

Sharpe's Sword: Richard Sharpe and the Salamanca Campaign, June and July 1812 Study Guide

Sharpe's Sword: Richard Sharpe and the Salamanca Campaign, June and July 1812 by Bernard Cornwell

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Plot Summary

Sharpe's Sword is a novel in the series that chronicles the heroic exploits of Richard Sharpe. In this novel, Sharpe takes part in the British campaign to drive the French from Salamanca, and in the process he meets a beautiful woman and faces a deadly adversary.

The story begins with the capture of Colonel Philippe Leroux, a special agent of Napoleon who uses torture to extract information from civilians. Leroux's particular method of torture is ghastly. He slowly strips the skin from the victim until he gets the information he seeks. Afterward, to instill further terror, he carves "Leroux made this" on the bodies of his dead victims. Leroux carries a Kligenthal sword that is the finest Sharpe has ever held. At the opening of the novel, Leroux has just finished torturing and killing a priest before the arrival of German cavalry forces him to flee.

Leroux is captured by Sharpe's Riflemen, but through guile he manages to escape. In the process, he kills a sixteen-year-old ensign and Sharpe's commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel Windham. On a personal level, Sharpe vows to get revenge. On an official level, because of Sharpe's firsthand knowledge of Leroux, Sharpe is tasked with his recapture.

Along the way to meeting Leroux and fulfilling his duty as leader of the Light Company, Sharpe meets a variety of unforgettable characters. Father Patrick Curtis is an Irish priest and professor at the Irish College in Salamanca. He has an entertaining wit and a knack for seeming to be in places at crucial moments. Captain Jack Spears is a young aristocrat and Exploring Officer. He is fun loving to the point of complete irresponsibility, and he is as likable as any character in fiction. Helena is a wealthy blond marquesa who takes a fascination in Sharpe and the stories surrounding his past heroics. She is the most beautiful woman Sharpe has ever seen, and she possesses an intellect equal to anyone Sharpe has known. Each of these three characters has dual identities, and the surface identity, the one Sharpe initially knows, is far different from the one he knows by the conclusion of the novel.

In his second meeting with Leroux, Sharpe is wounded and even believed dead for a while. Sharpe's many friends rally to his support, particularly his sergeant and best friend Patrick Harper. Harper also has some memorable exploits through the course of the novel. At one point he is mistaken for an insane grave robber, and days later he is trying unconventional remedies to improve the health of his injured captain. All characters who know Sharpe are deeply affected by his brush with death, and most are overjoyed with his miraculous recovery.

Despite his injuries and vulnerability Sharpe refuses to follow orders, and long before he should, he sets off in pursuit of Leroux. The action is non-stop, and many mysteries remain until the very end.



Part One, Prologue and Chapter 1

Part One, Prologue and Chapter 1 Summary

Sharpe's Sword takes place during the summer of 1812. British forces are fighting the French in the vicinity of Salamanca, Spain. A ruthless French officer named Philippe Leroux uses torture and murder to extract information from those that help the British, and it is the job of Captain Richard Sharpe to stop Leroux.

Colonel Philippe Leroux, a special French soldier who reports directly to Napoleon Bonaparte, has tortured a person for information. He, along with Captain Delmas, flee from the King's German Legion, a group of German cavalry fighting with the British. Leroux knows he must not be captured because he has just discovered the real name of El Mirador, the leader of a network of spies against France. Leroux plans to capture El Mirador, take him to France, and torture him until he gives the name of all the spies that report to him.

Leroux gets off his horse and moves branches in what Delmas thinks is an effort to construct a hiding place. Instead, Leroux kills Delmas and takes his uniform. Leroux rides on and is captured by a group of British Riflemen, including Captain Richard Sharpe and Sergeant Patrick Harper. Leroux says his name is Delmas.

Sharpe admires Leroux's sword, and Sharpe is suspicious of Leroux.

In chapter one, Lieutenant Colonel Windham is impatient for Sharpe to read the agreement Leroux, who the British think is called Delmas, signed regarding the nature of his capture. Sharpe is annoyed with Windham for agreeing to give Delmas his freedom once the British can exchange Delmas for a captured British officer.

Sharpe returns Leroux's sword, and the South Essex Battalion marches for days to meet the other British forces. During the march, Captain Lossow, an officer with the King's German Legion, talks to Sharpe. Lossow says he doesn't trust Leroux, and Sharpe agrees. Lossow also thinks about how much has recently happened to Sharpe, including getting married two months ago.

After two and a half days of marching, the South Essex Battalion reaches Salamanca. They will be positioned at a bridge to ensure that no French soldiers escape once a larger British force enters the city. Sharpe has been to Salamanca before, and he has fond memories of the city.

Leroux asks when he can be returned to the French, and Windham assigns Ensign McDonald, a sixteen-year-old junior officer, to escort Leroux to headquarters. While the two ride away, Windham talks to Sharpe. Suddenly Sharpe sees something and shouts to the soldiers in his Light Company. Sharpe sees Leroux racing away on his horse. Sharpe tries to take aim with his rifle, but Windham is in pursuit, and he blocks Sharpe's aim.



Part One, Prologue and Chapter 1 Analysis

The narrator describes Leroux as a killer, but the delight he takes in his grisly work makes the word "evil" seem equally applicable. The reader learns of Leroux's purpose for being in Spain, and it is a reasonable assumption that stopping him will become the purpose of the novel's main character Richard Sharpe. From Leroux's perspective, the reader learns a few things about Sharpe. He has a formidable appearance and the scars and worn uniform indicate a man who is accustomed to life and death conflict.

In chapter one, both the narrator and other characters reveal much about Sharpe. The narrator mentions that Sharpe rose from the ranks of enlisted soldiers to become an officer in the British Army. That feat was uncommon at that time in history. Lossow reveals much about Sharpe, including the fact that Sharpe has recently married. Perhaps most telling is Lossow's observation that Sharpe strives to accomplish despite adversity, and he is never prone to allowing himself to become complacent.



Part One, Chapters 2 & 3

Part One, Chapters 2 & 3 Summary

Sharpe and his men try to recapture Leroux. Sharpe takes aim and fires but misses. Another of his Riflemen hits Leroux's horse, and Leroux falls to the ground and runs on foot. Windham is still in pursuit, and when he is almost upon Leroux, Leroux turns with his sword and strikes Windham's horse in the mouth. Then Leroux steps aside and kills Windham. Sharpe and Harper are ahead of the rest of the Riflemen. Harper fires his huge seven-barreled gun, but none of the shots hit Leroux. The French forces in the forts across the river from the city open fire with cannon, and this further slows the British.

Some French Voltigeurs, or light infantry troops, join the fight, and Sharpe knows they will reach Leroux before he does. Suddenly Sharpe hears the sound of musket fire, and he looks up to see Spanish citizens inside Salamanca firing in order to help the British. Sharpe sees Leroux stop going toward the forts and try to go to the city. About same time he notices that the Spanish muskets stop firing and he sees a priest ordering the citizens to stop firing.

Sharpe and Harper are isolated from rest of the British soldiers, and the French soldiers try to attack the two men alone. Sharpe kills four French soldiers with his sword before Harper can get to his side. The rest of the French soldiers flee. Sharpe sees that British forces have entered the city. Sharpe is relieved. With British forces in control of Salamanca, Leroux will have to take refuge in one of the three French forts, and the British have those surrounded. Leroux will be trapped.

Sharpe and his Riflemen cannot get back across the bridge to the South Essex Regiment, so Sharpe takes his men into the city to join the British forces already inside. Sharpe encounters Father Curtis, the priest that ordered the civilians to stop firing. The priest says he did it to stop reprisals from the French against the civilians. He also tells Sharpe that the man Sharpe chased, the man Sharpe thinks is Delmas, is Colonel Philippe Leroux.

In chapter three, the citizens of Salamanca celebrate the liberation of their city, and Sharpe and his men follow the other British soldiers marching toward the center of town. Sharpe tells Harper to take charge of the men, and Sharpe says that he is going to find Major Hogan. Sharpe buys some wine and food and gives some of the wine to a woman with a baby. Sharpe encounters Father Curtis again. Curtis seems to recognize Sharpe's name but does not say why. Curtis says he knows someone who wants to speak to Sharpe.

Sharpe follows Curtis to an expensive horse-drawn carriage. Inside the carriage is a blond woman, and Sharpe thinks she might be the most beautiful woman he has ever seen. The woman, La Marquesa, wants to know if Sharpe indeed saw Leroux enter the



forts. While Sharpe speaks to the woman, another British officer refers to Sharpe as an uncombed brute, and Sharpe responds that is better than being a lap dog. Before a brawl can ensue, General Wellington, commander of the British forces, arrives.

Sharpe begins to walk away, but another British officer, Captain Jack Spears, approaches Sharpe and gives him a note. La Marquesa, Helena, has invited Sharpe to a party. Sharpe says he cannot attend. Sharpe sees that Spears has a wounded arm and learns that Leroux gave him the injury. Sharpe also learns that Spears is the same Lord Spears who works for Major Hogan as an Exploring Officer, a British soldier who goes deep behind enemy lines gathering information.

Part One, Chapters 2 & 3 Analysis

The extreme violence might be shocking to some readers. One expects war to be brutal, but the violence toward even horses might surprise some readers more accustomed to accounts of war that focus more on romantic notions of heroics and gallantry.

Sharpe blames himself for the deaths of Windham and sixteen-year-old McDonald. This says a great deal about Sharpe's character. The reader also learns more about Harper, including that he has a peaceful personality off the battlefield but that he is deadly ferocious in combat. There is evidence that he has a great deal of admiration and respect for Sharpe.

