like manner. He informs her that her father sold his share of the shipping company for ten thousand pounds, but that this money is missing.

After leaving Mr. Temple's office, Sally wanders around wondering where to go. Then she remembers the photographer's card that Frederick Garland gave her in Swalesness. She goes to the address on the card and finds an argument raging in the back rooms of the shop. Fred seems annoyed, but when he sees Sally he smiles and greets her warmly. He introduces her to his sister, Rosa, the young woman he was arguing with. They were arguing about needing an accountant, so Sally points out that she is good with figures and could help them in return for their aid. They agree, and she joins them for lunch.



Over lunch, Sally explains all about Mrs. Holland and the mystery. Fred and Rosa insist that she come to live with them. Frederick points out an article in the paper about the death of Marchbanks. Sally had copied the riddle from the paper into her diary, and Fred now translates the Latin for her. It is a message from Marchbanks saying that he knows he will soon be dead. Fred sends Trembler, their servant, to fetch a directory, in which he looks up the name Bedwell. He finds Bedwell's brother, Reverend Nicholas, in Oxford, and tells Sally that they will visit him tomorrow.

Sally spends the rest of the day looking at the shop's accounts. She finds that Rosa brings in most of the money from her acting, but that the shop could earn good money if managed correctly. Fred offers her the job and she accepts.

## **Chapter 7: The Consequences of Finance, and Chapter 8: The Passions of Art Analysis**

Sally is quickly beginning to build up a network of friends and people she can rely on, so that she does not have to face the mystery and the danger alone. As seen earlier in the story, Sally seems to have the ability to get people on her side instantly, and to inspire great trust and support. Jim is still on the case and determined to help her, and she made such an impression on Frederick that he went home and told his sister Rosa all about her. Frederick clearly still admires Sally and wants to help her, and soon Rosa is welcoming her with open arms too. Even when Sally tells them her whole story about being robbed and the dangerous Mrs. Holland, and even when they realize that Mrs. Holland must have had Marchbanks murdered, they are still anxious to help Sally despite the danger they will be putting themselves in. Sally's natural honesty, and her friendly and easy-going nature attract people to her. She is not judgmental or stand-offish, but will happily talk to anyone else as if they are her equal. She is still a little socially awkward, but this does not prevent others from seeing through to the good person underneath.

The Garlands are the perfect new family for Sally. They are a little unusual and do not do things by the rules. They are from a respectable family, but they do not care about social etiquette, preferring to eat without plates so they do not have to wash dishes, and living how they want to rather than how others think they should. They treat everyone else as equals, including their servant Trembler, and their new acquaintance Sally. Sally is pleased to find that she is never treated as 'just a girl' and that Trembler is not treated as lower than the Garlands because he works for them. They are more like one big family. Rosa is similar to Sally in many ways, as she is a strong and fiercely independent young woman who will not put up with men telling her what to do. Both Rosa and Frederick instantly accept Sally as their accountant without once questioning whether a girl could really do that job. In patriarchal Victorian society, trusting a woman with this kind of work would be extremely unusual. Fred and Rosa therefore seem to have very similar ideals and values to Sally. They do not judge, but instead believe that every person should live how they want to, free from the pressures of family and society's rules. Sally could not have asked for a better or more accepting place to begin a new life and new home. Likewise, Sally is perfect for the Garlands. She is not



judgmental or too proper; she is friendly and easy to get along with; and she can do their accounts for them, which they so desperately need. It seems like good fortune for both sides that they have found each other. Now Sally can begin to make a place for herself in the world, and has a chance to gain happiness again after her father's death.

In these chapters Sally shows once again how capable, sensible and independent she can be. She decides that she can no longer stay with Mrs. Rees. This is partly a sensible measure taken to protect herself, as Mrs. Holland has proved that she knows where Sally is and can easily send someone to harm her. Sally will therefore have to move and find somewhere safer and more hidden to live. Sally's other reason for moving is that she does not want to be treated poorly by Mrs. Rees anymore. She is sick of being talked to as if she is a burden, useless and shameful. She has too much self respect to stay in this place where she is obviously not liked or wanted. She leaves, and goes to see her family lawyer Mr. Temple. Mr. Temple is surprised and slightly impressed by her business-like attitude. She knows exactly what she is doing with her money, and quickly tells him how she would like her various shares to be managed to make as much profit as possible. She shows a smart attitude and a keen business sense. She knows that Mr. Temple will probably not allow her access to her money when he finds out that she has left Mrs. Rees' house, as he is a traditional Victorian man who does not think girls are capable of looking after themselves. She therefore decides to withdraw all her money, ensuring that she will have enough to set herself up somewhere and think about her next move. Leaving Mrs. Rees' house may have been slightly rash behavior, but Sally does not panic or give up. She takes stock of her situation and then follows the most sensible path to solving her problems. She is not afraid to seek out Frederick Garland, and when she does she puts her business head to use again by offering to do his accounting. The skills Sally's father taught her have paid off, helping her to be a very capable, independent young woman.

Sally also finds out from Mr. Temple that Mrs. Rees has been taking Sally's income in return for giving her a place to stay. Mrs. Rees has been calling Sally selfish and complaining about her relying on charity, when all the time Mrs. Rees has actually been getting paid for looking after Sally. This is hypocritical and manipulative. Sally quickly makes sure that Mrs. Rees will not profit from her ever again, telling Mr. Temple to pay the money directly into Sally's account instead. Mrs. Rees is just one example of the many people in this story who seem to be out to help themselves, not caring who they hurt on the way. Mrs. Holland is desperate for the Ruby and will even murder to get it. She is keeping poor Mr. Bedwell in a permanently drugged state just to extract information from him. Mr. Hopkins stole from Sally twice while she was sleeping, but was then mugged and killed himself by a thief. Even Mrs. Rees' maid is jealous of Sally and wants to harm her. London is portrayed as a dangerous and difficult place in which a person must always be on their guard. Anyone might be out to take advantage of another person, to use them for their own ends. Sally will always have to be careful who she trusts. It is therefore a strong contrast when she meets the Garland family, who are instantly so open and honest. Together they can help each other to avoid the dangers and support each other in their problems.



# Chapter 9: A Journey to Oxford, and Chapter 10: Madame Chang

## Chapter 9: A Journey to Oxford, and Chapter 10: Madame Chang Summary

Mrs. Holland hears of the death of Mr. Hopkins from a friend. She immediately puts it about that she is looking for the killer and will pay for the information. Meanwhile, Mr. Selby writes to Mrs. Holland, asking for a meeting.

Sally and Frederick set off on the train to Oxford. They have a meal together on the train, but Sally feels awkward and does not talk much. When they arrive, Frederick goes to photograph some buildings while Sally takes a cab to the Vicarage. Reverend Nicholas Bedwell greets her, and she tells him that his brother is alive and being held by Mrs. Holland, permanently drugged with opium. Nicholas tells her that his brother was a sailor on the Lavinia, which recently sank. This is the same ship Sally's father died on.

The reverend agrees to help get Mr. Bedwell out of Mrs. Holland's lodgings, but he asks if Sally would be able to procure some opium for him. They will need to wean Mr. Bedwell off the drug, for which they will need the opium. Sally promises to try.

Sally wanders around Oxford and finds a small photography shop. She spends the next hour talking to the proprietor about photography and his stock, before it is time to meet Frederick again. On the train, Frederick tells Sally that his old college friend introduced him to an Indian mathematician. This man told Frederick a legend connected to the Ruby of Agrapur, that it is cursed and only a woman its equal will one day be able to destroy its evil. Sally tells Frederick about her trip to the photography shop and suggests that he start taking and selling stereographic pictures. She then asks him if he will help her buy some opium.

The next day Frederick takes Sally to Madame Chang's, one of the more comfortable and respectable opium dens in the city. He tells her about the opium trade, that the drug is grown in India under the supervision of the British government, then shipped to China. Britain went to war with China when they tried to stop the import of the drug, resulting in Britain forcing them to take the opium.

At Madame Chang's, Frederick introduces Sally and explains what they want. Sally looks around, but then accidentally breathes in some of the smoke. She is instantly plunged into her recurring nightmare, but experiences more of it than usual. When she wakes up, Madame Chang explains that visions brought on by opium can be visions of the past, rather than fantasies. She also says that Sally must have breathed the smoke before in order to be affected so quickly this time.





As they leave, Sally tells Frederick about the vision, in which it seemed like someone was being murdered. She now recognizes two people from the nightmare, Major Marchbanks and her own father. She does not understand what it all means.

## **Chapter 9: A Journey to Oxford, and Chapter 10: Madame Chang Analysis**

Sally, and by extension the reader, learns a little more about opium in these chapters. Opium is a drug obtained from the poppy plant. In Victorian times it was grown in India under the supervision of the British government. The East India Company, a British shipping company, was given the official license to trade this abroad, particularly to China. This was fully sanctioned by the British government, who, although they did not directly control the East India Company, had a strong interest in the success of the opium trade. When China banned the drug, it was smuggled in instead. China put a restriction on British goods that could be imported to China, only allowing British silver. However, British demand for Chinese products such as tea and silk was extremely strong. The British government did not want to have to trade expensive silver for these goods, when they could be trading much cheaper-to-produce and addictive opium. Eventually, the Chinese rulers tried to take control of the situation by seizing shipments of opium and introducing the death penalty for smuggling. The British government did not want to give up their lucrative trade, so they went to war with China to force them to accept the drug. These were known as the Opium Wars. This resulted in a huge proportion of the Chinese population becoming addicted to and ruined by opium.

This did not just have adverse affects on China, but on India too, where the drug was grown. The Indian people were treated badly, and so many crop fields were turned into drug fields that people starved. In 1857 an Indian Rebellion broke out, beginning with the mutiny of sepoys (Indian soldiers in the service of a foreign power) of the East India Company. This is what Sally's father and Major Marchbanks were embroiled in at Agrapur in 1856-7. This is the Mutiny that Marchbanks refers to in his diary. It is through this Mutiny that the Ruby was lost, leading to the mystery that Sally is now trying to solve. In fact, opium is central to the plot of this book. It connects the two mysteries, and it has directly or indirectly caused the suffering of every troubled character in the story. Bedwell currently holds some information vital to Sally, but cannot convey it because of his enslavement to opium. There would have been no Mutiny if not for the production of the drug. Opium and the Ruby seem to be inextricably linked; even the depths and chasms inside the Ruby remind Marchbanks of opium addiction. Sally herself seems to have been exposed to the smoke before, as Madame Chang points out, and opium will prove to have had a heavy influence on her life and identity. Even Sally's father's death is connected to the trade of opium, as the reader will find out later. Opium is the 'smoke' of the title, which will finally reveal the truth of the Ruby to Sally. This chapter is therefore a very important one, as it introduces the reader to a very important theme of the book.

The Ruby and opium are connected in evil; both corrupt others, both ruin lives, and both incite greed and inhumanity in people. Opium is shown to be an addictive and



monstrous thing. It traps people, giving them pleasure at first but quickly turning into a nightmare. People find it hard to get free, as the drug has such a strong hold over its users. Frederick tells Sally that people will lie on shelves or on the floor in squalid buildings, taking the drug and forgetting everything else. Even at Madame Chang's, which is more comfortable and respectable, the drug users are oblivious, lost inside themselves and unable to connect with the world around them. Sally is surprised to see young women there too, and some people who seem respectably dressed. This shows her that the drug can get hold of any person, no matter how rich or respectable they think they are, and make them forget everything else. A person addicted to opium will forget their family, their life and their duty. A strong example of this is Mr. Bedwell, who has fallen into a pathetic and terrible existence, unable to fulfill his promise to Mr. Lockhart or to find his brother and tell him that he is not dead. Later, there will be an even clearer example, when the reader will see that opium can even make a man give up his own child. Not only is opium use a horrible thing, but opium inspires greed and corruption. The British government seemed to think nothing of condemning a whole country to its poison, or of ruining Indian lives in its production. This is because opium and its sale is worth a lot of money to them. On the one side, opium is about greed, corruption, power and wealth. On the other it is about oblivion, addiction, suffering and poverty. Opium is an evil substance that, like the Ruby, only ever seems to spread more and more misery.

Sally is also introduced to some of the other realities of Victorian London in chapter ten. She sees the poverty-stricken streets, the dark, dirty alleys, and the poor men, women and children who gaze at her with hostile eyes and look much older than they actually are. They are care-worn by constant worry and the difficulty of just surviving. Sally remarks that there must be jobs for them somewhere but Frederick tells her that this is not the case. They have to choose between begging and living on the streets or working at the workhouses, which provide such dangerous and back-breaking work that it is likely to kill them faster than living on the streets would. This is in strong contrast to what Sally usually sees in the streets of London that she walks in. She was lucky enough to be born into a respectable, good family, and her father has always cared for and provided for her. She has never had to see this kind of poverty before, and it shocks her. Victorian London was a city of extremes; the rich were very rich and the poor were very poor. For Sally, it is eye-opening to see how wide the gap between the classes really is. This is a different kind of misery and depression from the opium smokers. These people have no hope and barely anything left to live for. They are struggling simply to get by, not through any fault of their own but because they are given no chances. Frederick remarks that this is actually a worse evil than opium, and Sally agrees. Both this, and the shady reality of the opium trade, are the 'hidden' parts of Victorian life. These are the consequences of the riches, enlightenment, expansion and opportunities of the Victorian age. The Victorian times are often looked on as a kind of 'golden age' for Britain, bringing new inventions, culture and wealth, and pushing society forwards towards modern day. However, it is these hidden harsh realities that fueled it, and on which the Victorian age was built. The author is pointing out that it is important not to forget this side of it too.



