Ship of the Line Study Guide

Ship of the Line by C. S. Forester

BOOKRAGS

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Plot Summary

Captain Horatio Hornblower has recently returned from a successful cruise in HMS Lydia. News of his impressive successes fires the popular imagination and circulates in the Admiralty. Hornblower is appointed captain of HMS Sutherland, 74, and assigned to join a blockading fleet under the command of Rear Admiral Leighton. Hornblower pursues his duties with typical rigor and, when given brief detached command, conducts an astounding five raids in two days. He then rejoins the fleet and encounters four French ships-of-the-line. As the main body of the fleet attempts to close, Sutherland engages the entire French squadron, causing extensive damage to all enemy ships before becoming dismasted and ultimately wrecked. Hornblower finally strikes his colors and is taken into French captivity.

Hornblower's cruise aboard Lydia is widely-known and discussed in all of England, yet he returns to a difficult life of near-poverty and briefly struggles to find a new command. His friend and love-interest, Lady Barbara Leighton, uses her considerable political influence behind-the-scenes to assist in his appointment as captain of Sutherland—Hornblower never ascertains how much of his appointment is due his own merit. In any case, he is placed under the immediate command of Barbara's husband and the situation proves delicate. For several weeks, Hornblower struggles to provision, arm and man Sutherland as appropriate for a prolonged appointment of blockade service. As customary for the period, he resorts to a variety of advertising and impress to man the ship and mixes bluster, threats and flattery, oiled with his meager personal wealth, to obtain armament and provisions. Finally, Sutherland sails without about a quarter of its full complement. Sutherland escorts a group of merchant ships owned by the East India Company beyond the threat of French warships and then parts company with the merchant fleet. In a final act of exasperation, Hornblower presses twenty men from each of the merchant ships—violating British law but, finally, completing his crew.

Hornblower then returns to the established rendezvous point and finds Leighton's squadron not fully assembled. He is given free reign to cruise the Spanish coast for a few days before again visiting the rendezvous point. He makes excellent use of his time and completes five audacious and successful raids in two days. He first captures a French brig that briefly mistakes the Dutch-build Sutherland for a French ship-of-war, and thereby divulges the secret French recognition signal. Using this knowledge he flies a French flag—a legitimate ruse de guerre—and a few hours later storms and destroys a French fortress. A few hours later, he captures several smaller vessels and boards a near-hysterical Spanish cavalry officer. Learning of a nearby Italian army marching under Napoleon's army, Hornblower sails to a point where the road parallels the seashore and takes the Italian forces under his guns, causing widespread destruction. He finally rejoins the squadron and enters a period of patrol. When dirty weather occurs, Admiral Leighton's flagship becomes distressed and is nearly lost—but Hornblower takes it in tow and claws off the lee shore to safety.

Some time later, the English squadron encounters a French squadron that has evaded the English blockade of Toulon. Sutherland is the closest English ship so pursues the

French squadron while the other English ships attempt to close. When it becomes obvious that the English squadron will not be able to engage before the French squadron reaches the safety of a friendly Spanish harbor, Hornblower moves to engage the four French ships-of-the-line by himself. A fierce four-on-one battle ensues, though the odds are patently hopeless for Sutherland. Even so, the British ship performs exceptionally and disables or extensively damages all of the French ships-of-the-line. During the combat Sutherland suffers frightening casualties, including William Bush, who loses a foot. Hornblower, miraculously, emerges unscathed. As a dismasted Sutherland drifts ashore under heavy fire from the French ships and the Spanish fortress, Hornblower notes her inability to return effective fire and, finally, strikes his colors.

Chapters 1, 2, and 3

Chapters 1, 2, and 3 Summary

Captain Horatio Hornblower has recently returned from a successful cruise in HMS Lydia. News of his impressive successes fires the popular imagination and circulates in the Admiralty. Hornblower is appointed captain of HMS Sutherland, 74, and assigned to join a blockading fleet under the command of Rear Admiral Leighton. Hornblower pursues his duties with typical rigor and when given brief, detached command, conducts an astounding five raids in two days. He then rejoins the fleet and encounters four French ships-of-the-line. As the main body of the fleet attempts to close, Sutherland engages the entire French squadron, causing extensive damage to all enemy ships before becoming dismasted and ultimately wrecked. Hornblower finally strikes his colors and is taken into French captivity.

Captain Horatio Hornblower has recently returned from an extended, and quite successful, cruise in HMS Lydia. The public is clamoring about his successes, and the admiralty is impressed with his results. Hornblower is given command of HMS Sutherland, a Dutch-build, 74-gun, third-rate, ship-of-the-line. As an added measure of praise, Hornblower's entire crew, including officers, has been transferred from Lydia to Sutherland. However, as Sutherland requires nearly three times the crew as Lydia, Hornblower's first command begins undermanned. He uses various techniques to augment Sutherland's crew, including printing and posting fliers expostulating on the benefits—mostly imagined—of service in the Royal Navy. He also sends his lieutenants around to various local assizes, where criminals avoid prison sentences by joining the Royal Navy, though obviously most of these men are fairly undesirable types. In an attempt to control vermin infestations, the new hands are forced to bathe before being allowed below decks. Even with all these efforts, Sutherland remains about 150 men short of her full compliment. Hornblower considers Sutherland to be the most ugly and least desirable two-decker in the Royal Navy. After her capture, she was somewhat remodeled and re-armed to suit English tastes; nevertheless, she retains a large stern-gallery, which Hornblower appreciates.

Hornblower spends many days readying Sutherland for sea. She requires vast amounts of stores, powder, shot and food. The harbor supply stores are doled out penuriously, and, as with men, one of Hornblower's primary concerns is simply getting sufficient stores and powder aboard. While all this is going on, Hornblower is irritated by his wife's dependence on him and her desire to see him as often as possible. Even as new crewmen are brought or forced aboard, Hornblower begins to integrate them into the existing crew, demonstrating an egalitarian attitude that scandalizes Bush. On one occasion, he tours the lower decks that are, customary for the time, home to numerous women. Since their putative husbands cannot go ashore, the wives join them on the boat. Hornblower finds the immoral conditions fairly shocking, but is used to them.

While still readying the ship, Hornblower and Maria receive an invitation to dine with Rear Admiral Sir Percy Leighton and his wife, Lady Barbara Leighton. During the cruise of Lydia, Hornblower had given homeward passage to Barbara. During the voyage they developed a mutual love interest that was never consummated. Hornblower finds his wife Maria fairly uninteresting, if not cloying, but holds a secret flame for Barbara. Upon her return to England, however, Barbara quickly married for apparently political reasons; the marriage took place about three weeks prior to the opening of the novel. On the appropriate evening the Hornblowers dress and make their way to the Leighton's abode. A distracted and pensive Hornblower walks right by the Leightons' address, until his wife stops him. They backtrack, then, and enjoy an excellent dinner. Leighton will command the squadron to which Hornblower will be attached—Hornblower feels he owes his appointment as much to Barbara's influence as to his own command ability. During the evening, Hornblower is several times nearly overcome with his infatuation for the beautiful and influential Barbara. In turn, she is gracious and attentive—though not overly so. Hornblower is dressed in the finest manner that his poor lifestyle will allow, and even then, he notes, he is fairly shabbily dressed. The company is joined by Mr. and Mrs. Bolton and Mr. and Mrs. Elliott—Bolton and Elliott being two other captains assigned to Leighton's squadron. Hornblower likes Bolton and finds satisfaction in noting that Bolton's wife is frumpy and unfashionably dressed, as is, he believes, his own wife Maria. After a successful evening, the party breaks up.

Chapters 1, 2, and 3 Analysis

The initial chapters of the novel provide characterization, establish the setting, and establish the chronology used throughout the remainder of the novel. Frequent references are made to prior events occurring during a cruise aboard Lydia, Hornblower's prior command. Lydia's cruise transpired from June to October 1808, about nineteen months prior to the opening of the current novel—though the narrative suggests the time to have been considerably less. During that eighteen months, Hornblower has retained Bush as his senior lieutenant and has been given command of Sutherland. In a particularly bizarre move, the Admiralty has transferred Lydia's entire crew into Sutherland, including the warrant officers. Such a move, while historically very unlikely, provides Hornblower with an established nucleus of a crew and also allows the reader to continue to enjoy such familiar faces as Prowse, Gerard and others. Lydia, a sixth rate ship-of-the-line, typically would have a crew compliment of about two hundred men, though Hornblower estimates Lydia's crew at something like three hundred. Over one hundred of her crew became casualties during a prolonged naval combat with a much-larger Spanish ship. It can be assumed then that about two hundred men transferred from Lydia to Sutherland. Sutherland, a third rate ship-of-the-line, typically would have a crew compliment of about 650-700 men. Hornblower infrequently differentiates between full crew complement and sailor complement divorced of the marine contingent that makes exact accountings difficult. However, the numbers add up; Hornblower is short at least 230 men after the initial recruiting efforts pay out, which would be roughly 1/3 of his entire crew—a serious handicap. Hornblower's staffing problems consume much of the first third of the novel, and his incessant fretting over obtaining trained crew heavily foreshadows their future significance. The novel's

constant reference to events in a prior novel in the series is fairly unusual for the series as a whole—Hornblower usually lives much more in the present, though perhaps his infatuation with Barbara explains his tendency to re-live prior days of glory.

Hornblower is attached to Leighton's squadron; as Admiral, Leighton chooses to place his flag aboard Pluto, commanded by Captain Elliott. Leighton's squadron consists of three ships-of-the-line and presumably other auxiliary vessels, which are not noted. Hornblower objects to Sutherland nearly entirely because of her appearance. As a captured Dutch-built ship, she does not possess typical English construction and simply looks different. Her beamy build allows her to have very little draft, but also ensures she will not grip the water well and thus make a lot of leeway. While Hornblower doesn't like that, he does appreciate the trade-offs involved in construction—a perfect ship cannot be built. The initial chapters thus establish the tactical situation in which Hornblower will operate under the direct command of his love interest's husband. The strategic situation is also discussed somewhat—England is at war with France. Spain has vacillated in the past but is currently England's nominal ally, though French forces occupy much of Spain. The reader need not despair at not grasping the intricacies of the political milieu—even Hornblower finds it confusing and desires to obtain contemporary reference works on the topic prior to sailing.

As the book was written prior to volumes that occur chronologically before it, a certain amount of re-working occurs in Hornblower's history. One such example can be found in Chapter 3, where Hornblower's rank is given as lieutenant during the capture of Castilla, yet during the volume in which said capture occurred, Hornblower was actually a captain. The dinner conversation is interesting given Hornblower's attraction to Barbara. He stumbles in speech several times, though nobody seems to notice. The conversation proves a natural narrative device to provide information about Hornblower's previous career, and in this it is quite successful. Note particularly Leighton's toast to Hornblower, where he hopes that Sutherland's exploits will rival that of Lydia, clearly foreshadowing Sutherland's eventual role in combat. In any event, Maria seems oblivious to Hornblower's infatuation with Barbara. Throughout the novel, Hornblower wonders how aware Leighton is of the situation, and even wonders if Leighton's decisions are colored by jealousy. This aspect of the novel forms a minor, but intriguing, thread that persists throughout the narrative.

Chapters 4 and 5

Chapters 4 and 5 Summary

Hornblower and Maria walk home in the evening after the dinner party at the Leightons' house. Maria makes small talk that Hornblower generally ignores. He agrees with Maria's compliments about Barbara but tries to not display over-enthusiasm. Maria informs Hornblower that she had discussed her pregnancy with Barbara, and Hornblower finds this irritating. They reach their abode and get ready for bed, Maria chattering and Hornblower thinking of his upcoming deployment and wondering if Barbara loves Leighton, or if she married him solely for political consolidation during a perilous time. Maria drifts off to sleep as Hornblower tosses, worrying about adequate provisions, worrying about the political situation, and worrying about anything of which he can think.