The character Father Curtis seems fond of humor and has a winning sense of humor, despite Sharpe's anger over the priest stopping the citizens from firing on the French.

In chapter three, Harper's sense of humor is revealed. As the citizens of Salamanca are cheering the English, Harper is cheering the Irish. Sharpe demonstrates that he is more than a man who cares about nothing but battle and killing. When he buys wine and food he sees a poor woman with a baby and gives her some of the wine. When Sharpe encounters Father Curtis again, one can again see Curtis's quick and lively wit.

Sharpe does not like the way the rich and privileged behave and he refuses to play their games in order to gain favor.



Part One, Chapters 4 & 5

Part One, Chapters 4 & 5 Summary

Though tempted to go to Helena's party, Sharpe stays and drinks with his men all evening. The next morning, Sharpe and his soldiers join the British forces outside the city. French troops are gathering in an attempt to beat the British and rescue the French soldiers trapped in the three forts across the river from Salamanca. Days pass, and the French forces under the command of Marshal Marmont do not attack.

Major Hogan arrives and speaks to Sharpe. Hogan wants to know about Leroux, and Sharpe tells him that Leroux is among those trapped in the forts. Hogan shows Sharpe a piece of paper with a message the British intercepted and decoded. The message is from Napoleon Bonaparte to Marshal Marmont, saying that Napoleon is sending Leroux, and Marmont is to provide anything Leroux needs. Hogan says they absolutely must stop Leroux, and he asks if Sharpe found anything when he searched Leroux.

Sharpe sees that the fighting is about to begin, and he tells Hogan he must go. Again, Hogan asks if Sharpe found anything. Sharpe says no, nothing, and then Sharpe remembers the slip of paper that Leroux said was a list of horse dealers. Sharpe says the list is still in his belongings. Hogan says he will go retrieve the list from Sharpe's belongings, and Sharpe runs to join his Light Company.

Helena arrives with Spears to watch the battle.

In chapter five, Wellington does not want to attack but wants the French to attack instead. Wellington orders two battalions, one of them the South Essex, to attack, hoping to provoke the French into a full-scale battle. Sharpe's Light Company goes ahead of the rest of the South Essex. The French artillery begins firing. Sharpe sees a French officer and points him out to Hagman, the best marksman among the Riflemen. Sharpe himself shoots another officer. The Riflemen target the officers and the crews of the artillery. Sharpe is happy to see his men fighting so well.

The British forces march to within forty yards of the French, stop, and then fire. The British then charge, but the French troops are already in full retreat.

Helena tells Spears she is disappointed to see the French run away. Spears tells her that this engagement is just a minor skirmish. The main battle will happen later. Helena asks if that is Sharpe she sees in the distance, and Spears answers in the affirmative. Helena wants to know if Sharpe truly is a hero, and again Spears answers yes. Helena tells Spears that she wants him to arrange for her to meet Sharpe.

On the battlefield, Sharpe talks to Lieutenant Price, who is also disappointed that the French retreated without a fight and that the main French force has not attacked. While they talk, a staff officer on horseback approaches Sharpe and tells him he is to report to headquarters immediately.



Part One, Chapters 4 & 5 Analysis

Sharpe's decision to stay with his men again reveals his feelings of being out of place when around wealthy people. Sharpe's belief that he would be the object of mockery indicates that he must have had prior experience with the wealthy and privileged.

Hogan's conversation with Sharpe reveals how crucial it is that Leroux be recaptured or killed. Sharpe hears of Leroux's cruelty, and the news increases Sharpe's desire to defeat Leroux and take his sword.

In the conversation between Spears and Helena Spears makes a bet, and it is the third bet he has made since the character was first introduced. It seems that reckless betting is one of Spears's chief traits.

In chapter five, Sharpe wonders if he could have ever been good at anything else besides being a soldier, and he wonders that if the war ever ended whether he could be the type of soldier that led men to stop food rioters or against the fellow Irish countrymen of his friend Harper. This topic leads Sharpe to think about his baby daughter Antonia. Sharpe thinks all these things seconds before the battle begins.

After the battle, the conversation between Sharpe and Lieutenant Price indicates that some of Sharpe's men share his view of administrative officers who do not take part in battles. Price refers to the staff officer who brings a message to Sharpe as a "fancy boy."



Part One, Chapters 6 & 7

Part One, Chapters 6 & 7 Summary

Wellington wants to know if Sharpe will recognize Leroux, and Sharpe says that his entire Light Company will recognize Leroux. Wellington puts Sharpe and his men under the command of Major Hogan. British forces will assault the forts, and Sharpe's men will go along to identify and capture Leroux. As Hogan and Sharpe leave Wellington, Hogan tells Sharpe about the paper Sharpe took from Leroux. The paper is in Hogan's handwriting, and this means that someone among the British is working as a spy. Hogan says this person will be difficult to detect because in addition to the regular soldiers, many servants are employed. Hogan also tells Sharpe of the importance of El Mirador, and that El Mirador lives in Salamanca.

Jack Spears approaches Sharpe and Hogan and invites them to a picnic with Helena. Hogan readily accepts, but Sharpe is uncomfortable. Upon meeting Helena, Hogan asks about her husband, who is with the Spanish military in South America. Helena asks Sharpe if he truly is a hero, and Sharpe is increasingly uncomfortable with the meeting. Sharpe tries to stand aside from the others, and Spears speaks to Sharpe privately. Spears says that he can tell that Sharpe is attracted to Helena, and he encourages Sharpe to act.

Wellington arrives, and Helena has many questions about upcoming battles. Wellington says that if Marmont retreats, the British will attack the forts the following day. Helena says she will throw a party to celebrate the British victory. Sharpe thinks that in addition to Leroux's sword, The Klighenthal, he wants Helena as a prize too.

In chapter seven, as Wellington predicts, the French forces under Marmont withdraw. Sharpe does not expect taking the forts to be easy. The three forts are able to support each other with artillery fire. Sharpe would prefer a night assault, but Wellington orders the assault to begin in the evening before dark. Sharpe explains to his men that their job is not to take part in the assault. Their job is to apprehend Leroux. Sharpe offers ten pounds to the man who brings him Leroux's sword. This amount is greater than a year's wages for a common soldier.

Hogan arrives with the news that because the British do not have enough cannon ammunition, they are assaulting only one of the forts. As the troops are preparing for the assault, Harper tells Sharpe that he met Father Curtis and that the priest wished them luck. Sharpe wonders how a priest could have known of the planned assault, which is supposed to be a surprise, and Sharpe wonders if there are French spies in among the British. Sharpe thinks about the bravery it takes to perform a job like El Mirador, and he admires the person's courage.

General Bowes approaches Sharpe and says that he knows that Sharpe's men have their own orders and will not take part in the main assault. Then General Bowes orders



the assault to begin. The British soldiers under Bowes command try to sneak closer to the forts, but as soon as they are in the open, French cannon open fire. Sharpe realizes that the French had known in advance about the planned attack. Sharpe knows the attack cannot succeed, and he sees General Bowes killed. In an effort to help the other British soldiers retreating from the attack, Sharpe orders his Riflemen to try to shoot the French gun crews.

After helping the wounded, Sharpe dismisses his men. Sharpe is covered in blood and realizes that he cannot go to Helena's party.

Part One, Chapters 6 & 7 Analysis

The relationship between Sharpe and Wellington is revealed. Ever since saving Wellington's life in India, the two men have benefited from the association. Wellington often needs an officer with uncommon bravery and competence, and Sharpe needs a powerful patron to shield him from the prejudice of those who resent him for being promoted from the enlisted ranks.

Hogan gives Sharpe information on Helena's history, which helps to explain her avid interest and military matters. Her parents were killed in France, and Helena escaped to Spain and married a wealthy Spanish aristocrat. The news that there may be a spy in the British camp adds another element of mystery to the plot.

Spears is again betting recklessly, and he acknowledges that he has lost most of his wealth to gambling. Despite the flirtatious and light nature of the conversation once Wellington arrives, there seems to be a great deal of military intelligence exchanged.

It is unclear if Wellington is jealous of Helena's attention to Sharpe, or if Wellington is merely trying to ensure that his officers behave properly.

In chapter seven, the news that Father Curtis knows about the upcoming British attack on the forts is disturbing to Sharpe. When the French reaction to the assaulting troops makes it obvious that they knew of the attack in advance, Sharpe is convinced there is a spy among the British.

Sharpe's interaction with the lieutenant conducting the equipment check after the failed assault on the forts shows that Sharpe still identifies with the enlisted men and has little regard for soldiers in administrative duties that never take part in the fighting. Harper knows his friend well, and he knows that Sharpe needs some time alone after the battle.



Part One, Chapters 8 & 9

Part One, Chapters 8 & 9 Summary

On the way to Helena's party, Sharpe has second thoughts about going with this uniform covered in blood. Sharpe waits outside, undecided, and Jack Spears sees him. Spears calls for Sharpe to come to the party, but Sharpe says he does not think he should given the state of his uniform. Spears throws water from a fountain onto Sharpe's uniform and steals some items from the uniform of Sir Robin Callard while Callard is passed out drunk.

Once inside, Sharpe is amazed at the size of the home. The party is crowded with officers, and most are drunk. Not long after Sharpe and Spears arrive, a visiting British politician says Sharpe's uniform is a disgrace. Spears speaks up and tells the politician that Sharpe's name is Callard. The politician tells Sharpe to leave the party and change into a clean uniform, and Sharpe responds in colorful language that includes a threat of death. The politician is horrified and Spears is delighted.