# Chapter 11: The Stereographic Repertory Company, and 12: Substitution

## Chapter 11: The Stereographic Repertory Company, and 12: Substitution Summary

Sally looks around the house at Burton Street, searching for ideas to make them more money. She finds a whole room of props, and suggests taking stereographic pictures of scenes from plays and books. The others agree. They are sorting out the house when the reverend, Nicholas Bedwell, arrives. He suggests a direct approach to rescue his brother, to go straight to Mrs. Holland's house and drag him out. Frederick agrees to go with him, but insists that Sally stay behind where she will be safe from Mrs. Holland.

As Sally waits, she sees an advertisement in the paper about her, saying that she is missing and that Mr. Temple is looking for her. She knows that although Mr. Temple is well-meaning, he will not think her capable of looking after herself. He will insist on looking after her money for her, or on sending her back to Mrs. Rees. She decides to stay hidden at the Garland house for now.

Jim takes the afternoon off work to go to Swalesness. He has an idea that he wants to explore. He finds something, but decides not to tell Sally about it yet, as he thinks it will only put her in greater danger.

An ex-prisoner called Mr. Berry visits Mrs. Holland with information about Mr. Hopkins' death. He tells her that a pawn shop recently acquired a diamond pin like the one Mr. Hopkins wore. They go to the shop, and Mr. Berry threatens the owner into telling them who gave him the pin. They go to the address at Croke's Court where they find a drunken young man. After Mr. Berry hits him several times, he admits to robbing Mr. Hopkins and taking the gun, the pin, and the pieces of paper. Mrs. Holland takes the papers, along with Sally's gun, and leaves. Mr. Berry gives the drunk youth some literature about staying away from alcohol before he leaves.

Meanwhile, Frederick and Reverend Bedwell arrive at Mrs. Holland's lodgings in Wapping. No-one answers the door, so Frederick climbs in and opens the front door for the reverend. They go upstairs and find Matthew Bedwell and Adelaide. Nicholas manages to wake his brother up while Frederick talks to Adelaide. Adelaide is terrified that Mrs. Holland will kill her if Bedwell goes missing.

They hear a noise downstairs and realize that Mrs. Holland has returned home. Nicholas decides to go down and pretend to be his brother. He will distract Mrs. Holland while Frederick gets away down the back staircase with Adelaide and Matthew Bedwell. They do this. Frederick, Bedwell and Adelaide pass Mr. Berry on the way out, but he



does not seem suspicious. They climb over the wall, run to their waiting cab, and get away. Fred drops Adelaide and Matthew Bedwell off at the photography shop before racing back to help the reverend.

He returns later with the reverend. He has a black eye but is otherwise alright. The reverend explains to Sally that when he attempted to leave, Mrs. Holland set Mr. Berry on him. They fought, and with Fred's help he managed to get away. Adelaide is terrified, and is adamant that Mrs. Holland will find them and make them pay.

They pass the weekend settling into life at the shop, making Adelaide feel welcome. Matthew Bedwell is still too ill to answer any questions. They begin taking the stereographic pictures, and Sally tells Jim all about what happened. Life is peaceful again.

Mr. Selby is not happy about Mrs. Holland blackmailing him, even though she does not seem to know the whole truth. He suddenly thinks that Sally might know something about it, and decides it would be better to work with Mrs. Holland against Sally. He composes a letter to Mrs. Holland. Meanwhile, a mysterious gentleman is travelling to London aboard a ship.

## **Chapter 11: The Stereographic Repertory Company, and 12: Substitution Analysis**

Rosa points out that Sally is like two separate people, sometimes so confident and sometimes so quiet. When Sally is dealing with business or practical concerns, she is confident of her ability, and her natural leadership comes through. She takes charge of the shop and tells them all how they can make more money. She gives each person a job to do, and then realizes that she is perhaps being a little bossy. However, when she is not in her business-mind she is very quiet and shy. Rosa says that she sometimes doesn't even notice Sally is there. This is because Sally is still socially awkward and shy. She sometimes gets flustered when talking to Frederick, worries that she might be being bossy or overstepping herself, and does not know how to comfort or interact with Adelaide. She has confidence in the things she knows she is good at, but when it comes to things she is less experienced with, she is very unsure. She has not really found herself yet, and has not yet developed the fully rounded confidence that adults have when dealing with other people. This is beginning to develop now that she is with the Garlands, and living here will prove to be very good for Sally. Rosa has a very vivacious personality and she is naturally good with people. This will rub off on Sally and help to open her up.

The fact that the normally strong Sally allows herself to be vulnerable with these people shows that she has already accepted them as her family. She privately worries that she is not normal, and that she ought to take interest in the things that other girls do, like sewing. She confides in Rosa about this, admitting fears that she would never have normally told anyone else. Rosa points out that she is hardly normal either, and that it is better to follow one's heart in life. If a person is good at something and enjoys it, then



they should do it, no matter what anyone else says or thinks. This comforts Sally, as it persuades her that she can still find friends, and a place to belong, even though she is different.

These chapters provide a deeper look at just how dangerous Mrs. Holland can be. She threatens and attacks a pawn shop owner who has done nothing to her, and who simply happens to have bought the wrong item off the wrong person. Mrs. Holland does not care about him; she only wants to get the papers that will take her to the Ruby. The shopkeeper is lucky that he got away with his life. The next person they visit is the thief. He is a drunk young man who is half passed-out, and hardly dangerous. Nevertheless, Mrs. Holland instructs Mr. Berry to beat him up, and when he says he will give her what she wants, she tells Mr. Berry to hit him again, simply because he has gotten in her way. Mr. Berry is more violent and dangerous than Mr. Hopkins was. He has been to prison already, and seems to have no conscience about obeying Mrs. Holland's commands. Mr. Hopkins shied away from killing Sally, but Mr. Berry is not likely to. Adelaide seems to be convinced that there is no hope for any of them, and that Mrs. Holland will find them no matter where they are. On top of this, it looks like Mr. Selby has now become Sally's enemy too. There is danger closing in on all sides, but Sally has good, loyal friends to help her. They have already proved their bravery and their willingness to fight.



# Chapter 13: Lights Below the Water, and Chapter 14: Arms and the Girl

## Chapter 13: Lights Below the Water, and Chapter 14: Arms and the Girl Summary

A letter arrives at the office of Selby and Lockhart, which Jim takes up to Mr. Selby. Mr. Selby reads it and turns very pale, then asks Jim to look out of the window to see if a sunburned man is watching them. Jim doesn't see him. Mr. Selby writes a quick note for the messenger to take back, and Jim tries to get information out of him about who sent it. The messenger will not tell, but Jim sees the name of the Warwick Hotel written on his hat and buttons. He realizes this is where the gentleman who wrote the letter must be staying. He brings this information to Sally.

Jim thinks Mr. Selby is being double-crossed or blackmailed, and Sally asks what criminal thing a shipping company could do. Jim suggests deliberately sinking a ship and collecting the insurance. Just then, Matthew Bedwell comes into the room and explains to them what actually happened.

Bedwell was the second mate on the Lavinia and he met Mr. Lockhart onboard. It seems that Selby and Lockhart Shipping Company was involved with a Chinese criminal organization, one of the Triads. Sally's father boarded the ship suddenly and unexpectedly. Immediately, a load of cargo was cancelled. The ship was then supposed to sail out in ballast, but this was cancelled too. Eventually, it took on cloth from another port and set out from Singapore to Shanghai. The ship went slowly, and the captain seemed to be delaying on purpose. Bedwell noticed a black ship following them. On the second night, he saw the captain getting off the ship into a small boat. Bedwell hurried to Lockhart's cabin to find that he had been stabbed. Lockhart was still alive, and before he died he told Bedwell to find his daughter. He also told Bedwell that the black ship belonged to Ah Ling, a particularly murderous leader of one of the Triads. Bedwell ran back up on deck and hid in the shadows. The crew had been murdered, and Ah Ling's agents were setting fire to the ship. Lockhart's servant Perak tugged his sleeve and led him to a boat. They escaped the ship, but were not able to save any of the crew members. Later, they were picked up by a fishing boat and dropped off in Singapore. This is where Bedwell used opium to try to forget the horrible memories, and became addicted. He lost track of Perak. Eventually he made his way back to London, determined to find Sally. He believes that the ship was sunk to disguise Lockhart's murder.

Sally asks what the name of the society is that Ah Ling is leader of, and Bedwell tells her that it is The Seven Blessings.

The next day, Sally asks Trembler if he can procure her a gun. He comes back with an old fashioned gun that Sally is not sure will even work. She takes it out into the yard to



try. It shoots, but is very inaccurate compared to her old pistol. Frederick hears the shot and comes out to see if she is alright.

Meanwhile, Mr. Selby talks to Mrs. Holland, asking her to help him out with something that he is now in over his head with. He demands protection, and she demands that in return he find where Sally Lockhart is staying so that she can get rid of her. He agrees to these terms.

## **Chapter 13: Lights Below the Water, and Chapter 14: Arms and the Girl Analysis**

In these chapters, some of the questions concerning Sally's father's death are answered, but the mystery is still not completely solved. Sally now knows why the letter from her father was written so badly; it was dictated to his foreign servant Perak. Sally also now knows how Bedwell is involved in the whole thing. Bedwell tells them that the ship seemed to have been sunk as a way to disguise Lockhart's murder. This must have something to do with Ah Ling and his society The Seven Blessings, who are the ones who attacked the ship, and who Mr. Lockhart warned his daughter against. It is strange that the arranged cargo was abandoned as soon as Lockhart unexpectedly boarded the ship. This suggests that something else was intended to be shipped, but that it was either quickly abandoned to keep it secret from Lockhart, or that Lockhart refused to take it. Could Lockhart and Selby have been secretly shipping illegal goods? With the involvement of Ah Ling and the Triad called the The Seven Blessings, it seems likely that they were dealing in something illegal and that this was being smuggled to China. Given the prominence of opium in the story so far, the reader might wonder if opium is also behind Selby's secret and Lockhart's death.

As this mystery begins to unravel, a new mystery presents itself. A strange man arrives on a boat. The next day, Selby receives a letter that frightens him, and he asks Jim if he is being watched. This is enough to make Selby seek Mrs. Holland's help and protection. Who could this mysterious man be and what does he have to do with Selby? Jim has great fun trying to figure all this out. First, he tries to gain any information he can about the man. He is clever, and almost tricks Selby and the messenger into giving something away, but does not learn anything useful. However, he is observant enough to notice the Warwick Hotel's logo on the boy's hat and buttons. He now knows where the sender of the letter is staying. He is intelligent enough to know that Selby is in trouble and that it probably relates to Sally, and he wastes no time in bringing this information to her. He seems to be enjoying himself immensely, and even seems disappointed that he could not go with Fred and the reverend to free Bedwell from Mrs. Holland. Jim likes to be part of the action, and sees the whole thing as a big adventure, like out of his Penny Dreadful magazines. He longs to be a hero like the ones in the tales he reads, and finally Sally has given him this opportunity. Reading the stories has taught him quick-thinking, caution, resourcefulness and lateral thinking, but he is also loyal, brave and friendly. He cares a lot about Sally, who he admires deeply, and he wants to make sure no harm comes to her. Now he is getting to put all this into practice.



Sally is beginning to feel increasingly awkward around Frederick. She gets nervous when he is near, finds it hard to say what she really means in conversations with him, and even physically shakes when he is near her. Frederick thinks this is because she is cold, and she is frustrated that he cannot see the truth. She does not shake until he is around, and before he came outside, her hands were steady enough to shoot a gun. Clearly, she likes Frederick a lot, and is coming to develop strong feelings for him. He is brave, loyal and a good man. She trusts him with her secrets and her fears, and he has helped her out from the first second he met her. He shows that he obviously admires her and is concerned about her, but more importantly, he is willing to let her be herself rather than trying to push her into the stereotypical Victorian idea of a woman. However, poor Sally finds it impossible to express these things. She has little experience of social interaction with others, and even less of anything romantic. She is afraid that she just comes across as foolish and a little pathetic when she talks to Frederick. Seeing Frederick's reaction to her and his desire to be around her, the reader can see that Sally's assessment might be wrong. Fred does not seem to think she is pathetic at all, and he might be developing feelings just as deep for her.





# Chapter 15: The Turk's Head, and Chapter 16: Protecting the Property

## Chapter 15: The Turk's Head, and Chapter 16: Protecting the Property Summary

Mrs. Holland is still trying to figure out the riddle that leads to the Ruby. She and Mr. Berry travel to Swalesness to search, but have no luck. Then Mrs. Holland remembers that the local pub is called 'The Turk's Head,' and has an idea. They go inside the pub, where Mr. Berry refuses to drink alcohol much to Mrs. Holland's annoyance. Mrs. Holland pretends Mr. Berry is her son, and that she has a bet with him that the sea can be seen from the little window at ground level, in the cellar of the pub. The landlord tells her that the sea is visible from it at high tide, and agrees to let them go down there so Mrs. Holland can win her bet. He tells her that there is a buoy out there with lights on it, so if they can see that, then they are seeing the sea.

In the cellar, Mrs. Holland reads the riddle again. Three lights are supposed to mark the spot. Sure enough, the three lights from the buoy shine through the glass window and are focused on one spot on the wall behind them. Mrs. Holland goes to it and finds a loose stone. Behind it there is a box. She opens the box, but there is nothing inside. Someone has got to the box before them. Mrs. Holland suspects Sally.

