

# **Sharpe's Gold: Richard Sharpe and the Destruction of Almeida, August 1810 Study Guide**

**Sharpe's Gold: Richard Sharpe and the Destruction of Almeida, August 1810 by Bernard Cornwell**

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# Plot Summary

Sharpe's Gold by Bernard Cornwell is the second book he wrote, in 1981, but it is the ninth in the chronological order of the series. This book relates Captain Richard Sharpe's mission to covertly seek and acquire Spanish gold for General Wellington, which is to be used for a secret project. The project is the last hope for stopping Bonaparte.

The war with Bonaparte is going poorly and Spain is all but lost. Captain Richard Sharpe and his Light Company of the South Essex Regiment march to Celorico on Wellington's orders after a boring patrol of the southern borders. He has problems on the way with a Provost Marshall, Lieutenant Ayres, so his original purpose for being called to Celorico is overshadowed by complaints to Wellington by Ayres.

Wellington requires Sharpe's expertise so Sharpe is only required to apologize to Ayres. After Sharpe gets his assignment from Wellington, he and his Company go to meet Major Kearsley in Almeida, to learn how to get the Spanish gold necessary to support the war effort. Kearsley says the gold is in Castejeda; however, he is under the impression that the gold will be taken to Cadiz to the Spanish, not to Wellington.

Outside of Castejeda, Kearsley wants to meet El Catolico by himself and is captured by the French, so Sharpe decides to rescue him. In a bold action, Sharpe's Company attacks the French with wild screams and rifles firing. He not only rescues Kearsley, but also Teresa and her brother, Ramon Moreno. Sharpe's Company retreats back to a gully and with Teresa's help, the group tricks the French into leaving and goes into Castejeda.

Sharpe meets El Catolico, a local partisan leader who considers the gold to be his, so he has hidden the gold and tries to claim the French took it. Sharpe must find gold and, through luck, Patrick Harper discovers it in a manure heap.

Sharpe holds Teresa hostage to get away from El Catolico and they head to Almeida with the gold. They are troubled by the partisans and French troops the entire trip. When the French seem to be winning, help arrives in the form of Captain Lossow and his German Cavalry who escort them to Almeida. Here Teresa and Sharpe become lovers and he promises her some gold for her people.

El Catolico is also in the fort and Major Cox, who is in charge of Almeida, and Major Cox tells Sharpe to give El Catolico the gold. Sharpe refuses, blows up part of the fort, and leaves with the gold.

Wellington gets 14,000 in coins, Teresa gets 1000 for the partisans. El Catolico had stolen 250, so Sharpe and the Company get 750 to spend. Wellington uses the gold to pay for building the Lines of Torres Verdras, which bars the Lisbon peninsula and stops the French advance.



# Chapter 1-2

## Chapter 1-2 Summary

Sharpe's Gold centers on Captain Richard Sharpe and his men of the Light Company of the South Essex Regiment and their quest to get the gold required for a secret project that Wellington is working on to help stop the French advance on Lisbon. Their adventures and strife with the French, the Partisans, and even their own people are written of in an interesting, exciting way.

In chapter 1, the forces against Napoleon's armies feel the war is lost. Spain is basically defeated and the only Spanish people fighting the war are the peasants, whom the French armies hate and fear.

Captain Richard Sharpe does not agree with general sentiment, although when his bad mood is considered, one would think he feels the war is lost. Sharpe is a soldier in the British army, more specifically, the South Essex Regiment of riflemen.

Two of Sharpe's men, Lieutenant Robert Knowles and Sergeant Patrick Harper discuss Sharpe's poor mood. Harper is Sharpe's friend of long standing despite their rank differences. The group marches on until they run into the German Legion.

The legion and the regiment are outside of an abandoned town that contains Provosts, who are responsible for keeping the troops from pillaging the towns they pass through, so that the British will stay on good terms with the locals and not be hated like the French. Sharpe and his regiment head into the town where the Provosts and Sharpe talk for a few minutes pretending civility.

Lieutenant Ayres, one of the Provosts, catches one of Sharpe's men in a deserted cottage holding a chicken and accuses him of looting and plans to hang him. Sharpe threatens Ayres at gunpoint until he lets the man, Batten, go and Ayres threatens Sharpe saying they will meet again.

The South Essex is headquartered in a church in chapter 2. Sharpe's commander, Lieutenant Colonel William Lawford is taking Sharpe to meet Wellington. Lawford is in charge of Sharpe's regiment and helped Sharpe move up in the ranks after he saved Lawford's life seven years before in India. Lawford tells Sharpe that he needs to grovel to Wellington for his behavior with the Provosts. Sharpe enters Wellington's quarters and openly admits to threatening Ayres with a rifle.

Wellington reminds Sharpe that his Captaincy is not assured and could still be taken away from him if he continues to misbehave because the promotion must be approved by the Horse Guards in Whitehall with a strong recommendation from Wellington. He does not want the soldiers pillaging and raping in the local areas and he reminds Sharpe that the Provosts serve to prevent looting and increase the positive impression of the British army. Wellington does not need their authority undermined.



At the end of the meeting, Wellington removes Sharpe and his regiment from Lawford's command and places it under his own command. Wellington tells Sharpe that he intends to send him on a task and implies that Sharpe better not fail. Finally, Sharpe is ordered to apologize to Ayres.

## Chapter 1-2 Analysis

In chapter 1, the general attitude of the British army is that the war is lost. This attitude could be self-fulfilling if they continue to think negatively. Sharpe, a Captain in the British army, is in a foul mood, which seems to be caused by the two things: the fact that he is afraid the war may be lost and that everyone's attitude could contribute to defeat. His work ethic, or war ethic, is to fight against all odds and never give up.

Meanwhile, the discrepancy in classes is seen in the attitude of Knowles, who is jealous of Harper and Sharpe's relationship and the reader wonders if this foreshadows future issues between the two men.

When they run into a German legion, it is interesting that even the Germans know of Sharpe's reputation, which seems to be that of a great soldier, a hard worker, and a good leader. Sharpe's inability to buy a rank makes him work harder than most officers who have bought their position.

In the town where Sharpe runs into the Germans, we can see that the Provosts are carrying their authority to the extreme over a chicken. There seems to be bad blood between Provosts and everyone else (German or British), which indicates that their way of policing the armies is not appreciated; they seem to go out of their way to find someone to arrest.

Despite Sharpe's hatred of the man accused of looting, he still threatens the Provosts because he refuses to let one of his men die for such a mundane reason. Sharpe's loyalty to his men, despite Batton's uselessness, is part of what makes him a good leader. The reader can only speculate that the bad blood between the Lieutenant Ayres and Sharpe is a foreshadowing of a worse meeting in the future.

Sharpe feels responsible for the populations and fears that the French may be winning the war in chapter 2. The people in Celorico know the British will be withdrawing soon and the priest tells Sharpe they know the French are coming. Sharpe feels guilt as if he is responsible for the withdrawal, but knows there is nothing he can do personally.

Sharpe's commanding officer, Lawford, is frustrated with Sharpe's attitude toward the Provost Ayres. He reminds Sharpe that his bravery in battle and his eagle are not always going to save him when he disobeys the rules of the army.

Apparently, Sharpe has done things in the past that may not be completely within the rules of the army and Lawford is afraid that Wellington may not continue to let Sharpe's behavior slide. Lawford feels an obligation to Sharpe because Sharpe saved his life a long time ago. Lawford is the one who taught Sharpe to read and write, which enabled



Sharpe to be eligible for promotion to officer's rank. They seem to respect each other even though Lawford is frustrated with Sharpe's attitude towards certain rules. Sharpe feels Lawford has earned his rank and respects him as a soldier, even though he is able to buy a higher commission. Hopefully their differences will not cause problems in the future.

Wellington seems to need someone like Sharpe in his army because Sharpe refuses to accept loss as a possibility. It appears that Sharpe is let off easy; he is only required to apologize to Ayres and given a reminder that his rank as a Captain is not confirmed and depends on his behavior. The reader wonders if he is really getting off easy and what the mysterious task from Wellington will be. Perhaps it will be one of the biggest challenges that Sharpe has ever faced.



# Chapter 3-4

## Chapter 3-4 Summary

Sharpe learns that Wellington has a mission for him in chapter 3; however, he does not know the exact nature of the item he is supposed to procure. When returning to Wellington's quarters, the Provost, Ayres, and a Colonel Williams are waiting for Sharpe. The minute they all sit down, Williams expresses indignation over Sharpe's behavior towards the Provosts' authority. Sharpe apologizes but says that he is sorry and is sure Ayres is as well. Ayres quickly accepts the apology even though it implies he was at fault as well. Williams does catch this but the Provost says they are done and leaves. Hogan is not surprised at the ambiguous way Sharpe has apologized.

Sharpe talks with Michael Hogan, an Irish engineer who speaks both Spanish and Portuguese, which has helped him move up in the ranks quickly. Hogan tells Sharpe that his quest is for gold, a great deal of gold that will help the British army stop the French army. Sharpe is to go to Almeida and meet with Major Kearsley, who is to lead the Company to the gold. He has one week to bring the gold back to Wellington to pay for a secret plan to help everyone against the French armies.

That night, the company leave for Almeida, which is a small fortress town still held by the Portuguese but surrounded by the French. Kearsley is the only one who knows the location of the gold. Even though Sharpe has doubts about Kearsley, because of something fishy implied by Hogan, he must trust him to lead the company.

At Almeida, the Portuguese appear well-armed and ready to take on any enemy that will attack their walls. The English Commander of the town is a man named Cox who is glad to meet Sharpe. Cox is impressed with Sharpe's accomplishments at Talavera. He shows Sharpe their defenses and that most of the ammunition is stored in the cathedral and indicates that he could use good riflemen.

Sharpe meets Kearsley who appears to be a strong Christian and thinks that he is helping Sharpe deliver the gold to the Spanish. Kearsley tells Sharpe that they need to take the gold to the British Navy at Lisbon so the Navy may deliver the gold to Cadiz.

A man named Cesar Moreno leads a guerrilla army and holds the gold in the middle of French territory. Another man, El Catolico, who is marrying Moreno's daughter, is afraid of the British plan to steal the gold and is reluctant to release it.

In chapter 4, the march to get the gold begins and Kearsley leads the Company through the countryside. Kearsley is an excellent guide but he annoys the group with his comments and talking. Kearsley does reveal information about the Spanish and French fighting that shows extreme viciousness on both sides. The Spanish women and men fight to protect their countryside and their families so the vicious behavior is somewhat understandable.



They are going to Casatejada where Moreno used to own a great deal of land and dwellings. Kearsley tells the group that the gold is in Moreno's vault. They halt a short distance outside of the town in a gully at Kearsley's insistence. Kearsley explains that the French are lying in wait to ambush anyone who attempts to enter the city.

As they watch the town, five horses approach, two with French soldiers tied naked to their backs. While the French ride in a disorganized fashion in an attempt to rescue their men and are distracted, the Spanish soldiers ride down from the hills to ambush them and shoot at the French.

## Chapter 3-4 Analysis

Part of the secret of Sharpe's mission is revealed in chapter 3. A man that Sharpe knows previously, Hogan, tells Sharpe that his company needs to retrieve gold that will be used for a secret purpose. Hogan refuses to tell Sharpe the purpose for the gold, explaining that the more people that know a secret, the more chance that the secret will be betrayed. It is human nature to spread a secret and betray it, especially for money or power. Sharpe, being a good soldier, obeys orders even though he probably wonders why so much money is needed.