Spears dances with women, but Sharpe stands aside by himself and thinks how he does not belong at such functions. The only reason for Sharpe's being at the party rested on the hope of seeing Helena, but he cannot see her anywhere. Sharpe decides to leave. Spears tries to convince him to stay, but Sharpe walks away. On his way out, Sharpe is stopped by a servant. The servant directs Sharpe to step through a doorway hidden by a hanging tapestry.

In chapter nine, Sharpe climbs a stairway to a balcony enclosed by a screen. He sees spy holes cut into the wall so that a person in the balcony room can see down into the house and observe the people inside. He also notices a table set with food and wine. Mounted on the balcony is a telescope. Sharpe looks through the telescope and sees that it is aimed at where the evening's battle took place.

Helena arrives through another hidden doorway. She says that she could see that Sharpe hated the party. She also explains some of the purpose of the balcony. She said that it had been built by her husband's great-grandfather, who often spied on his younger wife. Helena seems to be flirting, and then she shifts the topic to the evening's battle. She wants to know what will happen now that the assault has failed, and Sharpe tells her that another will occur within the next couple of days. Helena asks Sharpe to show her, and he points to the forts from the balcony.

Again, Helena seems to shift back to flirtatious games. Sharpe is becoming confused and weary of her games. Abruptly, Helena asks if there will be a major battle and why Wellington did not attack aggressively when Marmont and his forces were present. Sharpe asks Helena why she asks him these questions when she has access to many higher ranking officers, and Helena angrily replies that she wants an answer, not someone to laugh and say a woman should not be concerned with military matters.



Sharpe explains that the location for a battle had been wrong. Marmont's forces could have retreated without suffering many casualties, and the fighting would have decided nothing.

Helena momentarily seems satisfied by the answer but then begins a new line of questioning. She wants to know what Sharpe fights for, and Sharpe answers that he fights for his friends on the battlefield. Helena wants to know if rumors she heard are true. Specifically, she wants to know if Wellington can fight only defensive battles. Sharpe answers that Wellington is capable of both offensive and defensive strategy.

Sharpe wants to know why Helena asks so many questions, but she dodges answering by returning to diversion and flirting. Sharpe is tired of the games and begins to leave. Helena asks if it is Sharpe's job to kill Leroux. Hearing the name Leroux makes Sharpe stop. Helena says she wants Sharpe to save her from Leroux. She explains that the type of balcony they are on is called el mirador, "the watch-place." Sharpe then understands that Helena is El Mirador.

The mutual attraction Sharpe and Helena feel takes hold, and they embrace.

Part One, Chapters 8 & 9 Analysis

Despite having seen her only a couple of times, Sharpe is irresistibly attracted to Helena. Spears's appearance and actions add depth to a character that has both likable and deplorable qualities. Spears says he has again made a bet and lost, and he admits he bets money that he does not have. Despite being incredibly irresponsible, Spears is a likable person, and his actions toward Sir Robin Callard and the British politician, Lord Benfleet, are hilarious.

Sharpe notices that Father Curtis is at the party. He also hears from Spears that Curtis once fought against the British. For a moment, Sharpe wonders if Curtis could be working for the French. He remembers how Curtis had stopped the Spanish citizen from firing on the French and how he had known about the assault on the forts.

While Sharpe stands aside and thinks about the differences in classes of society, he remembers a conversation he once had with an American. The American referred to the Declaration of Independence and the words "all men are created equal," and the American said that half the men who signed the document owned slaves, and the other half had little regard for the lower working classes of society. While Sharpe watches the people at the party, he concludes that he will never belong in that class of society.

In chapter nine, Helena seems almost sadistic in her games and questioning of Sharpe. After her revelation that she is El Mirador, the reason for her strange games becomes clear. She cannot reveal her information to just anyone, despite desperately needing a protector. She must know something of Sharpe's character before she reveals her situation. Sharpe tells her that he fights for his friends on the battlefield, but after this conversation with Helena, he has yet another reason to fight Leroux.



Part Two, Chapters 10 & 11

Part Two, Chapters 10 & 11 Summary

By day Sharpe helps with the preparations for the next assault on the forts, and by night he stays with Helena. The British have been bombarding the forts non-stop for four days and nights. Helena is very knowledgeable, and Sharpe spends much time listening to her. From the stories about her parents who were killed by the French and stories of her life after that event, Sharpe is able to calculate her age at twenty-eight. Helena often speaks of her fear of Leroux, and Sharpe reassures her.

Early one morning, Sharpe encounters Spears. Spears wants to know where Sharpe has been the last few days, and he even in good nature accuses Sharpe of having an affair with Helena. Sharpe denies this, and after more pressure from Spears to tell where he has been, Sharpe claims he has befriended a cobbler's daughter with only one leg.

Spears also asks Sharpe if he has ever heard of El Mirador. Sharpe says he has heard the name only. Sharpe asks Spears what he knows, and Spears says he's heard only vague rumors but doesn't know anything about the person.

When Sharpe returns to Helena, he tells her that the assault will take place tomorrow, and he promises her that he will catch Leroux.

In chapter eleven, Sharpe arrives in his Riflemen's camp, and he finds that Hogan is there, angry at being unable to find Sharpe. Hogan says that when he asked about Sharpe, Harper told him that Sharpe was with a woman named "Doris" with no legs. Hogan also says that Sharpe's marriage is his own affair, and then he asks Sharpe if he has heard from Teresa. Hogan also wants to confirm that Sharpe and his men know their mission concerning the upcoming assault on the forts.

Sharpe encounters Harper and asks what he knows of a "Doris." Harper corrects him and says the name is Delores. Harper says that Spears had come by spreading rumors.

The attack on the forts begins and then abruptly halts. One of the forts displays a flag of truce. The terms of the truce cannot be agreed upon, and the attack resumes. The French offer no resistance. Sharpe orders his men to prevent anyone from leaving. One of the first wounded French soldiers that Sharpe sees is an artillery officer with a horrible abdominal wound and all of his internal organs exposed.

After more searching, Sharpe gives the order to remove the wounded. Sharpe continues searching the fort and finds a telescope. When he looks through the telescope, he sees that it is aimed at Helena's balcony. Sharpe leaves to search another of the three forts, and he tells a British officer who speaks French to ask if anyone knows an officer named Leroux or Delmas. None of the French soldiers have any useful information.



Sharpe and Harper search the last fort. Sharpe orders the release of the prisoners and orders his men to search the dead. Sharpe and Harper see a body that has had all of the internal organs removed.

Part Two, Chapters 10 & 11 Analysis

Sharpe knows that as soon as he completes his mission regarding Leroux he will leave Helena and likely never see her again. He has mixed feelings about his goal. Harper and the other men of Sharpe's company are also affected by Sharpe's nightly disappearances. They wonder, even worry, about Sharpe.

Spears again shows that, though likable, he is in many ways no more mature than a child. He has lost the family's Irish lands in yet more irresponsible gambling. Spears also seems to delight in scandal and gossip.

In chapter eleven, in a moment of comedy, the product of Spears love of gossip is all over the Rifleman camp. Everyone seems to know about the cobbler's daughter with no legs. The story, clearly, has been modified since Sharpe first told it to Spears. Harper likely does not believe the story, but he passes it along for entertainment.

After the assault on the forts is complete and after all the living French soldiers have been searched, it seems that Leroux has done the impossible. It seems that he has escaped. When Sharpe and Harper see the body missing its internal organs, it takes a few moments for them to understand what they see. When they do understand, it must be with a sense of panic, because the horribly wounded officer with exposed organs had been one of the first wounded they had seen and has likely been one of the first to be removed from the forts.



Part Two, Chapters 12 through 14

Part Two, Chapters 12 through 14 Summary

Sharpe and Harper run into the city. The wounded are being taken to Irish College, and Sharpe estimates that Leroux has a thirty to forty minute lead. When Sharpe and Harper reach the area set up as a hospital, Sharpe asks a British sergeant where the officers are taken. The sergeant directs Sharpe to the surgeon's room, and Sharpe orders Harper to search upstairs.

Leroux is upstairs. He is still covered in another man's organs. He knows a horse will be waiting for him nearby at three in the afternoon. Leroux needs just ten more minutes before his horse arrives, and then he sees Sharpe in the courtyard below. Leroux hears a sentry confront someone, and as Leroux stands, Harper is looking the other way. The sentry sees Leroux and falls against Harper, causing Harper's gun to fire into the wall. Harper falls down the stairs and strikes his head.

Sharpe sees Harper unconscious at the bottom of the stairs, and Sharpe is enraged. He runs to the top of the stairs and fights Leroux, but Sharpe's sword breaks. Before Leroux can kill Sharpe, a British soldier fires at Leroux and misses. Leroux flees to a door, but finds the door locked. Sharpe points his rifle at Leroux and walks toward him. Leroux takes a pistol from his boot. Suddenly the door opens and Leroux jumps inside. Sharpe sees that Father Curtis opened the door. Leroux opens the door again and shoots Sharpe.

In chapter thirteen, Sharpe's Riflemen are still waiting at the fort. At headquarters, Hogan is also waiting for Sharpe. Later that evening, Lieutenant Price informs Hogan that the Light Company did not find Leroux and that Sharpe is missing. Eventually, word of a fight at the hospital reaches Hogan, and he and some of Sharpe's men go to the hospital. They find Harper still unconscious, but there is no sign of Sharpe. The surgeons say they have not treated a British officer. Father Curtis tells what he saw, but he says he does not know what happened to Sharpe. Huckfield finds part of Sharpe's uniform, and Hogan fears that Sharpe might have been mistaken for a French soldier. If so, he could have been buried in a mass grave. Hogan tells Price to take command of the Light Company. Later, Hogan tells Wellington that Sharpe is dead.