Mr. Selby takes a trip along the river to inspect a possible new replacement ship for the Lavinia. Mr. Berry accompanies him as a bodyguard, but the little boat that will take them to the shipbuilding yard will not fit him on. Mr. Selby goes alone, but never comes back. Mrs. Holland shouts at Mr. Berry for being a useless bodyguard, but at this point she is more focused on Sally and the Ruby anyway.

Jim spends most of his weekends at Burton Street now, where he helps out by posing in stereographic pictures as different literary characters. This Saturday he comes in and tells them that Selby is missing. He bets with Frederick that Selby is actually dead. Sally talks to a visitor in the shop who turns out to be a man from Chainey's printers who is interested in buying their stereographic prints. Sally tells him to come back on Monday, pretending to him that their pictures are already in demand.

Frederick points out a message in the newspaper that says if Sally Lockhart will meet Mr. Reynolds at the Warwick Hotel, she will learn something interesting. Jim thinks that this must be the gentleman who scared Selby so much. Sally is worried that it is a trap, and she decides not to go.

On Sunday afternoon, Trembler and Adelaide go for a walk around London, but they are seen by a man who knows Mrs. Holland is paying for information about Adelaide's whereabouts. He follows them, and sees them go into the photography shop.



## Chapter 15: The Turk's Head, and Chapter 16: Protecting the Property Analysis

Mrs. Holland finally manages to solve the riddle in this chapter, which points out where the Ruby is hidden. It says to look in a place of darkness under a knotted rope. This is the cellar of the pub. The pub is called 'The Turk's Head' which is a name for a special kind of knot. The riddle instructs that three red lights will shine on the spot when the moon pulls on the water. This means the three red lights on the buoy, which only shine into the cellar at high tide. The moon pulling on the water is a reference to the moon pulling on the sea, causing the tides. The instructions therefore lead to the cellar of The Turk's Head pub, where the buoy's lights shine on a loose stone where the Ruby has been hidden. Unfortunately for Mrs. Holland, she solves this riddle too late. Someone has already reached and taken the jewel. Mrs. Holland is furious, assuming that Sally must be the one who now has the Ruby. She is determined to make Sally suffer. Now Sally and her friends are in even greater danger than before.

However, the reader knows that Sally has not yet solved the riddle. In fact, she has not even really tried. Who could have stolen the gem? If the reader thinks back, they will remember that Jim ventured out to Swalesness on his own one day, following an idea. The reader was told that he found something there, but that he did not want to tell Sally about it yet, as he thought it would put her in even more danger. It seems very likely that Jim is the one who solved the riddle and found the Ruby, and that he is keeping it from Sally because the Ruby has a reputation for bringing bad luck and tragedy. Jim is clever and resourceful, and he knows how to think laterally from the stories he reads in his Penny Dreadful magazines. He loves mysteries and constantly reads about how heroes solve riddles and follow clues. It is natural for him to see hidden meanings in things, and it is no surprise that he was the first one to guess what the riddle really means.

In these chapters we see the criminal activities of Mrs. Holland contrasted sharply with Sally's life at Burton Street. Mrs. Holland is fierce, cruel and unrelenting. She orders people around and makes them fear her, but she has no real friends or family. She has no-one to support her out of loyalty alone, and instead she must manipulate everyone to get what she wants. She is completely obsessed with the Ruby, and is getting angrier and angrier at being thwarted. She will happily harm or kill anyone who gets in her way, thinking nothing of blackmail and physical assault. Sally, on the other hand, is kind and generous, and places a lot of value in friends. Her friends support her because they care about her and are loyal to her. Unlike Mrs. Holland, she is not completely obsessed with the Ruby. She is anxious to solve the mystery and to escape the danger of Mrs. Holland, but she does not spend every waking hour thinking about this. Instead, she focuses on the shop and trying to help Frederick's business. She talks to Rosa and tries to make Adelaide feel at home. Burton Street is a happy and carefree place, so different from Mrs. Holland's evil lodgings. Even Adelaide is starting to come out of her shell at Burton Street, spending more time with Trembler and enjoying exploring London with him. Jim likes to hang around the shop at weekends and is also helping out with the new business venture. When one of them needs something, the others will naturally help, without having to be manipulated or cajoled. This means that things are achieved



faster than for Mrs. Holland, who seems to be constantly frustrated in her goals. These chapters show that although the two groups of people are caught up in the same mystery and intrigue, Mrs. Holland and her cronies could not be more different from Sally and her friends.

Unfortunately for Sally and her friends, the calm, blissful atmosphere at Burton Street cannot last much longer. Mrs. Holland is now even more determined than ever to make Sally suffer, and Adelaide has been spotted walking into the photography shop with Trembler. Sally and Mrs. Holland's meeting is foreshadowed in this chapter, when the author explains that two people who are thinking about each other will soon meet. The message is clear; it is only a matter of time before Mrs. Holland pounces.



# Chapter 17: King James's Stairs, and Chapter 18: London Bridge

## Chapter 17: King James's Stairs, and Chapter 18: London Bridge Summary

The man from Chainey's printers comes to look at the stereographical pictures and Frederick, following Sally's instructions, manages to negotiate a very good deal. Afterwards Frederick tells Sally how much he respects her, but just as he is about to tell her something else, Jim walks in and interrupts him.

Jim tells them that Selby has been found dead. Sally then reads the newspaper and is shocked to see an article about the murder of Matthew Bedwell in Oxford. They write to Reverend Nicholas Bedwell immediately to send their sympathies.

That night, Sally is making dinner for everyone. Jim, Trembler and Adelaide go out for beer to have with the meal. Jim comes running back to tell them that Mrs. Holland grabbed Adelaide and has taken her away. Trembler was knocked down by Mr. Berry. Frederick runs out with Jim to get Adelaide back, shouting for Sally to stay put and lock the doors.

Trembler comes back, bleeding from a cut on the cheek. Sally tends to his cheek and makes him eat some dinner. Sally then decides that she needs to smoke opium in order to bring on the Nightmare again. She needs to know what happened in her past in order to understand the mystery, if she is to help her friends. Trembler agrees to help her. It works, and Sally enters the Nightmare again.

Meanwhile, Frederick and Jim hurry to Wapping in a cab. As Frederick confronts Mrs. Holland and Mr. Berry, Jim grabs Adelaide and runs away with her. They get to a narrow court, and suddenly come face to face with Paddy, the leader of a gang of mudlarks and a friend of Jim's. Paddy tells them he can help them get away, and takes them down King James's Stairs where Mrs. Holland is waiting for them. Paddy betrays them, explaining to Jim that he needs the money.

Mrs. Holland tells Mr. Berry to punish Adelaide. He raises a stick to hit her, but Jim steps in front of her and takes the full force of the blow on his arm. Mr. Berry grabs Adelaide by the neck, but Frederick arrives and tells him to let Adelaide go. Fred tries to fight but is weaker than Mr. Berry. Jim sees the stick lying on the ground and throws it to Fred. Between them, Fred and Jim manage to knock Mr. Berry into the river. However, Mrs. Holland has left with Adelaide.

Sally wakes up from the Nightmare. She now remembers everything. Rosa arrives home and Sally explains what has been happening. Rosa then admits that Jim found the Ruby a while ago but was keeping it secret to keep Sally safe. She gives Sally the



jewel. Sally sends Trembler to arrange a meeting with Mrs. Holland on London Bridge. Rosa insists on coming too, and Sally agrees as long as Rosa promises not to interfere.

Sally meets with Mrs. Holland and shows her that she has the Ruby. They then discuss the truth. Mrs. Holland was once a beautiful young woman living in India, who was much admired by everyone, including the Maharajah. The Maharajah promised the Ruby to her in return for her love, but then went back on his deal and refused to give her the jewel. It was she who let the rebels in to kill him. Mrs. Holland was bought for a Ruby, but she points out that Sally was too. Sally's father was actually Major Marchbanks. He was addicted to opium at the time, and had huge debts because of it. The Maharajah offered the Ruby to Lockhart in return for protecting him. When the rebels murdered him, Marchbanks begged Lockhart to give him the Ruby. Lockhart exchanged it for Marchbanks' baby girl, Sally. Lockhart did not want the child growing up with a drug-addict for a father. Marchbanks took the Ruby and Lockhart took Sally. As she grew up, Lockhart let her believe that he was her father, and made up a story about a fake mother.

Sally tells Mrs. Holland that the Ruby has only brought misfortune, and she throws it into the river. Mrs. Holland dives in after it and is drowned. However, just as Sally thinks it is all over, a man draws up in a cab and tells her to get in. He tells her that he is Hendrik Van Eeden, also known as Ah Ling.

## **Chapter 17: King James's Stairs, and Chapter 18: London Bridge Analysis**

The reader sees more of the unpleasant, hidden side of Victorian London in these chapters. While they are running from Mrs. Holland's men, Paddy takes them down into the Animal Charcoal Works, where the bones and remains of dead animals are sent down a chute into the underground works to be made into charcoal. It is a dirty, smelly and disgusting place, and yet there are many children living there. These are the mudlarks, the children who desperately try to earn a living by scavenging in the river mud for valuable items. They are very poor, and often go short on food. They take shelter in the Animal Charcoal Works because they have nowhere else to go. This is literally their home and sleeping place. They chase rats to earn a little extra money, and Paddy is even forced to betray his friend because he is so desperate. The chute itself is greasy with animal fat and blood, and the stink of the decaying animal parts fills the whole place. It is dark and depressing, but these children have nothing else. Victorian London was full of poverty on this scale, alongside people who were extremely rich. This was a time when Britain was very wealthy and spent it publicly to make the respectable areas of the city even more beautiful. Money was spent on architecture, culture, the arts, science and discovery, on anything but helping the city's extreme poor. The author shows the reader that although Victorian London was an exciting and interesting place, for many people it was also a depressing, hard and cruel place. It is important to remember both sides when telling a story about the people who lived there.



Jim finally gets an adventure like those in his Penny Dreadful magazines. He carries out a daring escape with Adelaide, thinking on his feet and never giving up, even though this is not his fight. He proves himself brave, calm in a crisis, and resourceful, all the traits that his literary heroes possess. He even manages to look after Adelaide, encouraging her when she is too frightened to move. If Jim had not been betrayed by someone he thought was a friend, he would have managed to get away. Jim is shocked by this betrayal because loyalty is incredibly important to him. He would never even consider betraying Adelaide or Sally, and refuses to let them down. He fights on even when he is too injured to move, and proves that he would be willing to die to do what is right. Frederick also shows his bravery and unswerving loyalty as he fights Mr. Berry to help Jim get away with Adelaide. Even when left for dead, Frederick manages to stumble along to King James's Stairs to stop Mr. Berry from killing Adelaide. Like Jim, he fights even when he is injured and when it seems like he has no chance. Together, they use their resourcefulness and quick-thinking to knock Mr. Berry into the river. This is a triumphant moment, but despair immediately sets back in when they realize that Mrs. Holland has gotten away with Adelaide. This increases suspense as the reader wonders what will happen to the terrified little girl.

Meanwhile, Sally cannot sit at home doing nothing, even when Frederick points out that she needs to stay out of the fight because she is the one Mrs. Holland really wants. Sally hates to think of others fighting her battles, or of Adelaide suffering because of her. She feels guilty about not being able to help, and angry with Mrs. Holland for hurting her friends. She makes the difficult decision of taking some more opium. She wants to stimulate the Nightmare again, so that she can learn the truth about her past. She hopes that this will allow her to stop Mrs. Holland. After seeing how badly opium affected Mr. Bedwell, Sally is very brave to try this in the hopes of saving her friends.

The mystery of the Ruby is unraveled in these chapters. Mrs. Holland explains her part in the story and why she wants the Ruby so badly. It was promised to her, and she believes that she has a right to it. More than this, she feels that she has already paid for it. She was cruelly betrayed by a man she trusted, and possessing the Ruby would somehow make this right for her, finally justifying the anguish of her past. This is why she has become obsessed with it, and why she hates anyone else who gets in her way. She sees the Ruby as hers, and anyone else who takes or claims it as a thief and rival. There is even a little understanding, perhaps even sympathy, for Mrs. Holland inserted into chapter eighteen. She has been driven to madness and villainy by a hurtful betrayal in the past. Her youthful innocence was shattered and she saw how cruel the world could really be. When she jumps into the river after the Ruby, the reader sees how she really has been driven into insanity and despair by her obsession with it. For her, the Ruby is like opium addiction. She became lost in it, losing herself and her life. Even Sally begins to feel a little sorry for Mrs. Holland here. However, any sympathy for her is quickly extinguished when the reader remembers all that she has done. She has murdered people, terrorized people, and ruined lives. She has kidnapped Adelaide, whose fate is currently unknown. Sally also realizes that since Marchbanks is her real father, Mrs. Holland is also her father's murderer. Sally can feel no pity for her in the end.