The most interesting part of the quest is that Sharpe's Company is entrusted with finding and retrieving this gold and Wellington is not concerned that they will try to steal the gold for themselves. This shows the reader the strength of Wellington's faith in Sharpe and his Company to get the job done as well as to bring the gold back.

The description of Almeida is interesting as it is the lone survivor in an area held primarily by the French. The mention by Cox of all the exposed ammunition and the fact that the town is being surrounded by French foreshadows the future destruction of the fortress town.

Sharpe's meeting with Kearsley, the man who discovered and planned the return of the gold to Spanish, does not go well. Sharpe learns that Kearsley thinks the Company is escorting the gold to the Navy so that they can return it to the Spanish government. Sharpe realizes that he cannot tell Kearsley the truth or he will not lead them to the gold. Kearsley's faith in God, the Spanish, and his strong sense of right and wrong during war time hints at a problem that will place him between his Spanish friends and his loyalty to the British army very soon. Also, when Kearsley describes the relationship between Moreno, El Catolico, and the gold, the reader knows that getting the gold will be a problem.

Last, Sharpe learns that Josefina's husband, Hardy is in the camp with Moreno and El Catolico guarding the gold. Sharpe appears to have some unresolved feelings about Josefina and finds it difficult to imagine working in peace with her husband. The reader wonders if this is going to cause strife on the quest for the gold.

In chapter 4, Sharpe's annoyance with Kearsley's personality is tempered by his appreciation of his knowledge of the terrain. Sharpe may sometimes make quick





judgments; however, he is reasonable enough to respect Kearsley and see past his irritating qualities to appreciate his skills and be ready to listen to him.

When Kearsley is explaining that everyone in the Spanish population, even the women and especially Moreno's daughter Teresa, are fighting the French, it is obvious he fears and respects Teresa. He specifically mentions her ability to fight like a man, which foreshadows her involvement in future events.

Meanwhile, the description of El Catolico is of a man driven by hate of the French and strong religious beliefs, which makes him a dangerous enemy. He supposedly prays over his victims as he kills them, which Kearsley feels is just a joke on his part. Perhaps El Catolico is not really that religious but just lets people think he is to make the Partisans and others respect him. Kearsley seems to think well of El Catolico but Sharpe's Company is repulsed by the description and later by the actions of the Partisans.

The ruthlessness of the Spanish and the intelligence and ferocity of El Catolico and his group are shown by their turning the tables on the French ambush. They are not afraid to treat the French brutally to win the war, which means they may be very difficult to convince to give up the gold. The reader realizes they want a way to further their own cause, not help out someone else's.



# Chapter 5-6

## Chapter 5-6 Summary

The Company and Kearsley continue to watch the Spanish fight the French from the hill in chapter 5. Sharpe recognizes El Catolico as the leader and then looks for Teresa to see if there is a women fighting among the men, but there are only men. He also looks to see if he can find Hardy by the type of uniform he wears, but sees no sign of him among the Partisans. Seeing only Partisan men, he studies their technique and is impressed with the fighting style. The Spanish quickly capture and kill a great deal of French and then ride away.

Kearsley decides to ride to the Partisans, leaving the Company in the gully, as he wants to let El Catolico know that the British have arrived to escort the gold. Sharpe studies the town and wonders when the French will leave and if he can get a group into the village and steal the gold without the Spanish or French finding out.

Sharpe plans his entrance into the village and Harper supports him once they decide to use Hagman to find their way through the dark. Hagman, a former poacher, is known for his ability to find a path in very little light. After making the plan, Sharpe sleeps until he is woken by a noise. Looking down the hill, he sees Kearsley being chased by a group of Polish lancers.

Knowles tells him not to worry because Kearsley's horse is corn-fed, which makes him faster than any grass-fed horse. Unfortunately a bird startles Kearsley's horse and he falls off the animal. Luckily, he hops back up uninjured and continues the race to escape the lancers.

Kearsley is surrounded and attacked by Polish lancers, even beheading one with his sword. But he has no chance against a whole regiment and with too much dust to see him any longer, Sharpe and his men think he is dead. Once the dust settles, they are relieved and worried when they see that Kearsley has been captured alive.

Sharpe knows that he cannot find the gold in the village without Kearsley and he needs to wait until the French leave and the Spanish once again inhabit the village. Unfortunately, he also knows that Kearsley is the only person that may be able to convince El Catolico to release the gold to the British. Sharpe announces that they are going to attempt to rescue Kearsley that night, even though they are greatly outnumbered.

In chapter 6, Sharpe contemplates the plan for the Company's attack on the village. He knows the French expect the Partisans to attack, so they are well-fortified against a sneak attack. Sharpe knows he must come up with a new way to attack that will catch the French off-guard.



Kearsey is wandering around the village, alive but slightly injured. He gave his word not to make an escape attempt, which pleases Sharpe because it is easier to find and rescue a man who is not chained in an obscure location.

The group head towards the village until Sharpe worries that there may be French soldiers hiding in the fields or waiting in alleyways, so he and Harper scout ahead. Outside the village, Sharpe gives the signal for the rest of the Company to enter.

Making as much noise as possible, they startle the French and the battle begins. Now the French are in shock and not expecting the Company to be lined up volleying shots at them. Continuing deeper into the buildings, they fight through and kill additional French soldiers.

Harper and Sharpe go into Moreno's old house and rescue Kearsey. Looking for an open window, Sharpe finds a beautiful woman tied up. Next to the bed is a hiding Colonial in the French army whom Harper is ordered to watch. After Harper cuts the girl free, she kills the Colonial in a brutal manner and they all escape out the window.

## Chapter 5-6 Analysis

The Spanish armies deal an impressive blow to the French holding the village of Castejada in chapter 5. After watching El Catolico and the Spanish fight, the reader worries that the same passion they apply to fighting may also apply to keeping the gold from the British. Sharpe is also nervous as he realizes El Catolico is an amazing leader and fighter and even Sharpe shows a little concern that he may not get the gold from the Partisan. Sharpe's self-doubt does not last long because his belief in himself and in his men may be deluded, but it keeps him going.

His beliefs and delusions also cause him to plan on sneaking into the village while it is under French control and steal the gold without any Spanish help. Once Kearsey is captured and that plan is thrown out, Sharpe makes an even more insane plan to rescue Kearsey. Even his men think the new plan is crazy but will do anything for Sharpe, always hoping for the best. The reader cannot help wonder when his schemes will fail him and what the cost of his absolute refusal to give up will cost his Company.

In chapter 6, Sharpe knows he has to rescue Kearsey to get the gold. Despite the odds against him, he plans on storming the village. It would be much easier and safer to just give up and head home, but Sharpe refuses to give up on anything. He may be brave but the reader has to question his sanity and intelligence.

Harper also follows Sharpe without question, which shows his intense loyalty and faith in Sharpe and his abilities to persevere in any situation. Hopefully Harper's blind loyalty will not be a problem in the future. Every leader needs someone to question his schemes and Harper does sometimes ask questions, but if Sharpe does not agree with an idea Harper puts forth, then Harper follows Sharpe.

Sharpe's plan appears to work and he rescues Kearsey and a girl. The girl's brutal stabbing of her captor shows her willingness to payback any enemy and the reader wonders if rescuing her is a huge mistake for Sharpe. Her presence also seems to distract Sharpe and we wonder if it may impair his judgment in the future.



# Chapter 7-8

## Chapter 7-8 Summary

Sharpe's men escape through a window in chapter 7. Meanwhile, Sharpe follows the girl they just rescued because he thinks her beautiful and he figures she must be important to the enemy. Following her to the cellar, she stops and shushes him just as a lancer jumps out and attacks them both. Sharpe's instincts save him and then he notices the Spanish bodies littering the floor. The girls searches for and finds Ramon, a man nailed to a wall.

Sharpe frees the man from the wall, with difficulty, and puts him over his shoulder so that they can escape. She leads them to a trap door where they exit and find the rest of the Company right outside. Relieved to see Sharpe alive, the men cheer. He orders everyone to head out of the village just as the approaching lancers descend upon Sharpe's Company. After firing one time at the lancers, he orders them to run.

The remaining French and Polish lancers do not continue their pursuit because they think that there are more men waiting for them. Back at camp, Sharpe takes stock and is glad to learn that only four men are dead and one more dying. Kearsley proceeds to yell at Sharpe for the rescue, but it falls on deaf ears as Sharpe defends his actions. Kearsley is happy to find that Sharpe has rescued Ramon and Teresa who are Cesar Moreno's children.

In chapter 8, the following morning, the men's adrenaline from their successful attack and rescue is wearing off. The wounded man, Kelly, that they have brought back to camp is barely hanging onto life and it reminds everyone of their own mortality.

While watching the village, Kearsley notices that mules are being loaded, which indicates that the French are leaving. Sharpe hopes they will not look for the Company but Kearsley immediately dismisses that hope and tells him they need to keep their current hiding place in the gully.

Kearsley once again lectures Sharpe about how important the gold is to the Spanish because they feel let down by the British army. He worries that without the gold the Spanish may become angry and refuse to support the British.

Sharpe asks Kearsley to find out from Teresa if she has any information about Hardy and the gold. She speaks a little English but is not as fluent as her father, so Kearsley asks her in Spanish. Teresa tells them she has no information, which Sharpe finds hard to believe but lets the questioning go for now.

While looking down, Sharpe notices a huge lancer making his way up to their hiding place. Harper and Sharpe grab the Polish lancer who is extremely tough to capture. Teresa hits him with a musket and the lancer is finally knocked unconscious. Unfortunately, the line of other lancers is still advancing toward their hiding place when



Teresa draws their attention. Stripping naked, she runs away from the Company as if escaping and leads the enemy away from the British.

Teresa survives and the Company remains in the gully until they are sure the French are completely gone from the area. At dawn they have to bury Kelly. Then, with their Polish captive in tow, the Company heads to the village to find the gold.

## Chapter 7-8 Analysis

Sharpe's impulsive nature shows as he runs after the attractive girl in chapter 7. By going away from his men and not helping them escape, he endangers the Company for one person. Sharpe shows that he is a man and sometimes forgets to put the needs of his group above his own desire and curiosity.

When she leads him to the cellar and he sees the bodies of the Spanish, Sharpe feels rage at such senseless killing of women and children, which shows that he has not become completely desensitized by the war. His men also show their emotions when they cheer at finding Sharpe alive and well. He inspires loyalty and trust in the people around him, which makes everyone more likely to go along with Sharpe's wild plans and schemes.

Kearsey's anger at his rescue all for the "gold" shows that he has no clue how important the mission is to recover the gold. Once again Sharpe does not tell him that they plan on taking the gold for the British. Kearsey still believes the best about everyone and his naivete is not a good thing to have during a war. However, Sharpe does see the benefit of rescuing the two Morenos, but his thought about El Catolico being a lucky man in relation to Teresa makes the reader wonder if his lust will blind him or hurt their mission.

Kearsey's continued idealism is shown in chapter 8 as well. He insists that the gold be returned to Cadiz thinking that this small gesture will repair any ill will between the Spanish and British. Sharpe is more realistic and knows that the two groups have a common enemy and need each other, so the gold is not what holds them together.