In chapter fourteen, by the time Sharpe reaches the surgeon, he has been stripped of his uniform, and the surgeon thinks Sharpe is French. When the surgeon sees the bullet wound, he knows he cannot remove the bullet, and he thinks there is no chance for Sharpe to survive. He orders his assistants to close the wound with the bullet still inside.

When Sharpe is moved, some soldiers notice his scars from flogging, and they conclude that he might be British, but since they believe he is dying they take him to the dying room where Sergeant Michael Connelley tries to allow men to die in peace. Sharpe is placed in a far corner of the room.



Sharpe struggles through strange dreams to regain consciousness. He is in extreme pain and weak, but he tries to speak. He calls for Harper, and Sergeant Connelley thinks Sharpe is trying to say that his name is Patrick. Connelley tries to calm Sharpe by telling him stories of Connelley's home in Ireland.

Part Two, Chapters 12 through 14 Analysis

The shift between points of view of Sharpe, Leroux, and Harper heighten the suspense. Knowing that Leroux waits upstairs with his sword makes the reader worry about Harper as he nears Leroux.

Again it appears that Father Curtis's knack for being everywhere is beyond the possibility of coincidence. The mounting evidence against him, even though circumstantial, leaves the reader little choice but to believe that he works for the French.

In chapter thirteen, the reader can see the regard others have for Sharpe. When a noisy soldier makes unkind remarks about Sharpe, others in the Light Company are ready to react with violence. Lieutenant Price and the sergeants are genuinely worried about Sharpe. Hogan is devastated by the belief that Sharpe has died. When Hogan tells Lieutenant Price to take command of the Light Company, Price refuses.

In chapter fourteen, one can see the only deviation from the chronological structure in the novel so far. After describing the search for Sharpe, the narrator backtracks and says what was happening to Sharpe during the time that he was missing.

Sharpe's dreams tell more than just his fears and what is already known about his resentment of the upper classes. His history is expounded upon. Sharpe's dream images of the foundling home tell that Sharpe grew up in an orphanage. When, in an earlier chapter, Sharpe thought that he had no relatives except his daughter, he meant literally that he had no other relatives. He has grown up alone, and the army has given him the only sense of belonging he has ever known.

In his moment of greatest need, Sharpe calls out to the person he trusts the most. He calls out for Sergeant Harper.



Part Two, Chapters 15 & 16

Part Two, Chapters 15 & 16 Summary

Lieutenant Price marches the Light Company to a mass grave of French soldiers. As they are forming and about to offer their salute to Sharpe, they hear that earlier a madman had been in the grave trying to dig up the bodies. The men fire their salute and then march on.

Wellington asks Hogan if a guard has been assigned to El Mirador, and Hogan answers that he has assigned the task to Captain Jack Spears. Hogan hears someone calling him, and he looks to see that The Provosts have Harper in custody. One of them beats Harper with the butt of a musket. Hogan learns that Harper had been the "madman" digging in the graves, and Harper says that Sharpe was not in the grave. Hogan orders Harper released.

Harper believes Sharpe is still alive. He says that any British soldier seeing Sharpe's scars from flogging would know Sharpe was British. Hogan and Harper return to the hospital. They find Sharpe in the dying room still attended by Connelley.

In chapter sixteen, the French continue to move north and the British follow. Hogan sends word to the South Essex Battalion and to Sharpe's wife that he is alive. Harper and Isabella tend to Sharpe, but the doctors still say that Sharpe is sure to die. Harper tries every remedy he knows, and even threatens doctors in order to get them to give him some quinine to relieve Sharpe's fever.

In a final attempt to help break Sharpe's fever, Harper puts Sharpe in the courtyard while he goes on top of the roof to pour buckets of water on Sharpe. Sharpe's fever soon seems to stop. Harper thinks that having his weapons returned might cheer Sharpe. Harper cannot find a rifle, but he offers bribes and gets a cavalry sword from the armory. Harper spends many hours modifying the sword the way he knows Sharpe prefers.

When Harper returns from working on the sword, Isabella says a rich woman had visited, and she seemed angry that the army did no better job of taking care of a hero. The rich woman, Helena, will send a carriage for Sharpe, Harper, and Isabella tomorrow and move Sharpe to a more comfortable location.

Harper speaks to Sharpe and gives him his new sword.

Part Two, Chapters 15 & 16 Analysis

Hogan is still deeply affected by Sharpe's death.



Because the reader knows that Sharpe is alive, the funeral scene at the mass grave is almost humorous, and the revelation that Harper had been the "madman" uncovering bodies is hilarious, though touching. One can only imagine Harper hearing the news that Sharpe had been buried in a mass grave and then jumping from his hospital bed and rushing headlong into a pit full of dead bodies.

The cruelty of The Provosts has been mentioned before when Sharpe cautioned his men to behave while in Salamanca, and now the reader can see an example of their harsh treatment of other soldiers.

In chapter sixteen, the account of Harper praying adds more humor. He seems to view the act in much the same way a child might. He goes to the biggest church because he believes that might give the wish a little extra magic. After everything he has witnessed during Sharpe's recovery, the one thing that finally assures Harper that his captain will recover is Sharpe's anger toward Leroux.



Part Three, Chapters 17 & 18

Part Three, Chapters 17 & 18 Summary

Sharpe feels responsible for Leroux's escape, and his anger helps him to continually exercise and recuperate. Helena visits daily. In a letter from Hogan, Sharpe learns that Leroux is hiding in Salamanca. If the British cannot defeat the French, Salamanca will return to French control, and Leroux will be free to terrorize again. Sharpe also learns that a guard has been assigned to El Mirador. He is surprised, because every time Helena visits she comes alone.

One evening when Helena visits, Spears comes along. Sharpe is able to speak to Spears alone, and he asks about guarding El Mirador. Spears is shocked and angry that Sharpe knows of his assignment.

Helena tells Sharpe that she did not hear cannon fire today. She asks Sharpe what that means. Sharpe says he thinks it means that the two opposing armies are still too far apart to fight. Sharpe says that soon he will rejoin the South Essex Battalion. Harper is leaving the following day.

The next day Sharpe receives a letter from Hogan telling him that the British are most likely returning to Portugal and that Sharpe should leave at once. Sharpe prepares to leave, but he wants one more night with Helena. Sharpe hears a horse approaching, and he thinks it is Helena. Sharpe then hears footsteps, a man's voice, and the sound of a rifle being cocked. Sharpe turns to find a man pointing a rifle at him.

In chapter eighteen, the man pointing the rifle at Sharpe is Father Curtis, and he says he has come merely to return Sharpe's rifle. He leans the rifle against a wall. Curtis asks if he can wait out the rain, and Sharpe says he is expecting company. Curtis seems not to notice and begins talking. Soon he speaks of Helena. Sharpe says that he is considering drowning Curtis in the river, but then says he does not want to drown the priest and he does not want to hear religious lectures.

Curtis switches the conversation to military matters. He says that a battle will occur tomorrow and he predicts a British victory. He says that Wellington has grouped his forces around a village near Salamanca while trying to make it appear that all of his army except a few soldiers are racing to the Portuguese border. If the French fall for the trick, they will chase the British, and Wellington will have them in a vulnerable position. However, Curtis cautions that if the British do not win, then Leroux will be free again. Curtis wants to help the British by getting word to the French spies that the British are retreating. Sharpe is confused and tells Curtis to explain.

Curtis says he received a letter from Paris in reply to his inquiries about Leroux. The letter states that Leroux has a sister named Helene. Sharpe is shocked. Suddenly he realizes that Father Curtis is El Mirador and Helena is the French spy. Despite the



revelation, Sharpe is still unable to fully comprehend. Curtis says that he wants Sharpe to pass a lie to Helena. He wants Sharpe to tell Helena that the British are retreating to Portugal.

Curtis then tells Sharpe how he became El Mirador.

Part Three, Chapters 17 & 18 Analysis

Sharpe does not know what to think of Spears's sudden and nearly violent anger when Sharpe mentions guarding El Mirador. Sharpe thinks perhaps it is because Spears takes his assignment so seriously.

In chapter eighteen, the reason for Spears's alarm becomes clear. Spears is not guarding Helena as Sharpe thought; rather, Spears guards Father Curtis when he is in public. Spears must think that if even Sharpe knows that Father Curtis is El Mirador, then others know. Upon learning that Helena is the sister of Leroux, previous details take on greater significance. The two facing telescopes could have been how the two communicated while Leroux was trapped in the forts.

The next few hours will test Sharpe. Despite feeling humiliated and used, he must continue to behave as usual toward Helena in order to pass the false bit of intelligence.



Part Three, Chapters 19 & 20

Part Three, Chapters 19 & 20 Summary

Sharpe rides a horse and thinks about the previous night. Helena visited as expected, and Sharpe told her what Father Curtis asked him to tell. The following morning Helena had a servant deliver a horse to Sharpe.

As Sharpe rides toward the village of Arapiles, he examines the environment. He notices the two hills and the strategic positions they present and their value to artillery.

When Sharpe reaches a farmhouse, he notices many British officers and meets Hogan. Hogan is delighted to see Sharpe. After inquiring about Sharpe's health, Hogan asks if Sharpe conveyed the message to Helena. When Sharpe confirms that he did, Hogan is again delighted.

In chapter twenty, Marshal Marmont looks at the British in Arapiles and wonders if they are truly marching toward Portugal. Marmont looks through a telescope and sees Wellington talking to a tall Rifleman. Marmont wonders if it is only Wellington's light infantry in Arapiles to guard the larger force's retreat. He orders an attack on Arapiles. If only enough troops remain in Arapiles to guard the retreat, then the attack will encourage them to stay in the village and leave the plain open in the event Marmont orders the French to chase after the larger British force.

Marmont receives a letter informing him that the British have indeed marched west. The letter is from Helena.

