

# **Sharpe's Christmas Study Guide**

## **Sharpe's Christmas by Bernard Cornwell**

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## Plot Summary

"Sharpe's Christmas" by Bernard Cornwell is a collection of two stories about Major Richard Sharpe, both written for the Christmas editions of a newspaper. In "Sharpe's Christmas", Sharpe must defend Irati against a brigade of French soldiers on the north and a French garrison fleeing Spain from the south. In "Sharpe's Ransom", Sharpe attempts to rescue his woman and their child from French hussars seeking gold that they insist Sharpe possesses. Both stories in "Sharpe's Christmas" are very entertaining and reveal a level to Cornwell's hero beyond his expertise as a soldier.

In the Introduction, Cornwell explains that he wrote both stories for Christmas editions of a London newspaper. In "Sharpe's Christmas", Major Richard Sharpe and his men are sent to Irati to prevent the French garrison from the fort at Ochagavia from fleeing Spain. Meanwhile, Colonel Jean Gudin, a failure, worries about escaping to France but argues with Colonel Caillou, insisting that they are not abandoning the women and children. When Sharpe notices a French brigade marching from the north, he prepares for battle because the next day he will have an enemy in front, an enemy behind, a road to hold and a battle to win. As Picard leads his brigade toward Irati, he hopes the British are there because his troops need a victory to make them desire it. While Sharpe defends Irati against the French brigade, Gudin hears musketry in the distance during his march toward Irati, so he prays for a victory. Sharpe knows the garrison is approaching from the south but hopes they will surrender since they have women with them. His men defeat the French brigade at the frontier to the north of Irati, causing the brigade to retreat, and Sharpe sends d'Alembord and Nicholls to offer the garrison a chance to surrender; however, when Gudin and Caillou argue about who is in charge, Caillou shoots Nicholls and Gudin kills Caillou. After agreeing to talk to the commanding officer, Gudin is glad to see Sharpe and is very proud of him. He surrenders and tells Sharpe about his many failures. Sharpe and his men put on an elaborate display of musketry to make it appear that Gudin defeated the English, allowing Gudin to escape Spain and be hailed as a hero.

In "Sharpe's Ransom", Sharpe lives in Normandy with Lucille and Patrick, their son, but the villagers do not welcome him because Jacques Malan forbids them to do so. While Sharpe is hunting foxes on Christmas Eve, six men enter his farmhouse and capture Lucille, Patrick and Marie, their house servant. Sharpe returns home to learn that Lorcet and his five hussars want Napoleon's gold, which Sharpe recovered after Pierre Ducos stole it. They hold his family as ransom while he leaves to retrieve the gold with half of the men guarding him. After driving through the village, Sharpe overturns the cart and captures the three men, but now he must make friends which is the hard part for a soldier like him. When Challon gropes Lucille, she splatters boiling grease on his hand and promises Sharpe will kill them when he returns. Sharpe enters the village church with his three prisoners, followed by Malan and his crew. After sharing the story about Napoleon's gold, Sharpe asks his neighbors to help him rescue his family. He and Malan argue, but Malan agrees to help when he recognizes the soldier in Sharpe. Since Lorcet plans to kill Sharpe and Lucille anyway, Challon intends to rape Lucille but is interrupted when a choir starts singing outside the gate to Chateau Lissan. Meanwhile,



Malan leads Sharpe across stones left from a destroyed bridge to Chateau Lissan, up the stone wall, onto the chapel roof and through the attic window; the men are ready to go to war. As Challon undresses and prepares to rape Lucille, Sharpe and Malan attack him from the attic, rescuing Lucille, Patrick and Marie. After Lorcet surrenders, Sharpe locks the six men in the unused chapel while he celebrates Christmas with his family and his neighbors.

# Introduction

## Introduction Summary

"Sharpe's Christmas" by Bernard Cornwell is a collection of two stories about Major Richard Sharpe that were written for the Christmas editions of a newspaper. In "Sharpe's Christmas", Sharpe must defend Irati against a brigade of French soldiers to the north and a French garrison fleeing Spain from the south. In "Sharpe's Ransom", Sharpe attempts to rescue his woman and their child from French hussars seeking gold that they insist Sharpe possesses. Both stories in "Sharpe's Christmas" are very entertaining and reveal a level to Cornwell's hero beyond his expertise as a soldier.

In the Introduction, Bernard Cornwell explains that the two stories in this collection were written to fill pages in the "Daily Mail" over two successive holiday seasons. Each story was to be 12,000 words long, but they are much longer now since he rewrote them without constraints. Though it seemed like an odd request since Sharpe is not a man of peace, Cornwell was intrigued by it and tried to write two tales that acknowledged the Christmas spirit without ignoring Sharpe's belligerent nature. Cornwell thanks those who helped him with his stories and explains where the proceeds will be distributed.

## Introduction Analysis

In the Introduction to "Sharpe's Christmas", Bernard Cornwell, the author, explains that these two stories were commissioned by the "Daily Mail", a newspaper in London. He explains the requirements and why he agreed to write the stories. He also briefly describes the stories, emphasizing why each is important and where they occur chronologically in Sharpe's fictional biography. Cornwell ends the Introduction by explaining how the proceeds from the book will be distributed.



# Sharpe's Christmas (pp. 11-21)

## Sharpe's Christmas (pp. 11-21) Summary

Major Richard Sharpe and Sergeant-Major Patrick Harper crouch at the edge of a field trying to kill a bullock for their Christmas meal, but neither man is able to kill the animal. Their disagreement about who will perform the necessary duty is interrupted when Ensign Nicholls arrives with a summons for Sharpe from Colonel Hogan. Nicholls greatly admires both men and eagerly asks if they are going to fight. Sharpe hopes not because Christmas is only three days away and "Christmas was no time to be killing" (p. 15).

Hogan, the Peer's Chief of Intelligence, explains to Sharpe that a French garrison from the Fort at Ochagavia is rumored to try to escape to France, so Sharpe's men will cover the west road at Irati while the Spaniards cover the east road. Sharpe has spent the last ten years fighting the French and now he commands a battalion of redcoats due to an accident of war. They march on the hour with Sharpe ignoring his men's displeasure at the cold rain. Sharpe doubts the Frogs will choose the east road if they even decide to march, but he will go to Irati because King George wants him to; God help the Frogs if they do the same!

It pains Colonel Jean Gudin to abandon the Fort at Ochagavia where he has commanded for four years, but it is just another failure in his career full of failures. Of the men readying for escape, 300 are Gudin's garrison and the others are fugitives taking refuge after the disaster at Vitoria, mostly infantrymen from the 75th regiment led by Colonel Caillou. Caillou objects to the crowd of women and children gathered behind his regiment, but Gudin refuses to leave them behind to be tortured and killed. Caillou threatens to kill Gudin if he loses his Eagle which was granted to him by Napoleon. Ignoring Caillou, Gudin laments his failures but doubts the Eagle is worth the life of so many women and children; this is his handicap because Napoleon would sacrifice them all to preserve the glory of France. As the men march, followed by the women and children, Gudin watches as his sergeant sets fire to the fort. He prays that the British have not blocked the road, but if they have, General Picard will come from behind. Gudin only needs to survive the 40 km of winter roads to reach the place where Picard plans to meet him, in Irati.

## Sharpe's Christmas (pp. 11-21) Analysis

Sharpe and Harper's hunting expedition sets the tone for this story. It provides the time of year, near Christmas, and shows their compassion through their hesitation to kill the bullock meant for their Christmas dinner. Nicholls' announcement and Sharpe's hope that they will not fight at Christmas foreshadows the battle at Irati. This is further foreshadowed when Sharpe meets with Hogan, who sends Sharpe and his men to Irati to prevent a French garrison from fleeing the fort at Ochagavia. However, Hogan and



Sharpe doubts that the French will march or choose the road that Sharpe is sent to guard if they do march. Colonel Gudin is introduced in this section, and his failures are emphasized and lamented. Caillou is also introduced and used as a foil for Gudin; where Gudin is kind and refuses to abandon the soldiers' women and children, Caillou is merciless and wants to leave them to be slaughtered if it will increase his chances of protecting his French Eagle. Caillou's Eagle becomes a symbol of French pride in this story. Though Gudin realizes that his compassionate nature is his handicap and has caused many of his failures, he will not submit to Caillou's callous desires because he does not believe that the Eagle is worth the lives of so many women and children. Gudin is saddened to watch the fort be burned as it is another of his failures and as he marches with his men, he prays that the British have not blocked the road. He only needs to survive until he reaches the place where he is supposed to meet Picard's brigade, a town near the frontier called Irati. This completes the foreshadowing that unquestionably indicates Sharpe and his men will have to fight a battle against the French at Christmastime.



# Sharpe's Christmas p. 21-31

## Sharpe's Christmas p. 21-31 Summary

During a conversation with d'Alembord, Sharpe claims that the fact that mostly shepherds live in Irati is extremely fitting for Christmas. He walks north to make sure no Frogs are lurking in the rear as he has already found a place south of the village where his battalion can stop the escaping garrison. When d'Alembord asks if Sharpe liked India, Sharpe talks about how he served under the best colonel he ever had in India, a Crapaud named Colonel Gudin. Gudin wanted Sharpe to return to France with him and though Sharpe was tempted, it was a long time ago. D'Alembord thinks "Sharpe was quite simply the best soldier he had ever known or ever would know" (p. 23). As Sharpe looks through his telescope which is inscribed to the King of Spain from Napoleon, he sees movement on a distant slope, and it appears that a whole army is coming from France through a split in the grey stone. When d'Alembord looks through the telescope, he notes that a whole brigade appears to be coming from the wrong direction. Sharpe guesses that the garrison will use this road to escape and the French brigade has been sent to ensure the frontier is open for them. They will arrive tomorrow, on Christmas Eve. Sharpe orders barrels from the tavern in Irati to prepare tonight because "tomorrow there would be an enemy behind, an enemy in front, a road to hold and a battle to win. At Christmastime" (p. 24).

General Maximilien Picard is disgruntled because his brigade is late. He is pleased that his men are miserable since they need to be toughened up. Picard is accustomed to success, unlike Gudin whose garrison he must rescue. Picard tells Major Santon that Gudin is unlucky and Santon hopes the British are not waiting at Irati. Picard thinks that a victory over the English will make his young soldiers hunger more for victory. The problem with Gudin is that he has become used to defeat, but Picard is a winner and will give the English a Christmas to remember if they dare oppose him in the morning because he does not lose.