A few days later, Hornblower is aboard Sutherland, overseeing all the last minute preparations and fuming at the endless delays. Hornblower supervises his meager personal stores aboard—purchased with money obtained by pawning his prize sword. The loading goes on and on as a seemingly limitless stream of supplies of all sorts is loaded onto the ship. Fifty newly-pressed crewmen stalk about sullenly and are ordered about, sometimes accompanied by a beating. Hornblower watches the proceedings, broods about the future and quite needlessly cajoles Bush to work harder. He then goes below and reviews his orders, which appear standard in all respects. After thinking about his orders, he labors over the ship's complement—he desires 250 topmen and 450 gunners, for a total crew of about 700 men. He has about 190 sailors and 190 lubbers, leaving him 170 men short of complement. He considers the severe disadvantage this will cause the ship in any naval military action, and he frets over the ship's watch bill. After a seeming eternity, the ship is ready to sail and under Hornblower's watchful eye it slips out to sea. Sutherland quickly joins Leighton's squadro,n and the group immediately departs as a convoy, along with numerous merchant ships. Many of the new hands are incapacitated with seasickness, and the officers attempt to force them to vomit over the sides. The undermanned ship is handled slowly, which is embarrassing to the proud officers.

Chapters 4 and 5 Analysis

These two chapters transition Hornblower from his life ashore in England to his life afloat on Sutherland. In keeping with the major themes of the novel, Chapter 4, which deals with Hornblower's family relationship, is very brief; whereas, Chapter 5, which deals with Hornblower's naval problems, is very long. The transition from shore to sea is a difficult one for Hornblower. Aside from the professional demands placed on him, the personal issues are considerable. He leaves behind a pregnant wife; in fact, he will never see her again. He ventures into a difficult situation where he will serve under his love-interest's husband. He is personally poor—nearly penniless—and yet must

somehow provide for himself and his family. Added to all this is Hornblower's natural tendency to ceaselessly worry and criticize his own actions. It is little wonder, then, that he is so relieved when Sutherland finally slips out to sea. There, the worries of home life are put aside and the demands of each day are dealt with as they occur. Hornblower knows the sea, embraces his life upon it and finds little comfort away from it.

Much of Chapter 5 deals with the processes involved in crewing and provisioning a ship-of-the-line during the time period. The details are as interesting to the reader as they are irritating to Hornblower, and the list of loaded provisions in the final few hours of the final day ashore is impressive. When Sutherland sails out, Hornblower calmly demonstrates superior seamanship and an icy nerve, preventing Bush from taking an unnecessary tack to clear the harbor. When Sutherland joins the squadron, it is apparent that she has kept the other ships waiting for some time; this, combined with the green crew's slow handling, embarrasses Hornblower, even though he realizes it is inevitable. Under his watchful eye and the guidance of the petty officers, the green crew is slowly crafted into a competent unit. This subtle theme runs throughout the entire novel and helps to explain Sutherland's great military successes in the last few chapters of the narrative.

The initial chapters establish two primary literary conflicts for the novel—the larger runs throughout nearly the entire series of novels and pits the protagonist, Hornblower, against the tyrannical French government, personified by Napoleon Bonaparte. The smaller conflict is limited to the current novel and pits the protagonist Hornblower against his jealous rival and commanding officer, Leighton. The narrative is a good example of a literary historic novel.

Chapters 6, 7, and 8

Chapters 6, 7, and 8 Summary

Leighton's squadron escorts a convoy of merchant ships over the open sea. Hornblower, typically, becomes violently seasick and fusses about the ship in a foul mood. The performance of Sutherland's crew is embarrassing, but the ship manages to keep station. The strictly-disciplined military officers find the Indiamen's laxity in station-keeping and signals exchange to be irritating, and even potentially dangerous. The entire convoy proceeds to a departure point and then splits into three smaller convoys. Sutherland escorts six Indiamen, including Walmer Castle, Lord Mornington, and Europe, southward. The passage is made very rapidly through heavy weather. The Indiamen's seemingly deliberate straying and ineptness at signals exchange often exasperate Hornblower.

As the group of seven ships passes Brest, two French luggers sally and circle the merchant ships. Either of the luggers alone would pose no threat whatsoever, but they move to opposite sides of the convoy and begin to close. The Indiamen rush together as Sutherland ranges alongside one of the luggers and exchanges cannon fire. The lugger's mainmast is shot away, and Hornblower momentarily considers capturing the vessel—but then he recalls himself to his duty, and Sutherland shoots away to intercept the second lugger. It, too, is driven off; Hornblower has defended his charges admirably, and the convoy continues on its way. The two French luggers are left, heavily damaged, to make their way haltingly home. Immediately after the action, the men cheered and yelled, only to be denounced by Hornblower, who remarks on the puny nature of the enemy and the inefficient sailing and firing of Sutherland.

The convoy continues on its way making excellent time. Hornblower watches the crew develop with satisfaction and comes to know many of their names. As Sutherland nears the place where it will leave the Indiamen, Hornblower becomes pensive and moody. The weather finally moderates just as the Sutherland plans to depart. Captain Osborn and Lord Eastlake, the Governor-designate of Bombay, visit Hornblower and commend him for his service. They offer him a purse stuffed with money as a token of appreciation; Hornblower takes it but feels guilty about doing so. He refuses an offer to dine, noting he must immediately depart.

The guests return to their ship, and then Hornblower orders his men to lower the boats. Bolstered by armed marines, the officers of Sutherland then board each Indiaman in turn and press out of each, twenty prime seamen. The action is not only socially egregious, but also actually illegal. As the press is going on, Osborn returns to Sutherland and has a heated exchange with Hornblower regarding the illegality of the action. Hornblower casually minimizes Osborn's protests and then suggests that he be allowed to ask for volunteers from among the Indiamen's crews. A sputtering Osborn agrees to this. Hornblower notes that the Sutherland's boats are already returning and states that any of the men aboard them who are not volunteers will be returned to the

Indiamen. Thus mollified, Osborn departs. The ship's boats come alongside and discharge 120 new hands, all highly skilled. Thirteen of them have volunteered and the others have been pressed. Hornblower orders a signal be flown informing the Indiamen that all of the men have volunteered. He then turns Sutherland about and departs, even as the Indiamen attempt to send various confused signals back and forth.

Chapters 6, 7, and 8 Analysis

These intermediate chapters form an independent sort of literary episode; wherein, Hornblower uses a rather dull and prolonged period of sailing to drill his crew and get them trained into a semblance of proficiency. There is only a single naval encounter in the chapters, and it pits the Sutherland against two inconsequential French luggers. They are handily defeated but do give the crew a chance to rally, moral-wise, around Hornblower. Note that throughout the voyage, the Indiamen are inept at receiving and sending signals—Hornblower puts up with this apparently deliberate shortcoming at first, but gains from it later when he sends signals after pressing hands from the Indiamen. Hornblower retains the money given him by the grateful merchants and plans to treat it in accordance with Admiralty regulations instead of keeping it for himself. In point of fact, it is lost with Sutherland. The section also contains a brief reference to Hornblower smoking a cigar—a habit that is not carried through some other volumes in the series. Hornblower can thus be inferred to be an occasional smoker. Hornblower's moody behavior and feelings of guilt all foreshadow his action in pressing men from the Indiamen.

Hornblower had earlier noted Sutherland to be about 170 men short of complement; he presses 120 men from the Indiamen and is thus at, more or less, full complement for his ship. He does this because he knows that Sutherland will be called upon to act as a warship and must be effective in that role. He balances this against the knowledge that pressing men out of British merchant vessels is illegal and that doing so will anger powerful businessmen in the East India Company. Even so, he calculates that it will be many months before news of his action will reach England, and many months more before any censure will reach him in the Mediterranean. Hornblower is counting on vast distances and times to ameliorate the seriousness of his actions; in addition, he knows the admiralty will not deem the charges to be as serious as they are. Hornblower thus exchanges present need for future difficulty, and, as events prove out, his judgment is correct. Note that even his own loyal officers are fairly shocked at his decision to press men from the Indiamen, and Osborn is nearly foaming with rage. Hornblower uses several devices to establish a paradigm of plausible deniability to defend against his action—he allows Osborn to state an objection but then acts as if the objection were not really much of an objection. He then says he will send back all non-volunteers but claims all the men volunteered. In essence, he muddies the waters sufficiently that no formal charges are likely to be levied, and once again, he is correct in this assumption. Because of the nature and locale of sailing, Hornblower judges the impact of stripping hands from the Indiamen to be fairly little for those ships. Whether or not this is the case, the reader must rely upon the expert opinion of Hornblower. The completion of Sutherland's crew foreshadows their immediate need in subsequent chapters.

Chapters 9 and 10

Chapters 9 and 10 Summary

Sutherland leaves the convoy of Indiamen and runs north to the appointed rendezvous location. As her trip was favored by steady winds, she arrives before the other ships of the squadron and spends a day waiting and conducting firing drills and target practice. Caligula, commanded by Bolton, then joins Sutherland. As the senior captain, Bolton hosts Hornblower at dinner. They exchange information, discuss politics and consider military options. Hornblower is somewhat scandalized by Bolton's casual disregard for Admiral Leighton's station; Bolton refers to him as "Sir Mucho Pomposo" (p. 121). After a vast meal with much drink, Bolton decides that at least one of the ships-of-the-line should cruise the coast in search of prizes, while the other awaits Leighton. In the end, a coin flip determines that Hornblower is the lucky captain. Bolton is slightly put out by Hornblower's desire to depart immediately but also understands.

Hornblower departs and takes Sutherland on a whirlwind tour of the Spanish coast that results in a series of unprecedentedly rapid victories. Early the next morning, Sutherland raises a French brig. The French ship does not immediately attempt an escape, and Hornblower surmises she has mistaken the Dutch-build Sutherland for a French ship. Then the brig hoists signal flags with the message "MV," which Hornblower quickly surmises to be the secret French recognition signal. When Sutherland is unable to respond correctly, the French brig turns and runs, but by then it is too late. She is quickly captured and a prize crew is sent aboard.

Hornblower later reflects on the capture and orders a French tricolor flag to be made. He then points the ship toward Llanza, a fortress near the border of Spain and France. As land is sighted, Hornblower has the French flag hoisted in place of the English flag—such a ruse de guerre being considered audacious, but legal. Sutherland sails into the harbor and moves within close range of the fortress. At the last moment, Sutherland hoists "MV," and the fortress responds. Hornblower orders Bush to hoist out the ship's boats, and they are quickly filled with marines and sailors. Hornblower briefly considers leading the attack but finally tells Bush to lead the boats ashore and storm the fortress. Bush proceeds as the fortress finally realizes Hornblower's trick. The Spanish open fire, but it is too late, and, within a few minutes, Bush and his men have stormed the fortress and captured it. They ruin it by heaving the cannons over the wall, causing them to plunge down a cliff. Hornblower then dispatches several boatloads of sailors into the harbor, where they capture seven smaller vessels and make them all prizes.

Chapters 9 and 10 Analysis

Bolton has risen from the ranks, having served before the mast as a common seaman. He has thus demonstrated unusual ability combined with a fair amount of luck. Hornblower enviously notes that Bolton has been very lucky with prize money. Bolton

holds Leighton in slight contempt, vituperating the admiral's seamanship and referring to him with derogatory names. Even though Hornblower harbors much the same opinion, he is nevertheless scandalized at Bolton's public behavior. Bolton is, however, approachable and free of any affectation; he understands Hornblower and admires his abilities without professional jealousy. As the senior captain, it would by typical for Bolton to post Hornblower at the rendezvous station and go cruising himself. That he flips a coin for an even chance indicates his essentially egalitarian personality. Hornblower likes and trusts Bolton, though he believes the man to eat too much and drink too freely. Hornblower also notes that Bolton has been lucky in the area of prize money—mention of which foreshadows Hornblower's own forthcoming luck. In any event, Hornblower's brief cruise is unprecedented in its productivity and also makes him a considerable amount of wealth.

