

# **Sharpe's Trafalgar: Richard Sharpe and the Battle of Trafalgar, October 21, 1805 Study Guide**

**Sharpe's Trafalgar: Richard Sharpe and the Battle of Trafalgar, October 21, 1805 by Bernard Cornwell**

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## Plot Summary

Ensign Richard Sharpe purchases items to make his journey from India to Britain more comfortable but the warehouse where the goods are stored burns down before he can collect them. Sharpe, acting on a tip, discovers that the merchant—who reportedly died in the fire—is alive and well. He confronts the man and, in the act, saves a British Captain, Joel Chase. The men strike up a friendship before Sharpe leaves for Britain aboard the *Calliope*, captained by Peculiar Cromwell.

Another couple, Lord William and Lady Grace Hale, are also on board. Though Lord William has nothing but scorn for Sharpe, Lady Grace soon falls in love with him and the two begin an affair. The *Calliope* breaks away from the convoy of ships and is captured by a French ship, the *Revenant*. Sharpe believes that Cromwell has put the ship in a position to be captured and that others on board are in on the plot. Just days later, Chase's ship, the *Pucelle*, catches up to the *Calliope* and retakes it. Chase invites Sharpe to join him on the *Pucelle*, an invitation Sharpe accepts after learning that Lady Grace and Lord William will also be changing ships.

A short time later, Chase spots the *Revenant*. Just as the *Pucelle* is in a position to catch up with her, Chase discovers other British ships in the area and learns that there is a battle expected. He gives up the chase of the *Revenant* to join the upcoming battle. As a military man, Sharpe is expected to participate in the fighting. Fearing what might happen if the ship is taken by the enemy, Lady Grace asks for a gun and Sharpe gives her his. The battle rages and many lives are lost. Chase and Sharpe come through without major injuries. There are many ships from both sides but the majority of the French ships focus on the *Victory*, the ship carrying the British admiral.

The *Pucelle* winds up in a fight with the *Revenant* and wins, taking that ship as their prize. Meanwhile, Lord William and Lady Grace are hiding in the hold of the ship. Lord William reveals that Braithwaite left a letter outlining the affair between Lady Grace and Sharpe. Lord William makes it plain that he is about to kill Lady Grace. Lady Grace kills him with Sharpe's gun. Sharpe enters the hold and discovers the death. Lady Grace says that she knows she will be hanged for murder but Sharpe, with the help of a seaman named Clouter, disposes of the body. Sharpe and Lady Grace, who has by this time told Sharpe that she is pregnant with his child, discuss their future together.



# Chapters 1 and 2

## Chapters 1 and 2 Summary

As the story opens, Ensign Richard Sharpe is in India trying to make a deal for several pieces of furniture and equipment that he plans to use during his upcoming voyage to England. Sharpe says that he is planning to set sail on the "Calliope." He pays for the goods but before he can pick them up, he discovers that the warehouse where the goods were stored has burned to the ground and the merchant reportedly killed. On a tip, Sharpe travels to the home of another merchant and pretends to be a beggar. There he discovers the merchant who sold him the goods. While he is deciding what to do, several British seamen arrive and confront the merchant. However, the British are outnumbered and are quickly defeated. Sharpe steps in and the British get the upper hand. Later Sharpe and the British captain, a man named Captain Joel Chase, discuss the fact that the merchant took his defeat well. Sharpe is headed to England where he is to join a new regiment. The army has refused to pay his passage and Sharpe has paid for the cheapest fare he could find. Chase says that Peculiar Cromwell is captain of the ship Sharpe will be aboard, the "Calliope." Chase says that Cromwell could get the ship home quickly but he is traveling in a fleet which will slow the progress considerably. Chase is captain of the "Pucelle," and says that they will be traveling in a convoy in order to thwart the efforts of any privateers on the Indian Ocean. One of the fastest of these privateers is the Revenant, captained by Louis Montmorin.

On his way to the Calliope in a small boat, Sharpe encounters a couple who are to be traveling aboard the Calliope, Lord William and Lady Grace Hale. Both seem snobby to Sharpe. When their rowers refuse to take them any farther without more money, Sharpe shoots a hole in the boat, forcing the men to continue or risk sinking. Aboard the Calliope, Lord William instructs his secretary, Malachi Braithwaite, to write a letter to Sharpe's superiors, saying that Sharpe "could have" killed Lord William.

In chapter two, Braithwaite reveals to Sharpe that he has not sent the letter reporting Sharpe's action to his superiors as Lord William instructed. When Sharpe asks why, Braithwaite says he might someday need a favor from Sharpe. Sharpe is introduced to a man who is called Baron von Dornberg but who Sharpe recognizes as a "rogue" named Anthony Pohlmann. Pohlmann deserted the Hanover army for a wealthier position and was a leader of the feared Mahratta army. Most of Pohlmann's men were slaughtered in a fight against the British but Pohlmann himself simply disappeared.

Sharpe is invited to join the wealthier passengers at the captain's table that night and is questioned about having saved the life of a military leader, Arthur Wellesley, who turns out to be a distant cousin of Lady Grace. Later, Pohlmann tells Sharpe that he has taken note of the jewels sewn into the lining of Sharpe's cloak and receives Sharpe's assurance that Pohlmann's identity is safe. Later, Captain Cromwell tells Sharpe that having the jewels in view of the ship's crew is a bad idea. Cromwell orders that Sharpe give him the jewels for safekeeping in order to avoid any problems with the crew.



Sharpe initially refuses but Cromwell insists and he gives in. He does not, however, give up the gems sewn into his waistband or those hidden in his boots.

## Chapters 1 and 2 Analysis

Sharpe's first meeting with Joel Chase is purely by chance and it seems likely that the two part permanently when Sharpe boards the Calliope. Chase will, however, become an important character later in the story. Chase will actually take possession of the Calliope after the ship's captain gives the Calliope up to the French.

Sharpe's initial assessment of Lord William Hale is exactly correct but his opinion of Lady Grace is not. Lord William is cold and calculating, wanting only what he can get for himself. Lady Grace will soon prove to be a warm, passionate character. Sharpe feels obliged to give in to Cromwell's insistence that he turn over his jewels even though Sharpe does not fully trust Cromwell. Cromwell's argument—that having the jewels in plain sight is too much temptation for the crew—seems valid on the face. Sharpe's military training and his tendency to bow to a superior officer's orders seems to prompt his agreement though Sharpe does withhold some of the jewels.

Anthony Pohlmann is basically a con man and when he is "introduced" to Sharpe, his first words are a whispered plea not to tell anyone his real identity. Those aboard the ship will not learn his true identity until after the Calliope is captured but, for the sake of continuity, everyone refers to him as von Dornberg until that point. For the sake of continuity and clarity, he is referred to as Pohlmann throughout this study guide.