Teresa shows not only her brutality but her intelligence as she helps the men twice. Her willingness to think quickly and take out the lancer with a gun butt impresses the men but also shows how desensitized she is to the desperate acts that are necessary in war. When the group is about to be discovered, Teresa risks her life by distracting the Polish soldiers by pretending that the missing Polish Sergeant had captured her and she is now running from him naked. This certainly proves to be a distraction and the lancers give up looking for the Sergeant.



# Chapter 9-10

## Chapter 9-10 Summary

The sight that greets the men as they enter the village in chapter 9 both angers and saddens the men. Every man, woman, child, and animal is dead, except for one man from Sharpe's Company that is alive in the village because he is not a Partisan but a prisoner of war, so must be treated honorably. Ramon explains that not everyone wanted to be part of the war and those left in the village were mostly the very young, old or sick.

Sharpe orders the men to be buried and immediately gets back to business. He asks Kearsley where the gold is located so that they can get on with their purpose. Kearsley indicates it is under the hermitage in the Moreno family vault.

After opening the vault, the group discovers that the gold is no longer there. Sharpe angrily interrogates Kearsley who denies knowledge of Hardy and the gold's location. He asks if El Catolico could have taken the gold just as the man appears to make his denial in person.

Kearsley introduces Joaquim Jovellanos, El Catolico, and Sharpe knows this man is trouble. Sharpe asks Joaquim where the gold is located. He says it was taken by the French and Sharpe is unable to prove otherwise because Joaquim slit the lancer's throat on his way into the building. El Catolico also says he is in Sharpe's debt for rescuing Teresa Moreno. Doubtful of everything El Catolico says, Sharpe is frustrated and knows he has a new enemy in Joaquim.

In chapter 10, El Catolico and Sharpe assess each other through challenges and threats. Joaquim is a master swordsman and Sharpe challenges him to take the heavy Calvary sword and fight. The two spar and El Catolico wins easily, insulting Sharpe's fighting abilities.

Heading into the courtyard, Sharpe runs into Moreno who thanks him again for saving his children. Moreno explains that they were taken by surprise by the French when Ramon was sick. Sharpe learns that El Catolico plans to help Almeida, despite the fact that it is held by the British, and the Spanish feel the British have been lax in helping the Spanish. Sharpe notes all the weapons on every man, woman, and child and comments to Moreno about the expense of such equipment. Moreno says they fight for their hatred of the French, not for money.

The ceremony for the Spanish dead starts and ends, and then a separate burial area and ceremony for the British starts and ends because everyone must get back to the business of war. After the funerals, Kearsley announces that he is staying to help the Spanish but El Catolico will escort the Company back to Portugal.



Sharpe notices something strange about the graveyard and Harper points another recent grave. El Catolico brushes this off as belonging to a servant that passed six days ago. Ramon is sad that the British are leaving and is impressed with Sharpe's Company. As they are about to leave, El Catolico announces that the war is lost and Sharpe once again denies that the French have won.

## Chapter 9-10 Analysis

All of the men in the company are affected by the sight of the dead Spaniards in chapter 9. Tears and anger range through the men, which shows that everyone is affected by the brutality of war. Teresa appears unaffected, which means she is either numb from the sequence of events or blinded by her anger. From her previous actions, it seems a combination of the two theories.

When the gold is not in the vault, Sharpe shows the first true crack in his belief that the Company will accomplish the assigned task. Frustrated, he turns to anyone for a solution and hopes that someone other than the French have the gold.

El Catolico denies that the Spanish have the gold but his cold eyes betray his words. Sharpe is astute enough to know that the two countries are supposed to be allies, and that individual people's desires influence their decisions and greed is a big motivator. He strongly suspects that El Catolico has the gold.

In chapter 10, El Catolico expresses his gratitude for the rescue of the Morenos, but his actions do not match his words. The chapter opens with Sharpe and El Catolico fighting a mock duel with their swords, each measuring the others' ability if he were to become an enemy, which of course does happen in the future.

Their sword fight and Sharpe's continued desire for Teresa foreshadows the future issues between the men as well. Also, the fact that Sharpe does not believe El Catolico about the French having the gold lets the reader know the battle is not over and the two men and their allies will fight in the future.





# Chapter 11-12

## Chapter 11-12 Summary

In chapter 11, the men feel like prisoners as they are escorted across the terrain by the Partisans. Harper is sure the Spanish are lying about everything, the gold and the reason for the escort. He tells Sharpe he is sure they are hiding the gold in the grave that he pointed out in the village. Harper explains that based on their religious beliefs, the Partisans, who are devout Catholics, would not have buried a man on Sunday.

Sharpe processes what Harper says and combined with El Catolico killing the lancer before an interrogation and the suspicious escort, he knows he has to go back and see for himself if the gold is in the village. Telling his men to rest, Sharpe forms a plan to head back to the village and check for the gold in the grave. Sharpe knows if he goes back, he is risking the wrath of the French and the Spanish.

Sharpe orders Reid, another soldier to take the wounded on to safety and the rest of the men go back to Casatejada. Excited, the men prepare with only Knowles reminding Sharpe that El Catolico and Kearsy will be angry and that there could be serious repercussions.

In chapter 12, the men split up into two groups. Hagman takes Sharpe and Harper through the terrain while Knowles leads the remaining, larger group of men. At the outskirts of the village, Sharpe and Harper inch forward alone. Sharpe leaves Harper and moves towards the grave and begins to dig. Unfortunately, there are no coins, just El Catolico's mocking face as Sharpe is discovered.

El Catolico makes fun of Sharpe and says he is in the village to guard Teresa. Sharpe tells him they are surrounded by his men just as Harper arrives. Harper explains that he fell into manure and asks Teresa and El Catolico if they are sure the French took the gold. Teresa is sure but Harper announces that he found the gold in the manure.

## Chapter 11-12 Analysis

The value of each man in the company is shown with Harper's helpful comments. The differences and similarities of the men make the Company stronger. Most of the British are Protestants; however, Harper is Irish and therefore a staunch Catholic. He is the only one who would know that the Spanish would not bury a man on Sunday, which makes the grave suspicious.

Sharpe values the opinion of all his men and bases a new plan on Harper's religious beliefs. He hates to lose and has been looking for an excuse to go back and look for the gold. Sharpe never believed El Catolico when he said the French stole the gold, so Harper's theory was the perfect excuse to go back. Once again, the reader sees why Wellington sent Sharpe and his men; they refuse to give up no matter the odds.



The flash at the end of the chapter to what can only be Napoleon, foreshadows that the Company's eventual accomplishments will cause the French problems and the reader suspects the group will succeed and find the gold.

In chapter 12, Sharpe shows his daredevil side when he sneaks into the village by himself, leaving his men outside the walls. When El Catolico discovers him, Sharpe is momentarily angry at Harper but he quickly realizes this thought is unfair as he knew he was looking for an excuse to search for the gold and blaming anyone else for his coming back is unjust.

The exchange between El Catolico and Sharpe shows the animosity between the two men. El Catolico tells Sharpe to watch his back, which indicates that he is just waiting for an excuse to kill Sharpe without ruining the "relationship" between the Spanish and the British.

Meanwhile, Harper's affected accent indicates that he has made an important discovery. This shows the close relationship between the two men, that something as small as a change in accent by Harper means something to Sharpe. Harper's questions about the gold to El Catolico and Teresa show that he knows they are guilty of hiding the gold. El Catolico is silent; however, Teresa's chant that the French stole the gold shows that she needs to believe that they took it; otherwise, her world might be ripped apart with the lie. The reader wonders why it is so important that El Catolico not give the location of the gold to Teresa. Ultimately, Harper reveals he has found the gold.



# Chapter 13-14

## Chapter 13-14 Summary

The men are uncovering the gold in chapter 13. Sharpe tells El Catolico that if any of his men pursue them once the Company leaves the village, his men have orders to shoot and kill. A demonstration of their shooting ability is given and the men are impressed.

Knowles walks up and is pleased to see the gold. Harper once again gets to tell his story about finding the gold, proud that he contributed so much to their mission. They uncover 63 bags of gold and proceed to study the coins. Each coin is worth quite a bit and they discover one bag of gold is missing. El Catolico says he used the gold, but when asked about Hardy, he denies knowing his fate. Teresa and El Catolico say the French have Hardy as their captive.

Sharpe decides to lock all the Spanish up, which he knows will not hold them for long, but it buys the Company some time. As they are heading out, El Catolico promises to follow and kill them. Sharpe takes Teresa hostage and tells him if they follow she will die.

The group moves slowly through the terrain in chapter 14, because Sharpe chooses to take the hard route. The gold is heavy and it slows the group down in terms of weight and needing to trade off who is carrying the packs. Knowles catches up with the group and says he saw no sign of them being followed. Sharpe finds this hard to believe and keeps a close watch out and Teresa's unconcerned attitude also worries him. When they reach the river, Sharpe is pleased and tells them they will cross tonight.

They are all happy to see the Agueda but before they can celebrate, Harper tells Sharpe that the Partisans are approaching. The Partisans are working on surrounding them, which would trap the Company in the valley with no escape. Just before he mentally gives up, Sharpe sees the French approach and the Spanish start to flee when they notice them as well.

Teresa chooses this moment to escape and head toward the fleeing Spanish with Sharpe in pursuit. They fight until she realizes Sharpe is protecting her from a lancer. In that moment, they kiss, hoping the lancer will not find them and stealing a last few moments of human contact.

After the lancers go away, Sharpe notices a locket around Teresa's neck that used to belong to Hardy. Teresa tells him that Hardy is dead. In turn, he tells her the British are not returning the gold to Cadiz but do plan on using it to fight the French. She admits El Catolico killed Hardy and wants to use the gold to buy power, not fight the French. Teresa wants to kill the French, so she decides to side with Sharpe and shows him a fort that they easily defend and hide in for the night.



## Chapter 13-14 Analysis

Once they find the gold in chapter 13, El Catolico is angry and says he will get the gold to Cadiz and the British shall not be allowed to steal the Spanish gold. Sharpe does not believe for a minute he wants the gold to go to Cadiz. He realizes that El Catolico is controlling his emotions and has his own plans for the gold, which foreshadows El Catolico's true goal for money and power.

Some of the Partisans seem shocked by the discovery of the gold and Sharpe knows that only a select few must have known about the gold. If everyone knew, someone might have stolen it for themselves and also it would not have remained a secret. Once again the more people trusted with a secret, the less likely it is that something will remain a secret.

The fact that El Catolico threatens to kill the Company shows that the gold is a personal thing to him and he does not plan to return it to the Spanish government either. As insurance against El Catolico, Sharpe grabs Teresa, which the reader knows is personal to both men. Sharpe is interested in Teresa so this helps further both of his goals. Unfortunately, while neither man is hardened enough to kill the woman, neither know that about the other.

Sharpe tries to out-think the enemy in chapter 14 by taking the long way around. Unfortunately, he and El Catolico seem to be well-matched in terms of thought processes and intelligence.

A piece of luck is all that helps Sharpe escape the Partisans when the French convoy notice the Spanish but not the British and the Partisans flee. Interestingly enough, Sharpe once again refuses to give up and just hopes he will come up with a plan. Also, Teresa distracts Sharpe from his men and mission when she tries to escape and he follows. Sharpe seems to have a weakness for attractive women that could get him in trouble.

Teresa realizes that the only way the gold is going to help fight the French is if she sides with Sharpe. She also seems to realize that Sharpe has a weakness for her and will treat her well, which might be another enticement.