During the first day of the cruise, Hornblower takes eight vessels as prizes, including the brig Amelie. The first French brig captured mistakenly reveals the French recognition signal. This signal is composed of a certain hoist of semaphore flags that should elicit a particular response from the receiving ship that, in turn, would elicit a particular response from the initial ship. Thus, two strange ships meeting at sea could ascertain identity at a considerable distance. When Hornblower uses the recognition signal to approach the French-occupied Spanish harbor and fortress at Llanza, he does not display the signal until he is within long range of the fortress. This delay is intentional, as it causes the fortress to withhold fire while they run up the appropriate response. Hornblower does not know the continuing pattern, however, but the fortress' hesitation provides enough time for Sutherland to close and capture the strong point. After the fortress is neutralized, the harbor lays upon to Sutherland's depredation. Hornblower captures seven small craft, which nets him a considerable amount of prize money. Llanza is today better known to American readers as Llansá; it is a tiny town on the east coast of Spain, about two miles south of the border Spain shares with France and about fifteen miles north of Roses.

The attack on Llanza foreshadows two later developments—first, Hornblower wants to lead the shore party but in the interest of etiquette allows Bush to lead. In a subsequent shore raid, Hornblower is unable to resist personally leading the shore party. Second, Hornblower notes that Midshipman Longley, a capable and energetic boy, is frightened in combat and so gives him tasks, busywork if you will, to take his mind off his fear. In a subsequent combat encounter, Longley is busily occupied when he is killed outright. The loss of seven prize crews and a few casualties reduces Sutherland's full complement by a measurable amount. The two actions conducted form the first of five literary episodes considered in the middle chapters of the novel.

Chapter 11 and 12

Chapter 11 and 12 Summary

Sutherland stands out from Llanza and sails north about eighteen miles to Port Vendres, France. Sutherland closes with the land and then turns about and appears to sail away as night falls. After an exciting day of action, Hornblower is in high spirits and decides to personally lead the planned attack. Hornblower hosts the officers at dinner and explains his complicated plan of attack, stressing that the timing of all components must be carefully coordinated. In the early morning hours, Hornblower and 250 men embark in the ship's boats. One boat runs ashore near each battery, and the men then simultaneously commence a noisy, but ineffective, attack on each battery; the attacks are intended to cause confusion and delay, but not to be tactically effective. As the attacks begin, Hornblower's boat slips silently through the night and runs alongside a harbor guard rowboat, capturing it with complete surprise and little noise. Hornblower's boat, along with one other boat, then closes upon a large ship at anchor. They bang up against opposite sides at nearly the same time and swarm up onto the decks. A brief but intense fight ensues, and Hornblower leads the charge, hacking at French sailors with his sword. Within minutes, the French ship is captured, and the English sailors cut the anchor cable, set the sails, and depart the enemy harbor. Hornblower thus captures his ninth prize in twenty-four hours.

Sutherland then cruises the coast looking for victims but the area is mostly vacant. Hornblower reflects on the capability of the crew and how it has improved so much over the past weeks. Although reduced by 27 casualties and the loss of 34 men as prize crews, Sutherland is able to function as a disciplined machine of war. In this area of the coast, many minor inlets, bays and streams combine to offer the French a water route along the coast which does not require them to venture out into deep water. Canals further develop the sheltered routes. Hornblower realizes this makes traditional ship-to-shore attack impossible and instead focuses on a length of canal between Etang de Thau and Aigues Mortes. There, he sees a large coaster moving along slowly in a protected waterway. Determined to not be foiled, Hornblower calls on Brown and ten other volunteers. They row ashore and cross the narrow strip of land on foot, laden with fire-starting kits and weapons. At the canal's edge they strip naked except for their combustible kits and weapons and swim out to the large French coaster. It is crewed by a man and his wife, and only a few other older men. They offer scant resistance and within minutes Hornblower is in control of the vessel; he sends the French crew ashore in the ship's boat. Brown and the other men go below and rip open bags of grain and smash through doors and bulkheads, setting fires throughout the ship. They return to deck and pry up planking to vent the fire. The fire spreads rapidly and begins to consume the entire vessel. Hornblower and his men swim back to shore, where they are angered to discover the French crew has flung their clothing into the canal, and the clothing has washed away. This act of petty revenge is little more than an inconvenience. As the French crew curses the English raiders, they run naked to their boat and row to Sutherland, being received aboard with barely-concealed smirking,

while in the distance a cloud of smoke rises from the burning coaster. The destruction of the ship has cast the French crew and owners into poverty, but it also demonstrates England's naval power. Now, muses Hornblower, French forces will be diverted from conquest to protect the coast.

Chapter 11 and 12 Analysis

The cutting-out expedition at Port Vendres and the burning of a coaster in the Aigues Mortes-Etang de Thau channel form two more literary episodes presented in the middle chapters of the novel. These two events occur on the second day of Hornblower's brief cruise and further demonstrate the able officer's energetic prosecution of the war effort. Interestingly, the captured ship is not particularly described. It is likely a sizeable craft, however, as Hornblower allots around 100 men for its capture. Obviously, it is deemed the most-valuable ship in Port Vendres, and as it is referred to as a "ship," it is likely three-masted and ship-rigged. The system of prize money, much maligned by Hornblower in several volumes of the series, awarded cash prizes for seized vessels. An agent sold the captured vessels and their cargoes and the resulting money was divided up among the admirals, captains and crews involved in the capture using a somewhat complicated method. As the sold ship is in sight when the nine prizes were taken, the great bulk of the money would go to Sutherland and the largest share would devolve to Hornblower. Thus, the twenty-four hour cruise resulting in nine prizes makes Hornblower a fairly wealthy man; at a stroke he is no longer poverty-stricken. He does not take more prizes in the novel, but does continue his military exploits.

Chapter 12 contains narrative disclosure of interior thoughts of Bush and a few other characters and thus slightly digresses from the novel's typical construction. The capture and burning of the French coaster does nothing to enrich Hornblower or his men, but it does carry the war home to France. The action is cruel, and the horrible face of war is reflected in the eyes of the weeping French woman as she watches her home, her fortune and her future burn. Hornblower spares little pity for the woman; he instead focuses on the calculus of war; now the French will take men and cannon from their field armies to guard this section of the coast. England's naval power has been demonstrated again, and the war tilts ever so slightly toward England's favor. The scene is remarkable inasmuch as it demonstrates the effects of warfare upon the common citizenry of France. Other incidents in the novel concern military fortresses or ships-of-war, and are somewhat more abstracted in terms of human cost. The spectacle of a dozen naked English sailors running and rowing makes the narrative seem a little silly and off-balance, but it rather adds to the pathos than subtracts from it.

Chapters 13 and 14

Chapters 13 and 14 Summary

Sutherland points southwest and returns to the rendezvous station—but as Hornblower does not yet fancy his personal cruise of glory completed, he contrives to pass the rendezvous point at the dead of night and so misses the other ships. By first light he has passed beyond visual contact and cruises the Catalan coast. At a small town called Arens de Mar a boat puts off from shore and rows toward the English ship-of-the-line. As it poses no credible threat Hornblower allows it to close within hailing distance. Its occupant proves to be Colonel José Gonzales de Villena y Danvila, of His Most Catholic Majesty's Olivenza Hussars. Villena is a loyalist officer who resists the French occupation of Spain. Under Hornblower's close questioning, Villena admits that his regiment engaged an Italian army at Tordera, as the Italians marched from Gerona toward Barcelona. The Spanish were utterly defeated and in the general rout Villena rode his horse until it died. The Italians, allies of France, are acting under Napoleon's orders to subjugate the southeastern area of Spain. The only suitable roadway in the region runs parallel to the Spanish coast and is often adjacent to the sea. Hornblower assumes that Pino's army will use this single roadway as they pass southwest toward Barcelona. He questions Villena and then consults his sketchy nautical charts. Hornblower then muses on the likely reaction of a land-based forced to a single English ship.

Sutherland closes to a point selected by Hornblower and does indeed locate the Italian army, marching in long column down the single roadbed. Beyond the road the ground rises in steep, broken terrain. The land ends in a plunging drop to the sea that allows Sutherland to range in very close. As Hornblower has expected, the marching columns show no trepidation at the appearance of a hostile ship. Assuming that it cannot harm them, many of the marching soldiers even wave their hats toward their enemy. With a leadsman in the chains and the guns run out, Sutherland slides parallel to the Italian column and begins a deadly cannonade. Round shot is directed toward artillery and baggage sections of the column, and grapeshot is directed toward infantry sections. The execution is great as Sutherland ranges down the entire column. A few artillery battalions attempt to return fire but it is hardly effective and Sutherland destroys most opposition. On one occasion a group of Italian and French officers ride to a headland to survey the scene and Sutherlands grapeshot decimates the group of officers. All of Sutherland's 74 great guns, as well as her eight quarterdeck cannonades, are used repeatedly. Sutherland wears around and sails back along the line, shooting at larger groups of survivors. The Italian army wavers and then disintegrates into rout as Villena capers about the deck in joy. Finally Sutherland slides by the vast baggage train. Having read in the Account of the Present War in the Peninsula that baggage animals are strategically critical, Hornblower orders the men to fire into the lines of baggage animals, slaughtering them. The men hesitate—killing Italians is one thing, but killing animals is to them another—but discipline prevails. By the time the Italian army has routed into the broken hillside Sutherland stands out to sea; Hornblower conservatively

estimates the number of enemy casualties between 500 and 600 men, in addition to two battalions of field artillery and a vast amount of materiel destroyed, not to mention dozens of draft animals killed. In the exchange Sutherland suffers no casualties and hardly any damage—the only fatality aboard being a pig.

Chapters 13 and 14 Analysis

The town of Arens de Mar is today better known to Americans as Arenys de Mar; Malgret as Malgrat de Mar; and Gerona as Girona. Even today, the primary roadway leading from southern France toward Barcelona runs along the coast. Pino's invading army, marching from Gerona to Barcelona, would thus be traveling in a southwestern direction. Hornblower's attack takes place within a few miles of present-day Calella. Hornblower's comments to Villena about the fortunes of war and defeat provide major foreshadowing for latter events in the novel when Hornblower himself faces the prospects first of failure—during Chapters 17 and 18—and later of defeat—during Chapters 19 and 20. Chapter 13 is concise and introduces Villena, a loyalist Spanish officer and transitions the narrative to the literary episode presented in Chapter 14. The plot does have one minor gap: how does Villena recognize the Dutch-built Sutherland as an English ship?

Hornblower contrives to miss the rendezvous, so he can continue his independent cruise that has proved so successful to this point. He passes into waters devoid of targets but meets, quite by happenstance, the Spanish officer. Villena informs Hornblower of local military conditions and mentions that a large Italian army, led by Pino, is marching down a road that borders the sea. Hornblower consults a chart and realizes a naval ship-to-shore bombardment is indicated. Pino and his advisors are apparently entirely ignorant of the capabilities of an English ship-of-war and thus march blithely down the road within easy cannon shot of Sutherland. Hornblower educates Pino on the destructive capabilities of Sutherland. Chapter 14 contains a huge amount of technical detail relating to sailing, navigation and gunnery aboard Sutherland. It also presents a substantial amount of detail regarding the methods used by marching infantry and artillery and gives a fair indication of Pino's army's composition. Sutherland makes the most of her superior tactical position and sails up and down the Italian column, shattering it with round shot and grapeshot. Hornblower's conservative estimate of 500 to 600 casualties indicates a gigantic loss inflicted on the Italians. In addition, the entire column breaks and routs into the countryside, which Hornblower realizes will utterly demoralize the survivors. The action is a masterstroke resulting in no loss to Sutherland. Surely, such complete and lopsided victories are rare in warfare. Hornblower's ability to speak Spanish and to appreciate the littoral possibilities of Sutherland—thanks in large part to her shallow draft—combine to grant him this startling and singular victory.