# Chapters 3 and 4

## Chapters 3 and 4 Summary

In chapter three, Sharpe says that the "boredom is palpable." The passengers aboard the *Calliope* are divided into two distinct categories—the rich people who are in the better cabins, have access to better food and fresh air, and the poor who occupy the steerage cabins, eat poorer food and are often cooped up in the ship. The lower portions of the ship have a tendency to be damp all and smelly. Sharpe is straddling that line because his cabin is in steerage but he is often invited to join the wealthy passengers, typically eating at least one meal a day at the captain's table, at Pohlmann's invitation. Sharpe admits to himself that he accepts the invitations because it gives him the opportunity to see Lady Grace. At one point, Pohlmann and Sharpe are talking about the hostilities between France and England. Pohlmann says that England cannot withstand the French.

Sharpe encounters Braithwaite who bemoans his current situation. Braithwaite says that he attended Oxford and holds the position of Lord William's secretary, but is treated no better than a common servant. His cabin is in steerage and he is forced to eat the food of the passengers there. He says that he has complained to Lord William but that it has not done any good. That night at the captain's table, the guests are served a fish soup, of which several complain. However, the captain says that the soup is safe, adding that he has had crew and passengers die of a number of accidents, illnesses and suicide, but never as the result of the fish soup. The conversation turns to sailing and Lady Grace says she enjoys traveling aboard a ship, prompting Cromwell to say that not everyone feels as she does. After dinner, the party splits up with several of the men planning a game of whist—a common occurrence. Sharpe is still in the room having a glass of wine when Lady Grace enters. Sharpe offers to leave but she questions him about Pohlmann, though she refers to him as von Dornberg. Sharpe says that they met in India and that he saved Pohlmann's life. Lady Grace seems unwilling to accept Sharpe's words at face value and says that Pohlmann and Cromwell claimed to have met upon Pohlmann's arrival on the *Calliope*, but that the two men met nightly and talked. She rises to leave and the ship heaves, throwing her off balance. Sharpe catches her and holds onto her for a moment before a steward enters the room and they step apart. Lady Grace leaves.

The next day, Sharpe is told by a seaman that the *Calliope* lost sight of the rest of the convoy during the storm the previous night. He says that Pohlmann did it on purpose because the *Calliope* is "a fast ship" but was being slowed dramatically by the slower ships of the convoy. Later, Sharpe asks Pohlmann why Cromwell left the convoy and Pohlmann, though he denies knowing Cromwell, says that it is so the *Calliope's* cargo will arrive ahead of all the other ship's, making it more valuable. Sharpe counters, saying that "there's safety in numbers," but Pohlmann says that the *Calliope* is so fast that they can outrun any dangers. Later, Sharpe encounters Lady Grace and says that Pohlmann denied knowing Cromwell well and then reveals Pohlmann's true identity.



Lady Grace then tells Sharpe that she is concerned about their current route, saying that it takes them near Mauritius, a harbor known to be a safe haven for pirates. As Sharpe and Lady Grace continue to talk, she reveals that she hated India, that her three-month-old son died there, and that she almost died of fever. Sharpe reveals that he was an orphan. During their confessions, Sharpe kisses her and she returns his passion. She says that it is because she is "intrigued" by Sharpe and is unhappy in her marriage. They later slip down to Sharpe's cabin.

In chapter four, a member of the *Calliope's* crew spots the sails of another ship. Another of the passengers, Major Dalton, notes that Sharpe looks tired to which he replies that he has had trouble sleeping. Dalton responds that he hopes there is not something going around because Lady Grace also looks tired. Later, Sharpe encounters Braithwaite who reveals that he knows about the affair. Braithwaite says his "silence can be purchased," but Sharpe counters, saying that if Braithwaite reveals the situation, Sharpe will kill him. Though Sharpe does not reveal it to Braithwaite, he chastises himself for putting Lady Grace in the situation, knowing that her reputation will be ruined.

One evening at dinner, the conversation turns to military matters. Later, Lady Grace urges Sharpe to go with her to the cuddy cabin where they see Cromwell, Pohlmann and a third man, a passenger who is apparently Pohlmann's servant. The third man says "tomorrow morning" in French and Cromwell responds that it is "not certain." The next morning, Cromwell is obviously on edge but says that it is because he believes a storm is approaching, a fact that another passenger says is not true. Later in the day, a ship is spotted but Cromwell says it is probably the *Pucelle*—Joel Chase's ship—and that there's no need for alarm. When it is discovered that it is not the *Pucelle*, Cromwell orders that they run. He continually makes small adjustments in their course which makes Sharpe believe he is trying to get as much speed as possible but which another seaman says is only slowing them down. They soon discover that it is the *Revenant* and that ship fires on the *Calliope*. Cromwell orders the surrender. Sharpe and several others who have valuables in Cromwell's cabin want to go get them but Cromwell says he has things to do before the French board the *Calliope*. Sharpe is angry but gives in because he wants to stay near Lady Grace as they are boarded.

## Chapters 3 and 4 Analysis

The conversation between Sharpe and Pohlmann regarding the hostilities between the French and English is important because it provides a foreshadowing of the events to come. The foreshadowing in this case is not overly obvious, but what eventually occurs indicates Pohlmann's reason for being on the ship. It will eventually be revealed that Pohlmann, Cromwell and another man have joined forces to hand the *Calliope* over to the French. In fact, Cromwell later says that he agrees with Pohlmann, that the English cannot withstand the French. Cromwell will throw his loyalties in with the French in an effort to gain favor with what he believes will be the winning side of the emerging conflict.



Braithwaite's main reason for confronting Sharpe may appear to be a desire to blackmail Sharpe but may actually be because he is jealous of Sharpe's position. Braithwaite himself is enamored with Lady Grace, a fact that is noted by everyone close to them, including Lord William. However, the bottom line is that Braithwaite wants his position bettered and will go to any lengths—other than legitimate hard work—to get it. He does not seem to care whether his position is improved because he is Lady Grace's lover or her blackmailer, as long as it is improved. This is at the very heart of Braithwaite's character and makes him somewhat predictable.

As it becomes evident that the Calliope is not going to outrun the Revenant, Sharpe and Lady Grace listen to the comments of others. It becomes increasingly clear that Cromwell was not really trying to outrun the other ship and Sharpe becomes increasingly aware that Cromwell intended for the Revenant to catch them. One of the passengers predicts that the Revenant will take the Calliope and her cargo to Mauritius where it will be sold off. At one point, Lady Grace obviously realizes that the women on board might be in danger from the French. When she believes herself to be unobserved, she pleads with Sharpe to stay near her. It is apparent that she trusts Sharpe to defend her but does not believe that Lord William will. Another passenger overhears the comment and lets Sharpe know that he overheard. When Sharpe seems about to deny it, the man says that the affair is bound to be good for Lady Grace. The man seems to realize that Lord William is cruel and does not treat Lady Grace well; the man approves if she can achieve some level of happiness with Sharpe.