Sharpe dislikes the idea of fighting at Christmas and tells Harper to keep an eye on Nicholls if they do fight. His men are stationed fifty paces back from the frontier so the French brigade cannot see them beyond the crest of stones. Though Harper claims it will be easy, Sharpe still thinks it is a nuisance because he has to keep his battalion on the frontier with only a piquet to guard the south road where he expects to see the escaping French garrison. Captain Smith commands the piquet and will warn Sharpe if the garrison approaches, but either way, they will be caught between two larger forces. Sharpe hopes the garrison does not come today, though there is still no sign of the French battalion that must be cold and damp while Sharpe's men spent a comfortable night in the houses at Irati. Sharpe is impatient to get the job done and sets a trap for the Frenchmen on the road; seven groups of three barrels are arranged along the track up which they must come, and Sharpe's riflemen are hidden among the rocks above the barrels. While Sharpe worries that he will not hear Smith's warning, d'Alembord alerts him to the enemy's emergence. The French brigade, puzzled by the barrels, stop and





argue amongst themselves, unable to see their enemy concealed behind the crest. Finally, a French officer investigates a barrel and, finding wine, urges the other soldiers forward. As the French soldiers gather around the barrels of unexpected booty, they do not see the smoke sifting from a burning fuse and, when they kick the barrel over, the ensuing explosion hides the carnage from Sharpe's sight as half a dozen grenadiers are killed. The English riflemen open fire, shooting successfully at the sergeants since they are at close range. The French brigade flees back over the lip of the crest, leaving a dozen dead and eighty wounded men behind. The battle for Irati has begun.

## Sharpe's Christmas p. 21-31 Analysis

Sharpe's thoughts about the shepherds of Irati being fitting for Christmas reminds the reader of the time of year and this important theme in the story. At this point, Sharpe reminisces a bit about his childhood and d'Alembord informs the reader that Sharpe was uneducated before joining the army. After Sharpe surveys the land in order to prepare for a possible attack by the French, he talks about India and Colonel Gudin in response to d'Alembord's question. His admiration for Colonel Gudin foreshadows a peaceful conclusion to the battle at Irati. D'Alembord's thoughts demonstrate that Sharpe is a mysterious man and no one quite knows his entire story. When Sharpe sees a brigade approaching from the north, he correctly guesses they have been sent to ensure the frontier is open for the escaping garrison, revealing his military knowledge and prowess. He prepares his men for the following day's battle. Picard is introduced in this section and is shown to be a callous, arrogant French General. He hopes for a battle at Irati because he wants his troops to hunger for victory and he is confident that he will emerge victorious from an encounter with the British. Sharpe shows his compassion by his displeasure at the idea of fighting at Christmas and also through his concern for Nicholls' safety. He demonstrates his competence as a military leader by positioning his troops to defend Irati against both the brigade on the north and the garrison coming from the south. His intelligence is obvious during the fiasco with the barrels that he sets up as an ambush for the French brigade. When his rifleman open fire, the French flee; the battle for Irati has begun, fulfilling the foreshadowing that has preceded this event.



# Sharpe's Christmas p. 31-38

## Sharpe's Christmas p. 31-38 Summary

Luckily, Gudin is not troubled by a single partisan, but his bad luck prevails with delays caused by a horse with a broken leg and a wrong turn. Caillou fumes at the delay, but Gudin ignores him; they will be safe in France in three days as long as no British troops wait at the frontier. When the second wagon carrying luggage breaks after dawn, they are forced to abandon the wagon with their few possessions and Gudin leaves his cherished books behind, rescuing only his diaries including the two volumes he wrote in India. He often thinks of India and regrets leaving because he misses his youthful optimism; also, he possessed a future then but none now. Though he sometimes blames a young Englishman he liked when feeling sorry for himself, since Sharpe caused his first great defeat, Gudin does not blame him "for he had recognized that Private Richard Sharpe had been a natural soldier" (p. 33). Now, there is another Sharpe who haunts the French, and Gudin doubts it is the same man since few British officers rise through the ranks and few Europeans survived India. When the surgeon claims Maria cannot give birth naturally and should be shot to put her out of her misery, Gudin tells him to keep her alive until they reach Irati where he will be able to operate. Hearing the crackle of musketry in the mountains ahead, Caillou notes the enemy is ahead and blames Gudin for not leaving the women behind. He offers him the chance to redeem himself by leaving them now. Gudin refuses because they are near Irati and Caillou disgustedly walks away. Though Gudin's heels hurt, he will not retrieve his horse from his lieutenant who is ill with a fever and can hardly walk. Gudin prays for a small victory so his career does not end in failure or a firing squad, "one small Christmas miracle to set against a lifetime of defeat" (p. 34).

Looking at the dead grenadiers from the mouth of the valley, Picard ignores the bullet snapping past his head because he is charmed and no one can spoil his luck. He orders Santon to take a company and destroy the barrels with volley fire while he sends the voltiguers to the slopes where the Riflemen are hidden. He may have shown more caution if he had not thought they were partisans, but he plans to give them a lesson for Christmas.

Sharpe orders his bugler to sound the retreat as the voltiguers will soon be sent up the valley sides and the Riflemen have already done their damage. He watches the French general through his telescope as the bugler sends two messages; he advises the Riflemen to retreat and also informs the French that they are trained infantry rather than a handful of partisans. At Sharpe's command, his men put on a display for the French and Sharpe explains to Nicholls that it is a formal invitation to see if the French will come up to battle, but it is doubtful. He orders Harper to give three rounds of fast platoon fire because he does not want to kill any more Frenchmen. There has already been too much killing at Christmas, which is supposed to be a time of peace. He will show them that to climb the hill is to enter hell and he hopes they will decline his invitation after seeing the speed with which his men can reload. The marvelous display



promises a slaughter that should give the enemy pause, but Sharpe sees the French are not retreating since Picard is not a man to heed a warning. A musket fires far to the south, and Sharpe knows the other enemy is approaching.

## Sharpe's Christmas p. 31-38 Analysis

Though Gudin avoids partisans on the road to Irati, his bad luck persists with an injury to a horse and by getting lost temporarily. Then, the wagon carrying their belongings break down and the soldiers are forced to abandon most of their few worldly possessions. As Gudin saves his journals, including two volumes from India, he reminisces about his time spent in India and about Sharpe; this enhances the foreshadowing that the reunion between Gudin and Sharpe will end peacefully as both parties think fondly of one another. Gudin also considers Sharpe to be "a natural soldier" (p. 33), which seems a significant compliment from his former commanding officer. Gudin's compassion is displayed continually as he still refuses to abandon the women and children, will not allow the surgeon to kill Marie when he suggests she be put out of her misery since she cannot give birth naturally and relinquishes his horse to an ill lieutenant who needs it more. Caillou's disregard for humanity stands in stark contrast to Gudin's kindness and love. Gudin prays for a Christmas miracle in the form of a small victory to prevent his career from ending disgracefully. Picard's arrogance is apparent through his disregard for bullets passing near him and his belief that he can still win the battle at Irati because he is charmed with good luck. By ordering the bugler to sound the retreat, Sharpe gets his riflemen out of danger from the French and also informs the French that they are fighting trained infantry in his hope to dissuade them from pursuing the fight. He adds to this warning by ordering a display of musketry; his warning reveals his compassion and his respect for the Christmas spirit as it is given because he dislikes the idea of shedding more blood during a time meant to be peaceful. Unfortunately, Picard does not seem likely to heed Sharpe's warning and the musket firing from the south alerts Sharpe to the approach of the other half of their enemy, the fleeing French garrison from the fort at Ochagavia.



# Sharpe's Christmas p. 38-46

## Sharpe's Christmas p. 38-46 Summary

Sharpe instructs d'Alembord to take over while he rides to the south of Irati to confer with Smith. The French brigade fires at the remaining barrels, unaware that they do not contain gunpowder and though Sharpe reckons it will take them an hour to advance and without much enthusiasm due to the display of musketry, another thousand Frenchmen are coming from the south and their desperation to escape Spain makes them far more dangerous than the brigade. Sharpe is glad that the garrison is accompanied by women because that might convince them to surrender to prevent their women from being injured. They also have a French Eagle which Sharpe thinks would make a nice Christmas present for his battalion. Since the garrison is still two hours away, Sharpe instructs Smith to watch them and returns to the frontier, thinking it is now a matter of timing; he will be in serious trouble if the brigade and garrison attack at the same time. As the voltiguers spread out across the slopes of the northern ridge, Sharpe sends his skirmishers to abrade the confidence of the waiting ranks and frustrate the French infantry. When the Light Company positions itself behind rocks and fires at the French, the French fire back, but Sharpe's men are not hit since they are sheltered behind the rocks as two French officers go down. Sharpe thinks it is cruel since the French soldiers are "barely more than children snatched from a depot and marched to war" (p. 40). As the formidable-looking French column advances, it loses cohesion in its attempt to cut around the barrel remnants, and the officers shove their men back into place. Sharpe calls his Light Company in and orders the Prince of Wales's Own Volunteers to advance when the French are only fifty paces away as he tries not to pity the Frenchmen he is about to slaughter. After his men present and fire, he cannot see the enemy due to the smoke, but Ensign Nicholls runs to announce that the French are running away, so Sharpe orders his men to cease fire. The smoke clears to reveal the blood and horror of the broken Frenchmen. Sharpe sends d'Alembord to the south to tell the commander of the garrison that they have broken a French brigade and will do the same to him if he does not surrender. When Nicholls begs to accompany d'Alembord, Sharpe agrees with the reminder that he keeps his mouth shut. The French break and ran to the north, but Sharpe does not have the resources to care for their wounded men; someone will have to approach the enemy under a flag of truce and offer them a chance to collect their wounded just in time for Christmas.