Chapters 15 and 16

Chapters 15 and 16 Summary

Sutherland returns to the rendezvous station, and Hornblower makes his official verbal and written reports. Instead of commending him for decisive action, Leighton censures Hornblower for missing the rendezvous. After taking Hornblower's report, Leighton dismisses the casualty estimate for the action against Pino's army as ridiculously inflated, though he does gloat over the prize money coming his way for the capture of nine vessels. The visit aboard the flagship does accord Hornblower the occasion to shed Villena, and the visit is cut short, as the weather turns dirty. As Hornblower returns to Sutherland, he views the other ships of the squadron—he judges Caligula entirely seaworthy but feels Pluto is rather heavily armed and too heavy to be entirely reliable. He regains Sutherland moments before the storm breaks and the entire fleet stands out to sea. All proceeds well enough until a squall lays Sutherland onto her beam-ends and threatens to swamp the ship. Adroit handling averts catastrophe, and Hornblower watches the squall pass along the squadron and knock into Pluto. The flag ship breaches to and a horrified cluster of Sutherland's officers watch as Pluto fails to right herself and then loses her masts overboard. Finally, haltingly, Pluto rolls back up. But free of spars and sails, she is immediately driven aback toward the rocky lee shore of Spain.

Hornblower reacts immediately and intercepts the hapless Pluto—a mastless hulk nearly twice the size of Sutherland. As the ships draw close, Brown heaves a line to the stricken ship—he will have only one chance, and fortunately his throw is good. The line is used to pass a larger line, and after a series of difficult and dangerous maneuvers a towing hawser is fixed between the two ships. The situation is critical as Pluto is nearly ashore; Leighton actually signals Sutherland to abandon the rescue and save herself, but Hornblower submits that such is not necessary. Sutherland claws out to sea and makes a difficult and unexpected tack to clear the lee shore, Pluto trailing along behind her. The dangerous rescue is carried out in dirty weather and heavy seas and more than once Pluto threatens to surge forward, overtake and crush Sutherland. Hornblower calmly and correctly judges wind, wave and position and brings off a masterful feat of seamanship—comparing it more akin to playing a game of hazard than a game of whist.

Chapters 15 and 16 Analysis

This segment of the narrative demonstrates Hornblower's exceptional seamanship just as previous episodes demonstrated his military genius. He is first reunited with the squadron and then his report—brimming with incredible successes—is largely dismissed by the jealous and petty Leighton. Instead, Leighton only sees personal gain in the report that indicates not only an unlikable avarice but also a shortsighted view for an admiral. Hornblower's crafty abandonment of the talkative Villena is a humorous touch in an otherwise drab and depressing visit. He returns to Sutherland just as a

major storm breaks, and the fleet seeks safety in the open ocean. On his return trip, he looks at Pluto and decides she is rather over-armed—a judgment that proves correct and also foreshadows the accident that occurs minutes later. A squall hits the squadron, though, and broaches Sutherland and then Pluto. Sutherland, beamy and seaworthy, rights; Pluto does not. Pluto wallows on her side, shipping water and then loses her masts. She finally wallows upright, a dismasted hulk without means of propulsion. The winds and waves quickly drive her back toward the rocky lee shore, where she will be destroyed with great loss of life. Hornblower could let her go—he would profit by Leighton's death inasmuch as he would not share prize money with the admiral. He would also be rid of Barbara's husband. Yet a man such as Hornblower must obviously attempt rescue.

Most of Chapter 16 describes the technical process used to tow Pluto and is some of the most exciting language in the narrative. The crews pass a series of ever-larger lines until the massive towing hawser is made fast to both ships. The strain on the hawser is so great that it requires a complicated system of fastening in both hulls. During the whole process, both ships continue to be driven toward the shore. Thus the rescue occurs only after both ships occasion great danger. When Sutherland begins to tow Pluto Hornblower orders a tack-in-succession maneuver that is itself difficult and dangerous. But Hornblower is looking beyond the next ten minutes and realizes that the tack will clear the point of land and result in ultimate safety. That the evolution is executed with precision is a testimony of the efficiency of both ships' crews. The rescue itself is a testament of Hornblower's devoted character and peerless seamanship. It is also a symbolic inversion of later events in the novel. Here, Hornblower saves Leighton's dismasted ship from destruction. In Chapters 20 and 21, Leighton orders Hornblower's ship into destruction; following Leighton's orders, Sutherland is first dismasted and then driven ashore because Pluto is unable to come to her immediate assistance.

Chapters 17 and 18

Chapters 17 and 18 Summary

Months go by, and Pluto has been towed to England, refitted and repaired, and returned to active duty. Leighton has decided to enter into a joint operation with Spanish loyalist forces to strike at a French-controlled stronghold. To this end, he holds a council of war aboard Pluto and announces that Hornblower will lead the English forces, largely because he alone is fluent in Spanish. The plan is complicated and heavily reliant upon flawless coordination. Leighton asks for opinions, and Hornblower, versed in Spanish processes, voices concern that the Spanish forces will prove undependable. Instead of taking the opinion at face value, Leighton interprets it as a personal attack and accuses Hornblower of disloyalty. Hornblower retreats and does not comment further.

Two nights later the squadron closes with the shore and many cannon are landed from Sutherland. Hornblower goes ashore and commands hundreds of British sailors. He meets Colonel Juan Claros, who represents the Spanish commanding officer, Colonel Rovira. Claros has the bare minimum number of men and draft animals to move the English cannons along the road into their assault position. All appears to be proceeding according to plan, though Claros is reticent to assist as much as possible. After heroic efforts, the cannon, shot and powder are landed, and the siege train makes halting progress up steep slopes and over poor roads.

After moving for many hours, however, Hornblower comes to realize that the promised thousands of Spanish infantry and cavalry have not materialized. When he inquires with Claros, he discovers that no messengers have been dispatched to coordinate forces. In the distance, the French-occupied strongpoint can be seen, but Hornblower refuses to proceed until contact has been made, and the column halts for a few hours. Hornblower is further irritated by Claros' demand for provisions for the Spanish army. Alas, Colonel Rovira cannot be located—as Hornblower had feared—and after a few hours the French forces sally from the strongpoint. Claros enrages Hornblower by noting the superiority of the French numbers and then allowing what Spanish infantry there is to retreat, leaving the English and their cannons exposed and alone. Hornblower draws up the marine contingent and entrusts it to Major Laird. As the British marines fight a rearguard action, Hornblower directs the seamen to drag the cannon and powder back to the beach—the shot is abandoned. Hornblower and Longley find themselves in a tight spot under fire. Hornblower is so fatigued that he is uncharacteristically unsure about how to proceed and finds himself taking direction from the determined Longley. After a prolonged and dangerous skirmish, Laird pulls back. But he has delayed the French long enough that the English have salvaged their cannons and powder, as well as rescuing several score of draft animals. The military adventure is a complete fiasco, though at least the English contingent acted with honor. Hornblower returns to Pluto and reports the total failure of the expedition to a fuming Leighton.

Chapters 17 and 18 Analysis

These two chapters form a literary episode which consists of a military debacle—it is Hornblower's first failure in the novel, though hardly his fault. Leighton has been instructed to cooperate with the Spanish forces so far as is practicable. This cooperation is made possible largely because of Colonel Villena. Leighton determines that a combined operation would be desirable. The Spanish presumably have a large field contingent to throw against the French-held strongpoint of Cerona. It is hoped that if Cerona can be reduced, Rosas can be captured, and thus all of Catalonia can shake off French tyranny. The plan is grand in concept but complicated and depends utterly upon precisely-timed combined actions between Spanish field forces and English naval forces. Communications are poor and the various groups have no common training. Hornblower objects to the plan as impracticable—which is clearly is—but the inexperienced Leighton interprets Hornblower's objection as disloyal behavior and censures him for it. Ironically, Leighton then selects Hornblower to lead the mission.

In execution, the English forces are flawless. They perform the difficult task of landing cannon, powder and shot, and then use the meager Spanish draft animals to haul the enormously heavy artillery over the notoriously poor Spanish roads. That the cannon are mounted on naval limbers instead of field limbers makes the situation so much more difficult. The Spanish cooperation in the early stages is half-hearted but at least present, and the siege train covers several difficult miles. But then things go wrong; the main Spanish army cannot be located and, in fact, never materializes. This leaves Hornblower's siege train exposed on both flanks and without infantry support. When the French forces take to the field, the Spanish infantry that is present simply flees the area, abandoning their English allies without firing a shot. Although this proves Leighton a fool and Hornblower a visionary, it also leaves Hornblower in peril. He immediately determines to salvage the material so far as possible, and uses the English marines to delay the French by fighting a tenacious rearguard action. The time gained is used to transport the English cannon and powder, along with the Spanish draft animals, to the beach and then to the English squadron. The marines are then taken off and the farce is concluded. Hornblower thus suffers one of his rare defeats, though his men realize this to be in spite of, rather than because of, Hornblower's abilities—Polwheal didactically summarizes the entire escapade thusly: "'Twarn't Horny's fault'" (p. 280).

One episode in the retreat is a prime example of role-reversal in fiction. Hornblower and Longley retreat together along broken terrain. Hornblower, sleepless for nights, comes under fire and becomes confused and dazed about how to proceed. Longley then takes charge and guides—indeed, nearly orders—Hornblower down a sharp escarpment to the beachhead, where they find safety. This situation differs markedly from an earlier scene in the novel, wherein Longley cowered in fear and Hornblower took charge.

Chapter 19 and 20

Chapter 19 and 20 Summary

Sutherland offloads the Spanish draft animals and then patrols for three uneventful weeks with the squadron. Pluto and Caligula take station at sea and Sutherland, with her shallow draft, is sent along the French coast to examine Toulon. Hornblower and the crew enjoy the independent service; Hornblower spends the time pondering his life and remembering the sadness of losing his children to smallpox. Sutherland returns to station, but before she rejoins the squadron, she encounters the English frigate Cassandra, who is being pursued by an entire French squadron—four ships-of-the-line. Sutherland beats to quarters and shadows the French squadron. Hornblower commands Cassandra to make all possible sail, find Leighton, and bring him to the area. The next several hours are spent gaining positional advantage over the French squadron and observing their movement. The day draws to a close as Hornblower invites his officers to dine with him.

Early the next morning Hornblower relocates the French squadron and takes stock of the strategic situation. The French squadron has obviously escaped through the blockade and if allowed to run fully to sea would pose an enormous hazard to English shipping. As the French squadron lies between Sutherland and Leighton's ships, Sutherland can hardly hope for assistance. And yet Sutherland alone against four French ships-of-the-line would hardly be a fair engagement. Hornblower weighs the relative value of a single ship to England against four ships to France and concludes that it would be preferable to fight and lose than remain safe and allow the French squadron to pass. Cassandra eventually appears on the horizon, Pluto and Caligula astern. When the French squadron sights the English ships beyond, they quickly decide to seek the shelter of Rosas harbor, a path that takes them directly toward Sutherland. Hornblower determines he must engage the French squadron and attempt to damage some or all of the ships such that they must seek extensive repair in Rosas. There, they can be blockaded and dealt with at leisure by the Royal Navy. And yet the Sutherland will likely pay the ultimate price. And yet signals are now exchanged between Sutherland and Cassandra, and then between Cassandra and Leighton, which effectively puts Hornblower again under the direct command of Leighton. Hornblower realizes that due to distance and time, he can expect no assistance from the other English ships, and then Longley delivers Leighton's orders, relayed through Cassandra—"No. 21...'Engage the enemy'" (p. 306). Hornblower knows his decision has been correct, and he finds a certain satisfaction in knowing that Barbara's husband—Admiral Leighton—is not a moral coward.

The final sixteen pages of the novel describe the Sutherland's engagement against the entire French squadron and are easily the most-exciting and best-written pages of the novel. Sutherland, a 74-gun ship, faces three French two-deckers, one bearing 80-guns and the other two bearing between 74- and 80-guns apiece, and one French three-decker bearing 90- to 98- guns of much heavier caliber than Sutherland. Totally

outclassed and vastly outnumbered, Hornblower maneuvers to attack the French ships singly so far as possible and relies upon his crew's exceptional gunnery to partially counteract the French numerical superiority. He first closes with the leading French two-decker as the French squadron proceeds in line-ahead formation. Sutherland holds fire until close range and then wears to weather, moving around the French 80-gun ship's stern, each cannon raking the French ship from stern to stem in turn. Hornblower muses that it is the type of broadside which usually finishes an encounter, and the French ship is utterly ruined—she does not participate again in the combat but runs for shelter.