# Chapters 5 and 6

## Chapters 5 and 6 Summary

In chapter five, Sharpe finds a moment to slip away to Cromwell's cabin before the French are ready to board. Lord William discovers Sharpe in the cabin and says that he gave Cromwell a large bag of cash to keep safe. Lord William suddenly realizes that he is about to give Sharpe an explanation for his actions and stops in mid-sentence. Sharpe digs through Cromwell's trunk but finds nothing but dirty clothes there. He pushes past Lord William and heads to the deck, intending to confront Cromwell. However, when he gets there, he discovers that the French have already boarded and that Cromwell is offering a formal surrender to the French commander, Captain Montmorin. Sharpe watches as Pohlmann and the man who was posing as his servant arrive on deck. The servant is no longer dressed as a servant but is wearing a sword. Montmorin bows to the man. Montmorin tells the passengers that he will accept their pledges that they will obey the orders of the French crew taking over the Calliope. Montmorin says that he is leaving Lieutenant Bursay in charge of the Calliope. Sharpe and the others are warned to stay in their cabins. Sharpe reveals to Dalton his belief that Cromwell "sold" the Calliope because he believes the French will beat the English.

Sharpe is invited to remain in the cabin with one of the wealthier passengers, Mr. and Mrs. Fairly. The food immediately takes a turn for the worse and Fairly teases his wife, saying that it reminds him of their early marriage days. That night Sharpe takes over Pohlmann's cabin now that Pohlmann, Cromwell and some others have gone aboard the Revenant. Pohlmann's cabin is next to the cabin occupied by Lady Grace and Lord William. Sharpe goes to bed but does not sleep. He thinks about Grace, knowing that she and Lord William do not sleep together and wishing there was a way to let her know that he is in the next cabin. He suddenly becomes aware of raised voices coming from the Hale's cabin. Lord Williams is initially loud and angry and Sharpe considers that he might be complaining about the poor food being offered. Then he hears Lord William "yelp," then another door opening, then Lady Grace's voice, first speaking in French and then screaming. Sharpe is immediately on his feet and breaks through the flimsy wall separating the two rooms. He sees Lady Grace on the bed with Lieutenant Bursay leaning over her. Bursay has already removed both his coat and his sword but grabs a dagger. He and Sharpe begin to fight and it seems that Bursay might have the upper hand. Then Sharpe lunges with his own weapon, a saber. Sharpe, who is wounded by now, thinks that he has not done any real damage to Bursay but the Frenchman begins to waver and blood runs from his neck. After just a few seconds, Bursay collapses. The situation is very tense and Lady Grace is shaking with reaction. She accuses Lord William of doing nothing. He objects, saying that Bursay struck him and has a wound on his cheek, bearing out that statement. Lord William orders Sharpe out of Lady Grace's room. The second-in-command of the French crew arrives and apologizes for Bursay's action, says that Bursay was only recently promoted and that he had "no honor." The Frenchman promises no action against Sharpe. He also apologizes to Lady Grace and promises that she will be safe. Before the Frenchman leaves the room, he orders that



Bursay's body be removed and that the broken wall be covered. He also notes that the passengers have lanterns in the windows, their effort to gain the attention of a passing ship, and orders that the lanterns be extinguished. Sharpe returns to Pohlmann's vacated room, saying that he will be near in case the attack is repeated. Lord William seems set to object but gives in.

Sharpe and most of the other passengers are very bored over the next two days. Some of them gamble but Sharpe is not really interested, even when one of the others try to teach him to play backgammon. He does not encounter Lady Grace during the day but she spends the nights with him. One night she tells him that if the affair is discovered, Lord William would either kill her or have her declared insane. She says that if she were able to do anything she wanted, she would retire from society and live a quiet life. She says that she remains Lord William's wife only by acting appropriately and behaving as he wants.

Another day the French become hurried and it becomes evident that they have spotted another ship. The passengers are wondering if they can do something to ensure that the other ship catches up with them and Sharpe comes up with an idea. They cut a hole in the floor of one of the cabins, in order to saw through the huge rope that controls the tiller. They debate the best time to cut the rope, knowing that the crew can repair the damage though it will take some time. They finally come to a decision and cut the rope. Without the ability to steer, the Calliope flounders and the other ship, which turns out to be the Puchelle captained by Joel Chase, catches them and takes control of the Calliope.

In chapter six, Captain Chase boards the Calliope. Chase talks to some of the passengers and then asks if anyone knows anything about the man posing as a servant to the man he knows as von Dornberg. Sharpe says that the man spoke several languages and that he had not been dressed as a servant when they left the ship. Sharpe lies to Chase, saying that he had not thought about it earlier but that von Dornberg looked like the man Sharpe knows as Anthony Pohlmann. Chase prepares to leave a skeleton crew to sail the Calliope back to port and invites Sharpe to sail with him. Chase is insistent but Sharpe delays gathering his possessions. Chase says that he plans to pursue the Revenant toward the Atlantic. Chase then says that he is stuck with Lord William and Lady Grace as passengers as well. At that news, Sharpe yells to Chase's crewman, a man named Clouter, with instructions of where to find Sharpe's baggage.

Aboard the Pucelle, Chase says that Sharpe will remain in the captain's cabin and makes arrangements for some of the other passengers. He says that someone will take the cabin belonging to the second mate, who will take the third mate's cabin, who will find someone else to kick out. Chase says it will end when someone takes the place reserved for the cat and throws the cat overboard. When they are alone, Sharpe admits that he recognized Pohlmann early on. Chase says that even if Sharpe had revealed the man's identity and uncovered the plot to surrender the Calliope, Sharpe would have been silenced. Chase says that the British Navy is searching for a man named Michael Vaillard who is taking a treaty from the Mahrattas to Paris.



That night, Chase's guests share a meal that is much better than Cromwell those served. The conversation turns to battles at sea and tactics. Chase tells Sharpe that if they catch up with the Revenant, he will try to "hammer her into submission," but asks if Sharpe will help if the time comes to board against hostile forces. Sharpe assures him that he is willing. Chase coaxes every bit of speed he can from the Pucelle. They seek several other ships, mostly traders, but do not catch sight of the Revenant. Sharpe leads the seamen in training, rigorously keeping the men in shape in preparation for a fight with the Revenant. They also practice firing their rifles and learning to keep the flints from becoming unusable from the damp.