# Chapter 15-16

## Chapter 15-16 Summary

Sharpe and Teresa wake up together in San Anton's courtyard in chapter 15. His men wake him to let him know that El Catolico's men and Kearsy are nearby, heading in their direction. Sharpe orders them to get ready for travel and then goes out to meet Kearsy.

Kearsy is furious with Sharpe for taking the gold, kidnapping the girl, and locking up their allies. His anger is unexpected and Sharpe tells him that the Spanish killed Hardy and Wellington ordered him to bring the gold. Finally, Sharpe tells Kearsy that they are stealing the gold for themselves to fight the French and Kearsy needs to choose sides.

Frustrated with Kearsy's hardheaded attitude, Sharpe tells him that he is going to cut off part of Teresa's ear and will slowly dismember her if El Catolico's men follow or attack.

Sharpe pretends to hurt Teresa, and her screams paralyze the Partisans and shock the Company. As the Company safely walks past the Spanish, Sharpe tells Harper to tell the men that he did not hurt Teresa. At the end of the day, Sharpe knows the French are ahead and the Partisans are following and tells his men to rest and pray.

In chapter 16, Kearsy is trying to convince Sharpe to go to south to Almeida as their water and food are almost gone. Further, he says the French will be at the Coa River. Sharpe is determined to go west and cross the Coa to get to Wellington as soon as possible. At the foot of a slope, Sharpe stops as he feels the enemy must be nearby. Sharpe spots a red epaulet and knows the French are hiding over the hill.

When Isaiah Tongue is shot, they realize the French are close. There is probably cavalry waiting at the bottom of the hill, so Sharpe decides to go right into the skirmish line, which the French do not expect.

They top the western crest and decide to fight there since going down the hill will take them into the cavalry. Sharpe notices even Teresa is shooting with Tongue's rifle. There are a lot of French, so they are forced down the hill and forced to load the guns quickly so that they are not as accurate as usual.

Sharpe is hit in the left armpit by a ricocheting bullet. Sharpe is in pain and bleeding badly, but says they have to get across the valley. Harper says the wound will mend but looks concerned.

Then Sharpe sees about two hundred French lancers and knows that they are dead, but they run anyway. Then he sees cavalry coming from the other direction and has the Company form a square with Teresa in the center, hands his rifle to Kearsy, hears



cheering and passes out. Captain Lossow and his squadron are the cavalry riding to the rescue.

## Chapter 15-16 Analysis

Sharpe is sleeping with Teresa in chapter 15, which means she is a huge distraction. Obviously he is not a morning person because his men hope he will be in a good mood after being with Teresa.

His mood gets worse when he confronts Kearsley's idealism and shatters his illusions. Kearsley is so angry at the British's behavior towards the Spanish allies that he tears up Wellington's orders, which foreshadows issues for Sharpe now that he does not have proof of Wellington's ordering of the mission. Kearsley seems to be fully on the Partisans' side and the reader worries that his concern for El Catolico's group will cause Judas-like betrayal of the Company.

When Sharpe angrily tells Kearsley that he is not going to obey him and that he will slowly maim Teresa if the Company is not allowed to leave safely, we see the harsh but intelligent side of Sharpe. He immediately forms a plan that gets Teresa on his side and keeps Kearsley and El Catolico at bay. The reader cannot help but feel sorry for Teresa's father and we know that Sharpe has solved his immediate problem but has made a more dangerous enemy of Moreno and El Catolico. Now they will stop at nothing to kill him.

In chapter 16 things are not going well for the Company. It seems the French are everywhere and, if that is not enough of a problem, there are also the Partisans. When they are fighting the French, Sharpe is gratified to see Teresa shooting as well, and knows she is a person to have in tight spots. All through this encounter, the bravery of all the men is seen and we can understand why Sharpe is so proud and trusting of his Company.



# Chapter 17-18

## Chapter 17-18 Summary

In chapter 17, Lossow is happy for the opportunity to fight the French and rescue Sharpe and his Company. He feels the French are slow and his men and their sabers will have no problem against the French. They make short work of the lancers and take the Company to a safer area where Sharpe wakes up. His wound is bad and has to be cauterized to stop the bleeding. Harper tells him he almost bled to death.

Sharpe sees the German officer and during reintroductions, Sharpe says they must get to Wellington. Lossow says that is a problem because the French are everywhere. They all rest for now and then plan to cross the river.

The siege has not started on Almeida yet in chapter 18, according to Hogan. Wellington and Hogan are looking at a map to decide where the French are located. Massena is having problems with supplies, which is a typical problem in the Army. Wellington is having money problems because the monarchy in Britain is having its own problems. Wellington has a letter stating that no more money will be sent until autumn, which is why Sharpe's quest is so important. The General asks Hogan if he should warn Cox that Sharpe may be coming with the gold, but decides it should be kept secret from all. Hogan says Sharpe will not go to Almeida anyway so it will not be a problem.

Sharpe sends Knowles to find a house for the Company to stay in with a room for Teresa as well. Then he goes with Kearsley and Lossow to find Cox. When Sharpe meets with Cox in the fortress, he finds El Catolico is to be given the gold, and Cox will not let Sharpe leave with the gold. He convinces Cox to let him send a telegram to Wellington in the morning for orders to let Sharpe leave with the gold. They all decide to retire for the night. Sharpe goes into the bedroom where Teresa is waiting for him.

## Chapter 17-18 Analysis

In chapter 17 we see the bravery of Lossow's squadron as well. Lossow is an interesting character in that he is happy to fight the French lancers and very confident in his ability to win. It is humorous when he says it is good of the German King to give him this chance to fight, and all his men seem to feel the same way. This kind of attitude is obviously needed in a war: being willing to put up with the killing and bad living conditions. The reader admires his character almost as much as Sharpe, Harper and some of the others. Also, when he says they all need to cut themselves to use more of Teresa's dress (as bandages) so she will be naked, it makes for a good laugh in a novel that has been somewhat gruesome with death and strife.

The General decides to keep the gold a secret from Cox, which is a mistake. If he had trusted Cox with the information, a lot of trouble would have been avoided and he would have had some extra time because the siege of the fortress would have held up the



French army for weeks. Instead it is blown up and many are killed that might not have been lost in the war. The secrecy is necessary because the French would have come sooner if they had known what was being built and then made it to Lisbon.

When Hogan says Sharpe will not go to Almeida, he does not know about the harassment of the Company by both the French and the Partisans. Hogan does not know Sharpe has been shot as well, so they have to go to Almeida to recover in safety. El Catolico has anticipated just such a move and has already arrived there with fake orders he wrote to escort the gold himself. Unfortunately, Cox believes the paper because it is Spanish gold. Sharpe no longer has his orders to show Cox as they were destroyed earlier by Kearsey. Kearsey admits to destroying the orders but adds that they did not actually mention the gold anyway and of course this was because of the "secret."

Teresa is in bed waiting for Sharpe but when he lies down and holds her, she asks if she may keep the gun she took from Hagman's body when the Company was attacked. Sharpe says yes, it is hers. Here we can see that Teresa is always thinking about killing the French, even in an intimate moment. We have to wonder what this portends for any future with Sharpe.





# Chapter 19-20

## Chapter 19-20 Summary

In chapter 19, Teresa and Sharpe are in bed and she asks about the scars on his back. He says they were caused by liars whom he will eventually kill. Sharpe asks her about Hardy but she says she did not sleep with him even though he wanted her. She notices a locket in his pocket and more talk goes on about it and friendships.

Sharpe needs to leave to go to the telegraph area and tells Teresa he will see her later. Sharpe goes into the street and notices the close siege has not started yet, but trenches and such are being dug in preparation. The Portuguese gunners are firing on the French, which greatly pleases Lossow. He goes with Sharpe to the telegraph station where Sharpe asks about the way messages are sent. When the messages arrive, Sharpe finds his is not there, so Lossow goes to see Cox and find out why their message is missing while Sharpe waits.

Unfortunately the French have moved a gun closer to the fortress than anyone realized and they begin to fire on the fort. The Portuguese gunners fire back but with little effect. It seems they are trying to hit the telegraph and stop communications. Lossow arrives back with the message, but as it is still being sent when a French shell hits the telegraph and the boy sending the message is killed. Harper says that maybe another telegraph can be put up but the boy was the last one able to operate the telegraph, so it is now useless. The French have only fired four shots to destroy the telegraph and Harper says you have to admire them for achieving their goal in so few shots. Sharpe does not hold out much hope for Cox letting them leave with the gold at this point.

Sharpe, Harper and Lossow are looking for Cox in chapter 20. They find him in the cathedral having a problem with the gunpowder getting damp. He tells Sharpe he is busy, but he wants the gold sent to his headquarters and tells Sharpe to wait there as well.

He waits all afternoon, even falling asleep in a chair until Cesar Moreno enters. They discuss Teresa and how smart she is and Moreno asks for Sharpe's word that nothing will hurt her. Moreno also warns Sharpe to be careful because El Catolico will not let him have the gold and is better with a sword.

Sharpe falls asleep after Moreno leaves and stays asleep until Cox enters. Cox is irate that his men will not release the gold but Sharpe plays dumb and says he has been sitting waiting for him as he was told. El Catolico is with him and Cox tells Sharpe he has decided to release the gold to the Partisans in the morning, the date of which is August, the twenty-seventh, at the north gate. El Catolico says that he can stay to help in the fortress' defense but he really wants revenge against Sharpe. Cox tells Sharpe that he must also stay to help with the defense of Almeida because he needs rifles.



These decisions on Cox's part are ill-fated as now Sharpe is desperate and desperate men do desperate things.

## Chapter 19-20 Analysis

When Sharpe asks his men to watch out for Teresa while he sends a telegraph, it occurs to him that most soldiers could not be trusted with her life or with the gold. He trusts his men with his life so why would he not trust them not with other things. The Company men all follow Sharpe without question and are very loyal. The reader knows Sharpe is a really admirable soldier and can understand Wellington's trust in him.

It seems odd that there is only one telegraph operator but it is revealed that the other died of the pox, revealing the primitive state of medical care in 1810. Soldiers also died of wounds that would be nothing today because of antibiotics and modern surgery. A wound such as Sharpe received in his shoulder would have been considered pretty bad and he is lucky to recover so quickly without infection.

When Sharpe sees all the ammunition stored in the cathedral in chapter 20, even he is impressed. With this amount available, he feels Almeida can hold out for months. The place is strong with huge joists and very thick floors; so Sharpe feels it is unlikely to be destroyed easily by shells. This foreshadows that the only way it can be destroyed is through human error or sabotage.

When Cox demands the gold be sent to his quarters, Sharpe has no intention of complying. Lossow goes back to take care of the situation and Harper goes with him. Sharpe tells Harper to look after Teresa and he realizes he loves her.



# Chapter 21-22

## Chapter 21-22 Summary

Chapter 21 opens with Sharpe muttering about being stuck since Cox will not allow them to leave. When he asks Harper about Teresa, he learns she has been learning to use a saber from Sergeant Helmet, the very large German in Lossow's Cavalry who helps keep the gold from Cox's men.

Sharpe goes into the cathedral and saws off the weights on the leather curtain going to the deep crypt that protects it in case of an explosion in the first vault. Next he goes to the bakery where he has Helmet bash in the door. Then he looks around at the north gate and starts back to the house they are using.