Caillou watches furiously as Gudin approaches the two redcoats holding a flag of truce, knowing that they will offer terms and Gudin will surrender, causing him to lose his Eagle. Determined to prevent such a scenario, he gallops after Gudin and refuses the truce as Gudin tries to place himself between Caillou and the two British officers. When Caillou claims he is taking command and Gudin argues, d'Alembord watches in astonishment as the two Frenchmen draw weapons on one another. Unfortunately, Nicholls' horse twitches, and Caillou shoots Nicholls when he sees the motion in his peripheral vision. After firing at and killing Caillou, Gudin tells d'Alembord that he commands here to his shame and d'Alembord stonily delivers Sharpe's message.



Respecting the flag of truce, Gudin agrees to talk to the commanding British officer and follows d'Alembord to the village under the condition that his troops remain where they are. The battle is over, at least for the moment.

## Sharpe's Christmas p. 38-46 Analysis

While Sharpe confers with Smith to the south of Irati about the garrison, d'Alembord commands the English battalion at the frontier. Sharpe realizes that the garrison to the south is more dangerous than the northern brigade due to their desperation to escape, but he hopes that the presence of women and children within their procession will persuade them to surrender to avoid violence. He also notices Caillou's French Eagle and thinks it would make an excellent Christmas present for his men, again demonstrating the significance of this symbol which plays a large role in the story. With the garrison two hours away from Irati, Sharpe returns to his battalion to the north, knowing he will be in serious trouble if the brigade and the garrison attack at the same time. Sharpe positions his men for battle even as he regrets being forced to kill the young French soldiers. The French column shows its amateurism by losing its cohesion around the barrel remnants and Sharpe's men take advantage of the confusion to slaughter many of the Frenchmen. They cease fire when the French retreat, and Sharpe sends d'Alembord to offer the southern garrison a chance to surrender. Nicholls is permitted to accompany d'Alembord and this foreshadows his death. Sharpe again displays mercy by allowing the French to collect their wounded under a flag of truce. Caillou is furious when Gudin approaches the two British officers because he knows they will offer surrender and he knows Gudin will agree. His concern is not for his troops but for his Eagle. Caillou tries to usurp command from Gudin, but they draw on each other when Gudin objects. Unfortunately, Nicholls' horse moves, causing Caillou to shoot Nicholls, fearing a threat, and this fulfills the earlier foreshadowing that Nicholls would die. Since Caillou has violated the terms of a truce, Gudin immediately kills Caillou, demonstrating his honor. After d'Alembord presents Sharpe's offer of surrender, Gudin agrees to talk to the commanding officer and proceeds to Irati with d'Alembord. For the moment, the battle has ended.



# Sharpe's Christmas p. 46-55

## Sharpe's Christmas p. 46-55 Summary

While the enemy collects their dead and wounded, Sharpe hears about Nicholls's death and sends two companies to guard the southern enemy. After night falls and he is certain the northern brigade has withdrawn, Sharpe marches to Irati with murder in his heart and demands to know who dared to kill his officer in the tavern. Gudin assures Sharpe that he killed the man who murdered Nicholls and, after embracing each other in recognition, Gudin professes that he is very proud of Sharpe and sorry for Nicholls' death. Daniel Hagman pokes his head into the room to ask for more towels, which he needs to deliver Maria's baby, but Sharpe is not interested in d'Alembord's explanation because he does not care. He offers Gudin two choices: surrender or fight, promising to give Gudin a Christmas present of dead men if they fight. Actually, he is bluffing, as Sharpe's troops are weakened, "but when a man held a weak hand it sometimes helped to bid high" (p. 48). Smiling sadly, Gudin admits his men cannot defeat the English and offers his surrender to Sharpe. When Gudin mentions his bad luck since India, Sharpe asks to hear all about it because Christmas Eve is a good night for a story and Gudin complies.

Picard sulks about his defeat. His column is now more fearful than ever and he cannot sleep. He knows Gudin is doomed and has no hope against the British; he will lose Caillou and his French Eagle. Picard can bear defeat and anything else except a French Eagle lost to English captivity. As he laments the loss, all hell breaks loose above them.

The unending volleys sound like a battle to end the world to the defeated French brigade in the northern valley, but when Picard suggests they help Gudin's men, Santon insists they cannot because British soldiers still stand guard at the frontier. Gudin must be fighting because the sounds of musketry grow in intensity; however, Picard reckons Caillou is fighting because Gudin could never fight such a battle as this. Sharpe orders his men to load faster as they all shoot into the sky, joined by the French shooting into the highest peaks of snow. Hagman delivers a girl and announces that both mother and daughter will live. Sharpe thinks of the baby Jesus who must have also been born on a cold night, but at least he had more sense than to join the army. He orders more effort and faster shots to celebrate Christ's birth. After a half hour, Maria and her child are laid in the wagon, and the wagon and French garrison pass through Irati. Sharpe gives the Eagle to Gudin and they express hopes to see one another again after the war. In one last charade, the riflemen at the frontier run in feigned panic as Gudin's procession approaches and while Picard watches in amazement, his men cheer when he reports that Gudin still has the Eagle. As the musketry fire dies slowly, the redcoats grin. They enjoy the nonsense even though they lament Nicholls' death, but luckily no one else is even wounded. The French garrison, though, has gone free because Sharpe helped an old friend by giving him a victory. Sharpe watches as the French brigade gathers around Colonel Gudin who saved an Eagle, fought his way to freedom and was a hero at last. Harper wonders if they will ever figure out it was faked but knows he would not believe



such a story. Saying they will have mutton for dinner, Sharpe offers to buy a few sheep and let Harper kill them and Harper argues that Sharpe will kill them. Sharpe laughs because it is Christmas, "his men were alive, an old friend was a hero, and there would be mutton for dinner. It was Sharpe's Christmas" (p. 55).

## Sharpe's Christmas p. 46-55 Analysis

Sharpe is furious when he learns of Nicholls's death and after the brigade withdraws from collecting their dead and wounded, he marches to the tavern at Irati murderously and demands to know who killed his officer. Gudin apologizes and explains that he killed the murderer, an attempt to continue their peaceable arrangement. Gudin and Sharpe recognize each other and have a moment of happy reunion before settling down to business. Sharpe's disregard of d'Alembord's allowing Maria to come to Irati to deliver her baby suggests that Sharpe would have done the same thing. Sharpe offers Gudin the chance to surrender, promising death to many of Gudin's soldiers if he does not. Gudin agrees and the two friends from warring nations spend an amiable evening in reunion with Gudin telling Sharpe about his many failures since their last meeting. Picard sulks about the English defeat of his brigade but is more concerned with the loss of a French Eagle to captivity because he does not believe Gudin can defeat the English. The sounds of musketry in Irati seem to indicate that Gudin is fighting Sharpe, but this illusion is quickly revealed to be only an illusion. Sharpe's men and Gudin's men present musket fire to convince the French brigade that Gudin is fighting the British forces at Irati. Once Maria delivers her child, Sharpe sends Gudin and his men on their way in peace, even allowing Gudin to keep the French Eagle. After expressing hope of seeing Sharpe again and a sorrowful parting, Gudin crosses the frontier into France where he is received as a hero; Picard is especially pleased that Gudin maintained possession of the Eagle. Sharpe and his men are happy because Nicholls was their only casualty and Sharpe was able to help an old friend by giving him a victory. The ending scene parallels the opening scene as Sharpe and Harper dispute who will kill the livestock needed for their Christmas dinner, mutton instead of a bullock this time. Moreover, Sharpe is quite content because "his men were alive, an old friend was a hero, and there would be mutton for dinner. It was Sharpe's Christmas" (p. 55).



# Sharpe's Ransom p. 57-67

## Sharpe's Ransom p. 57-67 Summary

When Sharpe notes that the cogwheels are rusted, he complains that it will take a week to clean them, but Lucille says he will rest because Christmas is in two days and she will cook him a goose. She deliberately sways her hips as she gathers the wash since she knows he is watching. Sharpe returned to Normandy a year ago and has repaired the farmhouse on his half-pay as a retired British officer since the farm is not yet making a profit and it is dubious whether it ever will. As he holds his rifle and remembers, Lucille asks if he misses it, but Sharpe claims he was not thinking about the army and insists he must work on the cogwheels whether it is Christmas or not. Reminiscing, Lucille says the whole village would have helped in the good old days; however, Sharpe reminds her that the villagers would rather shoot him than help him, especially Malan who hates him fiercely. Lucille informs him that Jacques Malan is still loyal to Bonaparte and once thought he was in love with Lucille, but she insists that Malan is not a bad man, just disappointed. Sharpe objects that Malan is lazy, angered by the thought of the man determined to drive him away through sheer unfriendliness. Malan was a sergeant in France's Imperial Guard and Sharpe is the only enemy he has left now. After Sharpe learns that Patrick, their son, is sleeping, Lucille prays that Sharpe will stay in Normandy but she fears the village will repel him. His friends are far away and she cares for his happiness, but this farm is her ancestral home and she cannot bear the thought of leaving Seleglise, so she prays that God will make Richard happy here and they will stay.

Waking early on Christmas Eve, Sharpe tiptoes into the kitchen to feed the stove with fire and avoids waking Lucille and Patrick. Marie, the last house servant left at Chateau Lassan, warns Sharpe to dress warmly because the day will be cold and he complies, taking his rifle in case a deer crosses his path. A farmer now, Sharpe hates the foxes that kill his livestock. Though he needs to dig them out of their burrow, he needs a dozen men to do so and Malan makes sure that none of the neighbors welcome the Englishman. So, Sharpe hunts foxes, comparing it to war in which he sets up an ambush, surprises the enemy with a bloody nose and then attacks to finish him off. The farmhouse used to be Chateau Lassan, but when the castle crumbled, all that was left was the farm where Sharpe found Lucille and happiness; however, a man cannot live amongst people who dismiss him as an enemy, but Sharpe does not want to leave because Lucille would hate leaving, he cannot afford land in England and he is learning to love this patch of stubborn land. He is puzzled when six men appear on the road above the farm but decides they must be looking for shelter from the snow Marie predicted. As they vanish behind the trees, he knows they will pass the farm before reappearing on the road to the village. Sharpe often wakes at night, shaking from memories of battle, but he consoles himself that he has Lucille and a son and might even find happiness among his enemies in time. A rabbit thumps in warning and Sharpe readies his gun.