During the time aboard the Pucelle, more than a week, Lady Grace has maintained her distance from Sharpe—a fact that worries him. He has caught her eye a couple of times but she has not come near or held a conversation with him. On deck one day, Lady Grace asks Captain Chase to show her, on his maps, their current location. He senses that she is "distressed" and agrees. Sharpe appears in the captain's quarters a short time later and Chase, catching on that the two were looking for a few moments together, excuses himself for an imaginary errand. Lady Grace reveals that Braithwaite is blackmailing her and that the secretary is keeping a constant eye on her. They kiss and she leaves the room. Chase returns and tells Sharpe that there is a "fragile" balance of calm aboard a ship. Chase says that a situation blowing up, as could be the case with the affair between Sharpe and Lady Grace, could create tremendous problems aboard a ship. Sharpe assures Chase that there will not be a problem.

## Chapters 5 and 6 Analysis

Sharpe gets a tour of the Purcelle after his conversation with Chase. The tour is extensive with the young seaman proudly pointing out all aspects of the ship. The tour is obviously an effort by the author to include all the details about the ship. The method is very effective, though the reader who is more interested in the characters may be disappointed with the lack of action in this section of the book.

By the time they are aboard the Pucelle, several people know about the ongoing affair between Sharpe and Lady Grace. What is interesting is that with the exception of Braithwaite, everyone is in favor of the situation. Chase himself is only worried about the effect an argument might have on the people on his ship. Chase says that he understands Sharpe's motivation.

More information about the plot of the story is presented to the reader as Chase asks about the man who had been posing as von Dornberg's servant. Sharpe reveals to Chase that he had known Pohlmann's real identity but had not done anything—a fact that Sharpe now regrets though Chase says that Sharpe would have been killed by Pohlmann and his cohorts if Sharpe had revealed what he knew. The treaty between the Mahrattas and the French is important because the Mahrattas are a feared military force. Pohlmann had been part of that force when Sharpe met him. Though the entire story is not revealed, Sharpe indicates that he saved Pohlmann's life during a battle.

The British naturally do not want the Mahrattas to join forces with the French against the British.



# Chapters 7 and 8

## Chapters 7 and 8 Summary

In chapter seven, Chase's second-in-command, a man named Peel, says that it is bad luck to have women on board. He also says that firing the guns causes a lull in the wind. The men practice firing and another of the seamen talks about the logistics of a real battle. He says that ships are generally no more than twenty paces apart during a battle. As the men practice, they endeavor to re-enact the actions of a battle. Toward that end, one of the officers walks through, pointing out men and saying, "You're dead." They focus on shortening loading time and Sharpe realizes that it is very much like a battle on land. He says that in a military battle, the winner is often the army that can load fastest.

Sharpe turns his thoughts to Braithwaite and tries to figure out how to handle the situation. He says that he knows what to do but does not know how to accomplish it on a ship filled with people. Later, a ship is spotted and there is some discussion that it might be the Revenant. Chase says that he does not know for sure the identity of the ship but the tone of his voice makes it evident that he believes it to be the case. The wind dies down and Chase orders one of the seamen, Mr. Haskell, to "get the boats in." The order prompts the men to rush to lower several boats into the water. Men get into the boats and begin to row, towing the Pucelle throughout the night while there is no wind to push the ship. The next morning, the other ship has vanished. As the crew deals with their disappointment, everyone becomes surly and short-tempered.

Sharpe is onboard later when he sees Braithwaite taking a lantern and climbing into the hold of the ship. Sharpe waits a few minutes and follows. Braithwaite, it turns out, is going through the luggage belonging to Lord William. He finds a paper for which he had been searching and heads back toward the ladder where Sharpe confronts him. Sharpe tells Braithwaite that he knows Braithwaite is blackmailing Lady Grace. Braithwaite first says the accusation is "ridiculous." Sharpe says that Braithwaite is obviously hoping Lady Grace will give up some of her jewels in return for Braithwaite's promise of silence. Sharpe then says that Braithwaite might also be hoping to have an affair, just as Sharpe has had. Braithwaite seems to suddenly realize that Sharpe has admitted to having an affair with Lady Grace and that the admission is not a good thing. Braithwaite pulls a pistol from his jacket and points it at Sharpe. Braithwaite tells Sharpe that he has left a letter that Sir William will find, outlining the affair. Sharpe is not certain that Braithwaite is telling the truth, but is not certain that he is not. Sharpe kills the lantern's light and Braithwaite shoots into the dark, completely missing Sharpe. Sharpe gets his hands on Braithwaite and breaks his neck, leaving the body so that it seems that Braithwaite fell from his ladder.

Sharpe eats well at supper time and later Chase figures that they might be closing the gap on the Revenant. Lord William asks if anyone has seen Braithwaite but no one claims knowledge of his whereabouts. Chase calls for the crew to search for Braithwaite and someone soon reports his location along with the fact that Braithwaite is dead,



apparently from a fall. Lady Grace, when she has the opportunity, asks Sharpe whether he killed Braithwaite. Though Sharpe does not say he did, Lady Grace believes that he did and tells him she is glad. The crew catches another glimpse of the Revenant.

A couple of days later, they spot an island and Chase tells Sharpe that Clouter had been a slave on that island before joining Chase's crew. He says that Clouter had swam out to the boat one night, hidden until they were too far out to sea to send him back, and had proven himself an able seaman. The ship, still with the Revenant in sight, crosses the equator and there comes a long lull in the wind. Lady Grace asks Sharpe what will happen if the Pucelle cannot catch the Revenant and Sharpe says they will simply sail on to England. He knows that when that happens, Lady Grace will go home and he will go on to Kent to join his military unit. As he is thinking about that, Lady Grace reveals that she is pregnant. She says that Lord William is incapable, probably because of the large doses of laudanum he consumes, but that he will believe whatever Lady Grace tells him about the child's parentage.

The Pucelle then encounters a large force of the British fleet and Chase realizes that it means Britain has become involved in the war. He says that he will give up the pursuit of the Revenant in order to join the fighting. Chase talks about the various ships of the fleet and their captains. He points out the Victory, the ship on which the admiral is sailing.

## Chapters 7 and 8 Analysis

Sharpe's idea for how to handle Braithwaite is obviously to kill him. He says that he does not know how to accomplish it with the ship filled with people. In truth, the opportunity will simply arise later in the story and Sharpe does kill Braithwaite.

When Braithwaite's death is reported, Lord William asks if anyone found a paper that he had sent Braithwaite to retrieve. This is typical of Lord William. He has no concern for his secretary or his death. This lack of concern carries over into every aspect of his life, including his relationship with his wife. Lady Grace has revealed that they had a son who died in infancy. When the subject comes up between the two, Lord William says it was Lady Grace's fault the child was too weak to survive. When Lady Grace tells Sharpe that she is pregnant, he is elated. But the knowledge that she is carrying his child makes it incredibly difficult for him to contemplate their inevitable parting.