Ironically, although Sally and Mrs. Holland hate each other and are rivals for the Ruby, they are also similar in some ways. Both Mrs. Holland and Sally were bought for the Ruby. In Mrs. Holland's case, it was her body, love and respectability that were bought. In Sally's case, it was literally her whole self that was bought. Both were exchanged for a jewel, and so both were considered to be as valuable as the Ruby. However, while the Ruby was actually given up for Sally, the Maharajah refused to give it to Mrs. Holland. In other words, Mrs. Holland was not judged to be worth it after all. No wonder Mrs. Holland hates Sally so much. Sally was worth the jewel when Mrs. Holland was not, and now Sally is set to receive the Ruby from Marchbanks as inheritance, when Mrs. Holland gets nothing once again. Mrs. Holland sees the Ruby as belonging to her all along, as it was promised to her before the Maharajah gave it to Lockhart and Lockhart gave it to Marchbanks. Both Mrs. Holland and Sally are linked in this way by the Ruby. They were both judged to be as valuable as it, both sold for it, and are both strong, independent women. Sally is considered beautiful, just as Mrs. Holland was in her youth.

However, for all their similarities, they are also very different. Sally is fair where Mrs. Holland is dark haired. Sally is kind and gentle where Mrs. Holland is cruel and vengeful. Mrs. Holland has been corrupted by an unkind world, whereas Sally seems to face her problems and difficulties and push through them, not allowing herself to become a bitter person because of them. Mrs. Holland has killed for the Ruby, whereas Sally does not even want it. Mrs. Holland uses others and makes them fear her, whereas Sally makes real friends and gains loyalty through love. Sally is not corrupted by greed or her 'right' to the Ruby. When Sally chooses to throw the Ruby in the river, she proves that she is unlike Mrs. Holland after all.



# Chapter 19: The East India Docks, and Chapter 20: The Clock Tower

## Chapter 19: The East India Docks, and Chapter 20: The Clock Tower Summary

The cab drives towards the docks, and eventually stops. Van Eeden tells Sally that she may either come with him on a ship going east, or she can stay and he will kill her. He explains that he had an arrangement with Lockhart and Selby Shipping Company to trade opium. Mr. Lockhart refused to deal in opium, even the legitimate, high quality stuff that was stamped with the government's seal of approval. Van Eeden therefore came to a secret agreement with Selby. He would attack passing ships in his role as Ah Ling, pirate and leader of The Seven Blessings. He would take their opium, sink the ships, then mix low quality opium with it and give it a fake stamp of approval. That opium would then be traded under the respectable Selby and Lockhart name. People who smoked that opium would die very quickly, but Van Eeden and Selby never cared as long as it made them money. When Lockhart tried to stop this scheme, Van Eeden took on his role as Ah Ling and attacked his ship in order to murder him.

As Van Eeden is telling Sally this, she manages to grip the gun in her bag and aim it at him. He finishes his story and asks if Sally will come with him, or if she has chosen to die. He leans forward with a knife, and she pulls the trigger.

Van Eeden falls back, covered in blood, and Sally jumps out of the cab and runs away. Rosa catches her, and tells her that she followed the cab from London Bridge. Sally tells Rosa that she shot Van Eeden and Rosa comforts her that it was in self-defense. They decide to tell a policeman.

The next day they read about it in the paper. Van Eeden's body had disappeared and the policeman refused to believe the girls' story, thinking they were wasting his time. Frederick and Jim are back at the shop, bruised and cut but alright. Reverend Bedwell is visiting. However, Adelaide is still missing.

A week goes by and Adelaide has still not been found. The business is not doing well, and Rosa's play has been cancelled. Then one day, Reverend Bedwell sends Sally a letter saying that he has just remembered a message his brother told him. Mr. Lockhart had another message for his daughter, to look under the clock. Sally immediately knows what this means, and goes to her father's old house in Norwood. There she goes to the clock tower over the stables and finds her old hiding place. Her father has left a box for her there. It is full of bank notes, and has a letter explaining that this is the money gained from selling his shares in Selby and Lockhart Shipping Company. He advises her to invest it in a small business. He signs the letter as her father, even though he knows that if she is reading it, she will have learned the truth.





Sally leaves with the money, and with new hope for the Garland photography shop.

## Chapter 19: The East India Docks, and Chapter 20: The Clock Tower Analysis

The mystery of the Ruby was explained and tied up in the last two chapters, and these two resolve the mystery of Lockhart's death. Van Eeden, the man whom Lockhart trusted, has secretly always been Ah Ling, the leader of the dangerous Triad called The Seven Blessings. He reached an agreement with Selby to attack ships carrying opium, to mix the drug with lower quality opium, to put a fake stamp of approval on it, and then sell it under the respectable Selby and Lockhart name. This is, of course, highly illegal, not to mention dangerous. When Lockhart began to suspect what was happening, he tried to stop it. Van Eeden knew that Lockhart would have to be silenced, so he used his role of Ah Ling to attack the ship and murder him. He sunk the ship in order to make it look like a natural disaster rather than a murder. Lockhart was presumed to have drowned at sea. However, when Matthew Bedwell managed to survive and unwittingly gave some of this information to Mrs. Holland, Mrs. Holland began to blackmail Selby. Meanwhile, Sally began investigating the death of her father. Van Eeden sailed to London to silence Selby and to make sure Sally would not be a nuisance. It is most likely that Van Eeden murdered Matthew Bedwell to make sure that he did not talk about Lockhart's murder either. It was Van Eeden who also killed Selby. At the end of the book, Van Eeden kidnaps Sally and tries to make her come with him. He seems to want more from her than just her silence, perhaps hoping she will stay with him and become his lover. If she refuses to come, he will kill her. Van Eeden is a very dangerous man, more so than Mrs. Holland, and Sally suddenly finds that she has escaped one danger to fall straight into another. Thankfully, she followed her father's advice and made sure she always had a gun on her. She shoots Van Eeden before he can hurt her.

The foreshadowing in various parts of the book is resolved in these last chapters. The mysterious man who was sailing into London was Van Eeden, who is also Ah Ling. This is the man who killed Selby, and probably the man who killed Matthew Bedwell. He did not want the information about his illegal activities to get out. He is also the one who killed Mr. Lockhart, the man Sally has known as her father. At the beginning of the story, the reader was told that Sally would soon kill a man. She did, as Mr. Higgs died of heart failure when Sally mentioned The Seven Blessings. This now makes sense, as Mr. Higgs must have been involved in the illegal opium trade too, and must have been terrified of being found out or silenced by Ah Ling. However, this foreshadowing also applies to the end of the novel, as the author's words literally come true. Sally does actually kill a man when she shoots Van Eeden.

The prophecy of the Ruby has also been fulfilled by the end of the book. The legend of the Ruby of Agrapur states that it will continue to cause suffering until its evil is ended by a woman its equal. Sally is literally the Ruby's equal, as she was deemed to be as valuable as it. She was exchanged for the Ruby, making her its equal in worth. Sally manages to fulfill the prophecy by rejecting the Ruby and throwing it into the river. Only Sally could have done this. She is the only character in the whole book who manages to



truly give up the Ruby. Everyone else who has come into contact with the Ruby has been too greedy, wanting to keep it for themselves or to use its value to purchase what they want. The Maharajah used it to buy Mrs. Holland, but was then too greedy to let it go. The Ruby betrayed Mrs. Holland when she thought she had won it. The Maharajah gave it to Lockhart in exchange for his life, but the Ruby betrayed him too. He was killed anyway, and the Ruby was passed on. Lockhart may have given up the Ruby, but he did so by exchanging it for Marchbanks' daughter. He used its value to buy something he wanted more. Marchbanks wanted the Ruby to pay off debts, but seemed to have managed to hold on to it, perhaps because he could not part with it. Both Lockhart and Marchbanks were murdered, the former because of opium, which is what paid for the Ruby in the first place, and the latter more directly because of the Ruby. Mrs. Holland has been obsessed with the Ruby for a long time, and her desperation to possess it leads to her death. The Ruby is a curse that betrays people, leading to bad luck, suffering and death. Only Sally has the courage and sense to rid herself of it completely. She does not give it to Mrs. Holland or even use it to buy her friends' lives. She throws it into the river instead, and so stops its evil from being passed on forever. She has finally broken the curse of the Ruby of Agrapur. Accordingly, after this, good things begin to happen again when she thwarts Van Eeden's attempt to kill her and finds her father's fortune.

Now that Sally has found the money, she and her friends can have a happy ending after all. She can invest in the photography business and help it to expand, and she even hopes to become a partner in the firm. She has begun to develop strong feelings for Frederick and is pleased that she can continue to stay with him. She has found good friends for life in Rosa, Trembler, Jim and Frederick. However, there are still two cliffhangers left open for the next book. Has Van Eeden survived? His body was missing from the cab, so either he crawled somewhere else to die, or he managed to get away. More importantly, Adelaide has still not been found, and the reader has no idea if she is even still alive. Still, the end of the story is hopeful; Sally has enough money to hire a detective to find Adelaide, and she seems to believe that Adelaide is still alive. Sally has solved her mysteries, and now has a happy home to return to. She will never stop searching for her missing friend.



# Characters

## Sally Lockhart

Sally is the main character of the book. She is a sixteen-year-old girl living in Victorian London in the year 1872. Her father has just died, drowning at sea when his ship Lavinia sank. Sally's mother died when she was just a baby, so she is now an orphan. When she receives a mysterious letter that seems to be from her father, warning her of danger from The Seven Blessings and advising her to seek a man called Marchbanks, she begins to investigate his death further. She soon becomes embroiled in two dangerous mysteries, one involving an infamous Ruby and another involving her father's death and his shipping company. She discovers that her father is actually not her father at all. Major Marchbanks is her father, but he gave her up as a baby in exchange for the Ruby of Agrapur, which had been given to Lockhart as payment for keeping the Maharajah safe. Lockhart raised Sally as his own daughter and never told her the truth. Now Sally will inherit the Ruby from Marchbanks on his death, but Mrs. Holland is desperate to have it for herself. This puts Sally in a lot of danger.

Sally is not like most other Victorian women. She is strong, independent, and brave. She can do things on her own and does not have to rely on a man to get by in life. She is very intelligent and savvy with her money, and she understands things like the stock market, accounting, and tactics. These were not the normal things that Victorian girls were supposed to learn about. Respectable Victorian women were expected to be educated in music, art, french, history and literature. They were supposed to remain demure and ladylike at all times, and not to engage in men's affairs such as business. Because of this, Sally is sometimes looked down on or regarded with suspicion by others. Mrs. Rees thinks she is a disgrace, and Mr. Temple, although he admires her business sense, disapproves of her handling her own affairs. Sally is more like a modern girl than a Victorian one, and does not quite fit into the Victorian world in which she was born. She refuses to be restricted by society's 'rules', however, and insists on doing things her way. Sometimes she worries that she is not like other girls, but this is quickly replaced by the joy and ease she feels when doing the things she is really good at, such as helping Frederick's business.

Since Sally is unusual, she needs to find an unusual place to live in order to feel at home. She finds this at the Garlands' house and photography shop. Frederick and Rosa Garland are just like her; they are independent, strong and determined to do things their way. They take an instant liking to Sally, finding her interesting and kind. They offer her a place to stay, and in return she helps them with their business and their accounts. She comes up with new ideas to make money, takes charge, and shows how resourceful she can be. She seems to be a natural leader. Frederick and Rosa soon find that they cannot live without her. Sally has this affect on others too, as many characters admire her and wish to help her. She easily makes friends with Trembler, persuades Frederick to hide her at Swaleness after only knowing him for seconds, and makes such an



impression on Jim that he is determined to help her no matter what. She brings people together, turning the photography business into a very close and loyal family.

Sally might be strong, brave and independent, but she can also be unsure and self-conscious. This is because of how she was raised. She was brought up by her father according to the things he was interested in. This is why she is so good at business and accounting, and why she understands things like tactics and Hindustani. Unfortunately, her father left socializing out of her education. She spent most of her childhood alone or with her father, not playing with or learning how to interact with other children. This means that she can be quite shy around other people. This does not seem to affect her when her business head is on, such as when talking to Mr. Temple, but it does almost paralyze her with awkwardness when speaking to Frederick. She has not had much experience of talking to young men, and this is made worse by the fact that she is quickly developing feelings for Fred. She also worries that she comes across as too bossy and unladylike, which makes her feel shy and self-conscious. Rosa observes that she is like two different people, the strong, confident Sally, and the shy, quiet Sally. Rosa also reassures her that she should not feel self-conscious about doing what she is good at. Sally's fears are natural for a person who has not had much experience with other people, but they are unfounded. Everyone seems to warm to her friendly, strong personality, and she seems to inspire feelings of great loyalty.

Sally proves that she is a better person than Mrs. Holland and every other person who has come into contact with the Ruby. Everyone else either tried to gain or keep the Ruby, or exchanged it for something they wanted more. Sally avoids making these mistakes, instead rejecting the Ruby and throwing it away. She is the only person who was able to do this, and in doing so she manages to break its curse. The Ruby can only bring misfortune to people who let it have power over them. Sally does not give in to greed or desire. She does not want riches or beautiful things, only a happy life with good friends. Sally is therefore the woman in the prophecy about the Ruby. The prophecy states that a woman its equal will eventually end the evil of the jewel. Sally is the Ruby's equal because she was exchanged for it, meaning that she has been deemed to have the same value as it. She ends its evil by throwing it into the river and so ensuring that no-one will ever fight over it or kill for it again.

## Frederick Garland

Frederick Garland is a photographer living in Victorian London. He has a small shop with living quarters attached, on Burton Street near the British Museum. He meets Sally in Swalesness and helps to hide her from Mrs. Holland. He gives her his card, which she uses to find him when she leaves Mrs. Rees' house. Sally needs help and has nowhere to go, so Frederick lets her stay with him and his sister Rosa. In return, Sally helps with the accounts and the business of the photography shop. Frederick helps Sally solve her mystery, and fights Mr. Berry at the end of the story.