As Lucille feeds Patrick breakfast, she realizes he is almost two years old and prays he does not become a soldier like his papa. Patrick bears her maiden surname because she is determined her family name, Lassan, will continue another generation, plus she is not married to Sharpe. Sharpe let her choose his surname, but he chose their son's first name, Patrick, after an Irish sergeant who now runs a tavern in Dublin. When the bell in the courtyard announces a visitor at the main gate, Marie guesses it is Father Defoy, though it is unlike the priest to be awake so early. Instinct causes Lucille to put Patrick in his chair and reach for the rifle, only to realize it is gone. When Marie shouts indignantly after opening the gate, Lucille rushes to the gun cupboard, but before she can unlock it, a tall man stands in the doorway with a pistol and asks where her Englishman is. Lucille does not respond, but Patrick confesses that his papa is shooting foxes. A short, bespectacled man pushes past the tall man and instructs Lucille to look after her child as Patrick starts crying. Six men, who appear to have been Napoleon's soldiers, enter the kitchen, push Lucille and Marie into chairs and begin their search, ignoring Lucille when she asks who they are. The strangers find remnants of the Lassan silver and pile it beside the back door. When Lucille argues that they are not rich and that is all they have, the small man says she has much more and is much richer than they are, and he advises her not to try to leave the house or Corporal Lubecque will shoot her. Lucille asks the corporal if he will hurt them and he answers "that depends on your Englishman, and on my sergeant's mercy" (p. 67). He then explains that mercy was bled out of his sergeant and all of them during the war. As a shot sounds far away, Lucille thinks about the terrible things the war left in its wake; pillage and murder racked France and has now shown up on her doorstep at Christmas. She holds her crying child and prays.

## Sharpe's Ransom p. 57-67 Analysis

The first portion of this story informs the reader of Sharpe's current living situations. He lives in Normandy with Lucille and their son, and is retired since the war has ended. The settings is revealed as two days before Christmas. Additionally, Lucille worries that Sharpe will leave Normandy because the villagers consider him an enemy since he is an Englishman. As a result of this, they will not help him repair the farm despite being neighbors. Their antipathy is increased by the fact that Jacques Malan hates him. Sharpe fills with rage at the thought of Malan, but Lucille claims the man is loyal to Bonaparte and once thought himself in love with Lucille; his life has been very disappointing. Sharpe believes Malan is antagonistic simply because he is the only enemy Malan has left since the war ended. Lucille prays that Sharpe will stay in Normandy because she hates the thought of leaving her ancestral home. The next day, on Christmas Eve, Sharpe shows his love for his family by being careful not to wake them and he also shows that he has adapted to his new way of life as he leaves the farmhouse to hunt foxes that ravage his livestock. As he hunts, he thinks about the tension with the neighbors, particularly Malan, and about the history this land has in Lucille's family. His thoughts echo Lucille's prayer as he hopes he can make friends and avoid leaving Normandy. The six men that appear on the road toward the farmhouse foreshadows the danger Sharpe finds his family in and this is heightened by Sharpe's concern, though he tries to convince himself that he is being paranoid and returns to his



task. While Lucille thinks about her living arrangement with Sharpe and Patrick, a visitor arrives, and though Marie claims it is probably the village priest, Lucille is immediately on guard since Father Defoy is not usually awake so early. She reaches for the rifle, but it is missing since Sharpe has it with him. When Marie cries out, Lucille tries to get to the gun cabinet to procure a weapon with which to protect herself and her son, but before she can accomplish this goal, six men with guns enter her kitchen. These men threaten Lucille with violence and ransack her house. When Corporal Lubecque says that his sergeant's mercy will dictate whether they hurt Lucille and Patrick, violence seems imminent when he qualifies his statement by adding that mercy was bled out of all of them during the war. Lucille thinks of the pillage and murder that has appeared throughout France since the war, but because these men ask her about her Englishman, their actions are obviously targeting Sharpe rather than being random.



# Sharpe's Ransom p. 67-79

## Sharpe's Ransom p. 67-79 Summary

After killing the fox, Sharpe thinks how odd it is that the six men have not yet reappeared on the road beyond the farm, but when he is plagued by the sense of danger, he tries to convince himself that he is being ridiculous. Still, he reads the papers and knows about the plundering that occurs throughout France. He is certain the strangers have not gone to the village and though they are probably former soldiers begging for food like many he has fed before, he does not like leaving his family alone "with a group of hungry men who might just be tempted to take more than they were offered" (p. 69). As Sharpe hurries home, everything looks as it should, but danger still nags him and he trusts the feeling that saved his life countless times on the battlefield. Though the best thing to do would be to watch the farmhouse from a distance to discover whether there is danger, Sharpe has no choice because Lucille and Patrick are inside. He thinks how foolish he will feel if everything is normal and tells himself that the war has made him paranoid as he continues walking; however, when he enters the kitchen, a small, bespectacled man sits opposite Lucille while another man points a pistol at her head. A tall man with hussar pigtailed, carrying Sharpe's sword, asks if Sharpe remembers him and welcomes him home.

Sharpe sits beside Lucille at the kitchen table with the man with the pistol behind him. The small man introduces himself as Maitre Henri Lorcet, the lawyer who drew up the Last Will and Testament of Major Pierre Ducos, and this will mentioned the existence of gold that once belonged to Napoleon and which Ducos had bequeathed to Lorcet and Challon, the tall man. Ducos had indicated that Sharpe would know where the gold is and Sharpe admits to knowing about the gold. Two years earlier, Sharpe had recovered the gold that Ducos and Challon had stolen. Though Sharpe says the treasure has been greatly diminished, Lorcet is relieved because he feared nothing would be left at the end of his long quest. He promises to leave Sharpe in peace if Sharpe tells them where the gold is. Sharpe claims the gold is in Monsieur Plaquet's bank in the Rue Deauville in Caen and only he can retrieve it personally, according to an agreement he has with Monsieur Plaquet. Lorcet claims Sharpe must procure the money and Lucille, who has been watching the exchange in confusion, knows Sharpe is playing a game when he retrieves an old key that only opens the unused chapel on her property. Lorcet instructs Sharpe to retrieve the money and return by nightfall, or he will let Challon deal with Sharpe's family. He sends Corporal Lubecque and two men to guard Sharpe and they will kill him if he attempts to summon help. If Sharpe does as he asks, they will all survive the day. Grabbing the key, Sharpe kisses Lucille and Patrick and tells Lucille to watch after their son. He promises to return by nightfall.

Lubecque and his two men watch Sharpe harness two horses to the cart, but Lubecque does not trust Sharpe to drive. As one of Lubecque's men drives the cart, it lurches from side to side because Sharpe intentionally misharnessed the horses, so Lubecque instructs Sharpe to drive while he sits next to him with a pistol and his two men climb in



the back with their pistols. Now, Sharpe has them where he wants them and he is where he wants to be; "he had escaped the farm and he was ready to fight back" (p. 76). Sharpe drives through the village with no intention of going to Caen since Monsieur Plaquet does not exist, but he still has a woman and child to rescue. After greeting Malan who spits in response, Sharpe turns the cart down an alley, claiming it is a shortcut. He is relying on Lubecque's heavy coat to make it harder to extricate his pistol but does not know how he will manage after that. Taking a corner sharply, Sharpe grabs Lubecque by the pigtail and pulls him out of the cart as his men are thrown across the cart which overturns. As Sharpe and Lubecque tumble, Sharpe hits him in the throat, grabs his pistol and hits him in the head with it. After knocking the other men unconscious, he uses his reins to tie them up and leads them up the hill to the village. He has freed himself and defeated half of Lorcet's forces, but that is the easy part. As a rifleman, Sharpe is used to dealing with enemies; now, he must make some friends!

## Sharpe's Ransom p. 67-79 Analysis

Realizing that the six men he saw earlier have not reappeared on the road past the farmhouse, Sharpe is plagued with worry and though he tries to convince himself that there is no danger, his efforts prove futile when he abandons his mission and returns to the farmhouse to ensure his family is safe. Even as he thinks how foolish he will feel if everything is alright, Sharpe trusts his instinct because it saved his life many times on the battlefield. He ignores the smart method of watching the farmhouse to ascertain whether there is any danger because his family inside forces his decision to enter his home. Inside, he finds six men holding Lucille, Marie and Patrick hostage. The smallest of the men introduces himself as Maitre Henri Lorcet and explains the reason for their appearance; they covet the gold that Sharpe recovered from Ducos after he stole it. Sharpe tells the men where the gold is but claims that only he can retrieve it. Lorcet sends Sharpe to obtain the gold, sending guards to ensure that he does not try to find help, but he threatens to kill Lucille and Patrick if Sharpe does not return by nightfall. Sharpe leaves the farmhouse after promising Lucille that he will return. Lubecque's animosity toward Sharpe is explained when he mentions that he recognizes Sharpe from the war. Sharpe harnesses the horses to his cart, causing the reader to suspect that he has a plan to rescue his family, especially when the cart does not ride very smoothly. This is confirmed when the narrator admits that Sharpe intentionally misharnesses the horses, which convinces Lubecque to allow Sharpe to drive the cart. After passing through the town, Sharpe overturns his cart and beats the three hussars sent to guard him. As he escorts them back to the village, he worries about the hard part of his plan, making friends. This foreshadows his appeal to the villagers, including Jacques Malan.



# Sharpe's Ransom p. 79-89

## Sharpe's Ransom p. 79-89 Summary

While Sharpe's Christmas goose roasts in the oven, Lucille cooks bacon and eggs for Challon and his two hussars. Challon harasses Lucille about being with an Englishman instead of a Frenchman, and when he slides his hand to her breast, she drips steaming fat on his hand and positions herself to throw the whole pan filled with sizzling food in his face. After Lorcet reprimands Challon, Lucille demands an apology while holding the pan over Challon's groin, so he apologizes grudgingly. When Lorcet questions why Lucille is with the Englishman, she says he arrived one day and stayed and Lorcet argues that she allowed Sharpe to stay but "an Englishman has no business in France" (p. 80). As Lucille disputes that Sharpe's business is tending the farm, Lorcet argues that a Frenchman should do that; the French fought in the war and came home to nothing. The Englishman stole their gold and Lorcet is merely restoring it to its rightful owners. Since it starts snowing hard, Lorcet tells Lucille to pray that Sharpe does not get stuck in a drift, but she says he should pray that Sharpe does because then he will not return and Lorcet and his men might live. She mocks that they only sent three men with Sharpe and she hopes they rest in peace. Lucille is amused when Challon startles as the wind rattles the door and she informs his "my rifleman will come back, Sergeant. I promise you that. He will be back" (p. 81).