On the way back, the Partisans pull a sneak attack but are routed by Sharpe, his men, and three Germans. The commotion draws the interest of the Portuguese under the command of an old friend, Lieutenant Tom Garrard who is pleased to see Sharpe. When asked if there is anything he can do, Sharpe replies he can open a gate tonight. However, when he finds out why they need to leave, he says they are under orders to not allow the gold out so cannot help. Sharpe and his men then go back to the house where he realizes El Catolico may be on the roof of the house.

In chapter 22, Sharpe does not find El Catolico on the roof of any of the houses, but Sharpe knows he will come that night for revenge even though he is supposed to get the gold in the morning.

Sharpe, Harper, Knowles and Lossow go into a separate room to discuss options for taking the gold to Wellington. Some crazy ideas are suggested but they know none of them will work. Sharpe tells them that the General has told him that the gold is more important to the war effort than anything else.

When Teresa feels cold, she and Sharpe go upstairs for a coat. He instinctively knows El Catolico is near so he sends Teresa downstairs alone. He drops to the street and then climbs to the church roof. He finds Spaniards coming up through a trap door that he starts to shut when El Catolico asks to come up. El Catolico says he plans on killing Sharpe and they fight with swords. By letting El Catolico put his sword in Sharpe's leg; Sharpe gets the advantage, knocks him down, and puts the blade through El Catolico's neck.

He tells Knowles and Harper that Teresa will eventually be the new leader of the Partisans. In the meantime they have to get the gold to Wellington and past Cox. Sharpe feels the only way to do this is by blowing up the Fortress of Almeida.



## Chapter 21-22 Analysis

In chapter 21, Teresa's desire to learn new methods of fighting and killing is seen by her lessons about using a saber. She is a very determined person and plans to keep killing the French for revenge as long as she is capable. Sharpe accepts this and also knows that eventually she will have to leave and go back to lead the Partisan group.

Sharpe's men worry that he has gone a bit crazy when he begins muttering to himself. He seems distracted and not himself. Cox's attitude has made him very angry and he is ready to do almost anything to enable him to leave with the gold. This foreshadows that he will do what is needed no matter how drastic, just as Wellington knew he would. Harper wonders what Sharpe is up to when he goes into the cathedral and asks, but Sharpe does not tell him even though he trusts Harper. Sharpe says he will tell him later, and we realize Sharpe does not really seem to totally know what he is thinking, but a plan seems to be taking shape and it will probably be a risky idea as always seems to be the case with Sharpe.

In chapter 22, Sharpe knows he must eventually confront El Catolico and finally does so on the roof of the church. When the Partisan comes through the trap door, Sharpe could have killed him with no risk right then. However, as El Catolico knows, Sharpe is an honorable man and would never kill in cold blood but would want a fair fight. El Catolico would not have given Sharpe a similar chance and had planned on shooting him from the church roof. Teresa knows Sharpe is honorable and that is one reason she has switched to his side.

When Sharpe finally tells Harper, Knowles, Lossow and Teresa his plan to blow up Almeida, they are all shocked. He has prepared them for this idea by showing them that nothing else is going to work. Teresa is the only one who heartily endorses the idea right away and Harper only says "how?"



# Chapter 23-24

## Chapter 23-24 Summary

In chapter 23, it is being debated how long Almeida will be able to defend itself before being overrun by the French. Some think six weeks and some eight. Cox feels that with the big guns, Almeida will not endure long enough for the rains to begin and save them.

Sharpe hates to blow the fortress up but Cox will not let him leave with the badly needed gold so feels he has no choice. Harper and Helmet arrive with a barrel of gunpowder and make a trail across the plaza to the cathedral. Sharpe plans to light the fuse and run to safety at a house they have chosen with a deep cellar. Lossow once again asks him if he is sure about this crazy plan and Sharpe says yes, so Lossow leaves for shelter.

Meanwhile, the sentries do not even realize what is going on, which seems a little odd. He lights the powder but the French start shooting shells into the fortress and a shell hits much closer to the cathedral, which ignites the gunpowder sooner than expected. Harper, Teresa and Sharpe have no time to make it to the cellar, so get in the bread ovens, which are very sturdy and hope for the best. Sharpe hears a loud noise and knows the cartridges and gunpowder are exploding in the cathedral and that many will die. The ammunition creates a huge explosion and levels the cathedral, bakery, and many houses in the north of the town. It also takes roofs off of houses in the south of town.

Everyone is stunned, including the French, as they did not expect this huge explosion. Wellington hears the noise twenty-five miles away and knows Almeida has fallen and he does not have his six weeks.

Kearsey and about five hundred men have died in the explosion in chapter 24. Sharpe, Teresa and Harper survive in the three foot thick ovens. Lossow and Helmet are fine in the cellar as well.

Sharpe and Lossow find Cox and ask for permission to leave the fortress, which he gives without thinking as he has forgotten the gold and everything else because of the vast destruction. When Cesar Moreno asks Sharpe about Teresa, he says she is fine but that Joaquim is dead. He lies about the explosion and tells Moreno, who has lost about half of his men, that the explosion was an accident. The French are so busy staring at the north wall that the company leaves without incident and head to give Wellington the gold.

## Chapter 23-24 Analysis

Cox hopes to hold Almeida but knows in his heart that there is not much chance. If he had not been so stubborn about letting Sharpe leave with the gold, he may have been



able to hold the fortress for awhile, which would have helped the war effort. Sharpe feels that the gold is more important than permitting the fortress to stand, perhaps for six more weeks, and occupying the French force there, as that is not a certainty, and Wellington has told him the gold is the most important part of his mission. He hates the thought of the losing many lives, as well as the loss of Almeida, but makes the agonizing decision to blow up the cathedral so he can leave with the gold in the confusion.

Even Sharpe does not realize how bad the results of the blast will be as seen in chapter 24. He knows the General picked him for his ruthlessness but he still feels pain as much as any other man and hates to have killed so many men. Sharpe also has to lie to Moreno about the cause of the explosion because the Partisan would be ready to fight and kill him if he knew the truth.

Cox is also deeply distressed by the destruction, but does not have any suspicions that the explosion was caused by anything other than a French shell hitting just right. Sharpe was correct in his assessment that Cox would be distracted and let them go without thinking. He seems to be a good strategist but the cost is appalling.



# Epilogue

## Epilogue Summary

When Hogan asks Sharpe about Almeida, Richard basically tells him nothing, just that they got the gold. Sharpe does ask which was more important, the gold or Almeida and Hogan says definitely the gold. The Lines of Torres Vedras are being built and without the gold to pay for the equipment and the workers, the work had come to a standstill. These lines are basically 3 long hill fortifications that run from the Atlantic to the Tagus, with hundreds of guns on top in small stone buildings aimed at the area where Massena must cross to invade Lisbon. This will stop his advance and his troops will starve if they remain there because it is not possible to go around as the British Navy waits in the peninsula. The war is not lost.

Hogan asks about Teresa and Sharpe tells him about her and the reader learns that he has given her 1000 of the gold coins to help fund the Partisans cause against the French. He also gives her his personal rifle as the one she was using was promised to Roman.

Sharpe mentions Hardy and Hogan tells him that Josefina is in Lisbon and gives Sharpe her address. We also find from Lawford that reinforcements are on the way: 270 men. In a war today this number would be considered nothing but is a great deal in the 1800's.

## Epilogue Analysis

We have to wonder if Sharpe is afraid to reveal that he was responsible for blowing up Almeida to Hogan. Perhaps the less that he knows about what really happened the better. Hogan does suspect but without confirmation can only wonder at the truth.

Sharpe does keep his word to Teresa to help her people but refuses to stay with her. The army is very important to him and he is a loyal soldier though an unconventional one, which is one reason Wellington picked him for the gold mission in the first place. He does say that they will meet again leaving the reader to wonder when and how.

When Sharpe hears about Josefina being in the area, he goes to see her. He does think of Teresa but decides to be intimate with Josefina anyway. One would think he would be unwilling to have anything to do with her because she left him for Hardy. Sharpe asks the Lieutenant in Josefina's house how much the Lieutenant paid for being there, so it seems Josefina has found an alternative source of income.

# Historical Note

## Historical Note Summary and Analysis

The historical notes at the end of the novel are informative and reveal what is historically accurate. It is true that Almeida's cathedral did blow up on August 27, 1810 and a Brigadier Cox who was in charge was forced to surrender to the French the next day. The exact cause of the explosion is unknown and a soldier really did save himself by getting in a bread oven like Sharpe, Harper and Teresa.

The Lines of Torres Vedras are real and remnants of the fortifications can still be seen today. What a feat this must have been at that time period, when there was little in the way of heavy equipment. With the desire to do something, and the manpower and raw materials available, almost anything can be accomplished.





# Characters

## Captain Richard Sharpe

Richard Sharpe is Captain of the Light Company of the South Essex Regiment. He is a 6 foot, 33 year old Irishman whose parents never married, a fact that carries a stigma in the 1800's. He is taught to read and write as an adult by William Lawford, his Colonel, whom he likes even though Lawford is rich and privileged. Sharpe has served with him since India where as a Sergeant, Sharpe helped keep Lawford alive. Captain Sharpe has been a soldier for seventeen years, starting as a Private, then Sergeant, then finally an officer with all the promotions earned by his battlefield experience because he did not have the money to buy a promotion.

When he meets Captain Lossow in the abandoned town on the way to Celorico, Sharpe is described in more detail and the impression his clothes give is not great, as they are well-worn due to age. This is why Lieutenant Ayres does not realize that Sharpe is a Captain. He has a worn green jacket, with French pants and French leather boots. He and his men also have French hide packs. Most officers of a Light Company carry a saber, but Sharpe has a large, heavy, thirty-five inch sword, which is fine for a big man like him.

Sharpe's men respect him as a leader and will follow him without question and are always confident that they will win as Sharpe tells them so and they believe in him. This can be seen when he repeatedly battles almost impossible odds and somehow comes out on top. His bravery and his attitude, especially his belief that you never give up, are the very reasons Wellington chooses him for what may turn out to be an almost impossible task against incredible odds.

## Sergeant Patrick Harper

Sergeant Patrick Harper is a large, Catholic Irishman from Donegal who at 6'4" is actually taller than Sharpe. They have fought together for years and are good friends. Harper is Sharpe's right hand man because of his fighting ability and intelligence. He has a great deal of confidence in his own abilities and seems to feel the Irish are superior fighters, even against a much bigger contingency of men, as seen when they talk about rescuing Major Kearsley against incredible odds. There are only 53 men in their company compared to 800 French, but Harper says 13 men are Irish, as if that says it all. He is able to fire the seven-barreled gun Sharpe gave him as a Christmas gift. Few men are big enough or strong enough to fire this gun and even he admits the recoil is rough. A 6'4" man at this time is very large because people in 1810 are smaller due to poor diet and more illnesses. Even now, Harper would be considered a good-sized man.



When the Company goes into Casatejada the first time, Harper is appalled at the dead children in the hermitage and actually cries. The reader learns he has strong emotions and deep down, a tender heart, even though he is a soldier. Harper is the one that suggests they go back to Casatejada because he is suspicious of the freshly dug grave. Being Sharpe's right hand man means he is the one backing the Captain when they go into Casatejada looking for the gold. When he sees a Partisan soldier jabbing the manure with his sword, Harper deduces that something of value is in the manure and finds the gold. Harper is also one of the few who dares to question Sharpe. Sharpe usually listens because he values the Irishman's advice and sometimes Harper seems to read Sharpe's mind.