Sharpe wakes in the village and hears the sounds of the French attack. He can tell it is only a limited attack. A British soldier arrives with a message for Wellington. The French are moving.

Part Three, Chapters 19 & 20 Analysis

When Sharpe examines what he expects to be the battlefield, it is through the eyes of a man who has spent the majority of his life in military service. What looks to others like hills and plains to him appear as artillery platforms and killing fields.

Hogan's demeanor reveals his genuine affection for Sharpe, and he does show some sensitivity when the subject of Helene arises. Rather than judge Sharpe for his indiscretion, he says that he is envious.

In chapter twenty, the reader encounters one of the longer sections of the story that is not from the point of view of Sharpe. The majority of the chapter comes from the perspective of Marmont, a character who has thus far only been mentioned. When the

point of view switches back to that of Sharpe, it is learned that the plan to give false information to Helena has worked as hoped.



Part Three, Chapters 21 & 22

Part Three, Chapters 21 & 22 Summary

The French believe they are following retreating British, but Wellington has ordered a division of British soldiers to turn and march east. The French are marching directly into oncoming infantry. Once the progress of the French has been stopped, the British cavalry attacks the French flank and inflicts massive numbers of casualties.

Sharpe watches the South Essex Battalion and feels guilty about not being with them. The French counter-attack, and victory could go to either side. Despite being warned that his wound could reopen and kill him, Sharpe mounts his horse and rides toward the battle.

In chapter twenty-two, Sharpe takes command of the Light Company. His soldiers are delighted to see Sharpe and they perform well. The French counter-attack is stopped and the French are utterly defeated.

Part Three, Chapters 21 & 22 Analysis

For the majority of chapter twenty-one, the point of view is from a distant narrator, not from Sharpe or any other main character. This allows the narrator to present the battle in its entirety. Once the point of view switches to that of Sharpe, the focus is much more narrow, such as when Sharpe watches Harper through a telescope.

In chapter twenty-two, as Sharpe goes toward the battle, putting his life at risk despite still being wounded, he wonders what Helena thinks of him now that she surely knows he betrayed her. As usual, Sharpe feels more vulnerable to societal forces than to the physical dangers of war.



Part Three, Chapters 23 & 24

Part Three, Chapters 23 & 24 Summary

The battle has been an utter defeat for the French. Despite the victory, Sharpe feels only failure at having lost Leroux and being tricked by Helena. Sharpe is invited to have a drink with the officers, but he wants to see the end of the battle.

Sharpe rides to where he can see British infantry fighting the remaining French, and then he sees a lone British cavalry officer ride past the British infantry toward the French. Sharpe recognizes Spears, and Sharpe follows. It appears that Spears is running a suicidal one-man charge. Sharpe reaches Spears just in time to see him shot.

Sharpe leads Spears away from the fighting and helps him down from his horse. Spears has been shot in the chest. Sharpe asks Spears why he did such a foolish thing, and Spears says he did not want to miss the battle. Sharpe wants to get a doctor, but Spears says no. Spears says he has the Black Lion.

In chapter twenty-four, Spears asks Sharpe not to tell anyone about his syphilis. Spears also asks Sharpe to write to his sister. Dying a hero's death is all Spears believes he can give his sister, and he jokes that he could have also helped in the war effort by having sex with Helena and giving her syphilis.

Sharpe is stunned. He asks Spears how long he has known that Helena is an agent for the French. Spears tries to lie, but Sharpe continues to ask.

Sharpe places his sword against Spears and threatens to cut him and inform his sister that he died of venereal disease. Spears explains that he had been taken prisoner by Leroux. Leroux let Spears go with the arrangement that Spears would sell information to the French.

Sharpe asks if Spears has betrayed El Mirador, and Spears answers that he could not bring himself to harm the old man, so he sold Leroux a list of all of El Mirador's contacts. Sharpe asks where Leroux is, and Spears says he is fleeing to Paris. In a final request, Spears asks Sharpe to kill him, and Sharpe reassures Spears that he will be remembered as a hero. Then Sharpe shoots Spears.

Part Three, Chapters 23 & 24 Analysis

Despite inspiring his men to fight well and despite the British victory, Sharpe is in no mood to celebrate. He perhaps takes on more than his share of the blame for having lost Leroux, and he is depressed at having lost Helena. Though he knows that she is a spy, his feelings cannot be forgotten easily.



With the revelation that Spears has the Black Lion, his foolish act is somewhat understandable. He had intended to be killed. The Black Lion was the term British soldiers at the time used for syphilis, and at that time in history, syphilis was an incurable terminal disease. Often victims died horribly disfigured and insane.

In chapter twenty-four, despite everything, Sharpe cannot help but still like Spears. Even as he hears of Spears's traitorous acts, he thinks about the fun-loving Spears he has known for a brief while. Perhaps this is what allows Sharpe to enact a final act of kindness to Spears.



Part Three, Chapters 25 & 26

Part Three, Chapters 25 & 26 Summary

The French are retreating to a bridge near the town of Alba de Tormes. Wellington has placed a Spanish garrison in a castle over the bridge to stop the French retreat. News arrives in Wellington's camp that the Spanish have abandoned their posts and the French are free to escape. Wellington is normally cool and reserved, but at this news he explodes in anger. He claims that the British are fighting to restore Spain to the Spanish, but the Spanish seem to do little to save their own country.

Sharpe tells Hogan that the French have El Mirador's documents. Hogan at first wants to inform Wellington but discovers that he is preoccupied with the Spanish garrison that has allowed the French to escape. Hogan will have to act on his own, and Hogan finds that the King's German Legion is the nearest cavalry. Hogan orders Sharpe to remain behind because of his wound, but Sharpe goes along with the German cavalry. Harper goes too, on Spears's horse. In addition to his painful wound, Sharpe finds his lack of experience on horseback makes for a painful ride.

At Alba de Tormes, Sharpe's group finds no French, but Harper sees a lone rider on horseback. Sharpe recognizes the rider as Leroux. The King's German Legion follows, slowly at first, but Leroux sees his pursuers and races toward a group of French cavalry. He reaches them before Sharpe and the King's German Legion can catch him. Leroux does not remain with the French cavalry. He continues on, and Sharpe and the German cavalry go around the French cavalry. Leroux finds a group of French infantry in square formation, and he rides into the center. There is no way Sharpe and the German cavalry can capture Leroux because cavalry cannot break an infantry square. A group of British cavalry arrives, and Sharpe's group watch as they charge, but no one in Sharpe's group understands why.

In chapter twenty-six, from above the valley Sharpe sees the British cavalry charge, and he realizes why they are charging. They see only the French cavalry, not the French infantry squares hidden by the terrain. They believe they will fight only the cavalry and know nothing of the infantry formations that are immune to cavalry attack. Sharpe and Hogan want to warn the British. They try bugle calls, but the charging British do not hear. Sharpe is desperate to warn the British, and he races ahead. The King's German Legion follows and charges. When the British cavalry sees the infantry squares, it is too late. The French infantry fires and kills many of the British cavalry. Sharpe expects the King's German Legion to stop, but they continue to charge the infantry squares. Harper also joins in the charge. Though he thinks it is suicide, Sharpe joins the rush toward the impregnable squares.



Part Three, Chapters 25 & 26 Analysis

The Spanish garrison's abandonment of their post may mean more than a lessening of the British victory. It may also allow Leroux to escape with documents that can cause irreparable damage to the British forces. It comes as little surprise that Sharpe refuses to stay behind and instead ignores his vulnerable wound and puts his life at risk again.

In chapter twenty-six, some understanding of the function of an infantry square is required for understanding the unfolding events, and at the beginning of the chapter, the narrator provides this understanding with his detailed description of the square formation and the reason it is invulnerable to cavalry attack. Sharpe finds himself in a strange environment. As an infantry soldier, he has seen many cavalry charges from the perspective of the infantry square. Now he will experience it from the perspective of the charging cavalry.



Part Three, Chapters 27 & 28

Part Three, Chapters 27 & 28 Summary

Four hundred and fifty cavalry charge 1,500 infantry, and Sharpe believes the charge means certain death for the cavalry. Time and time again the infantry fires and kills cavalry soldiers. Many cavalry horses also die. One horse is shot, and when it falls, the forward momentum causes it to slide toward the infantry. The horse crashes through the infantry soldiers. Other cavalry soldiers see the hole and aim their horses toward the gap. Despite the overwhelming odds, the King's German Legion penetrates the square. The cavalry soldiers begin killing the infantry soldiers, and panic follows. The soldiers in the first square run toward the second square, and the break in the ranks enable the cavalry to also break the second infantry square.

Unlike the cavalry horses, the horse Sharpe rides, the one Helena gave him, is not trained to fight, and Sharpe has a difficult time controlling the animal amid all the chaos. Sharpe tries to find Leroux, but he cannot locate him among any of the soldiers. Finally Sharpe sees Leroux. He is in a third infantry square that has not broken. Sharpe charges toward the square.

Leroux sees Sharpe riding toward the square. He had at first been certain Sharpe was dead, and when he discovered he was alive, he also learned that his sister protected him. Leroux takes his pistol and aims at Sharpe. He fires but hits Sharpe's horse. Sharpe falls off the horse, and when he stands he walks into the infantry square and takes one of the French soldier's muskets. He fires at Leroux and strikes him in the leg.

Leroux falls from his horse and drops his sword. When he tries to pick up his sword, he finds Sharpe standing on it. Sharpe allows Leroux to take his sword and stand.

In chapter twenty-eight, Leroux refuses to fight and says he surrenders. Repeatedly Sharpe tells Leroux to fight, but Leroux says he surrenders. Sharpe presses Leroux back with his sword and keeps urging him to fight, but Leroux refuses. Finally, Sharpe places the point of his sword against Leroux's neck and says he will kill Leroux whether he fights or not. Leroux decides to fight.