After finishing mass, Father Defoy makes announcements, publicly reminding the widow Malan of her son's promise to deliver fuel to the priest's house. She is embarrassed by her son's uselessness and Defoy wishes Jacques would do something beneficial for their community. Father Defoy is surprised when the door opens to reveal three tied and bloodied men followed by Sharpe who claims he has brought sinners to make confession before he sends them to hell. Sharpe leaves the door open because he has invited more parishioners to church. Though Defoy is confused, he likes Sharpe—though the rest of the village does not share his opinion since Malan threatened to thrash anyone who welcomes the Englishman. He is shocked when Malan and a dozen of his cronies enter the church. They had been drinking merrily at the tavern when Sharpe kicked the door in, announced he had just beat three hussars and they should come to church if they want to know why. Malan and his friends abandoned their drinks and followed Sharpe to church. Sharpe addresses his neighbors; he knows they do not like him, but they are his neighbors and he needs their help. He proceeds to tell a story about an Emperor, gold and greed. Explaining that Ducos stole Napoleon's gold, Sharpe tells how he fought beside French soldiers from the Imperial Guard to retrieve the gold under the orders of General Jean Calvet, getting the attention of Jacques Malan who was a member of the Imperial Guard. The treasure went to Elba, but these men believe Sharpe still has the gold and are holding his family hostage. Sharpe asks if his neighbors will abandon Lucille and Marie to these thieves. When Malan claims Sharpe wants them to fight his battles, Sharpe invites Malan outside where Sharpe sits on a wall and offers to let Malan hit him. Sharpe refuses to stand because he has nothing to prove. Malan does nothing except cause trouble, but Sharpe could use the help of a



strong man on his farm; however, now, he needs a soldier, not a drunk. Sharpe asserts that he and Malan are the best soldiers in the village and pressures Malan to either hit him or help him. After Sharpe yells at a man for telling Malan to hit him because no one should give orders to a soldier, Malan sees a flash of the soldier Sharpe once was in his anger and because he likes soldiers, he asks how he can help Sharpe. Sentries are posted in the tower, but there must be another way in, which Malan would know because he used to be sweet on Lucille. Sharpe confesses that he knew he needed Malan from the moment he was in trouble because Malan is a soldier and Sharpe likes soldiers. Instructing Malan to fetch his musket from home and rejoin him at the church, Sharpe hides his sigh of relief as he enters the church to organize the choir.

## Sharpe's Ransom p. 79-89 Analysis

While Lucille accommodates the invaders, Challon's sexual interest in her is apparent as he gropes her, but her strength is demonstrated when she burns him with fat from her frying pan. Challon's anger when she demands an apology foreshadows his attempt to rape her. Both Challon and Lorcet reveal their contempt for the English through their questions about why Lucille is with Sharpe instead of a Frenchman. Lucille's faith in Sharpe is displayed when she tells Lorcet to pray that Sharpe does not return so that Lorcet and his men can live, as well as in her promise that Sharpe will return. Father Defoy's thoughts reveal his regard for Sharpe and his distaste for Malan. Sharpe returns the story to its central plot and focus as he enters the church with his prisoners, followed by Malan and his crew. After acknowledging that the villagers do not like him, Sharpe tells them about the gold and the invaders as part of his appeal for their help. Though the villagers seem to consider his request, Malan insults Sharpe, so Sharpe tells him to follow him outside where he offers Malan a chance to hit him. Sharpe follows with a speech about there being no reason for Malan's animosity and how he should help. He gets Malan's attention by admitting that he assisted the French in retrieving the gold and again by claiming that he and Malan are the best soldiers in the village. When Sharpe yells at a man for telling Malan, a soldier, what to do, Malan sees a glimpse of the soldier in Sharpe and agrees to help him because he likes soldiers. Sharpe asks Malan to help him find an alternate route into the farm and Malan agrees before going home to procure his weapon. Sharpe is relieved and admits that he knew he needed Malan as soon as he learned his family was in danger because he also likes soldiers. Sharpe reenters the church to organize the choir, foreshadowing another aspect of his scheme to rescue his family.



# Sharpe's Ransom p. 89-97

## Sharpe's Ransom p. 89-97 Summary

Challon finishes eating the goose while Lucille puts Patrick to bed. Lorcet is nearly finished with Sharpe's accounts and though there is no evidence of the stolen gold, he assumes Sharpe wanted to keep the plunder a secret. When Lorcet admits they will have to kill Sharpe and Lucille after Sharpe returns with the gold, he finds Challon's suggestion that it does not matter what happens to her first distasteful, but he shuts his mouth when faced with Challon's pistol. Upstairs, Challon pushes Marie out of the room and promises Lucille that she is about to enter paradise, but his plans are interrupted when a sentry rushes into the bedroom and announces scores of people are coming to the farmhouse. Challon rushes to the tower to see a procession of people, led by a priest, edged on the road along the moat at the front of the chateau. He drags Lorcet to the tower and they watch as the choir begins to sing Christmas carols. When Lucille says they will soon want to come in for food and wine, Lorcet says they will just leave the doors locked and tells her to pray that her Englishman hurries back with the gold. Agreeing to pray but not for that, Lucille returns upstairs, and Challon follows her as the carolers continue singing.

Dressed in his old uniform, Malan leads Sharpe through the woods to approach the chateau from the east, hidden from the tower. He points out stone pilings left where a third bridge once was; these lead to a stone wall they must climb to reach the roof of the chapel beside the farmhouse, allowing them to reach the attic window in the farmhouse. After following Malan across the stones and up the wall, Sharpe tells him to break the attic window, which will not be heard because the choir is singing so loud; it will just be another thing for Malan to fix. According to Sharpe, Malan will work for him because he would "rather work for another soldier than sweat for some bastard who stayed at home while [Malan] went to war" (p. 95). Instead of arguing, Malan breaks the window and Sharpe takes the lead inside. Pulling the pistol from his coat, he reaches for the old hatch and tells Malan it is time to go to war as he pulls the hatch cover back.

Lucille screams as Challon shoves her onto the bed, but there is nothing she can do as Patrick starts crying. She is sure that Sharpe persuaded the choir to come to the chateau, but she fears she will never learn what else he arranged because Challon undresses and slaps her. He points a pistol at her when she attempts to climb off the bed, but after putting it under his arm to resume his disrobing, he has no time to reach for it when he hears the noise of the hatch opening above him. After Sharpe kicks Challon in the face, he places a hand over the hussar's mouth and holds a gun to his neck. Challon fears Sharpe when he smiles. An unfriendly member of the Imperial Guard kicks Challon between the legs as Sharpe holds him before Sharpe ascertains that his family is safe. When Lorcet calls up the stairs to see what is going on because he is worried about the injuries Challon is inflicting upon Lucille, Sharpe responds that he has taken four of his men prisoner, has his woman and child and has an Imperial Guard who wants to murder someone; also, there was never any gold. Lorcet can have



a fight if he wants, or he can sit at the table like a good lawyer. After Malan drags Challon downstairs, Sharpe locks Lorcet, Challon and the remaining hussars in the chapel where they can repent of their sins until morning because he has more important tasks for now. While Malan unlocks the gate for the choir, Sharpe lights a fire, and they haul up bottles that had been stored in the cellar since before the Revolution. Listening to his neighbors' laughter, Sharpe reckons he will stay in Normandy after all because "it was Christmas, he had neighbours at last, and he was home" (p. 97).

## Sharpe's Ransom p. 89-97 Analysis

Though Lorcet finds no evidence of the gold he seeks in Sharpe's accounts, he assumes the Englishman simply did not want to publicize his wealth. Challon questions Lorcet about what will happen to Lucille when Sharpe returns with the gold and when Lorcet admits she will have to die, Challon claims it does not matter what happens to her before her death. Though Lorcet is offended by the insinuation that Challon wants to rape Lucille, his protests cease immediately when Challon aims his weapon at Lorcet. Challon confronts Lucille in her bedroom upstairs, but his intention is interrupted by a sentry who shows Challon and Lorcet that a choir is gathering in front of the property. This fulfills the foreshadowing that Sharpe would use the choir to distract his enemies; however, the distraction is incomplete as Challon follows Lucille when she returns upstairs. Malan leads Sharpe to a secret way to enter Lucille's property that Malan used when he was a young man and thought he was in love with Lucille. After crossing the moat and scaling the wall, Sharpe tells Malan to break the window as the choir will prevent his enemies from hearing the breaking glass. When he alludes to Malan working for him in the future, Malan disputes this, but after Sharpe explains that Malan would rather work for a soldier than someone who stayed at home during the war, Malan is silent, indicating that Sharpe is correct. Once inside the attic, the men prepare for war as Sharpe pulls the hatch cover back to enter the house. Lucille worries that Sharpe will be too late to save her as Challon undresses and keeps her on the bed by threatening her with his gun. His comments reveal the type of behavior that was permitted in Napoleon's army. Sharpe and Malan appear from the attic, and they beat and subdue Challon. When Lorcet calls upstairs to make sure Challon is not killing Lucille, Sharpe offers him a chance to surrender which Lorcet accepts. After Sharpe locks his enemies in the unused chapel on the property, he celebrates Christmas with his family and his neighbors, including Malan, knowing that he is finally home.





# Characters

## Major Richard Sharpe

Major Richard Sharpe is the protagonist of both "Sharpe's Christmas" and "Sharpe's Ransom." He is an English officer fighting the war against Napoleon in the first story and in the second, he is a retired British officer living in Normandy. Sharpe is a complicated character whom the author refers to as having a belligerent nature; however, he also shows generosity and compassion in his interactions with other characters as can be seen in these two stories. In "Sharpe's Christmas", Major Richard Sharpe and his men are sent to Irati to prevent the French garrison from the fort at Ochagavia from fleeing Spain. When Sharpe notices a French brigade marching from the north, he prepares for battle because the next day he will have an enemy in front, an enemy behind, a road to hold and a battle to win. While defending Irati against the French brigade, Sharpe knows the garrison is approaching on the south but hopes they will surrender since they have women with them. His men defeat the French brigade at the frontier to the north of Irati, causing the brigade to retreat, and Sharpe sends d'Alembord and Nicholls to offer the garrison a chance to surrender. Once they do, Sharpe admits he is happy to see his old friend and asks Gudin to tell the story of his many failures. Sharpe and his men put on an elaborate display of musketry to make it appear that Gudin defeats the English, allowing Gudin to escape Spain and be hailed as a hero.