Sutherland turns to run on a converging, but parallel course, with the second French ship. The ships draw into close range and the two ships exchange broadsides. As before, the English gunnery is more rapid and far more accurate, Bush coolly comments about the English broadsides "Three to her two, as usual" (p. 311). The second French ship continues on, seeking safe harbor, and draws slightly ahead of Sutherland before losing her mainmast. But Sutherland has suffered frightful damage in the exchange and tows behind a mass of wreckage. The first French ship limps away, headed for Rosas harbor, where it will likely be driven ashore; the second French ship drifts with the current. In any case, they are no longer a threat to England. But behind Sutherland remain two undamaged enemies and Leighton's ships are still over the horizon and becalmed. Sutherland still has control, and Hornblower makes an instant decision, putting her over to close with the remaining French ships; it is a suicidal, but calculated, move. Sutherland closes on a converging parallel course with the French three-decker and begins to exchange unequal broadsides. The undamaged French two-decker ranges up along Sutherland's other side and fires into her. From ahead, the second French ship fires at Sutherland's bow. The hot exchange continues interminably, and two gunboats, each mounting a monstrous 42-pounder, put out from Rosas and quickly join the fight.

Sutherland's spars are shot away and her sides are battered in. Dead men and fragments of men litter the decks and blood spurts from her scuppers. Still the British crew fights on. And then an errant shot strikes Bush and knocks off his foot; Hornblower orders the stricken man carried below to relative safety. The French three-decker drifts alongside with a loud crunching of timbers and French sailors pour aboard Sutherland. Hornblower leads a counter attack to repel the boarders. The issue remains in doubt until the French ship drifts away, and Sutherland's deck remains under Hornblower's command. But the combat is nearly over—few guns are still served, and dead men are everywhere. Hornblower sees a cannonball slam into Longley, turning the young man into a bloody mass of pulp. The gigantic cannon on the gunboats drive huge holes into Sutherland's hull below the waterline. The carpenter reports several feet of water in the well and all pumps destroyed. The surgeon reports massive casualties. Hornblower watches more men die and then concludes "'We must strike"' (p. 321), but no flag remains to be lowered. He staggers across the ruined ship and down to his devastated cabin and retrieves the French tricolor flag constructed months ago—returning to the deck as the pounding continues, he hangs the flag over the side. The French gunboats stop firing and row toward Sutherland to claim her as a conquered prize. A dazed Hornblower stands on deck, miraculously unharmed, and contemplates the ignominy of surrender.

Chapter 19 and 20 Analysis

The language and action sequences in the final chapters are exceptional; they are surely the most-exciting episodes of the novel and probably the most exciting segment in the entire series of novels. In a by-now familiar narrative construction technique, the first chapter of the two-chapter couplet is brief and sets up the plot for the action in the second chapter. Because of her shallow draft, Sutherland is sent on a coastal reconnoitering mission and is thus detached from the main body of Leighton's squadron. While trying to rejoin the squadron, she encounters a French squadron at sea. Sutherland is separated from the relative safety of her own squadron by the intervening French ships. Placing personal safety and concerns aside, Hornblower determines he must somehow stop the French squadron from escaping to sea. After a day long chase, he moves to engage the French in combat. That Leighton signals the attack is merely a secondary stamp of approval upon Hornblower's already-determined course of action. The attack is obviously suicidal—Sutherland will pit 74 guns against about 325 guns—and many of those of superior weight. Outclassed by a factor of five or more, Hornblower uses superior tactics and seamanship, as well as vastly superior gunnery, to wrest a semblance of victory from the situation. Although Sutherland is destroyed and captured, the four French ships are heavily damaged—two of them are entirely disabled and the remaining two require extensive repairs to become seaworthy. Thus, England loses one ship but France loses four. The French squadron will presumably shelter in Rosas bay, where they will become combat ineffective. In fact, the next volume in the series of novels treats with the ultimate fate of Sutherland's wrecked hulk and the four French ships—as well as that of Leighton—at considerable length.

The combat is described in colorful and exacting language. Hornblower's tactics are essentially correct and enable Sutherland to fight two one-on-one duels with decisive effect before inevitable being overcome by the remainder of the French squadron and the gunboats putting out from Rosas. Nearly a third of Sutherland's crew is killed during the brutal combat—but they inflict a costly price upon the French. Note also how the various reports are delivered to Hornblower as he watches death unfold around him—Sutherland cannot return effective fire; the crew is being mangled; the ship is sinking and cannot be pumped out; the ship cannot be sailed; the scene about the decks is one of utter destruction and slaughter, and the French have the ship surrounded and are delivering a withering fire. Sutherland truly fights to the bitter end and the account is resplendent with the glory of combat. Only the melancholy and self-critical Hornblower could look at the unfolded tableaux and see defeat: personal defeat amidst strategic victory. Yet the French victory is a Pyrrhic one. As the novel opens en media res, so it concludes abruptly.

Note how Hornblower's thoughts turn to his own deceased child as he contemplates his burgeoning fondness for Longley—this surely foreshadows Longley's imminent death just as Hornblower's comments to Villena regarding the fortunes of war foreshadowed Sutherland's defeat. In literary terms, Leighton's order to engage the French squadron precipitates the novel's crisis and the narrative conclusion is a catastrophe rather than the more-typical dénouement of the modern novel.

Characters

Horatio Hornblower

Captain Horatio Hornblower, the novel's protagonist and dominant character, is a post captain in the British Navy during the Napoleonic wars and commands H.M.S. Sutherland, a 74-gun, ship-of-the-line attached to Admiral Leighton's squadron. His age is about thirty-four, though this varies somewhat from the age indicated in the previous volume of the series. He is very educated and joined the naval service fairly late at the age of about seventeen. Hornblower is an exceptional navigator, captain and seaman, though he is nervous and constantly plagued by internalized self-doubt. He regards himself as cowardly and dishonest, yet all who know him regard him in an opposite way. His powerful drive to unqualified success masks his internal turmoil in icy reserve and even his closest friends never fully know him. An introspective and lonely man, Hornblower is married to Maria and had two children by her—a boy and a girl named Horatio and Maria, respectively—both children died of smallpox prior to the novel's primary time line. During the novel, Maria is pregnant with a third child.

Hornblower is entirely tone deaf and finds music irritating and incomprehensible. He is prone to seasickness, abhors many of the normal usages of naval life, declines strict discipline achieved through flogging and passes his time in isolation, reading or occasionally playing whist with reluctant lieutenants and midshipmen. Hornblower smokes a cigar during the novel, but this is a rare pastime for him. He enjoys light and fine foods but can also subsist on common ship's fare. He demonstrates a predilection for coffee, which is unusual among officers of the time period. He enjoys daily seawater showers, is unusually poor for a captain and worries frequently about his shabby appearance. Hornblower's early career is mentioned casually during several scenes in the novel, and the early chapters of the novel make frequent reference to his recent exploits in Lydia—events fully considered in a previous volume in the series. Hornblower spent a prolonged period as a prisoner of war in Spain, where he became tolerably fluent in Spanish. In any non-combat stressful situation, however, his Spanish deserts him and his English is likely to become stuttered and halting. Hornblower expects much from his officers and crew and when occasion demands it, he is a relentless taskmaster. His leadership qualities are grounded in the reality of always expecting more from himself than he does from his subordinates. He is described physically in only vague terms—of apparently average height and weight, and a bulging middle, which he finds unacceptable. He is much given to pacing the quarterdeck or Sutherland's capacious stern gallery in silent isolation every morning for about an hour, as much a form of physical exercise as mental calculation. His fingers are long and apparently delicate, though he considers them bony.

Hornblower possesses exceptional leadership qualities—probably his best overall trait—and the men of Sutherland are devoted followers. Hornblower spares corporal punishment insofar as is possible and occasionally engages in egalitarian banter with commons sailors, a practice which scandalizes Bush. Energetic, insightful, and

aggressive, Hornblower enjoys a series of audacious successes during the novel, which would have made him a rich man at home—had he not been forced to surrender the Sutherland and accept imprisonment in a French-controlled Spanish jail.

Maria Hornblower

Maria Ellen Hornblower née Mason meets Hornblower during another volume in the series of novels. Hornblower finds her physically stout though unattractive, and she is of a lower social status and intellect than Hornblower desires. Though he never loves her, she falls in love with him and dotes upon him with a constant affection that Hornblower finds cloying and irritating. Obviously devoted to Hornblower, she dotes upon his needs. In return, Hornblower is formal and distant but also devoted and proper, respecting her support. Bush finds Maria generally irritating. In nearly all respects, Maria is the type of wife that most sensible men would greatly desire. Maria has borne Hornblower two children—both of whom died of smallpox prior to the novel's primary events. Maria is pregnant with a third child during the present novel. Maria is a recurrent character in several volumes in the series, though she is usually a fairly minor character. She is about 30 years old during the present novel and married Hornblower c. April 1803. She is presented as a loyal and likable character during the novels early chapters, and Hornblower thinks of her often during the remainder of the narrative.

Lady Barbara Leighton

Lady Barbara Leighton née Wellesley is the aristocratic, younger sister of two militarily and politically successful brothers. She comes from an established, respected and powerful British family and has spent considerable time in India and is familiar with the practices of the sea, though not particularly with military ships and actions. Hornblower considers her to be unspeakably beautiful. She has a willowy and graceful figure and a youthful intensity and a joy of life that is infectious. Highly-educated and experienced, she demonstrates a natural intelligence and a gift for putting others at ease. She is keenly insightful and easily influences men, moving among them with a casual confidence and enjoying easy successes among them. Her social ability and natural grace quickly win over nearly everyone. During a previous volume in the series of novels, Barbara and Hornblower became acquainted and developed a mutual, but unrequited, love interest. Several of the early chapters of the novel summarize their common experiences.

About three weeks before the opening of the novel, Barbara marries Admiral Leighton—a move that breaks the married Hornblower's heart. Hornblower and other characters correctly assume the marriage is for purely political reasons, though as would be expected, Barbara is a devoted wife. Barbara uses her considerable influence behind the scenes to ensure Hornblower is appointed a suitable command. Thus, Hornblower ends up serving under Barbara's new husband in what proves to be a difficult arrangement. The gracious Barbara hosts the Hornblowers to a small dinner party, where she discusses Maria's pregnancy and other domestic topics. Barbara does not

again appear in the narrative, though Hornblower thinks of her often. Barbara is a recurrent character in the series of novels. She is about thirty years old during the present novel, and her marriage to Leighton can be dated c. April 1810.

Rear Admiral Sir Percy Gilbert Leighton, Knight of the Bath

Leighton, appointed as admiral at a remarkably young age, is about 41 at the time of the novel. Hornblower notes that Leighton has a "perceptible fullness about his jowl" (p. 35), which he believes suggests self-indulgence and stupidity. Bolton privately refers to Leighton as 'Mucho Pomposo' and vituperates Leighton's ability as a seaman, navigator and commander. The flag captain Elliot's opinion of Leighton is not directly recorded but subtle suggestions indicate he does not fully care for the admiral. Leighton owes his appointment entirely to political machinations and family station. Throughout the novel, Leighton displays a basic capability devoid of much insight. On several occasions, he makes erroneous decisions and demonstrates poor—though not catastrophic—judgment. He appears to be petty and vindictive, though he saves most of his ire for Hornblower.

Leighton marries Barbara about three weeks before the opening of the novel. Hornblower surmises the union to be entirely for political reasons, and several other characters share his opinion. Leighton apparently knows of or suspects Hornblower's and Barbara's mutual affection and this is possibly why he holds Hornblower to an impossibly-high standard. For example, on one occasion Leighton asks his officers for their opinion, and when Hornblower offers an opinion contrary to Leighton's, Leighton accuses Hornblower of disloyalty. Hornblower spends much of the novel wondering if Barbara loves Leighton, or if she married him for purely political reasons.

When Sutherland is the only ship between the French squadron and the open sea, Leighton orders Hornblower to engage the French squadron. The order results in Sutherland's destruction but does prevent the French squadron from escaping. This order precipitates the literary crisis of the narrative and simultaneously demonstrates a moral courage in Leighton that Hornblower ultimately comes to respect. At the end of the novel, Leighton has demonstrated basic competence but no flair or insight. His ultimate fate is considered in another volume of the series. Leighton functions as a minor antagonist to Hornblower and is a source of minor, but early and constant, conflict throughout the narrative.