There is a complicated method of communication between ships using flags as letters, words and symbols. The system is very complicated but serves its purpose. What is interesting is that the various ships send short messages to each other most of the time but these flags are also used by Chase and another ship's captain to tease each other. They make derogatory comments about the other's ship, prompting responses. Later, as the ships are headed into battle, the admiral sends a complex message and it takes some time for the message to be decoded by Chase's crew. The admiral's use of the communication system bolsters the crew at a time they really need it.



# Chapters 9 and 10

## Chapters 9 and 10 Summary

In chapter nine, the British ships change course slightly in order to gain an advantage over the enemy ships that are nearby. Everyone knows that a battle is inevitable. The crewman named Peel tells Sharpe that he has never been involved in a battle. Sharpe says that he has never been involved in a battle at sea. Peel admits to being frightened and Sharpe reassures him, saying that waiting for the battle to begin is much more difficult than the actual fighting. Another crew member, referred to as Mr. Collier by Chase, is also obviously nervous. Chase gives the young man the task of recording all the messages between the Pucelle and other ships over the course of the day. Chase then apologizes to the man who normally handles that duty, explaining that he wants to give Collier something to take his mind off his fear.

There is little wind and Sharpe notes that a man could walk as fast as the ships are sailing. Chase returns to the deck, dressed in his best uniform in honor of the upcoming battle. There is a message from the Victory, urging the ships to line up in proper formation, then another calling for the crews to prepare for battle. Chase orders those who will not be participating in the fighting to get below deck. Lady Grace objects, saying she prefers to offer her help to the ship's surgeon, but Chase declines the offer. In preparation of the imminent battle, men throw sand on the deck so that the men will not slip as they rush around. Other crewmen douse the sides with water to discourage fires.

Chase is invited to the Victory to have breakfast with the admiral. Chase is pleased with the offer and insists that Sharpe accompany him. Sharpe is initially reluctant but Chase, as is typical, refuses to allow a refusal. Chase later explains that if he had invited any one of his crew, others would have felt slighted. He says that Lord William would expect to be invited, but that Admiral Nelson would have been bored with Lord William's company. Sharpe is immediately taken by the fact that Admiral Nelson is small and has something of a "fragile" air about him. The conversation turns soon to tactics and Nelson asks whether Chase sends his men up the rigging during battle. Chase says that he does but Nelson says he fears sails catching on fire will cause unnecessary deaths. Chase immediately gives in to the Admiral's suggestion and agrees that he will not send men "in the tops."

Back aboard the Pucelle, Sharpe tells Chase that he was impressed with Admiral Nelson. Sharpe says that Nelson is a natural leader and that after their brief meeting he is ready to follow the Admiral's lead. Chase says he would follow Nelson anywhere and that he would feel assured of a victory, regardless of the circumstances. Later, the crew gathers for a brief ceremony in which Chase reads "the Prayer to Be Said Before a Fight at Sea Against Any Eneymy." Lady Grace and Sharpe manage a brief moment alone and she admits to him that she fears her fate if the Pucelle is taken by the French as the Calliope was. Sharpe gives her his pistol but assures her that she will not need it.



Chase sends a young crew member named Collier to a safe area with cover. Collier objects, saying his place is near Chase and assuring Chase that his head is "not very big," therefore makes an insignificant target. Chase insists and the boy agrees but escorts Lady Grace and Lord William to a safe room in the hold of the ship. They learn that the Revenant is among the French ships they will soon be facing. There is a total of thirty-four of the enemy ships and the British have a total of twenty-eight as the two navy forces meet at Trafalgar..

In chapter ten, Sharpe takes a place on the forecandle with a crewman named Sergeant Armstrong. Armstrong is dedicated to Chase and is accustomed to being the leader. Sharpe gives in to Armstrong's lead, believing the men will respond better to Armstrong's orders because they know and trust him as a leader. Clouter is nearby. They are soon taking fire though it takes some time for the enemy to get the range right for a hit. They soon have their first casualty. Armstrong orders that the victim be thrown overboard but urges the men to retrieve the man's ammunition and anything of value in his pockets. The scene is repeated all over the ship and Sharpe sees other victims being thrown overboard. Another of the men near Sharpe is badly injured with blood dripping down his arm. Armstrong orders him to the ship's surgeon but the man says it is "only a scratch" and assures Armstrong that he can continue to fight. After showing that he can still flex his fingers, Armstrong rules that the man can still fire a gun and allows him to stay, but urges that he get the arm bandaged to stop the flow of blood.

The Victory is soon identified as the ship with Admiral Nelson on board and several of the enemy boats converge on her, obviously hoping to take that ship as a prize. The fight rages on for those on the deck but below deck, Lord William tells Lady Grace that he is reading "The Odyssey." He seems unconcerned with the battle. He then says that he took her to India with him because he had known she could not be faithful to him unless he was nearby, watching over her. Lord William then says that he had never liked Braithwaite because the secretary "lacked subtlety" where his ambitions were concerned. Lord William says that he was surprised when he discovered a letter from Braithwaite, written as the man had a premonition of his death and left for Lord William. He insists that Lady Grace read it.

## Chapters 9 and 10 Analysis

The approaching battle has different effects on the various characters. Sharpe is bound to be somewhat nervous but does not show it. Chase is too excited to be nervous but when Lady Grace mentions her fears, he tones his own excitement down a little to accommodate her opinion. The young man name Collier is a favorite of Chase, who worries about the boy and seeks to find a way to keep him safe. Chase eventually tells Collier that he is to be in a particular place and is to keep an eye on a particular clock. When the boy says that he cannot do both because he cannot see the clock from that place, Chase points out that he has already moved the clock so that it is literally under cover where the young man is to be. Later, the boy comes to Sharpe who orders him back into hiding "with the clock," but Collier says that the clock has been destroyed in the battle. This, along with Chase's insistence that Lady Grace be out of the line of fire





during the battle, indicates Chase's sense of responsibility for those aboard his ship. He actually sends Lady Grace and Lord William to a part of the ship that is below the water line. The idea is that shells are slowed and their paths skewed by the water, making the lower part of the ship the safest during the shelling.

Sharpe is impressed with Admiral Nelson and is amazed at that, having not really expected to enjoy himself aboard the Victory. The two men are actually very much alike in several ways. Both are very self-assured and are willing to give credit for actions to others. But what is interesting is that Nelson asks Sharpe about his military career and Sharpe is not forthcoming, as is his nature. Nelson understands this and tells Sharpe that modesty is not really a virtue. He says that a person should brag on himself when the situation warrants it. He also says that past actions should be motivation to future actions. In Nelson's words, a person should brag on his deeds and then do even greater deeds.



# Chapters 11 and 12

## Chapters 11 and 12 Summary

In chapter eleven, Lord William tells Lady Grace that he knows about her affair with Sharpe. Then William says that he can remember when he was encouraged to marry Grace. He says that he had not been sold on the idea but that he had come to believe that maybe her looks made up for her lacks and the fact that her parents were "wastrels" and "fools." He then says that she failed in her duty—producing him an heir. She says that she gave him a son. He counters, saying that she produced a "whelp" too weak to survive.