In "Sharpe's Ransom", Sharpe lives in Normandy with Lucille and Patrick, their son, but the villagers do not welcome him because Jacques Malan forbids them to do so. While Sharpe is hunting foxes on Christmas Eve, six men enter his farmhouse and capture Lucille, Patrick and Marie, their house servant. Sharpe returns home to learn that Lorcet and his five hussars want Napoleon's gold which Sharpe recovered after Pierre Ducos stole it. They hold his family as ransom while he leaves to retrieve the gold with half of the men guarding him. After driving through the village, Sharpe overturns the cart and captures the three men, but now he must make friends, which is the hard part for a soldier like him. Sharpe enters the village church with his three prisoners, followed by Malan and his crew. After sharing the story about Napoleon's gold, Sharpe asks his neighbors to help him rescue his family. He and Malan argue, but Malan agrees to help when he recognizes the soldier in Sharpe. Malan leads Sharpe across stones left from a destroyed bridge to Chateau Lassan, up the stone wall, onto the chapel roof and through the attic window; the men are ready to go to war. As Challon undresses and prepares to rape Lucille, Sharpe and Malan attack him from the attic, rescuing Lucille, Patrick and Marie. After Lorcet surrenders, Sharpe locks the six men in the unused chapel while he celebrates Christmas with his family and his neighbors.

## Colonel Jean Gudin

Colonel Jean Gudin is the commander of the Fort at Ochagavia. His career has been filled with failures since he returned from India and he misses India because he had a



future then. Sharpe served under Gudin in India and Gudin liked the young Englishman. As they prepare to abandon the Fort at Ochagavia, Gudin insists upon taking the women and children with them when they march, despite Caillou's protests. He hopes to make it to Irati where he is supposed to meet General Picard. Though Sharpe claims Gudin was the best colonel he ever served under, Picard says the colonel is unlucky; Gudin means well and knows his business, but Fate does not like him.

During their march, Gudin relinquishes his horse to a feverish lieutenant who can hardly walk, and he manages to salvage his diaries when they are forced to abandon their second wagon after it breaks down. He refuses to allow the doctor to kill Maria when he claims she cannot give birth naturally and he ignores Caillou's continual threats, even as Gudin prays for victory so that his career does not end disgracefully. He rides out to meet d'Alembord and Nicholls under a flag of truce, but when Caillou tries to take over command of their procession, Gudin draws his weapon. He then shoots Caillou after Caillou kills Nicholls. Gudin tells d'Alembord that he commands here to his shame. After agreeing to meet the British commanding officer, he follows d'Alembord to Irati where he is happy to see Sharpe, and he expresses pride at Sharpe's success. Once he surrenders to Sharpe, he shares his story of his ill luck and many failures, causing Sharpe to fake a battle at Irati in order to make it appear that Gudin defeats the English. Sharpe allows Gudin to keep Caillou's French Eagle and both men express a desire to see one another again after the war ends. Colonel Jean Gudin returns to France and is greeted by Picard's battalion as a hero.

## **Sergeant-Major Patrick Harper**

Sergeant-Major Patrick Harper is a rifleman who serves under Sharpe's command at Irati and he is a close friend of Sharpe. Sharpe names his son after Harper.

## **Ensign Charles Nicholls**

Ensign Charles Nicholls is a young man who recently joined the army and is eager to go to war. He is 17 years old but looks only 14. He summons Sharpe for Colonel Hagan when Sharpe's battalion is dispatched to Irati. Sharpe worries about the young man getting killed and orders d'Alembord to watch over him. Nicholls is shot and killed by Colonel Caillou under a flag of truce when he accompanies d'Alembord to offer surrender to the French garrison and Sharpe is enraged when he learns of Nicholls' murder.

## **Colonel Caillou**

Colonel Caillou is the commander of the 75th Infantry of France and was awarded a French Eagle from Napoleon. He believes Gudin is inept and threatens to have him killed if his Eagle is lost during their march to Irati. Caillou unsuccessfully tries to persuade Gudin to abandon the woman and children at the Fort at Ochagavia. He tries



to take command of the garrison when d'Alembord and Nicholls offer surrender under a flag of truce, but when he shoots Nicholls, Gudin kills Caillou.

## **Captain Peter d'Alembord**

Captain Peter d'Alembord serves under Sharpe at Irati and he thinks Sharpe is the best soldier he has ever known and will ever know. Sharpe sends d'Alembord to the south of the village to offer surrender to the retreating garrison under Gudin's command and d'Alembord is furious when Caillou murders Nicholls.

## **General Maximilien Picard**

General Maximilien Picard is the French officer leading the brigade to Irati in order to meet Gudin's retreating garrison, though he thinks Gudin is useless. Picard does not lose and he hopes the British are at Irati so his young troops can taste a victory that will make them hunger for more. He orders his men to attack the English at Irati because he wants to give them a lesson for Christmas, but after his troops are defeated, he feels Gudin has no chance. Crying at the thought of losing a French Eagle to British captivity, Picard claims he can bear anything else. He is surprised and happy when Gudin returns to France with the Eagle after an apparent victory over the English at Irati.

## **Lucille Lissan**

Lucille Lissan is a French woman from Segligese whom Sharpe lives with, though they are not married. They have a son Patrick together. Lucille, along with Patrick and Marie, is held for ransom by Lorcet and his five hussars in exchange for the gold that Sharpe recovered from Ducos. She is feisty and argues with her captors instead of easily yielding to them, despite the fact that they possess weapons and threaten her frequently. Lucille is afraid when Challon attempts to rape her, but Sharpe and Malan arrive just in time to rescue her.

## **Patrick Lissan**

Patrick Lissan is the son of Sharpe and Lucille and he is nearly two years old. Along with Lucille and Marie, he is held as ransom against Napoleon's gold, but Sharpe and Malan rescue him. Lucille gives her son her maiden name so that it will continue for another generation and Sharpe provides his son's first name in honor of an Irishman he served with in the war who now runs a tavern in Dublin, Sergeant-Major Patrick Harper.



## Marie

Marie is the only remaining house servant at Chateau Lassan and she is very loyal to Lucille and Sharpe. She is held for ransom against Napoleon's gold, along with Lucille and Patrick, but Sharpe and Malan come to the rescue.

## Jacques Malan

Jacques Malan is a former soldier of Napoleon's Imperial Guard who hates Sharpe because he is an Englishman and he forbids the neighbors to welcome Sharpe into their village. Malan thought he was in love with Lucille when they were young and Lucille claims he is not a bad man; he is just disappointed. Sharpe believes Malan is a lazy troublemaker, as does Father Defoy. When Sharpe appeals to Malan for help rescuing his family from Lorcet's men, Malan argues at first, but he agrees to help after he sees the soldier Sharpe used to be in Sharpe's anger; Malan likes soldiers. Malan leads Sharpe across the moat to Chateau Lassan via a destroyed bridge and they scale the wall to reach the attic window. Sharpe offers him work in the future and claims Malan will work for him rather than for someone who stayed at home during the war and Malan does not dispute this assertion. Malan helps Sharpe rescue his family and capture Lorcet and his men and then he joins Sharpe's family and the village choir for a Christmas celebration.

## Maitre Henri Lorcet

Maitre Henri Lorcet is the lawyer who wrote Ducos' Last Will and Testament in which Napoleon's gold was bequeathed to Lorcet and Challon. With the help of five hussars, he holds Lucille, Patrick and Marie for ransom against the gold. While he finds violence distasteful, his greed causes him to admit that they will kill Sharpe and his family when Sharpe returns with the gold. Lorcet surrenders after Sharpe captures four of his men.

## Sergeant Guy Challon

Sergeant Guy Challon is one of Lorcet's hussars who holds Sharpe's family for ransom against Napoleon's gold. He remembers and hates Sharpe from the war, and while Sharpe leaves to retrieve the gold, he stays at the farmhouse to guard Sharpe's family. Challon attempts to rape Lucille, but Sharpe beats and captures him before he can do so.

## Corporal Lubecque

Corporal Lubecque is one of the hussars with Lorcet and he accompanies Sharpe as a guard to retrieve Napoleon's gold. Sharpe manages to beat Lubecque and capture him.



## Father Defoy

Father Defoy is the priest of the church in the village of Segligese. He likes Sharpe and thinks Malan is lazy, but when Sharpe appeals to the villagers for help, Defoy helps by organizing and leading a choir of carolers to sing outside of Chateau Lassan. This serves as a distraction for Lorcet's men and masks the noise of Sharpe and Malan breaking the attic window in order to rescue Lucille, Patrick and Marie.



# Objects/Places

## Irati

Irati is a small village in Spain where Sharpe is sent to thwart the escape attempt of a French garrison from the fort at Ochagavia. This is the chief setting of "Sharpe's Christmas."

## The Fort at Ochagavia

The Fort at Ochagavia in Spain is commanded by Colonel Jean Gudin for four years, but it is burnt down when his garrison abandons it in their attempt to escape to France.

## Caillou's Eagle

Caillou's Eagle is a small, gilded bronze bird given to Caillou by Napoleon. Since it represents France, losing a French Eagle is the greatest disaster a regiment can imagine. Caillou threatens to kill Gudin if his Eagle is lost during their retreat, but Sharpe allows Gudin to keep the Eagle.

## India

India is mentioned in references to past battles and is where Sharpe served under Gudin, as well as where Gudin was last successful.

## Frontier

The frontier between Spain and France is near Irati and is where Sharpe defends against Picard's brigade.

## The Prince of Wales's Own Volunteers

The Prince of Wales's Own Volunteers is the regiment of men that Sharpe commands.

## Chateau Lissan

Chateau Lissan is the main setting of "Sharpe's Ransom." It has been Lucille's family's home for 800 years, but the castle has crumbled, leaving only a barn, dairy, chapel, stables, watermill, farmhouse and watchtower. Sharpe lives at Chateau Lissan with Lucille.