Brown

Brown is the coxswain and plays a consistent but minor role in the novel, particularly in the latter half, where he is selected by Hornblower to assemble the crew used on the swimming raid to burn a French coaster. Brown's performance impresses Hornblower, and he later has Brown throw a towline to the disabled Pluto. These actions bring Brown to Hornblower's particular attention. In later novels in the series, Brown plays a much

larger role. He is described as intelligent, active and physically dominating. Hornblower admires Brown's easy competence at any physical task and frequently watches Brown's bulging muscles with envy.

Colonel José Gonzales de Villena y Danvila

Villena is a Spanish loyalist and commander of the apparently-destroyed Olivenza Hussars. He wears a long sabre and dresses in resplendent uniform. Hornblower notes Villena is a sunburned and youngish man of fair complexion and possessed of a so-called Hapsburg lip. He is one of a large number of officers and men who resist the French occupation of Spain, though the resistance is fairly ineffectual. Villena's force engaged the French and was entirely routed; he rode his horse to death outside a small village before seeing Sutherland and rowing out to her. Villena then provides information that allows Hornblower to locate and shell an Italian army column. Hornblower finds the talkative Villena irritating and as soon as practicable, pawns him off on the flagship. Villena is a minor character in the novel but is critical to the plot development of Chapters 13 and 14.

Longley

Longley is a ship's boy—a midshipman—aboard Sutherland. Hornblower judges him "an ugly little fellow, with...stubbly hair and monkey face" (p. 282), but Hornblower also feels genuine affection for the lad. Longley joins the ship with no experience but quickly becomes a valuable member of the crew. In early encounters, he is nearly paralyzed with fear, and Hornblower sees him cowering on one occasion. Hornblower handles Longley correctly, however, and ensures that the young man always has something to do during stressful periods. Longley eventually becomes a dependable midshipman, even during dangerous combat. Hornblower expects Longley to enjoy an exceptional career—but it is not to be. Longley is killed during Sutherland's final battle; Hornblower witnesses the cannon shot that turns the energetic youth into a mass of red pulp.

Captain Bolton

Bolton commands Caligula, one of the three ships in Leighton's squadron. Bolton is a large, heavyset and coarse man, much given to bawdy humor, heavy eating and liberal drinking. He began his naval career as a common seaman, serving before the mast and rose through the ranks due to his exceptional ability. He is a resolute combatant, though Hornblower feels him to likely be somewhat short on tactics. In many respects, Bolton is similar to Hornblower—they both come from poor backgrounds; they both owe their station to their own ability, and they are both married to common women. Hornblower seeks for higher station, both intellectually and socially, but grudgingly likes Bolton's bluff honesty. Both captains are respected by their respective crews. Bolton has a saucy sense of humor and holds Leighton in disregard, noting that he is not a seaman, nor yet a navigator. Bolton refers to his superior officer as "Mucho Pomposo," which

scandalizes Hornblower. Bolton is quite wealthy because of fortunate encounters with prize ships. When Bolton and Hornblower meet at the rendezvous, Bolton is the senior officer. Demonstrating his egalitarian personality, Bolton flips a coin to determine which ship will get to cruise, and which ship will have to remain on station. Hornblower wins and Bolton lets him go. A gruff man of his word, Bolton is a reliable man, expert seaman and dependable friend.

Luciano Gaetano Pino, Knight of the Legion of Honour, Knight

Pino has several extravagant titles and functions within the narrative as the commanding general of an Italian army in the service of Napoleon. Prior to his consideration in the novel, Pino has enjoyed great successes fighting against the ill-trained loyalist, Spanish forces. Traversing Spain during the time period considered was made difficult by a paucity of roadways. Pino thus marches his army along an obvious path—that of the only suitable road leading to Barcelona. The road borders the sea. Pino, perhaps an excellent land-based general, has little appreciation for warships and is nonplussed when Sutherland ranges up alongside his massive infantry and artillery column. Hornblower soon educates Pino on the capability of an English ship of war, and Pino's column is shattered and routed, taking 500 to 600 casualties and losing two artillery batteries, vast stores of materiel, and scores of draft animals. Pino's personal fate is not considered in the novel, but Hornblower rather fancies that Pino's legs are shot away during a ship-to-shore cannonade. Possessed of an inflated sense of self-worth, Pino is an apparently ruthless tyrant. Although a minor character in the novel, Pino's presence is significant to the plot during Chapters 13 and 14.

Gerard and Crystal

Gerard is a lieutenant aboard Sutherland, and Crystal is Sutherland's warranted master. Both men served with Hornblower aboard Lydia, and they are held in high regard by Hornblower, their fellow officers, and the crew. They are described only in vague terms—both men are apparently of average height and build. Gerard takes great pleasure in accurate and fast shooting and is otherwise a nondescript, though reliable, officer. Crystal is an exceptional sailor and navigator and is more concerned with Sutherland's safety than her mission. Both men occur throughout the narrative in minor but recurring roles.

Lieutenant William Bush

William Bush is about forty years old, a tallish man of great courage and dominant physical strength, satisfactory intelligence but no great insight. He is well liked, open, generous and gracious but suffers from a lack of spontaneity of thought. He is in his element when surrounded by rough seamen and sailors, but finds women nearly unintelligible. He is thoroughly honest and entirely dependable. He is also formidable

with a sword, a good pistol shot and an excellent commander of gunnery. Little is revealed of Bush's life ashore; he has several sisters, who he supports financially.

Bush joins Sutherland at Hornblower's request prior to the opening of the novel. He acts as first lieutenant serving under Hornblower. Prior to Hornblower's appointment as commander, Bush had outranked Hornblower due to seniority. The devoted friends surpass this situation, which might have caused awkward moments. The fact that Bush retains discipline and order throughout all the various episodes in the novel, speaks well of his capacity as a reliable if uninspired leader of men. Bush leads one amphibious assault on a fortress with great success and later commands Sutherland while Hornblower goes ashore. Possessing all the best qualities of a man, Bush is the epitome of a Royal Navy officer and a constant support to Hornblower. After serving with courage and distinction through all the military actions in the novel, Bush loses a foot during the final gunfire exchanges with the French squadron. Even then, Bush desires to remain on deck, but Hornblower orders him below—largely so that his friend will be carried to a safe place within the splintered hulk of Sutherland. Bush is a recurrent character in many of the volumes in the series and is always a devoted and reliable friend to those who know him.

Objects/Places

HMS Sutherland

Sutherland, a third-rate of 74 guns, is a captured English ship-of-the-line, formerly the Dutch Eendracht; she has been remodeled and rearmed per English sentiment but of course retains her round bow. Hornblower considers her the most ugly and least desirable two-decker in the Royal Navy, though she has retained a large stern gallery of which Hornblower is particularly fond. Sutherland was built to operate in shallow waters, and her draft is considerably less than the typical English ship-of-the-line, though at the expense of her being rather beamy and round-bottomed. Because of this, she makes a notable amount of leeway. Sutherland is destroyed during the final climactic battle of the novel; she otherwise proves an exceptionally able ship. Her crew compliment is given in slightly different figures throughout the text, but she would carry about 650-700 seamen and 90 marines. Sutherland carries 18-pounder guns on her upper deck and 24-pounder guns on her lower deck, as well as mounting lighter carronades on the quarterdeck.

Aside from Captain Hornblower, Sutherland is officered by Bush, First Lieutenant; and Gerard, Rayner, Hooker, Lieutenants. Three of Sutherland's midshipmen are named: Longley, Savage and John Hart, who is killed in action early in the narrative. Sutherland's warrant and petty officers include Grey, master's mate; Price, master at arms; Thompson, captain of the forecastle; Harrison, boatswain; Wood, purser; Polwheal, captain's steward; Crystal, master; Brown, coxswain; Morris, Captain of Marines; Vincent, the signals officer; Potter, sail maker; Howell, carpenter; and Goddard and Clarke, petty officers of an undisclosed rank. Sutherland's named crew includes Waites, a recruit from Exeter assizes; Simms, an able seaman, and Dawkins, Benskin, Ledly, Stebbings, and Hobson. The ship's fiddler is Sullivan.

Leighton's Squadron

Leighton's squadron is composed of the flagship Pluto, commanded by Captain Elliott; Caligula, commanded by Captain Bolton, and Sutherland, commanded by Captain Hornblower. Hornblower is the junior captain. He joins the squadron as it departs from England, and, soon thereafter, the squadron's ships separate for independent escort duty. The squadron later reassembles and patrols together, eventually locating a French squadron of roughly equivalent power. Unable to bring the entire squadron into action, Leighton orders Hornblower to engage the French against four-to-one odds.

Account of the Present War in Spain, Gibbon's Decline and Fa

Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, by Gibbons, is a favorite historical book owned by the fictional Hornblower. It indicates the type of intellect that Hornblower possesses and is cited primarily for characterization. In addition to classics, Hornblower acquires a library of books likely to be useful to him on his voyage, including the probably-fictitious contemporaneous, Account of the Present War in Spain, which summarizes the complicated political and military situation in Spain at the time of the novel. The novel also cites the probably fictitious Account of the Present War in the Peninsula, which summarizes much of the same information found in the previously-mentioned book.

Walmer Castle, Lord Mornington, Europe, and other Indiamen

Sutherland's first assignment is to escort a convoy of six Indiamen from England to a certain destination far south of France's naval influence. Three of the six ships are named—Walmer Castle, Lord Mornington and Europe. Walmer Castle is pursued by French luggers before Sutherland intervenes. Lord Mornington is the flagship of the merchant convoy. All the ships are armed—Lord Mornington especially so. Hornblower presses twenty experienced men from each of the ships upon taking his departure—a move that infuriates the convoy's captains and additionally breaks English law.

Splinters

Naval combat between large wooden ships was violent and dangerous, even though it rarely resulted in complete victory for either side. Ships rarely sank outright, though they were sometimes captured. The chief weapon of naval engagement was the cannon—several types, weights and configurations are noted in the novel. In general, cannons threw heavy iron balls—cannonballs—at the enemy. The cannonballs would strike the enemy ship's outer hull and cause clouds of splinters to fly away from the ship's inner wooden hull. These splinters, traveling at great velocity, were the chief cause of injury and death among the ship's crew. The word 'splinter' seems innocuous enough; however, they were lethal and often very large. During Sutherland's final destruction, Hornblower often notes the destructive effects of splinters.

The Weather Gauge

To have or possess "the weather gauge" describes the favorable positioning of a sailing vessel relative to another with respect to the wind; in brief, it is any position upwind of the other vessel. Being upwind, or having the weather gauge, allows a vessel to maneuver at will toward any downwind point and thus gain the tactical advantage over other ships. Further, the ship having the weather gauge typically controls the timing and

even the occurrence of military engagement. In general, correct tactics dictate that seeking the weather gauge is always an appropriate endeavor, and Hornblower usually gains the weather gauge so that he can control the combat.

The French Brig Amelie

Amelie is a French brig that is captured by Sutherland during Chapter 10. She carries general stores including 25 tons of powder, 125 tons of ship's biscuit, beef and pork in casks and brandy. Her captain is not very perceptive and mistakes Sutherland for a French ship and thus flies the private French recognition signal of "MV," allowing Hornblower to later use the signal to great advantage.

Llanza, Spain and Port Vendres, France

The two indicated locations are sites of aggressive military action undertaken by Hornblower during the middle chapters of the novel. Llanza is today better known to American readers as Llansá; it is a tiny town on the east coast of Spain, about two miles south of the border with France. Sutherland enters the port flying a French flag and hoisting the private French recognition signal. This ruse de guerre allows the English ship to close with the shore and launch an amphibious assault before the fortress reacts appropriately. The fortress is captured and wrecked, and Hornblower takes seven prize vessels out of the harbor. Port Vendres, France, is about eighteen miles north of Llanza and is a larger town with two batteries positioned to interlock fire. Hornblower launches diversionary night attacks against the two batteries, while the main attack goes into the harbor and cuts out a French ship.

