

A Test of Wills Study Guide

A Test of Wills by Caroline and Charles Todd

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Contents

A Test of Wills Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	3
Chapters 1-2.....	5
Chapters 3-4.....	8
Chapters 5-6.....	11
Chapters 7-8.....	14
Chapters 9-10.....	17
Chapters 11-12.....	20
Chapters 13-14.....	22
Chapters 15-16.....	25
Chapters 17-18.....	27
Chapters 19-20.....	30
Characters.....	33
Objects/Places.....	39
Themes.....	41
Style.....	43
Quotes.....	45
Topics for Discussion.....	47



Plot Summary

In the summer of 1919, Inspector Ian Rutledge of Scotland Yard is desperate to get his old life back after four years of service in the trenches of World War I. When he is assigned to a case in a small English village, he jumps at the chance to see if he still has what it takes to solve a murder, but this case has complications that could end his career and send him back to an asylum a broken man.

Colonel Charles Harris, a soldier and a landowner in Warwickshire is killed by a shotgun blast to the face. The narrator tells us he dies hard and angry with a bellow of objection on his lips. After conducting the preliminary investigation, the local Constabulary turns to Scotland Yard for assistance. They have encountered a piece of evidence, given by a shell shocked former soldier, that implicates war-hero and Royal favorite Captain Mark Wilton. Ian Rutledge arrives on the scene and begins gathering evidence. Initially, it appears that Colonel Harris had no enemies among the people of Upper Streetham, and no one can imagine who would have wanted to kill him.

Ian questions Wilton, Lettice Wood, who is Harris's ward and Wilton's fiancée, a troublemaker named Mavers, and an ostracized artist named Catherine Tarrant. All have a story to tell, but none offer the complete one. It is not until Rutledge is able to talk to the shell shocked Hickam, that he gets a true breakthrough on the case. Meanwhile, Rutledge's internal demon, named Hamish McLeod, comments disparagingly on every step Rutledge takes. Hamish is a voice in Rutledge's head, a hold over from a horrific incident during the war that Rutledge barely survived. Hamish speaks up regularly and Rutledge often wonders if anyone else can hear him, even though he knows they cannot. In any case, Rutledge persists on through near despair at his inability to call on his former skills to solve the case.

Rutledge circles ever closer to an answer, but loses confidence because he is building a case that doesn't seem to fit. He finds a child's doll in the meadow where Harris died. The doll ends up being a key to the case since the little girl it belongs to is locked in a waking nightmare, having seen the headless corpse on its horse, and been convinced it was her father. With the facts in mind, and all signs pointing to the heroic Captain Wilton, Rutledge makes one last attempt to break through Lettice Wood's grief. She finally reveals that she and Colonel Harris were lovers, new lovers at that. She'd only had one night with him, but they had told Wilton that her engagement to him was over.

When the principals all gather for the funeral, Rutledge finally pieces together the part that is missing and is nearly too late to save Colonel Harris's steward, Royston, from an ax-wielding crazy woman. Colonel Harris was, in fact, mistakenly shot in the place of his steward Royston, who'd killed a child twenty years earlier in a motor car accident. The killing of Colonel Harris was all for revenge, but had been carried out by a mad woman on the wrong target.

Finally all the pieces fit and Rutledge's career is saved. He has gained confidence with this success, but Hamish still haunts him and Bowles has it in for him. Rutledge decides he must persevere, and he doesn't believe in ghosts.



Chapters 1-2

Chapters 1-2 Summary

The book begins, as all good mysteries do, with a murder. Colonel Charles Harris is out riding over his land one morning when he's hit in the face by a shotgun blast. He dies hard, the narrator tells the reader, with a cry of angry rage.

Meanwhile, in London at Scotland Yard, the headquarters of the British police, a man named Bowles looks over a letter written in a girlish, childish hand and contemplates the downfall of a rival detective, Inspector Ian Rutledge. Colonel Harris's case comes across Bowles desk and he maliciously sends it to Ian Rutledge, knowing the case's controversial issues might reflect badly on Rutledge.

With the preliminaries in place, the author introduces the main character, Inspector Ian Rutledge. He is a formerly brilliant police investigator for Scotland Yard who has returned damaged in body and spirit from World War I.

Bowles keeps his envious resentment of the more clever, capable, and better-educated Rutledge to himself when he assigns him the Harris case. Rutledge starts on the case immediately, driving that evening to the town in Warwickshire, England where the murder took place. As he drives, the reader gets a clearer picture of Ian's demons, specifically the presence of Hamish McLeod. Rutledge hears the dead corporal's voice in his head as a living person, even though he knows that McLeod is long dead, killed in the war. The Harris case immediately becomes more complex as the author details Ian's troubled re-entry into society after serving in the trenches.

Rutledge arrives in Upper Streetham, a typical English village, and goes immediately to the Inn. The nephew of the innkeeper, a wounded soldier named Redfern, shows Rutledge to his room as the rain pounds away outside.

The next morning, Rutledge gets right to his investigation. He visits the local police station and finds that the lead policeman, Inspector Forrest is out on another case, but that Sergeant Davies has been assigned to assist Rutledge in his investigation. They go through a list of possible suspects and people to question who have had involvement with the murdered man. The most controversial witness, and the key to the case, is a shell-shocked, drunken wreck of a man named Daniel Hickam. It had been Hickam's testimony on the day of the murder that had caused Scotland Yard to be called in because Hickam's statement specifically points to war hero Captain Mark Wilton, and puts him in conflict with the victim, Colonel Harris.