Leroux hopes that if he defeats Sharpe, other British officers will allow him to surrender. He fights, and at first he is able to make Sharpe back up and defend.

Sharpe notices that Leroux is in pain when he has to put weight on his wounded leg. Sharpe picks his moment carefully and then lunges to stab Leroux in the same spot where Leroux shot him. Leroux falls to the ground, and Sharpe stabs Leroux in the neck to kill him.

After the fight, Hogan asks Sharpe if Leroux refused to surrender, and Sharpe said yes, Leroux was stubborn. Sharpe takes Leroux's sword and finds the documents from El Mirador.



Part Three, Chapters 27 & 28 Analysis

Once Sharpe sees Leroux, rage clouds Sharpe's judgment, otherwise surely Sharpe would have known better than to charge alone toward the third infantry square. But like with the first two squares, another unexpected occurrence allows Sharpe to get inside.

Briefly the point of view shifts to that of Leroux as he sees Sharpe approaching. Leroux's lack of regard for Helena is interesting. She has probably been his greatest source of military intelligence in Salamanca, yet he refers to her as his "idiot sister."

At any point after shooting Leroux, Sharpe could kill Leroux, but he allows him to take his sword and stand. This is perhaps Sharpe's way of easing his humiliation at having lost to Leroux previously.

In chapter twenty-eight, Sharpe thinks that this is one of those rare instances when he does enjoy killing. In his quest for revenge, he manages to stab Leroux in the same part of the body where Leroux shot him.



Epilogue and Historical Note

Epilogue and Historical Note Summary

Sharpe waits on the bridge at Salamanca as Helena's carriage stops. She asks if he killed Leroux, and Sharpe says it happened in a fair fight. Helena says that she and Leroux were not fond of each other. She plans to go to Madrid, and if the British take Madrid, she will go north. They say goodbye.

Hogan and Harper are leaving to join the rest of the British forces. Sharpe has been ordered to stay in Salamanca and recuperate. Hogan observes that Sharpe wears two swords. Sharpe removes The Kligenthal from his belt and throws it in the river.

When Sharpe arrives at his assigned house in Salamanca, he finds that his wife and daughter have arrived.

In the Historical Note, the author says that both Father Patrick Curtis and Sergeant Michael Connelley were actual historical characters. Curtis was truly a chief of a spy network, and Connelley really was a kind and well-liked hospital orderly. For those interested in the two characters, the author suggests further non-fiction reading.

The Plaza and the Roman bridge in Salamanca are still in much the same condition today as they were at the time of the novel. The battle site at Arapiles has not changed much, and the author provides driving directions from Salamanca.

The author gives special thanks to a friend that is a medical doctor for providing technical advice on the type of injury Sharpe sustained as a result of the pistol shot.

Epilogue and Historical Note Analysis

Considering everything they have been through, the farewell between Sharpe and Helena is rather reserved. Perhaps both characters have been through so much neither knows what to say.

Hogan seems to know that Spears was the spy, but he sees no good reason in causing a scandal that will help no one.

Sharpe demonstrates the value he places on friendship when he chooses the sword Harper made over the expensive Kligenthal.

In the Historical Note, the diligent historical research by the author is impressive. In at least one case, a real-life character had a "stranger than fiction" life.



Characters

Captain Richard Sharpe

Richard Sharpe is first described as tall, dark, and brooding. The reader learns early on that Sharpe is no ordinary officer. Sharpe first enlisted in the army as a private. He came from an impoverished background. In fact, Sharpe is an orphan who was raised in a foundling home. While in the army, Sharpe encounters the only security and sense of self-worth he has ever known. This drives him to succeed.

Sharpe is the veteran of several battles both Europe and in India. In many of those battles, Sharpe distinguished himself and has become somewhat famous within the British Army. Many times Sharpe meets people who already know something about him from hearing tales of his past heroics. This little bit of fame does not shield Sharpe from the prejudice he encounters from the upper classes. Many resent his promotion from the ranks, and Sharpe himself often feels lost when in the company of the aristocracy.

Sharpe's identity as a Rifleman is of utmost importance to him. He takes great pride in being an infantryman. Other officers ride horses, but Sharpe remembers his beginnings as an infantryman. This is also perhaps a way he bonds with the infantrymen under his command. Sharpe was once a member of the 95th Rifles, an elite infantry regiment. In the novel *Sharpe's Sword*, Sharpe has command of the Light Company of the South Essex Regiment.

There is more to Sharpe than being a good soldier and fighter. He is capable of being a good friend. His friends also think a great deal of Sharpe, and this is revealed in the ways that many react first to the news of his death and later when it is revealed that he is alive but dangerously injured. Many send gifts and other acts of kindness.

Sergeant Patrick Harper

Patrick Harper is described as a gigantic Irishman. He is huge in stature and equally larger than life in his sense of humor. Aside from his immense size, the most notable quality about Harper is his perennial upbeat attitude. Even in the most somber of situations, Harper finds humor. When Sharpe throws the captured sword of an enemy in the river after both he and Harper nearly died at the hands of that villain, Harper comments that Sharpe's action might "frighten the fishes."

Harper offers the perfect balance to the outwardly appearing rigid Richard Sharpe. But there is more to Patrick Harper than being a jolly big fellow. He is also a fierce fighter. Harper carries an unusual gun into battle. It is a gun with seven barrels that fire simultaneously. Harper is one of few men strong enough to handle such a weapon. Even without the huge gun, Harper is ferocious in combat. Once, when only he and Sharpe are facing many French soldiers, Harper picks up a partially burnt piece of wood and walks toward the enemy armed with guns and swords.



Another notable quality of Harper is his capacity for friendship. He truly cares about Sharpe. He considers insults against Sharpe to be insults against him, and he considers Sharpe's obstacles and goals to be his own. When he receives news of Sharpe's death, he refuses to believe it and is even arrested for digging up corpses with his bare hands. After learning that Sharpe is alive but injured, it is Harper who takes care of Sharpe.

Harper modifies a sword and presents it as a gift to Sharpe. This will likely become one of Sharpe's dearest possessions.

Father Patrick Curtis

This Irish priest in Salamanca has a tendency to seem to be everywhere at once. Sharpe encounters the priest at pivotal moments in the story, such as the pursuit of Leroux outside Salamanca, Helena's party, and the fight with Leroux in the hospital. Curtis is seventy-two years old and a professor of astronomy and natural history at the Irish College in Salamanca. He has a delightful sense of humor, but Sharpe's suspicions about the man prevent him from appreciating the priest's finer qualities. Later in the novel, Curtis visits Sharpe to return Sharpe's rifle. The two men have a conversation, and Curtis reveals some things that are shocking and dramatically affect the plot.

Helena (a.k.a. La Marquesa de Caesares el Grandes y Melida)

Sharpe describes this woman as the most beautiful he has ever seen. Once he gets to know her, Sharpe also discovers that there is far more to the woman than physical beauty. She speaks five languages and has a keen interest in the outcome of the war. Constantly she asks Sharpe questions about the British Army's progress in fighting the French. She first claims to ask Sharpe rather than higher ranking officers because she believes Sharpe gives more honest answers and takes her seriously despite her gender. Later, she reveals that she also asks Sharpe's assessment because she believes she needs a personal protector. Helena tells one version of her past to Sharpe, and later Sharpe learns a very different version.

Major Michael Hogan

Major Hogan is an officer on Wellington's staff. Instead of fighting in the infantry or cavalry, Hogan is tasked with gathering intelligence about enemy activity. He leads a group of officers who go far behind enemy lines in search of information. These officers are called Exploring Officers.

Hogan is a true friend to Richard Sharpe. When Sharpe becomes involved with Helena—or rather, when Hogan suspects that Sharpe is involved with Helena—Hogan worries about his friend's marriage. Later, when everything regarding Sharpe's relationship with Helena is exposed, Hogan tries to console Sharpe on the loss and the feelings of guilt



Sharpe experiences. When Hogan learns of Sharpe's death, Hogan is shaken and depressed. When he learns that Sharpe is only injured, he is overjoyed but often worries about Sharpe's recovery.

General Wellington (a.k.a. The Peer)

This is the commander of all British forces in Spain. He is a brilliant strategist and has a long record of victory against the French. Wellington is almost always calm and reserved, and he ensures that all soldiers under his command behave well toward civilians and other soldiers or face dire consequences. Sharpe once saved Wellington's life, and the two men have a special relationship. The narrator says this relationship cannot be called friendship, but it still important to both characters. Wellington needs a soldier with uncommon bravery, and Sharpe, who has a tendency to offend those in authority, needs a powerful patron.

Sometimes Wellington is referred to as "The Peer" because of his status in the British nobility.

Colonel Philippe Leroux

This character is the villain of the story, and though the narrator describes him as a killer, the term "evil" is not inaccurate in describing this man. Leroux is on special assignment from Napoleon, and his task involves the abduction and torture of civilians in his search for a spy who damages the French cause. Not merely satisfied to get the information from torture, Leroux also carves his name in his victims so that others will fear him. He presents a formidable opponent for Sharpe. Leroux is cunning and deadly with his sword, the most finely crafted sword Sharpe has ever seen.

Captain Jack Spears

This character comes from a wealthy family and is part of the English aristocracy. He serves with Major Hogan as an Exploring Officer. Despite being incredibly irresponsible and so addicted to gambling that he loses his entire family fortune, Spears is likable. Everyone around him seems to be affected by his fun loving nature and hilarious actions. Despite being of aristocratic birth, he is one of the few members of the upper classes that put Sharpe at ease. In one particularly memorable scene, he steals part of a drunken officer's uniform to help make Sharpe more presentable for a party.