Protected Canal between Etang de Thau and Aigues Mortes

The French coast features an area of protected inlets, bays and rivers that are connected by a series of canals. This allows French coasters to move goods along coastal waterways without being exposed to British ships-of-war. Hornblower attacks a coaster in the canal in the indicated area by rowing to shore, crossing the narrow land on foot, and swimming out to the undefended coaster.

The French Squadron off Rosas

Sutherland, a third-rate ship-of-the-line, engages and heavily damages a French squadron off Rosas, Spain; Sutherland is also wrecked by the French squadron, and ultimately Hornblower surrenders. The French squadron is composed of four ships—three third-rate two-deckers and one three-decker. At least one of the two-deckers bears 80 guns to Sutherland's 74; the other two-deckers are probably 80- or 74-gun ships. The three-decker is likely a second-rate ship-of-the-line, bearing 90- or 98-guns of a

much heavier weight than Sutherland's guns: the three-decker probably mounts 32-pounder guns on the lower deck compared to Sutherland's 24-pounders. In addition, two gunboats that put out from Rosas, join the French squadron. Each gunboat bears a single 42-pounder cannon that is used at close range to hole Sutherland below the waterline. Given the vast discrepancy in firepower, the English ship, though ultimately defeated, acquits itself most honorably in the exchange. All four French ships are disabled and forced into Rosas harbor as cripples.

Themes

Military Adventure in the Age of Sail

The novel's principle setting is the high seas during a time of war; Napoleon Bonaparte's military adventures threaten England, and only a strong naval response keeps the French aggression at bay and ensures the survival of the British Empire. As a captain of the Royal Navy, Hornblower's sworn and obvious duty is to engage the enemy at every opportunity. He admirably carries out this duty with H.M.S. Sutherland.

The novel relates a sea voyage from May to October of 1810; although the voyage is fictional, it contains many historical elements, and the maritime combat described is realistic and, at least in part, derived from historical accounts. The ships mentioned represent fictional ships of an historically-appropriate type; the crews and most characters are entirely fictional. All aspects of the novel are related to sea adventure; most of the action takes place at sea, and even the action which takes place on land generally relates to the sea. The novel's opening chapters focus on Hornblower's preparations to take Sutherland to sea. Intermediate chapters detail the process of escorting a merchant shipping convoy through hostile waters. The novel's latter chapters detail a series of militarily-brilliant exploits against various types of enemy targets, and the novel concludes with a desperate fight against overwhelming odds. These military adventures are either nautical or based on amphibious operations.

The strength and popular appeal of the novel is undoubtedly due to the nature of high seas adventure and the conversational way in which it is presented. Although full of accurate descriptions of lengthy nautical and amphibious maneuvers and frequent technical descriptions of nautical equipment, the text is presented in an accessible and friendly manner, which allows the reader to descend to deck-level, at it were, and enjoy the excitement of days long gone.

Difficulties of the Heart

Hornblower is not a man typically given over to maudlin sentiment, though he does form a romantic attachment to Barbara and creates a certain idealization of her. In general, however, he is pragmatic in his analysis and, if somewhat critically, in his self-analysis. Usually, Hornblower prides himself on abstinence of all types, of conforming the body to the will. He is not a man overly given to passion or the quest to satiate bodily desire. It is interesting, therefore, that he is so consumed with his passion for Barbara that in her presence during the early chapters of the novel, he briefly enters a sort of trance state and becomes nearly oblivious to those around him, including his wife, his peers and his commanding officer. Indeed, Hornblower's consuming passion for Barbara nearly causes him grave social embarrassment. Fortunately, he spoons in a mouthful of scalding hot soup and, gagging the burning liquid down, returns with a painful start to reality of the conversation directed his way. It is interesting to note the symbolic coupling

of Hornblower to Bolton in the initial chapters of the novel. Both men come from humble beginnings and both have achieved their station by diligent service and commendable exploits. Both men are married to rather undesirable, common women. But while Hornblower pines for Admiral Leighton's wife, Barbara, Bolton satisfied himself by consuming the fine food of Admiral Leighton. The juxtaposition of Barbara and dinner is intriguing and informs a subtle interpretation to Hornblower's later comment upon Leighton's choice in food.

Additional elements of the theme of love affairs include Hornblower's prolonged introspection about his loveless, but proper, marriage to Maria in contrast to his unremitting desire for Lady Barbara Leighton. An additional subtle element can be found in the portrayal of the few other marital relationships in the novel—between Bolton and his wife, between Elliott and his wife, and, finally, between Admiral Leighton and Barbara. Hornblower's marriage to Maria—and of course her pregnancy—spans the novel, as does his constant pining for Barbara. Indeed, Hornblower's prolonged and difficult affair of the heart is one of the dominant themes not only of the present novel, but also of several other volumes in the series.

War

More than any other volume in the series of novels, this novel is at heart about war. The domestic setting presents Hornblower as a commissioned officer with a sworn military duty moving about an imperiled England and obtaining military stores from under-supplied and over-managed bureaucracies. Hornblower's personal and social life is allowed only insofar as it does not interfere with his personal duties. Even the common sailors aboard Sutherland are, more or less, enslaved by their ostensibly voluntary military service. For example, they are not allowed to go ashore, and thus their wives join them aboard ship, causing a scene of immoral sex and bawdy banter that causes even the formidable Hornblower to retreat from his own gun deck.

Once at sea, Sutherland's entire purpose is to defend against French depredations, while simultaneously carrying the fight to France and Spain. A complex political situation is described, and Sutherland operates along a portion of the Spanish coast that is occupied by Italian forces under French command. Much of the first half of the novel, and the entire second half of the novel, deal with Hornblower's military attacks and tactics directed against a variety of French targets. The novel recounts a successful defense against a French sortie aimed at British mercantile shipping and additionally details a series of five raids conducted by Hornblower. One of these in particular evokes the theme of total war—Hornblower and a few men make an amphibious attack against a French private vessel and burn it, while the owners stand watching from the shore. Finally, the novel concludes with an all-out and desperate attack by Sutherland against an entire French squadron. Overwhelmed and out gunned, Sutherland nevertheless performs admirably and Hornblower only surrenders after the entire French squadron has suffered catastrophic damage. Indeed, the theme of warfare runs throughout the novel as the dominant unifying theme.

Style

Point of View

The novel is told from the third-person, limited, point of view. The narrator is reliable, entirely effaced and unnamed. Hornblower, the main character, is the protagonist and central figure in all the scenes in the novel. The narrator frequently divulges frequent internal thoughts of the protagonist. The majority of the story is told through action and dialogue; revealed thoughts are frequent but generally are used for characterization rather than plot development. For example, Hornblower is often portrayed in an agony of self-critical and nervous thought. The narrator also occasionally reveals the internal thoughts and opinions of minor characters. This style deviates somewhat from the norm for the series of novels but does not harm the narrative in any way. Indeed, the occasional internal thoughts of Bush or other officers are enlightening.

The third-person point of view allows Hornblower to be presented in a highly-sympathetic manner. For example, the narrative structure portrays Hornblower's isolated or affected mannerisms as deliberate rather than haughty. Hornblower thus comes across as a heroic figure rather than a marionette. The narrative also allows portrayal of Hornblower's life situations as difficult but not entirely pathetic. The sole exception to this is in Hornblower's seeming inability to find happiness without constant internal turmoil. In this way, the choice of narrative view is appropriate and successful. Indeed, the structure of the novel and the method of plot development nearly require the use of a third-person point of view. Finally, the frequent appearance of minor characters is allowed through the point of view selected; it is carried throughout all of the novels of the series and is accessible and successful.

Setting

The novel features two principle settings. The first and most important setting is well developed and is aboard ship of H.M.S. Sutherland, an English third-rate ship-of-the-line with 74 guns. The ship sails fairly well, fights well, and is generally responsive, though her design for shallow draft causes her to make considerable leeway (unintentional drift). Overall, the ship is of typical construction of the time, with two decks, quarterdeck, stern captain's cabin, and so forth. Dutch-built and English-remodeled, she has some external features that Hornblower considers undesirable and ugly; however, she retains a large stern gallery of which Hornblower is particularly fond. She has three ship-rigged masts and is capable of sailing in fairly heavy seas; for example, she tows Leighton's flagship from danger during foul weather. Her compliment is about 650 seamen and about 100 marines. The ship was initially manned by the entire crew of Lydia, and thus she has an unusually competent core crew. Hornblower's egalitarian leadership and constant drills form the numerous new recruits into a functioning and disciplined unit.

Alongside Sutherland, the novel contains diffuse secondary settings, composed of various harbors, fortresses and landscapes around the coast of Spain and France. Most of these locales are not described in significant detail and are developed only as transient settings for plot development. For example, the location where Hornblower goes ashore to burn a merchant vessel is described thoroughly in those matters that apply directly to plot development, but is otherwise not described. As these secondary settings generally refer to historical locations, their development relies heavily upon facts obtained from reality; that is, reference to an atlas can resolve the actual locations of most events described in the narrative.

Language and Meaning

The novel's language is generally simple and accessible. Standard punctuation is used to indicate dialogue and interior thoughts and descriptive text are easily distinguished. Most of the places, some of the objects, and even some of the events referenced in the narrative are identifiable as real geographical locations, historical objects or events. It is notable that the novel was originally written and published in England and uses standard English spelling styles, which may be somewhat unfamiliar to American readers, though they pose no problems of meaning. Occasional words are given in a foreign language—nearly always in French or Spanish. These, too, present no particular barrier to comprehension as they are brief and their meaning is easily inferred from the context.

The novel becomes linguistically complex in two primary respects. First, when dealing with nautical events, a somewhat complicated, specialized language is used, which includes references to various parts of sailing craft and sailing techniques that may not be particularly familiar to modern readers. This technical language is accurate and interesting, and a reference to a general sailing encyclopedia will assist in a careful reading and complete understanding of the text. Second, the novel makes frequent reference to various events that occur prior to the novel's opening—this is a standard construction technique and in no way detracts from the novel's readability. Nearly all these events, of course, occurred in a prior volume of the series, of which this novel is the sixth.

Structure

The 323-page novel is divided into twenty chapters. The events of the novel are tightly focused on Horatio Hornblower, the protagonist. The narrative is presented in strictly chronological order with each chapter's events occurring after the events in the previous chapter and before the events in the subsequent chapter. Of course, references to previous events occur with frequency and characters from time to time think about future events. Such deviations from the principle time line are minor and are clearly identifiable as such. Thus, the novel's principle time line is accessible and easily followed. The passage of time within the novel is uneven—some paragraphs span weeks while other chapters are devoted to the activities of a single evening.

The novel is part of a series of novels dealing with the same characters and similar themes. The novel is chronologically the sixth book in a series of ten completed novels, but was the second-written, and along with the other volumes is an example of a roman-fleuve, or novel sequence. Many of the principle characters presented in the novel, therefore, are recurring characters with backgrounds and histories lightly re-developed in subsequent novels. This process, while apparent, does not detract from the narrative.

The structure is further complicated by adherence to historical events. In broad terms, events in the novel are fictional or fictionalized events, which could have occurred, or did occur, in the period of time used as the novel's setting; namely, the Napoleonic war between England and France during 1810. Based on textual statements and links to historic events, the novel can be accurately placed as having transpired between May and October, 1810. Thus, the novel's language, technology, politics, geography, et cetera, are all based upon historically-accurate representations. Some of the political situations discussed no longer exist and may be unfamiliar to modern readers.