Frederick is instantly attracted to Sally when he meets her in Swalesness. He thinks she is beautiful, but he also seems to admire the fact that she is confidently wandering



around on her own. She is clearly a strong woman who does not believe she needs a male escort. Frederick obviously loves and respects his sister, who is also a very strong, independent woman, so he is not shocked by Sally's behavior. Instead, he finds her very interesting and intriguing. He immediately wants to help her, offering her a place to hide, and doing his best to protect her. When he meets her again at Burton Street he is delighted. Rosa knows exactly who Sally is, so it is obvious that Frederick has talked about her. She seems to have made quite an impression for such a short meeting. From this, the reader can see that Frederick admires Sally and is developing strong feelings for her very quickly. This is backed up by his behavior towards her throughout the book. He constantly wants to protect her and to make sure that she is safe. He also helps her however he can with her mystery. When she is embarrassed or self-conscious, he does his best to reassure her or to make a joke to lighten the mood. When he sees her shiver he is instantly concerned that she might be too cold. Later in the story he tells her that he admires her, and he tries to talk to her seriously. He is interrupted, but it seems likely that he was about to confess his romantic feelings for her.

Frederick is not just gallant around Sally. He is generally heroic, brave, and determined to do what is right. He tries to help people who are in trouble, and will put himself in danger to protect his friends. When Reverend Bedwell goes to Mrs. Hollands' lodgings to get his brother back, Frederick accompanies him without complaint. While he is there he sees that Adelaide is in danger and saves her too. Later, when Adelaide is kidnapped, Frederick runs after her without question and gets himself into a very dangerous situation through his determination to save her. He fights Mr. Berry and is almost overcome, but even when he is injured and it looks like he will lose, he does not give up. Finally, with Jim's help, he is able to defeat Mr. Berry.

Frederick is also kind and gentle, and very friendly to everyone he meets. He never tries to put Sally down or to tell her that she is being unladylike. He only tells her not to do things when he is concerned about her safety. He is never patronizing towards her or his sister. Sally describes him as Bohemian, meaning that he is laid back, care-free and natural, and very easy to get along with. At the same time, she observes that he is very professional about his work and can be serious and sensible when he needs to be. He likes to think of himself as an artist and has absolutely no business sense. When Sally instructs him on the best ways to make more money, he is reluctant but trusts her completely and follows all her instructions. However, although he is naive about business, he seems quite knowledgeable about life in London. He knows where to find an opium den, explains to Sally where opium comes from and tells her about the government's shady behavior concerning it, and he shows her the reality of poverty in the city. Sally and Frederick are therefore a good match, as each has knowledge in areas that the other is lacking. Sally also notes that Frederick occasionally flies into hot-tempered arguments like his sister, but she finds this, and everything else about him, fascinating.



## Rosa Garland

Rosa Garland is Frederick's sister. She works as an actress in a London theatre, and lives with Frederick in the rooms attached to the photography shop. When she decided to be an actress she had to leave home, as her parents were very strict about what was proper for a respectable young lady to do. Rosa does not care about what society thinks or what is respectable; she only cares about doing the things that she loves and that she is good at. She is instantly very accepting of Sally, probably because she sees a little of herself in her. Like Sally, Rosa is strong and independent, and does not want to play by everybody else's rules. Like Sally, she is more like a modern girl than a Victorian one.

Rosa is fiery and passionate, and like Frederick she can sometimes fly into heated arguments. At other times she is very gentle and friendly. Her moods tend to swing in extremes more than Frederick's do. She loves deeply, and is very loyal to the people she cares about. She is also very accepting of others, and soon makes Adelaide feel welcome. Jim is very impressed with her, finding another Sally-like character in her, and he soon takes to hanging around the photography shop at weekends.

Rosa has a much better business sense than Frederick and is more concerned with practical matters like money. However, she still lacks the knowledge to actually turn the business around. When Sally turns up, Rosa is very enthusiastic about her working for them. She reassures Sally that she should not feel self-conscious about doing what she is good at, and she tries to encourage Sally to take charge. She loves all Sally's ideas and immediately throws herself into carrying them out. She is a very good friend who is always there for Sally when she needs someone to talk to. She also proves how brave she is when she accompanies Sally to London Bridge at the end of the story, and when she follows Van Eeden's cab.

## Jim Taylor

Jim is a young boy working at Selby and Lockhart Shipping Company as a general assistant and helper. He seems to work under the Porter and is ordered around by him a lot. Jim meets Sally when she comes into the office to ask questions about her father's death. Jim instantly likes Sally and is intrigued by her mystery. He immediately offers to help and Sally instantly trusts him. Jim is a very likeable boy who inspires trust easily.

Jim seems to admire Sally's strength and independence in a similar manner to Frederick. He also likes Rosa for similar reasons. Jim is not interested in shy, retiring women. He prefers that the people he is friends with are interesting and unique. He finds this in everyone at Garlands' photography shop, and soon begins to hang around there more and more. He becomes good friends with everyone, and is happy to help with the mystery as well as with their new business ideas.

Jim is a very simple and honest boy who is easy to get along with. He is much poorer than Sally and the Garlands and does not come from as respectable a family. However,



he hates being treated as a second-class citizen just because he is working class. He resents people ordering him around, and does not like people who think they are better than him. He likes Sally and her friends because they treat him as an equal right from the start, talking to him as if he is one of them rather than a servant. When people are too bossy or snooty with him, he will play tricks on them, such as throwing ink at the Warwick Hotel messenger boy. However, when people are respectful and kind to him, he will be fiercely loyal to them and help them out however he can.

Jim is very brave, loyal and heroic. When Adelaide goes missing, he goes after her without question and tries to help her escape. When Frederick helps Reverend Bedwell to rescue his brother, Jim is upset that he was not able to help too. He thinks nothing of putting himself in danger to help others. In fact, Jim loves doing this. He likes to think of himself as a hero like the ones in the Penny Dreadful stories he reads. These are tales of cunning, daring and bravery that he wants to emulate. These are his ideas of what it means to be a real man, and of what an exciting meaningful life is like. Jim certainly proves himself many times in the story. He works out the riddle to where the Ruby is being hidden, and goes after it himself. This shows that he is clever, resourceful and can think outside the box. He does not give the Ruby to Sally, fearing that it will only put her in greater danger. This shows his kind and thoughtful side. When he tries to help Adelaide escape, he is quick-thinking and brave, and remains calm even in a crisis. In the fight with Mr. Berry, he never gives up, and he manages to help Frederick beat the bigger man against all the odds. Jim proves himself to be just as heroic as any of the Penny Dreadful characters he reads about. He is a good friend.

## **Mrs. Holland**

Mrs. Holland is the main antagonist of the story. She owns a boarding house in Wapping, and seems to be quite influential in London's criminal underworld. She is completely obsessed with the Ruby and is determined to have it for herself. She believes that the Ruby should rightfully be hers and regards everyone else who claims it to be a thief. This is because Mrs. Holland has a history connected to the jewel. She was once a beautiful young woman living in India, where all the local men, even the Maharajah, desired her. The Maharajah wanted to be with her, so he bought her love with the Ruby. He promised it to her, but then went back on his word and refused to give it to her after he had gotten what he wanted. She was furious, and so she let in the rebels, leading to the Maharajah's death. Unfortunately for her, by this point the Maharajah had already given the Ruby to Lockhart. Lockhart gave it to Marchbanks in return for his baby, Sally. Now Marchbanks intends to pass it down to Sally. This is why Mrs. Holland resents Sally so much and is determined not to let her get her hands on the jewel. In Mrs. Holland's eyes, it is rightfully hers, not Sally's.

Mrs. Holland is also furious that she was deemed to be not worth the Ruby in the end, whereas Sally was exchanged for it, meaning that Sally was judged to be the jewel's equal when Mrs. Holland was not. Mrs. Holland resents the fact that Sally so easily won what she herself gave up so much for. Mrs. Holland's innocence and respectability were stolen, whereas Sally gained a better life than she would have had with her real father.



Now the only thing that will make it right for Mrs. Holland is getting the Ruby instead of Sally, and finally making Sally suffer. Mrs. Holland has been driven half-mad by this obsession. She is completely consumed by her search for the Ruby, and in the end she even jumps into the river after it. She kills herself rather than lose the Ruby. This makes her character more understandable, and perhaps the reader can even feel sorry for her. However, nothing can excuse her behavior, something that Sally herself concludes.

Mrs. Holland is an extremely dangerous, cruel and vindictive woman. She will do anything to get what she wants and hurt anyone who gets in her way. She will commit any crime, and does not even shy away from murder. In the story, she either kills Marchbanks or arranges for him to be murdered, tells Mr. Hopkins to kill Sally, blackmails Selby, keeps Adelaide prisoner, and kidnaps Adelaide at the end of the story. She is happy to steal, push people around, beat people up for information, and seems to actually enjoy causing pain. She keeps Bedwell on drugs in order to extract information from him, and means to kill him when he is no longer useful. Adelaide is terrified of her, and it is strongly implied that Mrs. Holland killed all the previous girls who worked for her. Mrs. Holland does not care about other people or value other lives, and inspires loyalty through fear rather than friendship. Despite being connected to Sally through the Ruby, the two women are nothing like each other. The author makes it very clear that Mrs. Holland is a dangerous enemy for Sally and her friends.

## **Trembler, Theophilus Molloy**

Trembler's real name is Theophilus Molloy, but everyone calls him Trembler, a nickname given to him by his previous associates. He works for Frederick and Rosa in their photography shop. Trembler was once an unsuccessful pickpocket, and Fred found him when Trembler tried to pick his pocket one day. Frederick stopped him, Trembler was relieved, and since then he has been happily working for the Garlands. The Garlands treat him as a friend rather than a servant, and he seems to be part of the family at Burton Street. He is very loyal to Frederick and Rosa and seems to love them dearly. He quickly befriends Adelaide when she comes to stay with them, becoming something of a surrogate father to her. He is kind, patient and friendly, but often very nervous, which is how he got his nickname.

## **Adelaide**

Adelaide is a serving girl who works for Mrs. Holland. She is a quiet, shy and frightened young girl, who is constantly terrified of her employer. Mrs. Holland has told her that she killed her previous serving girls and buried them in the yard. Adelaide is now convinced that Mrs. Holland will one day do the same to her. However, she is an orphan with nowhere else to go, and she knows that Mrs. Holland will not simply let her leave anyway. When she does finally manage to escape with Frederick, it takes her a long time to feel comfortable. She warms to Trembler quickly, and soon comes to accept everyone else at Burton Street too. She is still nervous around Sally, as she knows that Mrs. Holland intends to kill Sally.





Adelaide is kind and trusting, and is loyal enough to the people she cares for to want to help them. She is very fond of Bedwell, as he treats her with affection, and when he asks her to do something for him she agrees despite the danger. She tries to help all her new friends, even though she knows exactly how dangerous Mrs. Holland really is. Adelaide is a very tragic character and easy for the reader to feel sorry for. She seems to have never experienced love or a happy family until coming to Burton Street, instead living in fear her whole life. When she is kidnapped by Mrs. Holland again at the end of the story, she is almost too frightened to move. Adelaide is still missing at the end of the book, and Sally and her friends are determined to find her.

## **Matthew Lockhart**

Matthew Lockhart is the man Sally has always known as her father. He was killed before the beginning of the story, presumably drowned at sea but actually murdered by Ah Ling/Van Eeden. He was killed to stop him from interfering in an illegal opium trade.

Lockhart was once in the army, serving in India in Agrapur. He was given a Ruby by the Maharajah in return for his protection in the Mutiny, but the Maharajah was killed anyway. Lockhart exchanged the Ruby for Marchbanks' baby, Sally. He wanted to make sure the baby was brought up properly, away from drugs, and given a good chance in life. He cared about this more than the jewel. He has been a good father to Sally, and she still considers him to be her real father at the end of the story, even though she now knows that he is not her biological father.

## **Major Marchbanks**

Major Marchbanks was once in the army, serving with Lockhart. He was Lockhart's good friend, until Lockhart saw what opium addiction had done to him. Marchbanks is Sally's real biological father, but he exchanged her for the Ruby after the Mutiny in Agrapur. He has never been there for Sally, and so she does not think of him as a father even when she finds out the truth, though she is sad about his death. Marchbanks appears to feel sorry for what he did, and seems to want to make amends by giving the Ruby to Sally. Unfortunately, he is killed by Mrs. Holland before he can answer any of Sally's questions.

## **Matthew Bedwell**

Matthew Bedwell is a sailor who was on the Lavinia when it was attacked by Ah Ling/Van Eeden. He found the dying Lockhart and listened to his message, promising to take it to Sally. He managed to escape the ship with Lockhart's servant. However, while in the east he gave in to opium and became addicted. He manages to make it back to England, but becomes trapped at Mrs. Holland's when she deliberately keeps him on the drug in order to extract information from him. He suffers and is delirious most of the time, but he still manages to tell Adelaide that he must find Sally Lockhart. Eventually, his brother Reverend Nicholas Bedwell and Frederick manage to get him away from



Mrs. Holland. He begins the process of trying to get sober, but is killed before he can get his life back on track. He is most likely murdered by Van Eeden to keep him from talking about what happened on the Lavinia.