## **Teresa Moreno**

Teresa Moreno is the daughter of Cesar Moreno and is engaged to El Catolico, who is now the Partisan leader instead of her father. Sharpe rescues her from the French in Casatejada where she is being held as a hostage. The French hope that the Partisans will attempt to rescue her in the town where they set up an ambush. She turns out to be the love interest in this novel as she falls for Sharpe after he kidnaps her. Teresa is very brave and as good a fighter as any man according to Kearsley. She shows her determination when she will not accept being rescued by Sharpe until they find her brother and save him as well.

Teresa's mother was killed by the French and she is determined to kill as many French as possible. She decides to stop fighting Sharpe when he kidnaps her because he promises to give her money to help fight the French. Teresa does seem to honestly fall for Sharpe and the reader wonders if she ever liked El Catolico. She does not seem to trust him to do the best for the people. Teresa helps the Company many times and learns to use a rifle quickly when there is need.

Teresa is a quick thinker as evidenced when she kills the enemy Sergeant that comes into the gully in which the Company is hiding. She also distracts the French from continuing their search for their lost Sergeant, thus saving everyone.

## **Lieutenant Colonel the Honorable William Lawford**

William Lawford is a rich Lieutenant Colonel as well as the head of Sharpe's company. Sharpe and he are both 33 years old, but he has the advantage of wealth, which enabled him to start out as an officer. Rich men can buy a commission; however, Lawford's rank is deserved as he is a good leader. Lawford is ambitious, smart, and wealthy so he seems to have it all, yet he cares for Sharpe even though he feels Sharpe does not have the best attitude. Lawford is a good politician and has helped the unit feel pride in their Company and gives each man a badge to wear after Talavera, which makes them all feel they have worth in his eyes.

Lawford meets Sharpe in Celorico when the Captain has to appear before Wellington because of a complaint by Lieutenant Ayres. Lawford is in his best uniform and is



appalled that Sharpe is dressed so poorly to meet with Wellington. He tries to reason with Sharpe about his attitude toward Ayres and tells him he will need to apologize to the Provost as the General cannot keep excusing Sharpe's bad behavior. Lawford even gets angry when Sharpe refuses to apologize. The anger is apparently rare for him and Lawford cools down quickly.

## Colonel Joaquin

El Catolico is a tall, dark, thin man about three years older than Sharpe and a local Partisan leader who plans to marry Teresa Moreno. He was once a Colonel in the Spanish army and is Catholic. Kearsley tells Knowles that he has seen Joaquin skin a Frenchman while praying over him at the same time. He wants the gold for his people and also for the power it gives him. El Catolico follows Sharpe to Almeida to get the gold back and will do almost anything to keep the gold. Joaquin does seem to value Teresa, which enables Sharpe to get away with the gold in the first place. Eventually, El Catolico's focus on acquiring the gold for himself and his belief in his superiority as a fighter get him killed at Sharpe's hand.

## Captain Lossow

Captain Lossow is a German cavalry officer who admires the Light Company for their deeds at Talavera. Sharpe admires the German infantry because he feels they do their job well. Lossow is a square-faced, pleasant man in the blue uniform of the King's German Legion and is carrying a curved saber when Sharpe first meets him. He warns Sharpe about the provosts being in the village and they talk briefly. He knows who Sharpe is and says he will be patrolling the Coa and hopes to get an eagle himself.

Sharpe is later aided by Captain Lossow and his men near Almeida when the French lancers greatly outnumber his Company. He leads his horse, Thor against the French lancers, laughing at the great opportunity to do battle. Lossow seems to have a unique sense of humor and really loves to fight. He also has great confidence in his and his men's abilities and feels they are every bit as good as British infantry. According to Sharpe, Lossow's men are better than the British.

## Major Kearsley

Major Kearsley is a small, short man with a large, grey moustache that does exploring for Hogan and sends back information and maps from behind enemy lines. He leads Sharpe to the city of Casatejada to get the gold for Wellington, even though the Major thinks the gold is going to the Spanish. He also has a strange sense of what is "clever" and is a brave man, which is seen when he fights the French alone from his horse outside of Casatejada.



## Lieutenant Robert Knowles

Lieutenant Robert Knowles is a soldier in the Light Company of the South Essex Regiment under Sharpe. He is envious of Harper's friendship with Sharpe and does not approve when anything critical is said about Sharpe. Knowles is a good and brave soldier and also seems to be smart.

## Sergeant Helmet

Sergeant Helmet is a small, stocky German with immense strength who is in Lossow's cavalry. He teaches Teresa to use a saber. Helmet chews furniture, splinters doors and is an all around interesting character. He helps rout the Partisans when they attack Sharpe, Harper, Hagman, and Roach in Almeida at night. He also helps with carrying the barrel of gunpowder when Sharpe blows up Almeida.

## Sir Arthur Wellesley (General Wellington)

Sir Arthur Wellesley (General Wellington) is the head British commander and a brilliant man. He has made his headquarters in Celorico and seems to like Sharpe though he feels he is a rogue. However, he knows that if anyone can get the gold, it is Sharpe. Sharpe saves Wellington's life in 1803 when they are fighting in India at the battle of Assaye.

## Daniel Hagman

Daniel Hagman is a small man who is a former poacher and Cheshireman. He has good night vision and gets the Company safely through the dark several times. Hagman is also a very good shot and is one of the best of the riflemen, in spite of being one of the oldest men in the Company, as he is in his forties. In that time, forty was considered somewhat old, especially for a common soldier, as many did not make it to that age.

## Lieutenant Ayres

Lieutenant Ayres is the Provost Marshal who catches one of Sharpe's men stealing a chicken. He wants to hang the thief but Sharpe will not let him, so Ayres complains to Wellington. When Sharpe arrives in Celorico, he finds he is to be brought before Wellington for the offense but basically gets a slap on the wrist as the General has bigger things in mind for Sharpe.

## Ramon Moreno

Ramon Moreno is Teresa's dark-eyed brother who is a hostage in Casatejada where Sharpe and Teresa rescue him. He is nailed to the stone wall by the French, surrounded



by the dead. He feels great hatred toward the French because many of his friends in the village have been savagely murdered.

## **Major Cox**

Major Cox is in charge of Almeida and believes El Catolico when he says that the gold rightfully belongs to the Spanish. Cox also believes El Catolico plans to take it to Cadiz, which goes to prove how gullible or perhaps stupid Cox is. He will not accept Sharpe's explanation that Lord Wellington wants the gold brought to him. Cox orders Sharpe to give the gold to El Catolico, which leads to the destruction of Almeida by Sharpe.

## **Captain Claud Hardy**

Captain Claud Hardy is the rich, young cavalry officer that Josefina left Sharpe for after only a few nights together.

## **Michael Hogan**

Hogan is a spy for Wellington and tells Sharpe he gathers intelligence about the enemy and draws maps.

## **Cesar Moreno**

Cesar Moreno is the guerrilla leader with grey hair and grey moustache who brought the gold from Salamanca. Before the French came, he was a wealthy landowner with a large house in Casatejada.

## **Jose**

Jose is one of El Catolico's Lieutenants and the surly leader of the Company's escort when they leave Casatejada. He is killed by the French.



# Objects/Places

## Telegraph

A telegraph is hooked up to Wellington's headquarters. The telegraph is a device for the army that uses bladders that go across ropes and transmits messages quickly across a distance. The technology is new and helps Wellington's army communicate more effectively.

## Seven-barreled Gun

The seven-barreled gun is carried by Harper and was a Christmas present from Sharpe. Harper is one of the few men that can handle the recoil from the powerful weapon, which is said to have the power of a small cannon. Only a few hundred of the squat guns exist and they were originally made for the Navy.

## Sharpe's Sword

Sharpe's sword is a Heavy Calvary sword and is made of heavy steal, 35 inches long, and straight-bladed, and requires a tall, powerful man to wield it.

## Eagle

The Eagle is a badge given to Sharpe. A French battalion at Talavera was attacked by Sharpe and his South Essex Light Company captured the battalion's standard. Sharpe's Lieutenant Colonel, Lawford, had a gold eagle in chains badge made and Sharpe wears it on his sash to show that Sharpe's company captured a French standard. So far they are the only ones to get an eagle, so have become well known for the feat.

## Hermitage

Hermitage is the actual building that is said to contain the gold located in Casatejada.

## Moreno Vault

The Moreno vault is under a slab in the floor of the hermitage. It has the Moreno name on it as well as their coat of arms and seems to be an underground crypt, which explains why the French did not bother to pry the slab up. After it is opened by Sharpe, the group learns the crypt does not contain the gold.



## Manure Heap

The Manure heap is in Casatejada and is where Harper finds the gold buried. Harper becomes suspicious when he sees one of El Catolico's men jabbing the manure with his sword.

## Donegal

Donegal is the home of Patrick Harper and is in the Province of Ulster in Ireland and has moors, which Harper remembers fondly.

## South Essex

South Essex is the area in England where Sharpe's regiment is from.

## Redcoats

Redcoats is a term often used to refer to a soldier in the British Army. At the time it was because of the color of the uniforms worn by many of the regiments.

## Hussars

Hussars is a term used for light cavalry riders, which originated in Hungary but is used to refer to the French cavalry in this book. They generally used light sabers to fight because it is more practical to do so from horseback.

## Bayonet

A Bayonet is a knife-like object that Sharpe's Company fixes to the end of their rifles, which effectively turns the gun into a spear. It is a close-combat weapon used when the gun can no longer fire. This is necessary as rifles took a long time to reload in the 1800s.

## Ring

A silver ring, engraved with an eagle, that Josefina bought for Sharpe before Talavera and before she left with Hardy.



## San Anton's Courtyard Rampart

San Anton's courtyard rampart is the place where Sharpe stands to talk to Knowles. They look into the valley and view the stream that Sharpe and Teresa laid in when hiding from the French lancers.

## Grasshoppers

Grasshoppers is the name the French give the riflemen that wear green in the British army. Their sharp shooting is greatly respected because they can kill at three hundred paces.

## Voltigeurs

Voltigeurs are the French light infantry that wore blue uniforms with red epaulets on their shoulders, which made them easy to recognize.

## Celorico

Celorico is the town Sharpe's Company is marching to at the start of the book. They have been patrolling in the south before their march. Wellington's headquarter is based in Celorico, which is 25 miles from Almeida.

## Casatejada

Casatejada is the village where the gold is supposed to be and also the home of the Morenos. The village is where Sharpe first encounters El Catolico and his Partisans. He also rescues Teresa Moreno and her brother. The gold is hidden in a manure-heap in the village.

## Almeida

Almeida is a northern fortress town in Portugal opposite the Spanish fortresses of Ciudad Rodrigo and Fort Concepcion. The town's primary mission is to protect the crossings of the River Coa, which form a natural barrier between Portugal and Spain. Sharpe's men take him to the fortress with the gold as there are too many French all around for them to find somewhere safe to spend the night when he is badly wounded. Major Cox will not let Sharpe leave with the gold, so Sharpe ends up destroying the fortress of Almeida because he feels the gold is more important than Almeida.





## **Ford of San Anton**

Ford of San Anton is a ford used to cross the river Agueda. Sharpe's Company must cross here to continue to the Coa. On the near side of the ford is an old fort partially in ruins where the Company seeks shelter after encountering the French. They are able to defend the only opening in the fort to keep El Catolico out even though they are greatly outnumbered.

## **Cadiz**

Cadiz is the fortress harbor in Spain where Major Kearsley believes the gold is going to be taken by the British.