Quotes

"'Aye aye, sir,' said Bush, philosophically.
Hornblower was the only captain he had ever heard of who bothered his head about the use of starters. Starters were as much part of navy life as bad food and eighteen inches per hammock and peril at sea. Bush could never understand Hornblower's discliplinary methods. He had been positively horrified when he had heard his captain's public admission that he too had baths under the washdeck pump—it seemed madness for a captain to allow his men to guess that they were of the same flesh as his. But two years under Hornblower's command had taught him that Hornblower's strange ways sometimes attained surprising results. He was ready to obey him, loyally though blindly, resigned and yet admiring." (p. 21)

"He felt that no price would be too great t pay at the moment to be able to slip away to the solitude of his ship. But certainly he could not do that; the hour would make such a thing odd and the full dress uniform he wore would make it preposterous.
'Not ready for sleep?' It was so like Maria to repeat his words. 'How strange, after this tiring evening! Did you eat too much roast duck?'
'No,' said Hornblower. It was hopeless to try to explain a too rapidly working mind to Maria, hopeless to try to escape. Any attempt to do so would only hurt her feelings, and he knew by experience he could never make himself do that. With a sigh he began to unbuckle his sword.
'You have only to compose yourself in bed and you will sleep,' said Maria, from her own constant experience. 'We have few enough nights together left to us now, darling.'" (pp. 42-43)

"'Very good,' he growled, and busied himself with his papers.
'Yes, sir,' said the boy, after a moment's hesitation, withdrawing.
'Mr. Longley!' roared Hornblower.
The child's face, more terrified than ever, reappeared round the door.
'Come inside, boy,' said Hornblower, testily. 'Come in and stand still. What was it you said last?'
'Er—sir—I said—Mr. Bush—'
'No, nothing of the sort. What was it you said last?'
The child's face wrinkled into the extreme of puzzlement, and then cleared as he realized the point of the question.
'I said, 'Yes, sir,' he piped.
'And what ought you to have said?'
'Aye aye, sir.'
'Right. Very good.'
'Aye aye, sir.'" (p. 61)

"Hornblower turned his attention to the flagship and the convoy; he could not bear the

sight of frightened men being hounded up the rigging by petty officers with ropes' ends. It was necessary, he knew. The navy did not—of necessity could not—admit the existence of the sentences 'I cannot' and 'I am afraid.' No exceptions could be made, and this was the right moment to grain it into men who had never known compulsion before that every order must be obeyed. If his officers were to start with leniency, leniency would always be expected, and leniency, in a service which might at any moment demand of a man the willing sacrifice of his life, could only be employed in a disciplined crew which had had time to acquire understanding. But Hornblower knew, and sympathized with, the sick terror of a man driven up to the masthead of a ship of the line when previously he had never been higher than the top of a haystack. It was a pitiless, cruel service.
'Peace'll be signed,' grumbled Bush to Crystal, the master, 'before we make sailors out of these clodhoppers.'" (pp. 68-69)

And that was that, thought Hornblower, replacing the speaking trumpet. A rare beginning to a voyage. The traverse board showed that the Sutherland had held steadily on her course through the night and the deck log on the slate showed speeds of eight and nine knots. Before long Ushant should be in sight in this clear weather; he had done all his duty in keeping the Indiamen under his eye, on their course, and under canvas conformable with the weather. He only wished that the queasiness of his stomach would permit him to e quite confident about it, for the gloomy depression of seasickness filled him with foreboding. If a victim had to be found, it would be he, he felt sure. He gauged the strength of the wind and decided that it would be inadvisable to set more sail in the hope of overtaking the rest of the convoy. And with that, having reached the satisfactory conclusion that he could do nothing to avert blame if blame were coming to him, he felt more cheerful. Life at sea had taught him to accept the inevitable philosophically. (p. 78)

"'Stop your vents!' shouted Gerard, and then his voice went up into a scream of excitement. 'There it goes! Well done, men!'
The big mainmast of the lugger, with the mainsail and topmast and shrouds and all, was leaning over to one side. It seemed to hang there naturally, for a whole breathing space, before it fell with a sudden swoop. Even then a single shot fired from her aftermost gun proclaimed the Frenchman's defiance. Hornblower turned back to the helmsman to give the orders that would take the Sutherland within pistol shot and complete the little ship's destruction. He was aflame with excitement. Just in time he remembered his duty; he was granting the other lugger time to get in among the convoy, and every second was of value. He noted his excitement as a curious and interesting phenomenon, while his orders brought the Sutherland round on the other tack. As she squared away a long shout of defiance rose from the lugger, lying rolling madly in the heavy sea, her black hull resembling some crippled water beetle. Someone was waving a tricolour flag from the deck.
'Good-bye, Mongseer Crapaud,' said Bush. 'You've a long day's work ahead of you before you see Brest again.'" (pp. 92-93)

"He heard Gerard's voice saying 'What the devil—?' come clearly over the water to him,

apparently Gerard had just detected the nakedness of everyone in the approaching boat. The pipes had twittered to call the watch's attention to the arrival of the ship's captain. He would have to come in naked through the entry port, receiving the salutes of the officers and marines, but keyed up as he was he gave no thought to his dignity. He ran up to the deck with his sword hanging from his naked waist—it was an ordeal which could not be avoided, and he had learned in twenty years in the navy to accept the inevitable without lamentation. The faces of the side boys and of the marines were wooden in their effort not to smile, but Hornblower did not care. The black pall of smoke over the land marked an achievement any man might be proud of. He stayed naked on the deck until he had given Bush the order to put the ship about which would take the Sutherland southward again in search of fresh adventure. The wind would just serve for a southwesterly course, and he was not going to waste a minute of a favourable wind." (p. 175)

"Now that he knew what had happened there was no advantage to be gained from dwelling on Villena's misfortunes; indeed it was better to hearten him up, as he would be more useful that way.
'Defeat,' said Hornblower, 'is a misfortune which every fighting man encounters sooner or later. Let us hope we shall gain our revenge for yesterday today.'
'There is more than yesterday to be revenged,' said Villena.
He put his hand in the breast of his tunic and brought out a folded wad of paper; unfolded it was a printed poster, which he handed over to Hornblower who glanced at it and took in as much of the sense as a brief perusal of the Catalan in which it was printed permitted. It began, 'We, Luciano Gaetano Pino, Knight of the Legion of Honour, Knight of the Order of the Iron Crown of Lombardy, General of Division, commanding the forces of His Imperial and Royal Majesty Napoleon, Emperor of the French and King of Italy in the district of Gerona hereby decree—' There were numbered paragraphs after that, dealing with all the offences anyone could imagine against His Imperial and Royal Majesty. And each paragraph ended—Hornblower ran his eye down them—'will be shot;' 'penalty of death;' 'will be hanged;' 'will be burned'—it was a momentary relief to discover that this last referred to villages sheltering rebels.
'They have burned every village in the uplands,' said Villena. 'The road from Figueras to Gerona—ten leagues long, sir—is lined with gallows, and upon every gallows is a corpse.'
'Horrible!' said Hornblower, but he did not encourage the conversation. He fancied that if any Spaniard began to talk about the woes of Spain he would never stop. 'And this Pino is marching back along the coast road, you say?' (pp. 184-185)

"He could take the Sutherland much closer in here when he wanted to. But at present it was better to stay out of half gunshot. His ship would not appear nearly as menacing to the enemy at that distance. Hornblower's mind was hard at work analyzing the reactions of the enemy to the appearance of the Sutherland—friendly hat-waving by the cavalry of the advanced guard, now opposite him, gave him valuable additional data. Pino and his men had never yet been cannonaded from the sea, and had had no experience so far of the destructive effect of a ship's heavy broadside against a suitable target. The graceful two-decker, with her pyramids of white sails, would be something outside their

experience. Put an army in the field against them, and they could estimate its potentialities instantly, but they had never encountered ships before. His reading told him that Bonaparte's generals tended to be careless of the lives of their men; and any steps taken to avoid the Sutherland's fire would involve grave inconvenience—marching back to Malgret to take the inland road, or crossing the pathless hills to it direct. Hornblower guessed that Pino, somewhere back in that long column and studying the Sutherland through his glass, would make up his mind to chance the Sutherland's fire and would march on hoping to get through without serious loss. Pino would be disappointed, thought Hornblower." (pp. 189-190)

"'They're going about again, by God!' said Gerard, suddenly.
Wordless, they watched the four French ships come up into the wind, and come over onto the other tack. Then they came round, farther and farther still, until in all four ships their three masts were in line; every one of them was heading straight for the Sutherland.
'Ha—h'm,' said Hornblower, watching his fate bearing down upon him; and again, 'Ha—h'm.'
The French lookouts must have glimpsed Leighton's mastheads. With Rosas Bay six miles under his lee and Barcelona a hundred miles almost to windward the French admiral could have taken little time to reach a decision in face of those strange sails on the horizon. He was dashing instantly for shelter; the single ship of the line which lay directly in his path must be destroyed if she could not be evaded." (p. 305)

"Longley came sliding down the backstay, the whole height from topmast head to the deck, his face white with excitement.
'Vincent sent me sir, Cassandra's signaling, and he thinks it's 'Flag to Sutherland, No. 21.' Twenty one's 'Engage the enemy,' sir. But it's hard to read the flags.'
"Very good. Acknowledge."
So Leighton at least had the moral courage to assume the responsibility for sending one ship against four. In that respect he was worthy of being Lady Barbara's husband.
'Mr. Bush,' he said. 'We've a quarter of an hour. See that the men get a bit to eat in that time.'
'Aye aye, sir.' (p. 306)

"'Here,' he said, giving it to Crystal and Howell. 'Hang that over the side.'
It was the tricolour flag he had had made to deceive the batteries at Llanza. At sight of it the men in the gunboats bent to their oars to propel their craft alongside, while Hornblower stood with the sun shining on his bare head waiting for them. They would take his sword of honour away from him. And the other sword of honour was still in pawn to Duddingstone the ship chandler, and he would never be able to redeem it now, with his career wrecked. And the shattered hull of the Sutherland would be towed in triumph under the guns of Rosas—how long would it be before the Mediterranean fleet came down to avenge her, to retake her from her captors, or burn her in one vast pyre along with her shattered conquerors? And Maria was going to bear him a child, whom he would never see during all the years of his captivity. And Lady Barbara would read of

his capture in the newspapers—what would she think of his surrendering? But the sun was hot on his head, and he was very weary." The End" (pp. 322-323)

Topics for Discussion

Hornblower attends the Leighton's dinner party in resplendent clothing, ruefully noting only that his shoe buckles are brass instead of solid gold. Maria attends dressed in a shapeless and frumpy gown of much use. How does this discrepancy reflect upon Hornblower's character? Discuss.

Hornblower uses his own money to recruit men for Sutherland. His officers go around to various assizes to gain 'volunteers.' Finally, hundreds of Englishmen are simply pressed into service—that is, forced to enlist. Discuss how this method of assembling a crew could influence the crew's morale and discipline.

After escorting merchant ships beyond the threat of French naval forces, Hornblower basically robs the merchant ships of much of their crew. His rationale is sound, and he desperately needs the men aboard Sutherland. But pressing men out of merchant ships in such a manner was considered illegal. In the final analysis, did Hornblower make the right choice?

During an early encounter with a French brig, Hornblower discovers the private French recognition signal. He later uses this, along with a French flag, to trick a fortress into holding fire. Do you consider this type of "signals intelligence" to be an honorable and legitimate ruse de guerre? Why or why not?

After reading the novel, do you envy the life of a common sailor in the Royal Navy during the Napoleonic wars? Why or why not? Would you rather be a seaman aboard Sutherland or Walmer Castle? Why?

Hornblower uses a fairly egalitarian method of leadership to inspire his men. For example, he shuns corporal punishment and sometimes explains his rationale to common seamen. Bush views Hornblower's predilections as at best bizarre and at worst horrifying, even as he admits Hornblower achieves results. Imagine that Bush, instead of Hornblower, commanded Sutherland. How might the novel's outcome have been different?

What characteristics of Hornblower do you admire? What characteristics do you find less than admirable? Why do you think Hornblower is such an enduring character in the popular imagination?

Rear Admiral Leighton orders Hornblower to attack an entire French squadron with a single English ship-of-the-line. From the first shots of the engagement, Hornblower knows Sutherland will be destroyed—yet he prosecutes the attack vigorously. Was Leighton's order militarily sound? Or was he influenced by petty jealousy caused by Hornblower and Barbara's mutual infatuation?

The novel was originally published in 1938, only months before England descended into six years of the horror and destruction of World War II, and it enjoyed an enthusiastic reception from the reading public. Do you think the public's acceptance of a novel dealing with victorious English feats of arms from a heroic and historic past would have been so great during a time of peace?