## **Reverend Nicholas Bedwell**

Reverend Nicholas Bedwell is Matthew Bedwell's brother. He lives and works as a reverend in Oxford. Sally contacts him when she finds out that his brother is being held by Mrs. Holland. With Frederick's help, Nicholas frees his brother and begins trying to get him off the drugs. Nicholas is a kind and enthusiastic man who seems anxious to help Sally with her mystery as well as to help his own brother. He hates drugs, particularly opium, and sometimes wishes he could give up being a reverend in order to dedicate his life to fighting them.

## **Mr. Higgs**

Mr. Higgs is the Secretary for Selby and Lockhart Shipping Company. Sally talks to him at the beginning of the story, but he suffers heart failure and dies after she mentions The Seven Blessings. This is how Sally knows that she is on to something strange.

## **Mr. Selby**

Mr. Selby is one partner in the Selby and Lockhart Shipping Company. When Lockhart sells his shares and then dies, Selby becomes the sole owner. He is a greedy, cowardly and corrupt man who is willing to deal with criminals and the illegal opium trade in order to make money. When things get tough and his life is in danger, he goes to Mrs. Holland for help. He is killed by Van Eeden.

## **Mr. Hopkins**

Mr. Hopkins is Mrs. Holland's hired thug. He is happy to steal for her, but when she asks him to kill Sally, he cannot do it. He is killed by a thief as he leaves Mrs. Rees' house with Sally's papers.

## **Mrs. Rees**

Mrs. Rees is a distant relation of Sally's who agrees to take care of her when her father dies. She is mean to and disapproving of Sally, and constantly accuses her of taking advantage of her 'charity.' However, unknown to Sally, Mrs. Rees has actually been accepting Sally's income on her behalf. When Sally finds this out she is shocked and annoyed, and quickly makes sure that all money will come directly to her in future.



## Ellen

Ellen is Mrs. Rees' maid. She dislikes Sally, and is happy to let Mr. Hopkins in so that he can access Sally's room. Mr. Hopkins tells her that he is a policeman and Sally a criminal, and Ellen is only too happy to believe this.

## Mr. Temple

Mr. Temple is Mr. Lockhart and Sally's lawyer. Sally goes to see him in order to sort out her money and withdraw some of her savings. Mr. Temple is a kind man who seems genuinely concerned about Sally, but he does not believe she is capable of looking after herself. He puts an advertisement in the paper in order to find her, so that he can make sure she is properly cared for. This is annoying for Sally, who would rather stay with the Garlands and take care of her own affairs.

## Hendrik van Eeden, Ah Ling

Hendrik Van Eeden is one of Lockhart's contacts who he thought he could trust. He was wrong. Van Eeden is secretly the same person as Ah Ling, an extremely dangerous criminal who is the leader of The Seven Blessings, one of the deadly Chinese Triads. Van Eeden is dealing in illegal opium, attacking ships carrying the drug, stealing it, sinking the ships, mixing the opium with low quality opium, then re-selling it. He enters into an agreement with Selby to use the Selby and Lockhart company to add legitimacy to the opium he trades. When Lockhart gets wind of this he tries to interfere, and Van Eeden has him killed.

In this story, Van Eeden sails to London to tie up all the loose ends. He has Selby killed, and presumably is the man behind Bedwell's murder. He then kidnaps Sally and gives her the choice of death, or coming with him. She shoots him with the pistol in her bag and runs away. His body is never found, but he is presumed dead at the end of the story. Although Mrs. Holland is actually the main antagonist of the story, Van Eeden is much more dangerous.

## Mr. Berry

Mr. Berry is another hired thug who works for Mrs. Holland after Mr. Hopkins is killed. Unlike Mr. Hopkins he does not seem to be perturbed by the idea of killing young girls. He is more than willing to kill Adelaide. He beats people up on Mrs. Holland's orders, and displays absolutely no conscience. He is a member of the Temperance society, which means that he will not drink alcohol and believes that it is evil. It is unclear whether this is because he is a recovering alcoholic or whether he avoids alcohol for moral reasons.



# Objects/Places

## Victorian London

The story is set in 1872 in Victorian London. The front and back of the book give some context to help the reader understand what life was like in this year. Victorian London was an interesting place; the Victorian age was one of expansion, new discoveries, exploration and scientific achievement. It was a time of great wealth and influence for the British Empire. Inventions such as photography and steam power were making things possible that people could never have imagined before. However, it was also a time in which there was a great divide between rich and poor. Poverty was a horrible problem, with beggars dying on the streets, the unfortunates consigned to physically punishing workhouses, and children left without anything in the world. These poor were largely ignored by the rich, who tried to hide them away and considered them to be filthy and distasteful. The reader sees both sides of this Victorian world in this story.

## Victorian Attitudes to Women

In the Victorian age, women were still considered to be inferior to men. Women were thought to be less intelligent and both physically and mentally weak. Men thought women could not handle difficult situations, would faint at the merest hint of trouble, and could not look after themselves. Respectable women were expected to be escorted by a man when travelling, and not to gallivant around the city on their own. They were expected to be dignified, demure and submissive at all times, and to learn certain social graces from an early age. Upper and middle class girls were educated in subjects such as literature, French, history, art, and music, but were not expected to become involved in or to take an interest in business. A woman's place was considered to be in the home, and her role in life was to be a good wife and mother. In this story, both Sally and Rosa defy these conventions by showing that they are independent, strong women who are perfectly capable of looking after themselves.

## Sally's Gun

Sally's father trained her how to shoot and gave her a pistol, instructing her to always keep it with her and to ensure that her powder is always dry. This is because old guns needed to be loaded with gunpowder and would not fire if the powder was too damp. Sally takes her father's advice to heart. When her gun is stolen by Mr. Hopkins, she asks Trembler to procure her a new one, and carries it around with her in her bag at all times. This pays off; Sally is able to shoot Van Eeden at the end of the story before he can kill her. Sally is upset by the theft of her pistol as it was a gift from her father, and so it has emotional value for her.



## The Ruby of Agrapur

The Ruby of Agrapur is a particularly beautiful ruby that belonged to the Maharajah of Agrapur. It was bought with the wealth obtained from poppy fields, from which the drug opium is sourced. The Maharajah promised the Ruby to Mrs. Holland, who was at the time a beautiful young woman he desired. However, he went back on his promise and refused to give her the jewel. Instead, he gave it to Lockhart in return for protection from the rebels. During the Mutiny the Maharajah was killed, despite Lockhart's best attempts. Lockhart gave the Ruby to his friend Marchbanks in exchange for his baby girl Sally. Marchbanks intended to use the Ruby to pay off his debts, but still has the jewel sixteen years later when Sally begins investigating. Perhaps he simply could not bear to part with it. Because Marchbanks is Sally's real father, the Ruby will pass to her through laws of inheritance.

Mrs. Holland has been searching for the Ruby ever since the Mutiny, believing that it is hers by right. She manages to bully Marchbanks into changing his will, but then Sally gets in the way. Mrs. Holland is obsessed with the Ruby, and is not averse to murdering others to get her way. Both Sally and Mrs. Holland have the riddle that leads to the Ruby's hiding place, but it is Jim who works it out. He gets the Ruby but hides it from Sally, fearing it will bring danger on her. Later, Rosa gives the jewel to Sally and Sally takes it to Mrs. Holland. Sally throws it into the river and Mrs. Holland dives after it, killing herself.

The Ruby has a legend attached to it that claims it to be cursed. The legend says that only a woman its equal can destroy its evil. In the story, the Ruby seems to bring tragedy and misfortune on everyone who comes into contact with it, betraying them all in some way. Mrs. Holland is cast aside and betrayed, the Maharajah killed, Lockhart murdered at sea, and Marchbanks murdered in his home. However, unlike everyone else, Sally is able to reject the Ruby and throw it away, thus ending its evil. Because she was exchanged for the Ruby as a baby, she was deemed to be its equal in value. Therefore, the legend of the Ruby has come true.

## Selby and Lockhart Shipping Agents

Selby and Lockhart is a shipping company owned by Mr. Selby and Mr. Lockhart. It trades goods between Britain and the East Indies. Mr. Selby is an immoral man, and he entered into an agreement with a dangerous criminal called Van Eeden to trade in illegal opium. Lockhart did not know this, but got wind that something disreputable was going on. He tried to put a stop to it, and was murdered by Van Eeden. The shipping company was then owned entirely by Mr. Selby until he was also killed by Van Eeden. By the end of the story, the shipping company has fallen into chaos and will soon collapse. The money that Sally finds in the clock tower at the end of the story is her father's profits from selling his shares in the company.



## Swaleness

Swaleness is a small town by the sea where Major Marchbanks lives. Sally visits it when she is searching for answers from Marchbanks. It has a long pier, a lonely beach, a train station, and a few streets of shops. Marchbanks' house is a little way out of the town. This is where Sally first meets Frederick, when he hides her from Mrs. Holland. Swaleness is also where the Ruby is hidden, in a pub called 'The Turk's Head.'

## The Turk's Head

The Turk's Head is a pub in Swaleness where the Ruby has been hidden by Marchbanks. A riddle leads to its hiding place. The riddle instructs to search in a place of darkness under a knot. This is the cellar of the pub. A Turk's Head is a type of knot. The riddle then instructs to wait until the moon pulls on the water, meaning high tide, when three lights will shine on the spot. At high tide, a buoy in the sea shines three lights on the window, where the glass focuses them onto a spot on the wall. Here there is a loose brick where the Ruby is hidden. Jim works this out first, and manages to get the Ruby before Mrs. Holland can figure out what the riddle means.

## Penny Dreadful

'Penny Dreadful' was the nickname given to a certain type of publication in the Victorian era. These were fiction magazines printed on cheap paper, usually telling stories of monsters, heroes, mysteries, and gothic thrillers. They were often lurid and sensational. They were told in parts over several issues, with each issue costing a penny. They were mainly aimed at working class adolescent boys. In this story, Jim loves to read these Penny Dreadful magazines.

## Maharajah

Maharajah means 'king' or 'great king' in Sanskrit. During the time in which this story is set, India was split into hundreds of small states, each ruled by a separate king. The British ruled some areas directly, ruling the rest indirectly through these kings. One of the titles these kings might use was 'Maharajah.' In this story, the Maharajah is the ruler of Agrapur, one of the states ruled indirectly by Britain.

## Arapur

Arapur is a fictional state in India, ruled by a Maharajah who acts as a 'puppet ruler' for the British Empire. Opium is grown in Arapur. This is where Lockhart and Marchbanks were stationed when they were serving as British officers. This is also where Mrs. Holland lived as a young woman. During the Mutiny, Arapur rebels rose up against the Maharajah and killed him.



## Victorian Trade in the East, and the Opium Wars

Trade with the East Indies, China and Japan was extremely popular and important in Victorian times because of the products obtained from that part of the world. Demand for things like spices, tea, Indigo dye and silk was high. In return, Britain traded goods such as silver and opium. Opium was grown relatively cheaply in India, then sold at high prices to China. The Chinese rulers did not approve of the opium addiction in their country, so they banned the trade of everything except British silver. The British government did not want to have to deal in expensive silver when they could make so much more money out of opium. Instead, they sold opium to Calcutta on the condition that it be smuggled into China. The Chinese rulers attempted to put a stop to this too by destroying the imported drug and imposing the death penalty for smugglers. Britain then went to war with China, fighting two Opium Wars to force them to take the drug. Britain was successful, and trade with China resumed. Meanwhile, in India, many people began to starve because the land that was once dedicated to crop fields was being used for growing opium instead. This led to the rebellion of 1857.

### Opium

Opium is a drug obtained from the poppy plant. In Victorian times it was taken by burning it and breathing in the smoke. At one time this was extremely popular, but it is less so now, as more potent drugs can be produced from the poppy. Opium is very addictive. It causes hallucinations and visions, but can also cause paranoia, terror and nightmares. Opium addiction can, and did, ruin many people's lives. The terrible effects of the drug are presented to the reader in the example of Matthew Bedwell, who is shown to suffer greatly because of opium. Marchbanks even gave up his own child because of the drug, showing how drug addiction can make a person forget everything that is important and meaningful to them. Opium is very important to this story, as it is the root cause of almost every form of suffering or evil seen in the novel.

### Opium Den

An opium den was an establishment where people could go in Victorian times to smoke opium. These were legal, though considered by many to be a little distasteful. The worst ones simply provided rough benches or mats on the floor for the smokers to lie on. Nicer dens such as Madame Chang's provided couches or beds, cushions and clean surroundings. These dens were frequented by people of all different levels of society, even those who would consider themselves respectable. The opium dens were almost always run by Chinese people, as they brought the drug back with them to London. Sally and Frederick visit Madame Chang's opium den in this story in order to procure some opium for Bedwell, to help wean him off the drug.



## **The East India Company**

The East India Company was a trading company that was given official approval (a Royal Charter) by the British government. They traded mainly with the East Indies and China, particularly India, dealing in silk, Indigo dye, spices, tea and opium. The Company soon came to rule large areas of India on behalf of Britain. They were an extremely successful and powerful company that managed to hold a virtual monopoly on all trade to and from India. They were particularly involved in the shipping of opium grown in India to Calcutta, in order to be smuggled into China. Proceeds from the smuggling were paid to the Company. China attempted to stop this by destroying the drug and imposing the death penalty for smuggling. This resulted in the Opium Wars.