## **Seleglise**

Seleglise is the village near Chateau Lassan where Sharpe goes to ask his neighbors for help rescuing Lucille, Marie and Patrick.

## **Napoleon's Gold**

Napoleon's Gold was stolen by Pierre Ducos and recovered by Sharpe fighting with France's Imperial Guard under the command of General Jean Calvet. When Ducos bequeaths the gold to Lorcet and Callon, Lorcet, Challon, Lubecque and three other hussars hold Lucille, Marie and Patrick for ransom while Sharpe goes to retrieve the gold. Sharpe did not keep the gold, however; it went to Elba.

## **Normandy**

Normandy is the section of France where Sharpe lives with Lucille and Patrick.



# Themes

## War and Enemies

An important theme in both of these stories is war and enemies, especially significant because Sharpe serves as an officer in the British war against Napoleon. In "Sharpe's Christmas," Nicholls is eager for war when he informs Sharpe that Hogan wants to talk to him about some Frogs, but Sharpe hopes they do not go to battle. Unfortunately, Hogan sends Sharpe and his battalion to Irati to prevent a French garrison at the fort at Ochagavia from escaping. In Irati, Sharpe scouts for the French and admits to liking Gudin when he was in India, even though Gudin was a Frenchman and thus an enemy. When he sees a French brigade approaching from the north, he prepares for battle, knowing that he will have an enemy in front, an enemy behind and a battle to win the next day. Though Santon hopes the British are not at Irati, Picard hopes for a battle to toughen his troops. When the French brigade crosses the frontier into Spain, Sharpe's men attack and defeat them and Sharpe offers the southern garrison a chance to surrender. Caillou violates the flag of truce by murdering Nicholls and that is the reason Gudin kills Caillou. Picard sulks about being defeated. Though Sharpe likes Gudin, they are still enemies, so he threatens to kill his men if they do not surrender; Gudin surrenders. After a feigned battle at Irati, Sharpe allows Gudin to return to France as a hero.

In "Sharpe's Ransom", Sharpe is a retired British officer living in Normandy and he fears he will have to leave because his neighbors consider him the enemy and a man cannot live among enemies. Jacques Malan hates Sharpe because Sharpe is an Englishman and, as a member of Napoleon's Imperial Guard, he considers the English to be an enemy. Lorcet's five men are all former French soldiers, and they hold Sharpe's family as ransom for Napoleon's gold, which they believe Sharpe has. Lubecque scorns Lucille for loving the enemy, Sharpe. Malan gains respect for Sharpe when he sees the soldier Sharpe used to be and because Sharpe claims they are the two best soldiers in the village. Malan joins Sharpe in a war against Lorcet's men. This story also discusses the pillaging and murder that occurs in the aftermath of the war.

## Christmas

Since both of these stories were written for the Christmas editions of a London newspaper, Christmas is a major theme in each story. In his Introduction, Cornwell explains that he tried to write two tales acknowledging the Christmas spirit without ignoring Sharpe's belligerent nature. "Sharpe's Christmas" begins two days before Christmas as Sharpe and Harper hunt a bullock for their Christmas dinner. When they are sent to Irati for a possible battle, Sharpe hates the idea of killing people at Christmas and he thinks that the shepherds of Irati are fitting for the season. He recalls hearing a Christmas story from a fat parson in a foundling home when he was a child. Planning to fight the British at Irati, Picard claims he will give them a lesson for





Christmas, but Sharpe tries to dissuade the French from battle with a musketry display because he feels there has been enough killing at Christmas. When he sees Caillou's French Eagle, he thinks it would make a nice Christmas gift for his men. Sharpe offers to give Gudin a Christmas present of dead men if he does not surrender, but after hearing the story of Gudin's failures, he instead bestows the gift of making Gudin a hero by allowing him to return to France after a feigned battle at Irati.

In "Sharpe's Ransom", Lucille forbids Sharpe to work because it is two days before Christmas. She is upset when the chaos left in the war's wake appears on her door on Christmas Eve, the day that Sharpe's family is taken hostage by Lorcet and his men. Since it is Christmas, Sharpe is able to organize the choir to sing outside the farm as a distraction because carolers are a natural occurrence during the holidays. After rescuing his family and securing his prisoners in the chapel, Sharpe celebrates Christmas with his family and his neighbors.

## Compassion and Mercy

Though Cornwell claims Sharpe is belligerent, Sharpe demonstrates compassion and mercy throughout both of these stories and this is an important theme that recurs. In the title story, Sharpe and Harper are unable to kill the bullock for their dinner because they feel sorry for it and Sharpe worries about Nicholls being killed if they go to war. Gudin shows compassion by his refusal to abandon the women and children at the fort at Ochagavia while Caillou's lack of compassion serves as a foil to Gudin. Picard also shows a lack of mercy in the fact that he experiences no guilt about the idea of fighting during Christmas. Sharpe regrets having to fight the French brigade at the frontier because he feels the soldiers are too young to die and he hates killing during the holidays. He orders his men to put on a display of musketry in an attempt to dissuade the brigade from continuing the fight. Gudin loans his horse to a sick lieutenant, despite his own pains. Sharpe offers Gudin a chance to surrender, which Gudin accepts for the sake of the women and children in his party. D'Alembord brings Maria to Irati to deliver her baby. Sharpe feigns the battle at Irati to allow Gudin to return to France as a hero at last.

In "Sharpe's Ransom", when Lucille asks if the men will hurt her, Lubecque says it depends on his sergeant's mercy, but mercy was bled out of all of them during the war. This is proved when their greed leads them to hold Sharpe's family hostage in exchange for Napoleon's gold, as well as their threats and Challon's attempt to rape Lucille. Lorcet seems to be merciful when he claims to detest violence, but he tells Challon that they will kill Sharpe's family to prevent them from going to the police after Sharpe returns with the gold. Sharpe is unmerciful in this story as he saves his family from his enemies; however, he does generate compassion among the villagers by telling them a story about the gold and convincing them to help him save Lucille, Marie and Patrick. He also shows mercy by simply imprisoning his enemies instead of killing them immediately after he rescues his household.

# Style

## Point of View

The point of view of both stories in "Sharpe's Christmas" is third person. This point of view is omniscient and reliable, proven by the fact that the narrator is frequently able to report upon the thoughts and feelings of the characters in addition to the actions and events that occur in any particular scene. This method of writing is useful as it allows the reader to understand the reasons behind the decisions that are made throughout the narrative. Additionally, this provides foreshadowing in the book as the reader is able to predict upcoming events based on the plans that characters consider.

This story is written using a fairly equal distribution of exposition and dialogue. This is very effective in helping the reader to understand the dynamics between different characters, especially as it pertains to the chain of command in the military; the conversations demonstrate the respect owed to superior officers and such. Also useful is the way that the dialogue serves to show the derogatory attitudes that the characters tend to possess for their enemies, such as the tendency of Sharpe's men to refer to the French as "frogs." In this story, the viewpoint frequently varies, with that of Sharpe being the most common but also including those of Gudin, Picard and Caillou in "Sharpe's Christmas" and Lucille, Lubecque, Challon and Father Defoy in "Sharpe's Ransom."

## Setting

These stories are set in the real world during and after Britain's war with France. "Sharpe's Christmas" is set in Spain during the war and "Sharpe's Ransom" is set in Normandy after the war. In "Sharpe's Christmas", the characters are English and French officers and soldiers. The focus is on Gudin's ill luck and failure in advancing through the ranks after the time he spent in India. In "Sharpe's Ransom", the characters are former French soldiers and hussars as well as French villagers who consider Sharpe, the only Englishman in the story, to be an enemy. Jacques Malan leads this hatred because, as a former member of Napoleon's Imperial Guard, he hates the English, but Malan learns to like Sharpe since Sharpe is a soldier and Malan likes soldiers.

Irati is a small village in Spain where Sharpe is sent to thwart the escape attempt of a French garrison from the fort at Ochagavia. This is the main setting of "Sharpe's Christmas." The Fort at Ochagavia in Spain is commanded by Colonel Jean Gudin for four years, but it is burnt down when his garrison abandons it in their attempt to escape to France. India is mentioned in references to past battles and is where Sharpe served under Gudin as well as where Gudin was last successful. The frontier between Spain and France is near Irati and is where Sharpe defends against Picard's brigade. Chateau Lassan is the main setting of "Sharpe's Ransom." It has been Lucille's family's home for 800 years, but the castle has crumbled, leaving only a barn, dairy, chapel, stables, watermill, farmhouse and watchtower. Sharpe lives at Chateau Lassan with Lucille.



Seleglise is the village near Chateau Lassan where Sharpe goes to ask his neighbors for help rescuing Lucille, Marie and Patrick. Normandy is the section of France where Sharpe lives with Lucille and Patrick.

## Language and Meaning

The language used in "Sharpe's Skirmish" tends to be casual and informal. The sentence construction of the exposition is proper, but the dialogue tends to be improper as can be expected of militia conversations. The language used is very appropriate for the volatile environment in which the book is set as the characters are enduring a very dangerous and demanding situation that does not necessarily allow them time to be formal and polite.

The dialogue also serves to demonstrate reverence to officers of higher rank and the language overall characterizes the individuals in the story and their military rank. There is a fairly equal distribution of exposition and dialogue in this story. The language serves to show the reader the differences between characters of different military ranks and moral character, as well as the differences between the English and French. Some of the derogatory remarks made about the enemy troops underline the antagonism between the two groups of soldiers. Overall, the language is easy to understand and allows the reader to understand the dynamics within each group and between the two groups.

## Structure

"Sharpe's Christmas" consists of two stories, "Sharpe's Christmas" and "Sharpe's Ransom." The first two pages are an introduction and the remaining pages are divided into the two stories. These stories not broken into formal chapters but are separated by asterisks and divided, based on either a change in viewpoint or an elapse of time. These sections are generally around three to five pages long and they are neither titled nor numbered. The sections are short but very detailed as each encompasses a very short amount of time, two days for the first story and one day for the second story. "Sharpe's Christmas" contains forty-five pages and fourteen sections while "Sharpe's Ransom" comprises forty-one pages and eleven sections.