Back on deck, the crew of the *Pucelle* manages to fire on a boarding party about to climb onto the decks of the *Victory*. They continue to fight and the battle is heated and bloody. Several members of the crew are dead or seriously wounded. Despite the losses, Chase counts the *Pucelle* "lucky," having destroyed the *Redoubtable*, a ship that had been on the verge of boarding the *Victory*. Chase calls on the crew to engage another ship, the *Neptune*. Chase instructs the young man, Collier, to keep an eye on Chase. If Chase falls during the battle, Collier is to find the second-in-command with the news that he is to take command. Just then, another ship emerges from the smoke of the battle and Chase recognizes the *Revenant*. Chase remains on deck, even when the enemy is firing directly onto the deck. The two ships are so near that Chase can see Montmorin. Nelson had given Chase some oranges earlier in the day and he wishes he had one, noting that he could toss one to Montmorin.

Sharpe is still fighting though there are only ten men left with him. Armstrong is wounded and obviously bleeding to death. Suddenly there is a warning that there are boarders trying to gain access to the *Pucelle*. Sharpe and his men know they have to repel the boarders and they rush to do that. He discovers that the mainmast has fallen between the two ships, making a bridge of sorts between the two ships. Clouter and Sharpe are among those who keep fighting. The French are captured, disarmed and put in the hold. Chase asks for several of his officers but discovers that most are wounded or dead. He tells Sharpe to lead the boarding party.

On deck, the crew gets word that the *Victory*'s battle has taken a serious toll. Among the dead is Admiral Nelson. Sharpe prepares to run across the makeshift bridge, noting that it is a scary prospect. Chase holds Sharpe back, making the run himself first. The battle ends when they take possession of the *Revenant*. They then begin their search for specific passengers. Sharpe soon finds the man who had posed as Pohlmann's servant. He was, in fact, a "subtle enemy of Britain," Michael Vaillard. Vaillard tells Sharpe that he is a diplomat, and that as such, his life is "sacrosanct." Moments later, Sharpe shoves him into the sea. A sailor witnesses the event and asks if Sharpe was "supposed to do that." Sharpe responds that the man wanted to learn to swim, to which the sailor replies that the man looked rich and that his pockets should have been searched first.



He then points out that the man is drowning. Sharpe soon discovers that Pohlmann is already dead.

Sharpe then encounters Cromwell who says that he had told Montmorin not to fight. Sharpe demands to know where his jewels are and Cromwell pretends he does not know what Sharpe wants. Clouter comes by and Sharpe notes that Clouter has lost two fingers to an enemy cutlass. Clouter says that he can manage a gun and Sharpe sends him into the cabins with Cromwell with orders to retrieve Sharpe's jewels. Sharpe tells Clouter that he can keep anything else he finds. Back aboard the Pucelle later, Sharpe brings up the body of Lord William. Chase says he cannot understand it but that Lord William must have decided, for some reason, to join the fight. Sharpe does not offer an opinion.

Sharpe recounts the situation that he had seen earlier in the evening. He arrives in the hold to find Lady Grace in the room with Lord William's body. She says that he was going to kill her and that she defended herself. She knows, however, that she is likely to be hanged for killing him. She is frantic but Sharpe assures her he can take care of the situation. He begins the arduous effort of taking Lord William's body to the deck with the intention of making it look as if he were simply killed in the battle. As he is struggling with the body, Clouter arrives and pulls the body through the doorway. He hands Sharpe the jewels Cromwell had taken and helps conceal the circumstances of Lord William's death. Sharpe and Lady Grace know that they are no longer tied to their future apart and that they are headed home.

## Chapters 11 and 12 Analysis

Lady Grace is serious about her love for Sharpe but "cringes" under her husband's accusations. She has known all along that having the story told publicly would mean her ruin, but when she is faced with the reality—that her husband is aware and that she is facing that ruin—she is upset.

In truth, Chase is very afraid while he is on the deck of the Pucelle and the battle with the Revenant is about to begin. He admits that he wants to run toward the relative shelter being used by some of the other officers. He also considers that his presence on the deck is a means of encouraging his crew to fight harder. He thinks about his life, his wife and children, and wishes that he did not have to die. He also knows that his death will mean little in the long term. That sentiment could have either of two meanings. It could be that he knows the battle will not be particularly swayed by whether he lives or dies. It could also be that he knows his death will not be much of a tragedy among all the other deaths that day. It is left to the reader to decide.

The reader is left to decide the fate of Sharpe and Lady Grace. While it seems a perfect solution, there are still social dictates to observe and Sharpe will not be able to publicly acknowledge the child as his without admitting to the affair.



# Characters

## Richard Sharpe

A military man, he is the epitome of a hero. He is not afraid of danger but is modest about his past exploits. He has saved the lives of many and taken the lives of many more. He is eager to do what is right but is not afraid to kill if he feels there is justification. For example, he kills a secretary who is blackmailing his mistress, Lady Grace. Richard is handsome and charming though he is not overly comfortable in social settings. He is sought out during the voyages, partly because there are not that many refined people on board but partly because others want to hear about his exploits and adventures. Richard is especially popular with the ladies and, on this voyage, he attracts the attention of an unhappy young woman who is married to a wealthy but cold man. Richard has gained his officer's stripes by advancing through the ranks of the military—an unusual situation but one that points to his ability to take command of situations. He has been involved in many battles and is more than willing to fight if there is a need. When Lady Grace is being attacked by one of the men who captured their ship, Richard busts through a wall to save her. Her husband, meanwhile, is too afraid to act. This is typical of Richard's personality.

## Captain Joel Chase

Very similar to Richard Sharpe in manners and personality, he is the commander of the *Calliope*, a ship that rescues Sharpe and the others from the hands of pirates. Chase is determined to make a name for himself in the navy and pushes his crew to great lengths to accomplish that. Some members of his crew believe he is too easy on the men but his willingness to reward good deeds earns him the loyalty of the men who are willing to work harder in order to gain his good favor. An example of that is seen when one of the lookouts locates the ship they are pursuing and Chase rewards the man with extra liquor. Later, when the men are rowing to tow the boat during a lull in the wind, Chase rewards them with extra liquor as well. Chase is willing to fight for what he believes is right and it is this desire that puts Chase and Sharpe together for the first time. They discover that a merchant has set up a scam and both are victims. When the two men are there to confront the merchant, Chase and his men become captive and Sharpe saves them. Chase knows about Sharpe's affair with Lady Grace and warns Sharpe only to be careful that the situation does not create a problem while aboard his ship.