## **The Mutiny, the Indian Rebellion of 1857**

British rule in India under the East India Company was not good for the common Indian people. On top of the general mistreatment, large areas of land that were once used to grow crops were turned into poppy fields to produce opium. People began to starve, and they resented the Indian 'puppet rulers' who enforced the British rule. In 1857 the Indian Rebellion broke out, referred to in this story as the Mutiny. Rebels fought back against the British oppressors and their puppet rulers. In this story, the Maharajah fears being killed by the rebels in his state, and so he gives the Ruby to Lockhart in exchange for protection. Unfortunately, Mrs. Holland lets the rebels in and the Maharajah is killed anyway. Eventually, the Indian Rebellion was contained and stopped. The East India Company was dissolved in 1858, and afterwards India was directly ruled by the Crown.

## **Burton Street**

Burton Street is a respectable but slightly shabby street in London, near the British Museum. This is where the Garlands' photography shop and living quarters are situated.

## **Wapping**

Wapping is an area of London, close to the river, that contains a lot of warehouses and wharves. It is not a particularly pleasant area, containing a large amount of very poor people. This is where Mrs. Holland's lodgings are located.

## **Mrs. Holland's Lodgings at Hangman's Wharf**

Mrs. Holland owns a lodging house at Hangman's Wharf in Wapping. It is a dismal but cheap place to stay. This is where Matthew Bedwell comes after getting off his ship. This is where he succumbs to opium and accidentally tells Mrs. Holland too much information about Lockhart's death. Frederick and Nicholas Bedwell come here in order





to rescue Matthew. The lodgings has a yard out the back that Adelaide has been told is the burial place of Mrs. Holland's previous serving girls, who were all murdered by her.

## **Stereographic Pictures**

A stereographic picture is an image in which a 3D effect has been created. In Victorian times, this was achieved by taking two pictures from slightly different angles, representing the differences that each eye sees when the other is closed. When viewed through a special viewer that places the two images in the correct positions (a stereoscope), the picture appears to be three dimensional. This was still very new in the Victorian period and so was particularly fascinating for people. This is why Sally thinks selling them would be the best plan for making more money for their business.

## **Omnibus**

'Omnibus' is the old term for 'bus.' In Victorian times this was a large horse-drawn carriage with space for multiple passengers.

## **Mudlarks**

'Mudlarks' was the name given to poor children who earned money by foraging in the river mud for valuable items such as lumps of coal. In this story, Jim uses the mudlarks as a network for gaining information about Mrs. Holland. This is because the mudlarks rove along the river, seeing many things and gathering information.



# Themes

## Opium

Opium is a very important theme in 'A Ruby in the Smoke' as it pulls all the different plot elements together. Almost all the suffering and evil portrayed in the story is somehow caused by opium. It is represented as a very dangerous, destructive and evil substance, which will only cause greed, misery and corruption. Many of the characters declare their disgust for and hatred of the drug, including Lockhart, Reverend Bedwell and Frederick.

Opium was a popular drug in Victorian times. It was grown in poppy fields in India and traded legally by the East India Company. Victorians took the drug by burning it and breathing in the smoke. Opium brings on visions and hallucinations, but also paranoia and nightmares. It is an extremely addictive substance, and it is this addiction that can, and did, ruin lives. By using opium as a main element of his story, the author is exploring one of the 'hidden truths' about the Victorian world that often gets forgotten. The Victorian period was one of great invention, exploration, discovery, enlightenment and wealth, but it also had its dark secrets, including poverty, corruption, and the opium trade.

Opium is the reason Sally Lockhart lost the man she has known and loved as a father. His shipping firm, Selby and Lockhart, became involved in the opium trade without his knowledge. Lockhart disapproved of the drug, and so refused to deal in it. Selby wanted the riches that come with trading opium, so he entered into a secret deal with a very dangerous criminal. The criminal is a man called Van Eeden, who is also known as Ah Ling. He arranged to attack other ships carrying opium, steal it, kill the men and sink the ships, then take back the opium to mix with his own low quality drug. He would then stamp it with a fake government seal of approval, and use the respected Selby and Lockhart company to ship it. This is obviously a highly illegal and despicable scheme, and it demonstrates the lengths people were willing to go to make money from opium. When Lockhart got wind of this and began interfering in the plan, Van Eeden attacked his ship in the guise of Ah Ling, murdered Lockhart and all the crew, and sank the boat. Van Eeden then sailed to London to kill Selby and anyone else remaining who might talk about his role in the plot. As with the modern-day drug trade, this shows the kinds of dangerous and evil people who become involved with trading drugs, who put profit and power above human lives. Opium bred this kind of evil.

However, it was not only criminals who dealt in opium. The British government had a huge interest in seeing that the opium trade remained successful. Opium was grown cheaply in India and then sold on at a much higher price. China was a huge consumer, and a great deal of money could be made in trading to them. The demand in Britain at this time for Eastern goods such as tea, spices and silk was very high, but China banned the import of anything except British silver. Silver was expensive to trade, and much better profits could be made from opium. The East India Company, which had a Royal Charter and full government approval, got around this by trading opium to



Calcutta on the guarantee that it would then be smuggled into China. Income from smuggling was then paid to the Company. The British government knew about this and approved. Opium trade was perfectly legal, and the government even put their own stamp of approval on the proper, high quality yields. Chinese rulers then tried to stop the import of the drug by destroying any they found and introducing the death penalty for smugglers. Britain responded by going to war with them, resulting in the two Opium Wars. Britain won, and forced the Chinese to accept the drug. This shows how the greed and corruption inspired by opium even infected the government itself. The government never took into consideration how opium addiction was affecting China, or how the people of that country might be suffering. They simply wished to continue profiting from it. Frederick explains this to Sally when they visit Madame Chang's opium den, and Sally is shocked by this revelation.

The legal opium trade had knock on effects, many of which are felt in this story. Large areas of land in India, which had been used to grow crops, were now turned into poppy fields in order to produce more opium. This meant that a lot of Indian people starved. Eventually, the Indians became so resentful of this that they rebelled against British rule. This is the Mutiny of 1857 that Marchbanks refers to in his diary. This is the Mutiny in which rebels attacked the Maharajah of Agrapur, which led to the Ruby being given to Lockhart and then exchanged for Marchbanks' baby girl. In other words, the event that started the whole plot of this novel was caused by opium. In fact, even the Ruby itself was bought using the wealth gained through growing opium. In these ways, the Ruby and opium are inextricably linked. Because of opium and the rebellion, the Ruby was passed down to Marchbanks, who brought it back to England. This is why it became 'lost' and this caused Mrs. Holland to spend her life searching for it. She became obsessed, leading to all the murders and suffering she inflicts in this story.

The Ruby is even connected to opium by its very nature. The Ruby is beautiful to behold, but inside it contains depths and abysses that would drive a person mad. Marchbanks compares this to opium addiction. Opium seems wonderful at first, but it will grab hold of a person's life, driving them to madness and misery. The Ruby is evil and deceptive like opium. It seems to betray the people who possess or desire it, leading to their deaths, just as opium does for its users. Both cause greed, corruption and inhumanity. Both can drive a person to madness and obsession. In the end, neither has any redeeming features, and must simply be rejected and destroyed. As soon as a person gives in to their desire for either the Ruby or opium, they are doomed.

The effects of opium on a more personal, human level are also shown in the story. Marchbanks was so desperate because of the drug, it made him forget what was really important to him. He gave up his own child because of it. Bedwell was so addicted and driven half insane by the drug, he forgot his purpose in London and the promise he made to Lockhart. The message is clear; drugs will make a person forget duty, family and everything important, and they will lose everything they hold dear. More than this, opium does terrible, torturous things to a person. Bedwell suffers horribly at Mrs. Holland's lodgings. He writhes in agony and raves because of terrifying visions and memories. It is not until his brother and Frederick save him, and then gradually manage to wean him off the drug, that he begins to talk and act like a normal person again. Like



Bedwell, the drug-takers in the opium dens seem to be overwhelmed by its effects. Sally is surprised to see normal, respectable-looking people there, losing their lives to the drug. Even Sally's two brief experiences with it are extremely unpleasant, bringing on old memories in the form of a nightmare and completely terrifying her in the process.

Although Mrs. Holland is the physical enemy who is hounding Sally and threatening her friends, and although she commits some terrible crimes, she is not the most dangerous thing in the story. Opium is far worse, as it leads to suffering on a massive scale, as well as corrupting people in power and inspiring even more dangerous criminals like Van Eeden. Everything bad in this story seems to be caused, either directly or indirectly, by opium. Because of this, the reader might be justified in deciding that opium is actually the main antagonist of the novel, which every character must in some way fight against.

## Friendship and Loyalty

Friendship and loyalty are very important in this story. Sally begins the novel in a very isolated and lonely position. She has just lost her father, and her mother died long ago. She has no friends, and only one distant relation who is unkind to her. She receives a mysterious letter and must set about solving its mystery on her own. However, she quickly manages to find friends. First, she meets Jim, a young boy working for Selby and Lockhart Shipping Company. She feels she can instantly trust Jim, and he is also instantly drawn to her. They like each other immediately, and Sally is happy to confide in him about the mystery. He resolves to help her. This is partly because he is very intrigued by the mystery, feeling like he has stepped into one of his Penny Dreadful stories, but also because he admires Sally. Throughout the story he comes to like Sally more and more, seeing in her a kind but strong woman. Sally never treats him as a servant or makes him feel inferior for being working class, and he returns this respect with cheerful friendship and loyalty.

Next, Sally meets Frederick, a photographer taking a picture at Swalesness. She hides in his tent while Mrs. Holland goes past, and makes an instant impression on Frederick. Sally is embarrassed, thinking she may have offended him by offering to pay for his tent, but Frederick actually sees a pleasant, interesting, independent yet still vulnerable girl. He instantly likes her. It seems that Sally has the skill of making friends very quickly wherever she goes. When Sally decides to leave Mrs. Rees' house, she is at first very worried about where she will go. Then she remembers Frederick, and goes to visit his photography shop on Burton Street, London. He is delighted to see her, and immediately accepts her into his home. He introduces her to his sister Rosa, and to Trembler, the man who works for them. He offers Sally a place to stay and is determined to help her with her mystery. Sally is pleased to find such welcoming people, and is happy that she can help them with their business in return. Soon, they have struck up a firm friendship. Sally quickly comes to feel part of the family, and reflects on how accepting Frederick and Rosa are. They do not treat her like a girl, or Trembler like a servant, but simply respect everyone and let them get on with what they are good at. For Sally, this is ideal.



Jim soon begins to hang around at Burton Street too, finding the same acceptance and friendship there that Sally found. All the friends have plenty of opportunity to prove how willing they are to help each other out. Sally helps with the business and suggests new ways to make money, and everyone, even Jim, becomes involved. Rosa is always there to comfort Sally or give her advice. When they find out about Bedwell, Frederick never questions why he should get involved in someone else's problem and put himself in danger for another person. He agrees to help straight away. While rescuing Bedwell, Frederick also rescues Adelaide, and all the friends immediately welcome her into their group.

Jim proves how loyal and devoted he is when he puts his own life in danger to help his new-found friends. He retrieves the Ruby, keeps it hidden from Sally to protect her, and goes to save Adelaide when she is kidnapped. Frederick is also always willing to help with the mystery, accompanying Sally to Oxford and going to Wapping twice to rescue Bedwell and then Adelaide from Mrs. Holland's clutches. Rosa follows Sally into danger when she goes to the London Bridge, and afterwards when Van Eeden kidnaps her. All of them prove that they are willing to risk their own lives for each other. Sally proves her own dedication when she is willing to take opium again, face the nightmare and risk addiction, and to walk straight into danger at the London Bridge to try to save them all. In the end, Sally is able to reject the Ruby completely. This is because she has found good friends who will always support her, and this is all she wants or needs in life.

Mrs. Holland, on the other hand, is very different from Sally. She has no friends, and only draws people to her in order to use them. She is cruel to Adelaide, who betrays her and runs away. She pushes Mr. Hopkins to do something he is not comfortable with, and he disobeys her and leaves Sally alive. Mr. Berry only obeys Mrs. Holland out of fear and greed. Mrs. Holland extracts other favors and information through blackmail and physical abuse. She is a very lonely figure who does not seem to have anyone to care for or who cares for her. She is not interested in other people, as her only obsession is the Ruby. This is why Mrs. Holland ultimately fails and Sally wins. Sally has people who will follow her out of friendship and loyalty, not out of fear and greed. Frederick and Jim fight even when hope seems gone, and by working together they manage to defeat Mr. Berry. Mrs. Holland is left with nobody to stand beside her or to give her a reason to carry on living. When Sally throws the Ruby into the river, Mrs. Holland jumps after it and there is no-one who cares enough to stop her.

## Strong Women

Strong women are a recurring theme in this story. In the Victorian times in which the story is set, women were considered inferior to men, as well as weak and less intelligent. Women were expected to stay in the home in the role of wife and mother, and not to become involved in things like business. Respectable girls were taught Art, Literature, Music and French, and were not expected to learn the same things boys were taught. Women were supposed to be escorted by a man when travelling, and men did not consider them capable of managing their own affairs or looking after themselves. However, this story presents the reader with strong women who defy these social 'rules.'



Sally has always been told stories of her heroic, strong mother, who was an excellent shot with a pistol. This woman accompanied Sally's father on adventures, and could handle herself as well as any man. Unfortunately, this woman was actually made up by Sally's father. Sally's real mother was an unknown woman who died when Sally was born, and Sally is actually Marchbanks' daughter, not Lockhart's. Lockhart does claim that the inspiration for the story of Sally's mother came from a real woman who he knew a long time ago, however.