Captain Paul Delmas

This is a French officer that Leroux takes with him when he flees the King's German Legion cavalry at the beginning of the novel. Leroux kills Delmas and assumes his identity. Not until Sharpe meets Father Curtis does he realize that the man he has been calling Delmas is really Leroux.



Lieutenant Colonel Windham

This is the commander of the South Essex Battalion at the opening of the novel. He and Sharpe have a friendly relationship. Windham often pretends to be ignorant of things for the effect of humor. He goes against Sharpe's advice not to grant parole to Leroux, and he dies as a result.

Captain Lossow

This officer in the cavalry of the King's German Legion is a friend to Sharpe.

Teresa Sharpe

This is Sharpe's wife, who fights with the Spanish against the French.

Antonia Sharpe

This is Sharpe's young daughter.

Ensign McDonald

This sixteen-year-old officer is placed in charge of escorting Leroux. Leroux murders the boy.

Isabella

This woman is Harper's companion. He saved her from a violent attack before the novel begins.

Rifleman Daniel Hagman

This is the oldest man in the Light Company and the best shot. He was once a poacher in England.

Lieutenant Harold Price

This is Sharpe's second-in-command. He is very loyal to Sharpe.

Sir Robin Callard

This aristocratic cavalry officer calls Sharpe an uncombed brute.



Marshal Auguste Marmont

This is the youngest Marshal in the French military, and he commands the forces facing Wellington's troops.

Lord Benfleet

This pompous English politician makes the mistake of criticizing Sharpe's appearance and trying to order him to leave a party.

Sergeant Huckfield

This soldier in the Light Company was once saved from hanging by Sharpe, and he holds Sharpe in high regard.

Sergeant Michael Connelley

This character is in charge of the death room at the hospital. He is kind and does everything he can to ensure that patients are comfortable in their final hours.



Objects/Places

King's German Legion

This is the name of a group of German soldiers who fight for the British Army against France. Captain Lussow, a friend of Sharpe's, leads a group of King's German Legion cavalry.

River Tormes

This is a river in Spain that passes by the city of Salamanca.

The Kligenthal

This is the sword carried by Leroux. Kligenthal (or Klingenthal, as in Klingenthal, Bas-Rhin) is an area in France known for the manufacture of swords.

South Essex Battalion

This is the unit of the British Army that Sharpe is assigned to. A battalion usually consists of 300 to 1,300 soldiers.

The Light Company

This is the portion of the South Essex Battalion under the command of Sharpe. It is composed of both riflemen and regular British soldiers.

Salamanca, Spain

The author, the narrator, and Richard Sharpe consider this to be one of the world's most beautiful cities. It is the primary setting of the novel.

Rifleman

These soldiers are distinct from other infantry soldiers primarily by carrying a rifle instead of a musket and wearing a green uniform instead of the usual British redcoat. Sharpe is a Rifleman as are many soldiers in his Light Company.



Voltiguers

These are French light infantry troops. Like British Riflemen, their primary task is as skirmishers, those that go ahead of the main battle force and try to disrupt the enemy formation.

The Provosts

This is the police force of the British Army. At the time of the novel's setting, they had a reputation for harsh treatment of British soldiers.

Exploring Officers

These British Army officers go far behind enemy lines in full uniform in order to gather intelligence.

Palacio Casares

This is the lavish residence of Helena in Salamanca and the location of her special balcony.

Irish College

This is the location where the hospital is set up after the battle, and it is where Father Curtis is a professor.

Quinine

A substance derived from the bark of the cinchona tree. It is useful in treating fevers. Harper bullies some doctors into giving him some so he can treat Sharpe.

Arapiles, Spain

This is a small village near Salamanca, Spain. It is the location of the decisive battle between the British and French.

Black Lion

This is the name British soldiers during the Napoleonic Wars had for syphilis, a venereal disease that kills many.



Alba de Tormes, Spain

This is a town near a bridge Spanish troops are supposed to guard in order to prevent the French from escaping the British. It is also near the location of the climactic battle between Sharpe and Leroux.



Themes

Pride, Honor, and Personal Accountability

Arguably, Richard Sharpe places more responsibility on himself than any one person should have to bear. Nevertheless, it is this code that he lives by that is essential to understand if one is to make sense of his motivations and actions. Sharpe feels responsible for the escape of Leroux from the forts, and one can perhaps agree that Sharpe should bear the majority of the blame because he knew that Leroux was capable of trickery, but still he allowed the wounded to be taken from the forts when Leroux was actually the first casualty Sharpe encountered. However, Sharpe also blames himself for the death of Lieutenant Colonel Windham. Here Sharpe is being too harsh on himself because Windham granted Leroux parole over Sharpe's protest.

Throughout much of the novel, Sharpe is consumed with the desire to defeat Leroux. On more than one occasion, Sharpe risks his life to find and fight Leroux. The narrator explains this best in chapter twenty-eight, when he says that if a man does not understand Sharpe's need to defeat Leroux because Leroux once defeated Sharpe, then a man has no pride.

It is important when examining the concept of honor in Sharpe's Sword not to take the overly simplified view that the "good" characters have honor, and the "bad" characters do not. Jack Spears is as likable as any fictional character could be, yet he is deeply flawed. He behaves in an incredibly irresponsible manner, and later the reader learns that he has also committed traitorous acts. In the end, his conscious and feelings of betraying himself and others lead him to a desperate act to restore some of his honor.

The Uncombed Brute versus The Lapdog

A recurring theme throughout Sharpe's Sword is that of promotion and status based on wealth and power versus status based on merit and performance. Richard Sharpe came from an impoverished background, but he has worked hard and used his natural talents to succeed. Sharpe has been rewarded for his performance by promotion from the enlisted ranks to an officer's commission. But other far less talented and experienced men have been given far greater rewards because of their wealth and social standing.

When Sharpe first meets Helena, he is called an uncombed brute by a socially well connected cavalry officer, an aristocrat who has likely never seen battle. Sharpe responds in his usual cynical and defiant manner that it is better to be a brute than a lapdog. Only Wellington's intervention prevents a duel. Interactions like these are not uncommon in Sharpe's public life. The most vivid account of the manner in which Sharpe finds himself as an outsider occurs when Sharpe attends Helena's party. Sharpe stands away from others and contemplates what makes a lord. He knows it is not money because money can be attained, and if it is something in relation to birth, this



conflicts with Sharpe's other notions concerning merit. When it comes to mixing with "polite" society, Sharpe is lost and uncomfortable.

Wealth versus merit also influences Sharpe's personal life. Despite the overt advances that Helena makes toward him, and despite his intense desire for her, Sharpe delays in letting the relationship start because in his mind he is but a poor uncombed brute and unworthy of the attention of a marquesa.

Friendship

The theme of friendship is an important element in Sharpe's Sword. This theme is most evident in the example of Richard Sharpe and Patrick Harper, but it is not the only example. Sharpe also has the friendship of Major Hogan, Captain Lossow, Captain Spears, and others.

In many of Sharpe's instances of friendship, the relationship at one time was based on a superior/subordinate dynamic, but in the case of Sharpe and Harper, the friendship has moved well beyond this type of relationship. In first seeming to be a madman digging up bodies in search of his captain and later pouring buckets of water off a roof onto his naked and feverish superior officer, Harper goes far beyond the requirements of his duties as a sergeant.

It could be said that friendship is absolutely necessary to everything that happens in the novel. Sharpe himself when asked why he fights said for "my friends." Sharpe knows little and cares nothing about larger issues like politics, but he knows much about the dynamics of a group of men faced by adversaries who intend to kill them. To Sharpe, a poor orphan who has never had a family, friendship is everything.

Indeed, Sharpe owes his life to friendship. When Sharpe is in need, his friends rally. Harper digs up graves, pours buckets of water, and makes a sword. Captain Lossow sends a nearly impossible to acquire quantity of beer. Hogan arranges convalescent leave. The soldiers in Sharpe's company send letters. Sharpe also owes his reputation to friendship. Sharpe said it best when asked how he accomplished one of his most famous heroic exploits: "With Harper, sir."



Style

Point of View

Sharpe's Sword is told by an omniscient third person narrator and comes primarily from the perspective of the protagonist Richard Sharpe. However, the narrator can and does access the thoughts of other characters, and he does so often at length and in unexpected moments.

The perspective of Sharpe gives the novel its predominant tone and voice. Richard Sharpe is an officer in the British army who has seen many battles. He tends to view things in pragmatic terms. Sharpe's background as an impoverished orphan also colors his perspective. Sharpe's calm reserve in the face of danger and his understanding of the unfairness of the control by the rich and powerful governs the way Sharpe and sometimes the audience understands situations and events.

Because the narrator can access and relay the inner thoughts of characters other than Sharpe, the reader often feels events more intensely than if one saw them only from Sharpe's perspective. Usually the narrator resorts to using other characters' perceptions to tell the story when Sharpe is not physically present, but this is not always the case. Perhaps the most noticeable example occurs in chapter twenty-eight, during the fight between Sharpe and Leroux. Abruptly, the narrator switches from the perspective of Sharpe to the perspective of Leroux, and this unexpected shift lasts only three paragraphs before returning to Sharpe's perspective.

By presenting the novel primarily through the eyes of Sharpe, the narrator allows us to see the other characters through the discerning and critical eye of a man who has had to rely on his powers of keen observation for his survival and the survival of the men under his command.

Setting

The location setting of Sharpe's Sword is Salamanca, Spain and the surrounding area. The narrator goes to great effort in vividly describing the sights of Salamanca and the surrounding countryside. Some of the more memorable images of Sharpe's Sword involve the narrator's almost poetic descriptions of the beauty of the area.