"Sharpe's Christmas" by Bernard Cornwell is a collection of two stories about Major Richard Sharpe, both written for the Christmas editions of a newspaper. In "Sharpe's Christmas", Sharpe must defend Irati against a brigade of French soldiers on the north and a French garrison fleeing Spain from the south. In "Sharpe's Ransom", Sharpe attempts to rescue his woman and their child from French hussars seeking gold that they insist Sharpe has. Both stories in "Sharpe's Christmas" are very entertaining and reveal a level to Cornwell's hero beyond his expertise as a soldier.

The pace of these stories is very quick. The stories are mostly linear with only a few episodes of flashbacks or background alluded to, such as references to Sharpe and Gudin's time in India and other battles in the war. The stories are easy to read and show

both the French and English sides in the battle at Irati and in Sharpe's attempt to rescue Lucille and Patrick. Overall, it is a very entertaining and interesting collection of historical fiction.



## Quotes

"It's daft, isn't it? I wouldn't think twice if it was a Frog. It's only a bloody cow." Major Richard Sharpe, "Sharpe's Christmas", p. 13.

"There're over a thousand men in the fort at Ochagavia, and we don't want Boney to get those men back, Richard. You have to stop them... Kill me some Frogs for Christmas. That's why you joined the army, isn't it? To kill Frogs? So go and do it. I want you out of here in an hour." Colonel Hogan, "Sharpe's Christmas", p. 16.

"We are soldiers of France, and we do not leave women and children to die. They march with us." Colonel Jean Gudin, "Sharpe's Christmas", p. 18.

"And if he could escape successfully? That would be a victory, especially if he could take Caillou's precious Eagle safe across the Pyrenees, but he doubted even an Eagle was worth the life of so many woman and children. And that, he knew all too well, was his handicap. The Emperor would sacrifice a hundred thousand women and children to preserve the glory of France, but Gudin could not do it." Narrator, "Sharpe's Christmas", pp. 19-20.

"A fellow used to read the Christmas story to us in the foundling home. A big fat parson, he was, with funny whiskers. Looked a bit like that Sergeant who caught a bellyful of canister at Salamanca. We had to sit and listen, and if we yawned the bugger used to jump off the platform and clout us round the face with the holy book. One minute it was all peace on earth, and the next you were flying across the floor with a thick ear." Major Richard Sharpe, "Sharpe's Christmas", p. 22.

"Because tomorrow there would be an enemy behind, an enemy in front, a road to hold and battle to win. At Christmastime." Narrator, "Sharpe's Christmas", p. 24.

"Most of all he missed his youthful optimism. In India he had possessed a future, but after it, none. And sometimes, when he was feeling sorry for himself, he blamed it all on one young man whom he had liked, an Englishman called Sharpe. It had been Sharpe who caused that first great defeat, though Gudin had never blamed Sharpe, for he had recognised that Private Richard Sharpe had been a natural soldier. How the Emperor would have loved Sharpe! So much luck!" Narrator, "Sharpe's Christmas", pp. 32-33.

"Colonel Gudin sighed and walked on. His heels were blistering, but he would not retrieve his horse for he knew the Lieutenant's need was greater than his. Nor would he abandon his men's women, and so he just kept going and tried to blot out the awful haunting moans of the pregnant girl. He was not a prayerful man, but as he climbed towards the distant sound of the guns, Colonel Gudin did pray. He prayed that God would send him a victory, just one small victory so that his career would not end in failure or a firing squad. A Christmas miracle, that was all he asked, just one small miracle to set against a lifetime of defeat." Narrator, "Sharpe's Christmas", p. 34.



"We're giving the Frogs a formal invitation, Mister Nicholls. Seeing if they're brave enough to come up and dance." Major Richard Sharpe, "Sharpe's Christmas", p. 36.

"They're bringing their women, Captain, and they won't want them hurt, will they? It might even persuade them to surrender." Major Richard Sharpe, "Sharpe's Christmas", p. 39.

"It would be murder, not war, but it was the French commander who was doing the murdering." Narrator, "Sharpe's Christmas", p. 41.

"I command here. To my shame, sir, I command here." Colonel Jean Gudin, "Sharpe's Christmas", p. 46.

"I knew it was you! I'm proud of you, Sharpe. So very proud. And for your officer who died, I am sorry. There was nothing I could do." Colonel Jean Gudin, "Sharpe's Christmas", p. 47.

"I do not mind defeat, Santon, but I cannot bear the loss of an Eagle. An Eagle of France, gone to captivity... I can bear anything, except that." General Maximilien Picard, "Sharpe's Christmas", p. 50.

"I was thinking of the baby Jesus, Colonel. His birth must have been cold as hell... But at least he never joined the army, sir. He had more sense." Major Richard Sharpe, "Sharpe's Christmas", p. 52.

"I've already captured one, sir, I don't need another. Besides, I took the flag off the staff. Just as a keepsake." Major Richard Sharpe, "Sharpe's Christmas", p. 53.

"But one hundred Frenchmen went free. One hundred Frenchmen, their women, their children, their colonel and an Eagle. They went free because Sharpe, to help an old friend, had given that friend a victory, and Sharpe now watched Gudin's men go down the slope and he saw the men of the defeated brigade run to greet them. He heard the cheers and in the silver moonlight, framed in the lens of his telescope, he saw the brigade officers cluster around Colonel Gudin. Unlucky Gudin, who on a Christmas morning had saved an Eagle and fought his way to freedom. Colonel Jean Gudin, a hero at last." Narrator, "Sharpe's Christmas", p. 54.

"So at Christmas you rest, and the leat and the sluice gate and the bloody cogwheels can all rest. It is a holiday. I shall cook you a goose." Lucille, "Sharpe's Ransom", p. 57.

"[Lucille] closed her eyes and prayed that Sharpe would stay in Normandy, for she worried that the village might yet repel him. A man could not live without friends, and Sharpe's friends were far away, too far away, and she cared for his happiness. But this was her farm and her ancestral house, and she could not bear the thought of leaving Seleglise. Let us stay, she prayed, please God, make Richard happy here and let us stay." Narrator, "Sharpe's Ransom", p. 60.



"Lucille and happiness, he thought, except that a man could not live among a people who dismissed him as an enemy, and if the villagers went on rejecting him he knew that he would have to go back to England. He did not want that. He did not want to leave Normandy, and he knew Lucille would hate to go from a land that had been in her family for 800 years, but a man could not live among enemies." Narrator, "Sharpe's Ransom", p. 62.

"So maybe they were just beggars, he thought, but even so Sharpe did not like leaving Lucille, Marie and Patrick alone with a group of hungry men who might just be tempted to take more than they were offered." Narrator, "Sharpe's Ransom", p. 69.

"Then pray it does not snow, for if you are not back by nightfall I shall assume you have betrayed us, and I shall let Sergeant Challon deal with you family. I shall regret that, Major, for I detest violence. Corporal Lubecque will accompany you with two men. If you attempt to summon help, Major, the corporal will kill you. But do as I ask, and we will all survive the day, though admittedly, you will be somewhat poorer." Maitre Henri Lorcet, "Sharpe's Ransom", p. 74.

"I do hate hussars. Should have killed you all when I had the chance. I liked killing hussars... Three hussars against one rifleman, no wonder we won the bloody war. Lubecque! Stop croaking like a bloody frog and come here." Major Richard Sharpe, "Sharpe's Ransom", p. 78.

"So far, Sharpe thought, so good. He had freed himself and defeated half of Lorcet's small force, but that had been the easy part for a soldier like Sharpe. Now came the hard part. He was a rifleman and he was used to dealing with enemies, but now, instead, he would have to make some friends." Narrator, "Sharpe's Ransom", p. 79.

"If I were you, Maitre, I would pray that he does get stuck. Because if he is stopped by the snow, he won't come back here. And then you might live." Lucille, "Sharpe's Ransom", p. 81.

"Sorry, Father. I've brought you three sinners who want to make confession. Three miserable sinners, Father, whose souls need shriving before I send them to hell." Major Richard Sharpe, "Sharpe's Ransom", p. 82.

"I'm not going to fight you, Jacques, because I don't need to. I've been in as many battles as you have, so I don't have to prove a damned thing. But you do. You don't like me. In fact you don't seem to like anyone. You do nothing all day except make trouble. You were supposed to deliver firewood to the church house, weren't you? But you haven't done it because you'd rather sit in the tavern spending your mother's money. Why don't you make yourself useful? I could use you! I've got a rusted-up sluice gate that needs rebuilding, and a mill channel that needs clearing, and next month I've got a load of stone coming from Caen to repave the yard. I could do with a strong man, but right now I need a soldier. A good soldier, not some fat drunk who lives off his poor mother's purse." Major Richard Sharpe, "Sharpe's Ransom", p. 87.

"I shall pray, Sergeant, but not for that." Lucille, "Sharpe's Ransom", p. 92.



"Because I'll pay you, because you like Lucille and because you'd rather work for another soldier than sweat for some bastard who stayed at home while you went to war." Major Richard Sharpe, "Sharpe's Ransom", p. 95.

"Lorcet? This is Major Sharpe. I've got four of your men prisoner, I've got my woman back, I've got my child, I've got an Imperial Guardsman who wants to murder someone, and there never was any gold. And right now I'm coming down the stairs and you can have a fight if you want one, but if you want to live then put the ruby on the table and sit down like a good little lawyer." Major Richard Sharpe, "Sharpe's Ransom", pp. 96-97.

"Sharpe, listening to the laughter, and wondering how Lucille had managed to find so much food in the house, reckoned he was staying in Normandy after all. It was Christmas, he had neighbors at last, and he was home." Narrator, "Sharpe's Ransom", p. 97.





## Topics for Discussion

Compare and contrast "Sharpe's Christmas" and "Sharpe's Ransom."

How does the religious aspect of Christmas affect these two stories?

Which of these two stories is your favorite and why?

Which of these two stories most embodies the values and meaning of Christmas? Support your answer using the text.

How did Sharpe give the French a Christmas gift in "Sharpe's Christmas" and why?

In "Sharpe's Ransom", why does Sharpe think he may return to England, and what convinces him to stay in Normandy?

Which French soldier or officer proves to be the worst enemy to Sharpe and why?