Despite Sally's mother not being real, Sally has grown up with these stories and modeled herself on them. She is strong and courageous, and she will not give up easily. She is independent and can look after herself. Her father has given her an unusual childhood, bringing her up to be good at the things he was good at such as business, military tactics, Hindustani, shooting, and riding. This is much more like a Victorian boy's education than a girl's. Sally can manage her own money with ease and is very skilled at playing the Stock Market. However, she completely lacks the normal educational grounding of a Victorian girl. She knows very little about art, literature, history, French, and music and she has few social skills. She was brought up by herself and can get a little flustered and shy when trying to interact with other people. She is completely confident in her business self, but when she has to socialize with people her age, she withdraws into herself, becoming unsure and quiet. Rosa states that she is like two different people, the confident Sally and the self-conscious Sally. By staying at Burton Street, however, Sally begins to learn how to be more confident in interacting with others in a non-business sense. She is encouraged by Rosa to be proud of who she is and what she is good at and she begins to develop into a much more well-rounded person.

Rosa is another example of a strong woman in the story. She is fiery tempered and passionate, and will speak her own mind freely without worrying about what others think. She refuses to be kept inside the house in a normal woman's role, choosing to enter into an acting career instead. She knows this might be considered beneath a respectable woman, but she does not care what society thinks of her. She only cares about being happy and doing what she is good at. She is very determined to live her life according to her own rules. She is also a very confident, friendly and caring woman, and she acts as an older sister to Sally, encouraging and comforting her. She is nurturing towards Adelaide, taking on a mothering role towards her. She is practical and sensible, determined to keep their business running when Frederick does not seem able to. Rosa shows that a strong woman can also be womanly and girly as well, and that being independent and capable does not mean being unfeminine.

Just as there are good strong women in the story, there is a bad one too. Mrs. Holland is a very strong woman. She takes charge completely, knows exactly what she wants and goes for it without hesitation. She is determined and she will not let anything or anyone get in her way. She can manage her own affairs capably, but she is also skilled at manipulating others into helping her. Like Sally, she has learned to sometimes hide behind her 'weak appearance' as a woman in order to throw people off guard. She does then when she pretends to Selby that she is working for another gentleman. Mrs.



Holland is certainly not a weak woman, and she comes across as a worthy adversary for Sally.

Despite all the strong women, the men of the story do not all come across as bad or weak characters in comparison. Selby is cowardly, Mr. Hopkins and Mr. Berry allow themselves to be ordered around and used, and Bedwell and Marchbanks give in to opium addiction, but there are strong, capable men too. Frederick, Jim, Reverend Bedwell and Lockhart are all examples of men who are strong, kind and brave, and who are determined to stick to their principles. Jim and Frederick risk their own lives for Sally and their friends at several points in the story. Both Jim and Frederick are instantly accepting of Sally, even though she is an unusual woman by Victorian standards. They do not try to force her into what society says she should be. In fact, they seem to admire her strength and independence. Unfortunately, not everyone acts this way. Mr. Temple, though well meaning, does not believe Sally can look after herself. He puts an advertisement in the paper to try to find her, which is annoying to Sally as she would rather remain with the Garlands and take care of her own affairs. Mrs. Rees' and Rosa and Frederick's parents' reactions are even worse. Mrs. Rees treats Sally as someone very distasteful and disgraceful, and Rosa's parents throw her out of the house. Thankfully, they can all find a place together at Burton Street where prejudice is never allowed to get in the way.

As a strong girl who is more like a modern girl than a Victorian one, Sally is particularly relatable to the audience. It is easier to be sympathetic to her and to wish her to succeed.



# Style

## Point of View

The story is told in third person by the author who has quite a conversational voice that makes the reader feel close to the narrator. He will sometimes point out something or explain something as if he is talking directly to the reader, which helps the reader to feel more involved in the story.

At first the story is told from Sally Lockhart's point of view. She is the main character, so the reader is introduced to the world and the mystery through her eyes. She is a strong, independent and confident girl who is intrigued by the mystery and determined to solve it. However, she can also be unsure, self-conscious and vulnerable. She does not really know how to talk to people, and when she interacts with others this sometimes comes out as shyness. Sally does not like to show the rest of the world this vulnerability, trying to hide it by being businesslike, such as when she offers to pay Frederick for the use of his tent. When she is feeling awkward or confused, it is not always easy for others to tell. Providing the reader with a deeper insight into what she is thinking and feeling, therefore, allows them to understand and sympathize with her better.

As the story continues, many other point of view characters are introduced. The reader sees things from the perspective of Mrs. Holland, Marchbanks, Bedwell, Mr. Hopkins, Jim, Adelaide, Selby, and occasionally even Van Eeden. There is also one section from Ellen the maid's point of view. However, the majority of the story is still seen through Sally's eyes. The reader therefore sometimes sees things that Sally and her friends do not. Out of all the characters, the readers have more clues than anyone else, and so they can solve the mystery sooner. This makes the story more interactive and fun. This also means that suspense and tension can be increased, as the reader will often know when a character is in danger when they themselves do not.

Occasionally the author will describe a scene without showing any character's particular point of view. For example, this happens when Frederick and Reverend Bedwell go to Mrs. Holland's lodgings to rescue Matthew Bedwell. The reverend is not a point of view character, so the reader gets no insight into what he is thinking. Frederick's own thoughts and feelings are deliberately kept mysterious from the reader, as we are left in suspense as to how he really feels for Sally. This is why Frederick cannot be a point of view character.

## Setting

The story is set in Victorian London. At this time, women were expected to remain demure, ladylike, submissive and in the home. A woman's role was to be a good wife and mother. Sally defies these conventions of society, as she is a very strong, independent and capable girl. She does not need a man to accompany her or to take





care of her. This sometimes gains her disapproval, but she soon finds a place where she can belong. Fredrick and Rosa are quite unconventional too, and they do not mind Sally's uniqueness at all. In fact, they like and admire her all the more because of her strength, confidence and business skills.

Other elements of the Victorian world also come into the story. There are no cars since people travel by train or coach and photography is still a new and exciting invention. Trade with the East Indies and China is extremely important, and opium is central to the plot. Sally's father was once an officer serving in India, which at this time was ruled by Britain. Jim likes to read 'Penny Dreadful' magazines, which were periodicals with serialized short stories about heroes, mysteries and monsters, known for their lurid details. The author does a good job of conjuring up the atmosphere and details of Victorian London.

The author also shows the 'hidden' side of the Victorian world. This is the side of Victorian Britain that is sometimes forgotten. The Victorian times were ones of great invention, exploration, discovery, wealth and opportunity, but they also had their darker side. In this story the reader is told about the government's corrupt dealings in opium, and how they went to war with China in order to force them to accept the drug. They did not care how many people suffered as long as they could continue to profit from it. This is explored in this story through the prominence of opium. Sally sees how opium ruins ordinary people's lives, then comes to see how opium is at the root of all her problems. The Ruby of Agrapur was bought with money from opium, and the Mutiny in which the Maharajah died and the ruby was exchanged for Sally, was caused by the opium trade. Sally sees opium dens in the city, and comes to understand that opium is a terrible evil. However, as Frederick points out, there are perhaps even worse evils. Sally sees poverty on a scale she had never imagined. There was a huge gap between rich and poor in Victorian cities, and this is portrayed in this story. There are beggars on the streets and children forced to scour the river mud for valuable items just to survive. Jim is betrayed by a boy he thought was his friend, because he was so desperate for money. These represent the 'hidden' side of Victorian Britain and the consequences of the great wealth and expansion of the empire.

## Language and Meaning

The language used for the narration of the story is fairly simple, allowing the narrative to flow gently and to be easy to understand. Characters speak differently, as they come from a Victorian world. The way a character talks, and the language he or she uses, indicates their place in society. In Victorian times, there were much greater gaps between different social classes, reflected in their speech and accents. For example, Sally speaks very properly, without using colloquialisms, in a similar manner to Frederick and Rosa. This reflects the fact that they were all born into wealthy, respectable families. Sally seems to be rich middle class, and Frederick and Rosa probably have a similar background. In contrast to this is Jim, who speaks with a cockney accent that is indicated phonetically in the writing. For example, the writer drops h's in Jim's speech to show that Jim is also dropping his h's. Jim uses a lot of



colloquialisms, slang and abbreviations. He has never been taught to speak with received pronunciation as the richer members of society are, and he has obviously picked up a lot from the streets. Trembler and Adelaide also speak in a similar manner, although their accents do not seem to be as extreme as Jim's.

Other characters speak in a manner that indicates their intellect or level of education. Jim's accent might be working class, but he is sharp and quick and his speech indicates this. Mr. Berry and Mr. Hopkins, however, barely speak at all, and when they do their speech seems slower and less thought out. This indicates that they are men of muscle rather than brains; they are Mrs. Holland's hired thugs who are there to beat people up but not to contribute much else.

All of this helps to conjure a sense of atmosphere and makes Pullman's world more realistic.

## Structure

The book is split into fairly short chapters that move the story along very quickly. The story is fast-paced and exciting, with plenty of action amid the talking. Scenes shift very quickly between different characters, adding to the fast, slightly frenzied feel. The reader gets the impression that events are moving very quickly and that Sally will have to keep up or risk getting into even deeper danger. The mystery itself is introduced in the first chapter, but is only revealed in tiny little bits of information constantly throughout the novel. This helps to keep the reader's interest and anticipation up. Some events and people are introduced with very little explanation, which seems confusing at first. The end of the book ties all these strands together, however, bringing light to various things that are said or done. This makes it an interesting experience to re-read the story even though the reader now knows exactly what is going to happen.



## Quotes

"She was learning that if she pretended to be weak and frightened, and dabbed at her eyes with a lacy handkerchief, she could turn aside all manner of pressing questions"(Chapter 2, The Web. p. 14).

"She felt somehow that the pretence of helplessness, which worked so well with other men, would not take him in for a moment. That was why she had offered to pay him: she wanted to meet him on equal terms" (Chapter 3, The Gentleman of Kent. p. 32).

"Her upbringing had given her an independence of mind that made her more like a girl of today than one of her own time - which was why she had walked out, and why she was not daunted by the prospect of being alone" (Chapter 8, The Passions of Art. p. 63).

"They don't think of Trembler as a servant. And they don't think of me as a girl. We're all equal. That's what's so odd" (Chapter 8, The Passions of Art. p. 75).

"...talking to Frederick, and listening to him, seemed the most natural and agreeable thing in the world - but she found herself, once seated facing him across a table set with cutlery and napkins and glasses, absurdly tongue-tied" (Chapter 9, A Journey to Oxford. p. 78).

"Their shouts and laughter made her feel cold and deprived; where had her childhood gone? And yet only an hour or two earlier she had felt on fire with embarrassment because she was a child, and had none of the ease of an adult" (Chapter 9, A Journey to Oxford. p. 82).

"these quiet houses and leafy gardens seemed to be on a different planet from the darkness and mystery and sudden death she was returning to" (Chapter 9, p. 82).

"She would have given anything to be able to forget London and Mrs. Holland and the Seven Blessings, and to live in one of these large, comfortable houses, with children and animals and bonfires and lessons and games...Perhaps even now it wasn't too late to become a governess, or a nurse or...But it was. Her father had died, and something was wrong, and there was no one but her to set it right" (Chapter 9, p. 82).

"there was a legend that the evil of the stone would persist until it was laid to rest by a woman who was its equal" (Chapter 9, p. 83).

"I know so little! I don't even know how to talk to people. And what I do know is so...I don't know how to put it. It's just not the sort of things that girls know" (Chapter 11, The Stereographic Repertory Company. p. 97).

"Sally wanted to help; she was full of impulses of kindness, but did not know how to express them" (Chapter 12, p. 117).



"She knew she could learn more - but at the cost of another journey into the Nightmare. And she couldn't pay that; not yet. It was so ironic. Because for the first time she had friends, and a home, and a purpose" (Chapter 16, p. 157).

"It was easier to think about Frederick. Such a mixture of lazy flippancy and passionate anger, of Bohemian carelessness and dedicated perfectionism! Frederick was a topic to fascinate any psychologist" (Chapter 16, p. 157).

"Her heart was beating fast. What she felt for Frederick was so confused and powerful that she couldn't begin to articulate it" (Chapter 17, p. 163).



## Topics for Discussion

Discuss the presence of strong women in this story. Which women can be counted as strong and why? How does this add to the plot or to the readers' enjoyment of the book?

In what ways is opium important to the story? Who and what does it affect, both directly and indirectly? What message, if any, do you think the author is trying to give?

How does the author unravel his mystery, and how does he keep the readers' interested in it? How does he build a sense of intrigue and suspense?

Who is the main antagonist of the novel and why? In your answer you should consider Mrs. Holland, Van Eeden, opium, and the Ruby of Agrapur.

In what ways are Mrs. Holland and Sally similar? In what ways are they different? Do they make good adversaries for each other and why?

Discuss the theme of friendship in this story. How are friends shown as being important? Who has friends and who does not, and why? In what ways are different characters loyal to each other?

Who is your favorite character and why? Give reasons for your answer using examples from the text.

Rosa says that Sally is like two different people, one confident and strong, the other quiet and self-conscious. Do you think she is correct? Why? Does Sally change at all throughout the story? Do you think her character is sympathetic to the reader?

Discuss greed in this story. Who is greedy, and why? What does greed bring them? How is greed shown to be a bad, destructive or harmful thing?

In what ways are opium and the Ruby of Agrapur connected? Are they similar in any way? How does this complement the themes of the story?