Equal in importance to the location setting is the element of time. The novel is set two hundred years previous to contemporary early twenty-first century vantage point. Because of this, the setting of Sharpe's Sword, like other historical novels that endeavor toward historical accuracy, is of vital importance. Many contemporary readers will find the aspect of time more unfamiliar than the aspect of location.

The author wastes no time in immersing the reader in the setting, identifying the exact date of the opening of the novel, Sunday June 14, 1812. The narrator also immediately



provides vivid descriptions of the countryside in the Prologue. By the time the principle characters have reached an area across the river from Salamanca in chapter one, the description of the city begins, and it is a description rich in detail that continues in following chapters as action unfolds inside the city.

Sharpe's Sword is a story of war, and important to such a setting are the military terms, especially types of weapons. The narrator does an admirable job of describing the artifacts of the setting, particularly the weapons. Even readers who have never seen a cannon will understand the difference between round shot, canister shot, and heat shot.

The physical elements of the setting are all vividly described, but in the end readers will remember these aspects within the context of time. Sharpe's Sword in all its richly portrayed images is a novel set as much in time as in place.

Language and Meaning

Despite being set in the early nineteenth century, Sharpe's Sword is presented in contemporary language. This makes the setting and the subject, the adventures of a man two hundred years ago, more accessible to modern readers. While some may think at first consideration that the use of modern language is inadequate to present a world two hundred years gone, this is not the case with Sharpe's Sword.

In many cases, the names of specific items and practices are kept the same, but in each instance where a modern reader will be unfamiliar with a word or phrase, the author gives an outright definition or enables the reader to understand via context. Few readers besides military historians or fans of historical fiction will know what "heat shot" is, but the author goes into sufficient detail in describing the practice of heating cannonballs before firing. In fact, readers will even learn the exact number of minutes it takes to prepare heat shot. The author manages to provide these definitions without intrusive exposition that detracts from progression of the plot.

Perhaps the most striking use of language occurs in the scenes where battles are fought. The narrator makes no effort to conceal the brutal nature of armed conflict. On the contrary, all of the bloody and cruel horrors of violence are vivid and terrifying. Other famous fictional books about the Napoleonic Wars might speak of concepts such as glory and valor in war, but Sharpe's Sword vividly describes the carnage that kills people and animals.

Structure

The structure of Sharpe's Sword is almost entirely linear and chronological. The plot, or rather the action, moves from beginning to end. The Prologue begins in with the introduction to the villain near Salamanca, and the Epilogue ends with the friends and principle characters moving on now that a villain has been defeated and a battle won. With one notable exception, the only elements of backflash occur in the characters' minds, and these moments are brief.



The novel is divided into twenty-eight chapters, an epilogue, and a Historical Note section. The novel is also divided into three parts that correspond to dates. The narrative is continuous and unbroken aside from the one exception. Where one chapter ends the next begins. The exception to this practice is chapter fourteen. During chapter thirteen, Hogan and others frantically search for Sharpe and conclude that he is dead. Chapter fourteen reveals Sharpe's location and condition, but in time it takes place concurrently with chapter thirteen. After this one exception, the structure returns to its linear progression.

Possibly the most notable aspect of the structure is the way the author keeps the action and tension escalating in a nearly unending race to the finish. Time and time again it seems that Sharpe has become burdened with troubles he can never hope to escape. Little or no resolution is achieved until the very end. Even at the novel's conclusion, the action keeps its breakneck pace. Not until the very last pages, the Epilogue, does one receive resolution to some of the character's lives.



Quotes

"Leroux was a wanted man and he had seen to that himself. He worked by fear, he spread horror about his name, and all his victims, once dead, were inscribed with his name. He would leave a patch of skin untouched and on the patch would incise two words. Leroux fecit. Just as if he were a sculptor boasting a fine piece of work, he would leave his mark. 'Leroux made this.'"

Prologue, pp. 14-15

"The New Cathedral, three centuries old with its two domed towers, was huge and serene in the in the sunlight. This city was not a place of trade, like Badajoz, but a place of learning, of prayer, of grace, of beauty that had little purpose but to please. It was a city of gold above a river of silver, and Sharpe was happy to be back."

Chap. 1, p. 24

"Harper watched for an instant, grinning, because he was used to the fearsome spectacle of Richard Sharpe going fierce into battle and then he joined in. He left the seven-barreled gun behind and used a length of fire-blackened timber with which he flailed the red-epauletted enemy until, their courage broken, they were scrambling back up the hill. Harper looked at his Captain whose reddened blade had defeated four men in less than half a minute. He bent down to retrieve the big gun. 'Have you ever thought of joining the army, Mr. Sharpe?'"

Chap. 2, p. 40

"Sharpe had reduced the army's regulations to three simple rules. His men were expected to fight, as he did, with determination. They were not to steal, except from the enemy or unless they were starving. And they were never to get drunk without his permission. They grinned at him and held up wind that had been given them. They would have sore heads in the morning."

Chap. 3, p. 48

"A hundred thousand men, before and behind the ridge, feared on that perfect day of heat, poppies and cornflowers. The smoke from the French cooking fires of the night drifted into a haze to westward while the gunners prepared their instruments of slaughter. Surely today they would fight. Some men in both armies hoped for the battle, seeking in combat the death that would release them from the pains of diseased bodies."

Chap. 4, p. 63

"He was out of place here. It was not just the clothes. Any man, he supposed, could get a tailor to dress him like a lord, but it was not just a question of money. How did a man learn which of a dozen knives and forks to pick up first? Or how to dance? Or how to



make light conversation with a Marquesa, joke with a Bishop, or how, even, to give orders to a butler?"

Chap. 8, p. 114

"The Provosts turned round. They were the police force of the army, universally disliked, and they watched Hogan's approach with silent truculence. Sergeant Harper, who had shouted, was still on the ground. He looked up at Hogan. 'Would you be telling this scum to let me go, sir?'"

Chap. 15, p. 192

"I don't remember exactly when it started, perhaps four years ago, but I found the letters coming, and I wrote back, and then I began to hide the letters, to put them inside the bindings of books. Then, when the English army came, it seemed sensible to pass the material onwards, so I did, and now I find that I am the most important spy you have."

Chap. 18, p. 229

"Sharpe stood his horse at the southern end of the ridge, and his soldier's mind took in the escarpment, the valleys, and the village, but his wonder was at the plain that stretched away to the treeline to the south. The plain, which was pale with ripening wheat, was like a great sea that lapped against the escarpment, ridge and Teso San Miguel, and in the sea were two strange islands. Two hills, and to a soldier the two hills were the key to the plain."

Chap. 19, pp. 233-234

"Battles rarely start quickly. They grow like grass fires. A piece of musket wadding, red hot, is spat onto the grass, it smoulders, is fanned, and a hundred other such tiny sparks flicker on the dry ground. Some fade, others catch into flame and may be stamped out by an irritable skirmisher, but suddenly two will join and the wind catches the fire, blows it, swirls the smoke and then, quite suddenly, the little wadding sparks have become a raging fire that roasts the wounded and eats the dead."

Chap. 21, p. 245

"To the spectators on the great ridge the battle had appeared as something like the surging spring tide seething into a place that was usually above the high water mark. The tide had surged from the west, running swiftly over the plain, and then it had struck the obstacles of the Arapiles. The fighting had churned. For a moment it had looked as if the French centre would flow irresistibly toward the city, through the small valley, but it had been held, the two Divisions in column broken, and the fighting had surged back, past the Arapiles, and now the fighting drained off to the south and east; away from the city."

Chap. 23, p. 263



"Sharpe had been given his last chance. He had ridden for it through the night and in this dawn his hopes were at their lowest. He wanted to take his sword, his unblooded sword, against the Kligenthal. He wanted Leroux because Leroux had beaten him, and if a man thought that was a bad reason, then a man had no pride."

Chap. 25, p. 285

Topics for Discussion

The narrator often uses analogies to describe the spectacle of war, such as comparing the slow beginnings of a battle to the way a grass fire starts and spreads or comparing to the back and forth movement of troops on a battlefield to the movement of the sea. These destructive forces of nature present a ready comparison to the destruction in war. Find and discuss some times when the narrator has juxtaposed peaceful or even beautiful elements of nature to highlight the horrors of war.

Sharpe's Sword is part of a series of books about the exploits of Richard Sharpe. If you have read other books in the series, describe how Sharpe's Sword compares to the other work. If you have not read other works in the series, based on your enjoyment of Sharpe's Sword, explain why you are or are not likely to read another work in the series.

Bernard Cornwell, author of Sharpe's Sword, goes to impressive length to keep historical accounts accurate. Discuss how knowing that much of the story is taken from actual history affects your enjoyment of a story centering on a fictional character, Richard Sharpe.

Many novels and movies about war often glorify the setting rather than focus on the actual practice of killing and death. Discuss whether Sharpe's Sword portrays combat as something adventuresome and glorious or something terrifying that any sane person would want to avoid by citing specific passages from the text.

Sharpe's Sword is primarily a work of historical fiction centering on the adventures of Richard Sharpe, but the novel also contains elements more common to other genres such as mystery. Discuss how a mystery or multiple mysteries to be solved develops through the course of the novel.

The identities of several of the characters are uncertain through the course of most of the novel. Pick one known character you suspected of being one of the mystery characters, and describe to moments in the novel that led or misled you to your conclusion.

In a tale about warfare, espionage, and death, comedy might seem out of place, and yet it often occurs amid the most tragic or somber of circumstances. Pick one moment of comedy, and describe how taken on the surface the scene should have been sad or terrifying, but when taken in context of the greater story the scene is funny.