## Lady Grace Hale

Wife of Sir William Hale, she seems cold but is actually a very passionate woman. She has an affair with Sharpe though she knows that being discovered would mean the end of her good reputation. She is grateful to Sharpe for saving her from the advances of a



pirate and equally grateful when he kills her husband's secretary who is blackmailing her.

## **Captain Peculiar Cromwell**

Captain of the ship the "Revenant," he seems to be an experienced seaman and has a good reputation prior to leaving the port. When they encounter pirates, Cromwell makes poor decisions, allowing the ship to be captured. It is later discovered that there were plans in place for Cromwell to turn the ship over, having come to believe the outcome of the war made doing this in his best interests.

## **Lord William Hale**

Husband of Lady Grace, he is wealthy and accustomed to having everything his way. He is cold with everyone, including his wife. He is also demanding and disinclined toward generosity. When he learns that his secretary is dead, he is merely worried about a missing paper and the inconvenience the death causes him. When Lady Grace is being attacked, he stands aside. When Sharpe steps in, Sir William claims to have been hit, rendering him helpless to save his wife. He later thanks Sharpe but makes a point of saying that they will not speak of it again. He threatens to kill Grace after discovering her indiscretion but she kills him.

## **Braithwaite**

Secretary to Lord William Hale, he is a self-serving man who looks down on others. He is anxious to advance but not willing to work for it. He discovers the affair between Lady Grace and Richard Sharpe and tries to blackmail her. Richard catches him alone in the hold and breaks his neck, making it appear that he fell from a ladder.

## **Clouter**

A former slave, he swam to Chase's ship and became a seaman. Clouter is a large man and fights valiantly during the battle. He is wounded several times and loses several fingers. It is Clouter who helps get Lord William's body out of the hold of the ship after Lady Grace shoots him.

## **Anthony Pohlmann**

Masquerading as Baron von Dornberg aboard the "Calliope," he is immediately recognized by Sharpe though Sharpe does not reveal the ruse until much later.



## **Admiral Nelson**

Leader of the British Navy, he is a small man who strikes Sharpe as almost fragile. However, Sharpe is soon enamored with Admiral Nelson and admits that after sharing a single meal with Nelson, he would readily follow him into any battle situation. Nelson is aboard the ship, the Victory, which draws a great deal of fire during the battle at Trafalgar.

## **Captain Montmorin**

Captain of the Revenant, he is French and is involved in the battle at Trafalgar. He is apparently an honorable man and accepts his defeat at the hands of Joel Chase and the crew of the Pucelle.



# Objects/Places

## Calliope

The name of the ship Sharpe is on when he begins the voyage, it is captained by Peculiar Cromwell.

## Revenant

The ship that is a known privateer and that captures the Calliope while Sharpe is aboard.

## Pucelle

Captained by Chase, this is the ship that rescues Sharpe and the others after the French take control of the Revenant.

## India

Where Sharpe and the others are as the voyage begins.

## England

Where Sharpe is originally headed aboard the Calliope.

## Victory

The name of the ship with the admiral aboard.

## Trafalgar

The location of the final battle of the book.

## Oxford

Where Braithwaite says he was educated.

## **Whist**

The game played by many of the passengers aboard ship as a pastime.

## **Kent**

Where Sharpe is supposed to meet up with his military unit.





# Themes

## A Need for Love

Lady Grace is the epitome of this theme. She is a strong character and could easily stand on her own but needs tenderness from another. She does not find this at all in the arms of her husband but does find it in Sharpe's arms. Lady Grace is willing to risk everything for her emerging love for Sharpe. She knows that if the affair is discovered she will be ruined socially and predicts that Lord William might kill her. Despite these dangers, she is willing to take the risk. Lady Grace is not the only character who shows this need. Sharpe, though a very strong character who shows little in the way of weakness, is willing to take risks in order to follow his desire for Lady Grace. He realizes that Lord William is a powerful man who could create problems for Sharpe in his career, but discounts that as unimportant. Joel Chase realizes that Sharpe and Lady Grace are involved in an affair and, though he is worried about the possible impact on the passengers and crew of his ship, he is sensitive to the need for love. He tells Sharpe that having a wife has made his life much better and says that Sharpe will understand when it happens to him.

## The Effects of Personal Weaknesses

The two characters who show this to the greatest degree are Lord William and Braithwaite. Both are self-centered and believe themselves better than anyone else. Braithwaite cites his Oxford education repeatedly, apparently believing it impresses other. Lord William goes so far as to tell Lady Grace that he lowered himself to marry her but that her beauty made up for the things she lacked. He goes so far as to say that she gave birth to a son who was too weak to survive. These petty attitudes are evidence of his personal weaknesses. Putting Braithwaite and Lord William in each other's company is a mistake and the two men can barely tolerate each other. Lord William says that he planned to dismiss Braithwaite upon their arrival in England. He cares little when Braithwaite dies. Another who shows incredible personal weaknesses is Captain Peculiar Cromwell. He is greedy and anxious to align himself with the winning side, to the point that he "sells" the Calliope to the French. Cromwell believes the French will win the war and that his allegiance to this country will be rewarded when that happens. While Sharpe is a strong character overall, he also has some weaknesses. One of these is seen as he allows a sense of loyalty to prompt his keeping the secret of Pohlmann's identity. Sharpe realizes that keeping this secret was probably a mistake though Chase assures him that he would probably have been killed if he had revealed Pohlmann's true identity.



## Willingness to Do One's Duty

The willingness to do one's duty, even when that duty puts a person in danger, is seen in several of the characters. Sharpe is naturally among those characters. He is in the military by choice and is aboard the *Calliope* on his way to another military assignment when circumstances pull him into the battle at Trafalgar. However, Sharpe is willing to go a step farther and trains with the men aboard the ship as the possibility of battle with the *Revenant* becomes a reality. Sharpe takes on a leadership role in that battle, putting his life in danger. Chase is also willing to do his duty though it puts him in mortal danger. Chase is smart enough to be afraid. He notes that he might be killed by remaining on deck during the battle with the *Revenant*, but believes his presence there makes his crew fight more diligently. Toward that end, he remains in the line of fire. Admiral Nelson is another of the characters that demonstrates this theme. Nelson's presence soon becomes known to the enemy and his ship, *Victory*, takes on a greater level of attack than the other ships because of his presence. Nelson pays with his life.



# Style

## Point of View

The story is written in third person from a limited-omniscient perspective. The reader gains some omniscient information but sees some aspects of the story from Sharpe's point of view. Whenever Sharpe is in the scene, the reader generally gains information from Sharpe's perspective. For example, Sharpe is in bed with Lady Grace when he is summoned to the captain's quarters. There, he discovers that Lord William has asked to see him. Sharpe is nervous but Lord William seems to be seeking specific military information that Sharpe is likely to have. Sharpe seems to accept this at face value but remains somewhat skeptical. The reader is given only the information that Sharpe has at this point. It is not until much later that the reader discovers that Sir William does know about the affair. When that scene occurs, Sharpe is on deck while Sir William and Lady Grace are in the hold of the *Pucelle*. In that case, the reader is given a limited omniscient perspective. The reader gains information from the conversation but is not given unlimited access to the thoughts of the two characters. The perspective is appropriate to the story and provides information necessary to keep the reader informed.