## **Coa River**

Coa River is an important river that the British are trying to guard and Lossow is being sent to patrol. Almeida is very close to the east bank of this river.



# Themes

## Conflict of Loyalty

One of the themes in Sharpe's Gold is conflict of loyalty. In war, loyalties are not as clear-cut as they first appear. People on all sides have families, friends, and beliefs that may conflict with the "side" of the war on which they are supposed to be.

Kearsey is a British officer who has been working with the Partisans for much of his time in the war. He has been so integrated with the Spanish that he views the British treatment of them as unfair. Sharpe is unable to tell Kearsey the truth about the goal for the gold because of his strong belief in fairness. He is unable to side with the British because he is "supposed" to; instead Kearsey tries to do what he feels is fair and right. In war there is not a great deal of room for right and wrong because armies need people who follow orders. When Kearsey does find out Wellington's true intentions for the gold, he is furious. Kearsey tries to do everything possible to return the gold to the Partisans, despite the fact that he is a soldier in the British army and should be doing what the General has commanded.

Teresa's loyalty is also split between the Partisans and the British. Initially, she is loyal to the Partisans because they are still fighting the French. When Teresa is kidnapped by Sharpe and realizes he intends to use the gold to fight the French, she switches sides even though her father, brother, and fiancée are all Partisans. She knows her fiancée, who is the leader of the Partisans, thinks the war is lost and plans to use the gold for his own ends and for the power it will give him. Teresa's loyalty is split between her family and the British because her goals differ from both groups. She only wants to kill the French and exact revenge for the death of her mother.

In Almeida, when Sharpe wants to leave to take the gold to Wellington, the British commander of the fortress, Cox, refuses to let him leave with the gold. Cox feels the Spanish have more claim over the gold. Unknowingly, he is disobeying his General and siding with the Partisans. This forces Sharpe's loyalties to be torn as well. Despite the fact the fort is held by the British, Sharpe feels the only way to leave with the gold is by destroying the fort to cause confusion so that he may take the gold to Wellington. In his mind, the greater good outweighs the loss of the fortress town. Sharpe is forced to make a decision that tears him between two separate sets of orders.

## Greed & Power

In Sharpe's Gold, everyone is fighting for gold. They do fight against the French, but the allies and their friends spend more time fighting over the gold than they do fighting the French.

Everyone has their own purpose for wanting the gold. Wellington wants to take the gold from the Spanish for some secret purpose. London refuses to send more money for



troops and support because they have their "own problems." The monarch is ill and there is opposition to more money being spent, so Wellington must come up with his own funds.

Wellington wants to take the gold to help the war effort and expects all the gold to come back to him intact. The gold will give the British the power to stop the French, or at least that is Wellington's hope. He sends Captain Sharpe's company after the gold because they are good soldiers who do not seem to let greed change their orders or course of action. Sharpe takes the gold from the Partisans who say they plan to return the gold to their own people.

Most of the Partisans think the French stole the gold and do not realize that their leader, El Catolico is hiding the gold. When the gold is found, where El Catolico hid it, in the manure, he promises that he plans on returning the gold to his people in Lisbon and believes the British are greedy and plan to use it for themselves.

El Catolico believes the war effort is already lost, so he uses a bag of the gold to buy his people supplies and then plans on using the gold to buy himself safety and power when the French conquer the Spanish. Thus, his true purpose in keeping the gold was acquiring power.

Just because El Catolico was greedy and planned on using the gold for his own purpose, does not excuse Wellington's stealing it as any less greedy. Wellington thinks he has a nobler purpose, but in his own way, he is taking the gold from its rightful owners to make himself and the British more powerful, which would be accomplished by stopping the French.

In the end, Sharpe takes a little bit of the gold for himself and the Company, gives some to Teresa, El Catolico's replacement, gives some to the German Calvary that helped them retrieve the gold, and then the remaining to Wellington. It seems that no matter how noble the original intention, that gold always leads people down a path of greed and power. Nobody can resist keeping some of the reward.

## **Power of Hope and Belief**

One of the main themes in Sharpe's Gold is the power of hope and belief. Most Spaniards think Spain has been lost to the French and are just waiting for them to complete their invasion and take over. The British are running out of money, food, and manpower but Wellington and a few select Companies still believe that the French have not and will not win.

One Company that believes that the war can still be won is the Light Company of the South Essex Regiment lead by Captain Richard Sharpe. Some of his men worry that the war is lost but they have intense faith in their leader and he refuses to accept that the French can or will win.



Wellington is so impressed with Sharpe's dedication and belief that everything will work out for the British that the General sends the Company on a difficult mission to rescue Spanish gold that will help salvage the war effort. During the mission, sometimes hope is the only thing that keeps Sharpe and the Company going.

When they reach the village where the gold is supposed to be located and find it missing, Sharpe momentarily gives up, but despite outward appearances, he is looking for any excuse to go back and look for the gold. Harper, Sharpe's friend and a member of his Company, gives him a reason and they go back to look for the gold. Once again, his theory is wrong and the gold is missing and Sharpe is momentarily angry. Still, he hopes that something will change just as Harper stumbles on the gold.

On the road back to Wellington, surrounded by the Partisans and the French, Sharpe keeps pushing forward despite the fact that the situation appears hopeless and it seems they are all going to die or be captured. Most people would have given up and surrendered, but luckily, Sharpe is rescued by a German Calvary, which recharges his belief that his mission will succeed.

Injured in the battle, Sharpe, his Company, and the Germans take refuge in Almeida. The man in charge, Cox, refuses to let Sharpe leave with the gold, believing that the Partisans should keep the gold to take to Lisbon. Cox is actually a good soldier but his belief in the inherent good in someone like El Catolico and the truth of his documents is naive. Originally, even Kearsley believed in El Catolico over his own people so it is obvious that El Catolico spouts a good line. Sharpe believes that a telegraph from Wellington will help and convinces Cox to let them send a message to Wellington's camp.

When the French destroy the telegraph, Sharpe should feel like the mission is doomed to fail but instead he still believes his Company will succeed. He makes a plan to blow up Almeida, which enables him to sneak past Cox, the Partisans, and the French in the confusion.

All of Sharpe's many plans, schemes, and his belief in himself and his Company work and he finally delivers the gold to Wellington despite the many desperate and seemingly hopeless situations. Sharpe's refusal to believe that he can fail enables him to succeed. This shows the power of positive thinking and always believing that everything will work out for the best, especially in a fiction novel.

# Style

## Point of View

Sharpe's Gold is written in the third person. The third person style enables the writer to show us the perspectives of multiple characters and give good descriptions of towns. However, a great deal of the book is from Captain Richard Sharpe's point of view. There is a lot of dialogue in the book that lets us understand the characters, their motives for doing things, and their manner of speaking. Descriptions alone would not be as effective because dialogue makes the events and the characters more alive to the reader and helps the book feel less like a historical narrative.

This novel would not be quite as effective written solely in the first person, from Sharpe's viewpoint, because the other characters give their opinions of Sharpe and events, which we would not get in the first person. For instance, Sergeant Patrick Harper says to Knowles at the beginning of the novel that Sharpe is in a foul mood and likes being miserable but the bastard will get over it. From this discussion we learn that Sharpe's parents were not married, which we would have not known as Sharpe himself would have had no reason to talk about the situation.

Later, we learn that Sharpe does not come from a wealthy family so he must earn his rank as an officer, the hard way, through heroism. Officers are typically from wealthy and prestigious families like Lieutenant Colonel, the Honorable William Lawford, Sharpe's unit head. Also, when Sharpe encounters Ayres we learn more about the French regiment standard that Sharpe's Company captured at Talavera—without Captain Sharpe needing to brag. Ultimately, third person gives the reader different perspectives on people and events.

## Setting

Sharpe's Gold takes place in two main countries, Portugal and Spain. Most of the book takes place in locations in Portugal; however, the Spanish people are a huge part of the novel. Sharpe is given orders in a town called Celorico where the British, including Wellington, are currently headquartered.

Sharpe's Company is ordered to retrieve gold from the Partisans in Spain. The gold is rumored to be in a small village town called Casatejada that is supposed to be held by the Partisans. Sharpe finds the hidden gold and attempts to return to Celorico before the Partisans catch up and take it back.

Another important location in the book is Almeida, a fortress town in Portugal held by the British. The company stops at Almeida to recover from fighting with the French and Partisans. Sharpe is injured so the group seeks the protection of the fortress. The Partisans also travel from Casatejada to Almeida since El Catolico wants the gold for



himself. Sharpe is forced to destroy the fort, even though it is British occupied, because the British commander Cox refuses to let them leave with the gold.

During the confusion over the demolished fort, Sharpe asks Cox's permission to leave and since Cox is in shock he nods his head in the affirmative and does not even think of the gold. The French are distracted as well, so Sharpe's Company is able to ride to Celorico with no more problems. On arriving in Celorico, Wellington is given the gold and finishes building the Lines of Torres Verdras in Portugal, which stretch from the Atlantic coast to the banks of the Tagus River. The Lines effectively stop the French from crossing to Lisbon.

## Language and Meaning

The language of this novel tends to be very graphic about the descriptions of the war and the brutality and killing involved. One such example is when the book describes Joaquin skinning a Frenchman while praying over him. Also, the many fights are brutal but that is a realistic description of war. The author uses words that are no longer common in our usage today, as well as military terms with which most people would not be familiar. Some of these terms include the Seven-barreled Gun, Hussars, and Voltigeurs, which are described in the objects and places. Others the reader will have to look up or hope to get from the context. For instance, a Provost Marshall would probably not be readily identified by non-military types, but the reader gets the general idea of what one is from the context. The terminology makes the novel a little slower to read, but does add realism.

Descriptive passages are a fair portion of the novel, which helps the reader understand the characters and events. The reader also gains an understanding of the character's personalities from the dialogue, which is equally important in the novel. The characters are well developed, considering it is not the first in the series. There are references to events we do not know about, but on the whole, there is enough said about past events that we are able to understand their importance, including Sharpe's relationship with his unit head, Lieutenant Colonel William Lawford and past history with Wellington.

The dialogue flows well and provides useful knowledge of how the characters speak and think that we would not get if the author had only given us descriptions. From the dialogue, we see that Sharpe has definite ideas on events and people. The reader also learns Sharpe has a somewhat cocky attitude toward people he does not like and has issues with authority in general, as seen when he tells Wellington he had always intended to apologize to Ayers but told Lawford there was no way he would apologize.

This novel is well written, but the graphic descriptions may be a little too much for widespread appeal.

## Structure

Sharpe's Gold is the second novel Bernard Cornwall wrote but it is ninth chronologically. This novel is twenty-four chapters long and has 250 pages with the epilogue and the historical note at the end. The chapters are of varying length but most are between four and thirteen pages. The chapters have numbers only and no quick title or quote to explain what is going on in the chapter. The historical notes at the end are informative and explain what parts of the book are true.

The book spans a short period in August, 1810, in the war against Napoleon Bonaparte and proceeds in a logical, linear fashion. Even though it does refer to past events in the life of Sharpe and others, this does not make the novel confusing and on the whole it is a quick read, unless one is a stickler for understanding every unusual term used.