## Setting

The book has several distinct settings, ranging from a port town in India to a ship traveling on the ocean. The settings are each described fully, sometimes to an extreme degree that may prove distracting for the reader more interested in the lives of the characters and the action. For example, Sharpe is initially headed home aboard the *Calliope*. The ship is fast but is being held back by the lack of speed of the entire convoy until the captain breaks away. That ship is described down to the footlocker in the captain's quarters. While the various aspects of the ship are not terribly important to the storyline, they do lend a level of believability to the story that might not otherwise exist. The descriptions of the setting sometimes seem to be an effort on the part of the author to tout useless knowledge. For example, the author goes to great lengths to describe the raising of the anchor as the ship initially gets under way, even though Sharpe was confined to his cabin along with all the steerage passengers during that time. The time setting is not vital to the story other than by way of explaining the historical happenings. The ongoing fighting between the English and French and some aspects of the naval battles make it clear that the story is set around the early 1800s. The final setting, Trafalgar, is a reference to a famous naval battle that occurred in 1805. That battle has been described by some historians as a particularly bloody encounter—an assessment that is described in detail by this author.



## Language and Meaning

The book is written in a straightforward style with few words and phrases out of the ordinary. There are, however, a great many nautical terms used. Many of the nautical terms used are never explained but it is doubtful that anyone other than true historians or sailors will feel the need to understand. For example, as the anchor is being raised for the ships to set sail from India, the author notes that the seamen raise the "great anchor cable that came through the hawsehole." Few people will be familiar with this term but an exact definition is not vital to the overall understanding of the story. The writer uses some terms that are dated to the time period of the book. For example, Braithwaite uses the word, "nabob" to describe Pohlmann, who he believes to be Baron von Dornberg. The author then explains the meaning of the word "nabob," for those readers who are not familiar with the term. The author does not attempt to disguise the explanation but writes, "Braithwaite spoke the word in awe, meaning that the baron was a man who had made himself fabulously rich in India and was now carrying his wealth back to Europe." The overall tone of the book is of excitement and passion. Many of the characters—Sharpe, Chase and Lady Grace, for example—are strong-willed and this carries the tone of the book. The attitudes of other characters are overridden by the strong-willed characters. Braithwaite, for example, is self-serving and grasping, but this only serves to enhance the tone.

## Structure

The book is divided into twelve chapters. The chapters are numbered with no titles. Chapters vary only slightly in length with chapters ranging between nineteen and twenty-eight pages. The book is historically very detailed and these details may become tiresome to some readers. For example, there is a drawing at the opening of the book with a detailed sketch of a "third rate ship of 74 guns," such as the one described in the book. The sketch includes dimensions for all aspects of the ship and outlines of the various rooms and compartments aboard the ship. There is also a map of the position of the ships as the battle begins. This map includes the names of the ships and there is a great deal of narrative dedicated to describing the various ships and their important attributes. Again, these descriptions may become tedious to the reader who is more interested in the lives of the characters. The main character—Ensign Richard Sharpe—has been used by this author in other books. While this book easily stands alone, there are references to other books in which Sharpe is a character. The reader who has knowledge of these books will more readily understand the references but that knowledge is not necessary to the understanding of this book.



## Quotes

"Chase was gracious, generous, and apparently oblivious of the vast gulf that existed between a mere ensign, the lowest of the army's commissioned ranks, and a post captain who was officially the equivalent of an army colonel, though on board his own ship such a man outranked the very powers of heaven." Chapter 1, p. 13.

"The men don't think you're a proper officer, and the other officers ... well, it's like a working dog ending up on the hearth rug. The lap dogs don't like it." Richard Sharpe, Chapter 2, p. 41.

"Men fall from the upper works, folk die of fever and I've even had a passenger kill herself for unrequited love, but I've never had one die of fish poison." Captain Cromwell, Chapter 3, p. 59.

"They say, my lady, that those who would go to sea for pleasure would visit hell as a pastime." Captain Cromwell, Chapter 3, p. 60.

"Lady Grace had been in this squalid cabin for two nights running, coming long after dark and leaving well before dawn, and Sharpe had thought no one had noticed. They had both believed they were being discreet, but Braithwaite had seen and now he was bitter with envy." Chapter 4, p. 78.

"So my best hope of staying alive is to give him a son and to behave like an angel, and I swore I would do both, but then I saw you and I thought why not lose my wits?" Chapter 5, p. 114.

"God alone knows where the second will go. He'll turf out the third, I suppose, who'll kick out someone else and so on down to the ship's cat that will get chucked overboard, poor thing." Captain Chase, Chapter 5, p. 126.

"That you would follow him into the throat of hell? By God sir, I'd follow that man into the belly of hell and down to its bowels too." Sharpe, Chapter 9, p. 212.

"'And if he led us,' Chase said reverently, 'we would win there, just as we shall win this day.'" Chapter 9, p. 212.

"Armstrong was instinctively suspicious of Sharpe for the ensign was not a marine, not from Northumberland and not born into the officer class. Armstrong was, in short, ugly, ignorant, prejudiced and as fine a soldier as Sharpe had met." Chapter 10, p. 224.

"A part of her did not care if she was mocked, another part cringed under the lash of Lord William's scorn." Chapter 11, p. 249.

"But Sharpe had his woman, he was free, and he was at last going home." Chapter 12, p. 288.



## Topics for Discussion

Describe Richard Sharpe. Compare his character to that of Joel Chase, to Lord William and to Admiral Nelson. How does each differ? How are they similar? What are Sharpe's strengths? What are his weaknesses?

Who is Lady Grace? How does she come into Sharpe's life? What is her life like prior to meeting Sharpe? What do you believe her life will be like after the voyage comes to an end? Support your answer.

How are Richard Sharpe and Joel Chase acquainted? What happens that brings the two together initially? What happens to bring them back together? Compare the two encounters. Describe their time together.

How does the Calliope fall into enemy hands? Who is responsible? What is the ultimate outcome of that situation?

What is the Calliope? Who is the captain? What happens to this ship? What is the Pucelle? Who is the captain? What is the fate of this ship? What is the Victory? Who is the captain? What is the fate of this ship? What is the Revenant? Who is the captain? What is the fate of this ship?

Who is Braithwaite? What kind of person is he? What are his ambitions? How does he set about trying to achieve them? What is his fate?

Describe the battle of Trafalgar. List at least three high points of the battle. Compare the action on deck to what is happening in the hold between Lady Grace and Lord William.