The main plot of the novel involves Sharpe's quest to find and acquire Spanish gold to deliver to General Wellington, in order to aid the British war effort against the French. It begins with Sharpe making his way to Caloric to see Wellington. He has no idea why they have been summoned, but hopes he is going to be given an important task for his Company. They are all bored because they have been patrolling the southern border with very little action. Their last bit of excitement was at Talavera where they captured a French Standard and received a special badge for this heroic feat. When Sharpe meets with Wellington he tells Sharpe he must bring something back, which Major Hogan tells him is Spanish gold held by the Partisans. Of course, he does get the gold to Wellington but at the cost of many lives and the destruction of Almeida.

A subplot in the book revolves around Sharpe's conflict with Colonel Joaquin "El Catolico" Jovellanos and their romance with Teresa. El Catolico wants the gold himself and has no intentions of giving it up. Teresa, at first is on El Catolico's side but switches loyalties to Sharpe. The interaction between these three characters forms its own subplot that complicates the quest for gold. Sharpe's annihilation becomes a personal motive with El Catolico because of Teresa and the gold.



## Quotes

"It was as if they had been born to the job and it was on the battlefield, where most men thought nervously of their own survival, that Sharpe and Harper came together in an uncanny understanding. It was almost, Knowles thought, as if they were at home on a battlefield, and he envied them." Chap 1, Sharpe's Gold, p. 10.

"They had all heard of him: the man who had captured the French Eagle at Talavera." Chap. 1, Sharpe's Gold, p. 12.

"It was a new badge, commissioned by Lawford after Talavera, and showed an eagle in chains—a message to the world that the South Essex was the only regiment in the Peninsula that had captured a French standard." Chap. 2, Sharpe's Gold, p. 23.

"Lawford was not placated by Sharpe's crestfallen expression, which the Colonel suspected was not motivated by true regret. And do not think, Captain Sharpe, that just because the General ordered us here he will look kindly on your action." Chap. 2, Sharpe's Gold, p. 25.

"Thirty thousand troops, plus twenty-five thousand untried Portuguese, against three hundred and fifty thousand men?" Chap 2, Sharpe's Gold, p. 28.

"As they left, Sharpe could hear Colonel Williams interrogating Ayres as to why he should have any regrets, and Sharpe let a grin show on his face which widened into a broad smile as the door opened once more and Michael Hogan came into the room." Chap. 3, Sharpe's Gold, p. 33.

"If Richard Sharpe wanted to lead them to Paris they would go, blindly confident that he would see them through, and they had grinned when he had told them they were to march behind the enemy patrols, across the Coa, across the river Agueda—for Hogan had known that much—and then back again. But something in Sharpe's voice had been wrong; no one had said anything, but the knowledge was there that the Captain was worried." Chap. 3, Sharpe's Gold, p. 37.

"Sitting in the mist that ghosted up from the Agueda, he talked, in his gruff voice, about the Partisans. Sharpe and Knowles listened, the unseen river a sound in the background, as the Major talked of ambushes and murders, the secret places where arms were stored, and the signal codes that flashed from hilltop to hilltop." Chap. 4, Sharpe's Gold, p. 46.

"Harper grinned. In battle he was savage, crooning the old stories of the Gaelic heroes, the warriors of Ireland, but away from the fighting he covered his intelligence with a charm that would have fooled the devil. 'You believe that, sir?'" Chap. 4, Sharpe's Gold, p. 49.





"Kearsey was thumping his fist on the rock, willing the Partisans on, closer and closer to the wheeling French." Chap. 5, Sharpe's Gold, p. 56.

"The Partisans had lost none; the speed of their charge and withdrawal had ensured that, and their leader, staying till the end, had slapped French pride in the face." Chap. 5, Sharpe's Gold, p. 57.

"He had one other advantage, slight but important. Kearsey had obviously given his parole, his gentleman's promise, to his captors that he would not attempt to escape, and Sharpe had seen the small Major limping round the village." Chap. 6, Sharpe's Gold, p. 66.

"They were enjoying it, taking on sixteen times their number, and he did not understand that it was because of him. Harper knew, Knowles knew, that the tall Rifle Captain who was not given to rousing speeches could nevertheless make men feel that the impossible was just a little troublesome and that victory was a commonplace where he led." Chap. 6, Sharpe's Gold, p. 68.

"His place was with his men, not chasing some girl because she had Josefina's long black hair, a slim body, and a beauty that had overcome him." Chap. 7, Sharpe's Gold, p. 77.

"No more than seven or eight minutes, he decided. Enough time for his men to have fired seven or eight hundred shots into the astonished French, set fire to the house, rescued Kearsey, the girl and the prisoner, and he grinned in the darkness." Chap. 7, Sharpe's Gold, p. 80.

"They dared not light a fire to heat the water that could scour out their muskets, so the men used the battlefield expedient, urinating into the barrels, and grinned self-consciously at the girl as they sloshed the liquid around to loosen the caked powder deposits of the night." Chap. 8, Sharpe's Gold, p. 85.

"The girl had disappeared behind the summit, and the lancers, all discipline shredded, were panting up the slope a good fifty yards behind. Sharpe grinned at his Sergeant. 'She took her clothes off.'" Chap. 8, Sharpe's Gold, pp. 91-92.

"A few cats, too difficult to catch, had survived the French, but the dogs, like their owners, had been killed, splayed open with desperate savagery, as if the French thought that death by itself was not enough and a body must be turned inside out if it was not to come magically alive to ambush them again." Chap. 9, Sharpe's Gold, p. 94.

"A soldier, Sharpe knew, was judged not merely by his actions but by the enemies he destroyed, and the Rifleman's fingers reached, unconsciously, for his big sword. Nothing had been admitted, nothing openly said, but in the gloom of the vault, in the wreckage of British hopes, Sharpe had found the enemy, and now, in the scent of death, he groped for the way to victory in this sudden, unwanted, and very private little war." Chap. 9, Sharpe's Gold, p. 100.



"Sharpe would have buried the men without ceremony, but Kearsy had insisted, and Sharpe acknowledged that the Major had been right. The drill, the old pattern of command and obey, had reassured the men, and Sharpe had heard them talking, quietly and contentedly, about marching back to the British lines." Chap. 10, Sharpe's Gold, p. 104.

"God save Ireland, sir, they would not do that. Not on a Sunday and not on a holy day. They're Catholics, sir, not your heathen Protestants. On a Sunday? Not at all!" Chap. 11, Sharpe's Gold, p. 110.

"It was a nightmare journey and only Hagman's instincts, honed by years of poaching dark countryside, took the Riflemen safely back over the paths where they had been escorted earlier in the day." Chap. 12, Sharpe's Gold, p. 119.

"Sixteen thousand coins, each worth three pounds and ten shillings, and Sharpe tried to work it out in his head. Isaiah Tongue beat them all, his voice full of wonder as he gave the figure. 'Fifty-six thousand pounds, sir.'" Chap. 13, Sharpe's Gold, p. 132.

"No horse would make fast time up here and Sharpe forced the men on pitilessly, cracking his anger like a whip, driving them north and west, through the relentless weather, kicking the men who fell, and carrying two of the packs of gold to prove to them it could be done." Chap. 14, Sharpe's Gold, p. 138.

"The fortress was approached by a single precipitous track, easy to defend, and El Catolico had left them in peace." Chap. 15, Sharpe's Gold, p. 150.

"He heard Harper giving instructions, and wondered which of the Riflemen needed to be told that you wrapped the bullet in the small greased patch so that it gripped the rifling, and he was so curious that he dodged through the lingering smoke and saw Teresa, with Tongue's weapon, her face already blackened with powder smoke, kneeling up to fire at a Frenchman." Chap. 16, Sharpe's Gold, p. 166.

"The cauterizing iron hit him like the devils of hell. His shout was cut off as he fainted, as the flash burned and stank, and it took all Harper's strength to hold him down, but it was done and Lossow's horse-doctor nodded his satisfaction." Chap. 17, Sharpe's Gold, Chapter 17, p. 174.

"Knowles had done well, unbarring a huge house that stabled the Germans' horses, housed everyone, and on the second floor, behind a huge, polished door, was a bedroom with a feather mattress, a canopied bed, rugs, and the smell of old wood and fresh sheets." Chap. 18, Sharpe's Gold, p. 184.

"The boy, holding on to a rope, was spun into the air, screaming until another halliard whiplashed round his neck and tore his head horribly from his shoulders. His blood sprayed the four men falling backwards, and then the mast, still unbroken, pounded back on to the ramparts, killing Charles instantly, broke itself in a great fracture, bounced like a falling cane, and stopped still." Chap. 19, Sharpe's Gold, p. 196.



"The bastard must be handy with a pen, he thought, and it suddenly occurred to him that one of the fat coins would make a superb seal, pressed into the red wax with the ornate coat of arms downwards." Chap. 20, Sharpe's Gold, p. 205.

"There were enough of them, sir. But not him. Perhaps he doesn't do his own dirty work?" Chap. 21, Sharpe's Gold, p. 216.

"Sharpe could feel the hairs rise on his neck, the prickling of the blood beneath the skin, the old signs that the enemy was near, and he sat on the bed and pulled off his heavy boots so he could move silently." Chap. 22, Sharpe's Gold, pp. 220-221.

"They ran, through the door and over the counter, and he picked up the girl and thrust her head-first into the great brick cave of the bread oven." Chap. 23, Sharpe's Gold, p. 235.

"The smell of roast flesh hung in the air, like the stench of the burning bodies after Talavera, but that, Sharpe remembered, had been a mistake, an accident of wind and flame, while this chaos, this glimpse of damnation, had been caused by a powder keg that Sharpe had caused to be pierced and trailed to the cathedral's door." Chap. 24, Sharpe's Gold, p. 239.

"The gold had been needed, desperately needed, or the work would never have been finished and the ten thousand labourers, some of whom Sharpe could see, could have packed up their shovels and picks and simply waited for the French." Epilogue, Sharpe's Gold, Epilogue, p. 243.



## Topics for Discussion

Is the war lost or do you feel, like Sharpe, that one should never give up? What makes people think the war is lost?

Describe the new telegraph and how it works. Can you find out how a modern telegraph works in comparison? Where are the telegraphs described in this novel?

Why do you think Sharpe defends his soldier from Ayres when he does not really like the man anyway? Do you think he was right to do so? Should stealing a chicken be a hanging offense? Will such a small offense going unpunished really undermine the Provosts' authority?

What are some of the weapons talked about in this book? Describe three and how they are used and how they differ from today's weapons.

List three different types of soldiers mentioned in this book? What is their purpose in the war and how do they fight?

The gold Sharpe is sent to bring back is Spanish. Do you feel Wellington was justified in seizing Spanish gold and why? Morally, how do you feel about the British taking the gold? Do you feel Sharpe is right in giving Teresa 1000 coins and why? How do you feel about Sharpe and Lossow and their men getting a share of Spanish gold?

Do you feel Sharpe is justified in blowing up Almeida with the loss of so many lives? Why? Do you think the war would have been lost without this gold?

El Catolico is portrayed as a villain in this book. Do you feel he was anymore a villain for wanting to keep the gold than Wellington was for wanting to take the Spanish gold for British use? Why or why not?

Cox does not deal wisely with the gold situation as he believes a partisan over his own people. Do you feel he was wrong to take El Catolico's side? Do you think he even understands the situation and ramifications with the gold or is he too wrapped up in his own affairs to think clearly?

Why does Sharpe admire the German cavalry officer as much or even more than the British cavalry? Captain Lossow seems to enjoy fighting the French and even smiles while doing so. Do you think someone should take pleasure in fighting?