In Chapter 2, Sergeant Davies continues to detail Hickam's testimony even while he disparages Hickam for having been a spineless coward in the war. In contrast, the person that Hickam's testimony casts doubt on is a famous wartime pilot, Captain Mark Wilton. Wilton is a friend of the Prince of Wales and received the Victoria Cross—the



highest military honor in Britain—for his heroism in battle. Not only that, Captain Wilton is the fiancée of Colonel Harris's ward, Lettice Wood. Accusing Wilton of murder will be a tricky business with his friends in high places, and close connection to the deceased. Rutledge struggles with the possibility that he's been assigned to this case by someone who knows of his condition.

Rutledge decides that the true situation with Hickam had not been known by Scotland Yard, and in any case, Rutledge cannot quit now. For him, completing this case is a matter of personal, not to mention professional survival.

He decides his first task must be to go out to Mallows, which is the name of Colonel Harris's country estate, to question the Colonel's ward, steward, and servants. The estate is well run, and the manor house particularly lovely in its country setting. Rutledge asks to see Miss Lettice Wood. The Colonel had become her guardian many years ago upon the death of both her parents.

After a lengthy wait, Miss Wood agrees to see Inspector Rutledge and Sergeant Davies. She receives them in a darkened room and it soon becomes clear that she is grief stricken and has probably been given a sedative to help her through her shock. Even with that in mind, however, Rutledge finds something off about her manner that alerts him.

As he asks her about her guardian, he hashes out her responses, which include caution regarding her fiancé, Mark Wilton. She outright denies the possibility that Charles had enemies whowould want him dead. "Charles had no enemies," she says. She is obfuscating but Rutledge cannot pin down why.

The author switches point of view briefly in the middle of the chapter to give the reader a taste of Lettice Wood's state of mind. She is grieving, impatient, and unwilling to bare her soul to the cold inspector from London.

After his interview with Lettice, Rutledge questions Harris's servants, particularly the butler, Johnston, and the maid, Mary Satterthwaite. The servants are aware of an argument between Colonel Harris and Captain Wilton that occurred the night before the murder. It was enough of an argument that Wilton stalked out of the house and slammed the door, and the Colonel threw his glass at the closed door behind him.

As he drives back to the village, Rutledge thinks over the testimony, but finds that Lettice Wood has put him in mind of his own courage-less fiancée, Jean, who called it quits with Rutledge upon his return from war. He knew, as she gracefully withdrew from their engagement, that she not only was no longer in love with him, she was afraid of him.

Chapters 1-2 Analysis

The introduction of the murder and the investigator are common elements in the first chapter of a mystery story. What makes these elements more compelling in *A Test of*



Wills is that Charles Todd provides the victim's state of mind at the time of death in a way that resonates with the reader. In addition, Ian Rutledge, the protagonist of the story and the mystery's sleuth, has several elements stacked against him from the beginning: a rival investigator has it in for him and he is dealing with what is now commonly termed Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome (PTSD), which manifests as a dead corporal from his war experiences. On this first case that Rutledge has taken on since returning from war, nothing is straightforward. While unsure of his ability to return to his former occupation as an investigator, he gets the information that a key witness is a man much like he was just months ago. A soldier locked in the fearful prison of his own mind, unable to forget the horrors of what he has done and seen.

Appalled at his inability to defend the hapless Hickam against the Sergeant's accusations of cowardice, Rutledge hides his fear that his secret shame, so similar to Hickam's, will be found out. He focuses on the list of witnesses and begins his methodical investigation, but no matter how methodical he tries to be, both the details of the case and the lurking presence of Hamish McLeod in his mind cause him to second guess his instincts.

The author also uses a shifting point of view to capture the emotional state of Lettice Wood and even Sergeant Davies. This is in keeping with the agreement of a mystery author and a mystery reader: the reader expects that all of the clues be present so he or she can figure out who the killer is along with the sleuth. If the point of view didn't shift, the reader would not have access to tiny pieces of information that point toward the killer.



Chapters 3-4

Chapters 3-4 Summary

In Chapter 3, Rutledge goes to see Mrs. Sally Davenant, who is Captain Mark Wilton's cousin. Wilton lives at her house, one of the manor houses near the village of Upper Streetham. Rutledge asks her about Wilton's state of mind, but notices that she holds herself aloof in her responses. "Where does Wilton go when he is out walking?" he asks. "Around," she answers. "What about the quarrel with Colonel Harris?" he asks. "I can't imagine why they would have quarreled," she responds.

She goes on to say, "I can't imagine why anyone would have wanted to kill Charles Harris. He was a thoroughly nice man."

In talking to Mrs. Davenant, it occurs to Rutledge to wonder why Lettice Wood had not yet asked for Mark Wilton. He is her fiancé; surely she would want him close to comfort her in her grief.

Captain Wilton himself walks in as Rutledge is talking to Mrs. Davenant. He is the epitome of a war poster for heroes: handsome, upright, and with a certain expression in his face that recalls daring deeds. Rutledge begins his questioning of the Captain by asking him about meeting Colonel Harris in the lane. His answer is an unequivocal no, which goes against Hickam's testimony that he saw the Colonel and the Captain there discussing something in a heated way.

Rutledge finds a point of sympathy with the war hero when Wilton mentions that he came to the area because he wanted to get away from the killing. Flying is no longer a pleasure to him, and he wanted to get away from being drawn into the post-war plans for inventing ever more efficient killing machines.

Wilton has nothing bad to say about Colonel Harris, but even though Rutledge digs for a more rounded picture of the dead man, Wilton gives him very little to go on. The questioning stalls for a moment until Rutledge asks Wilton to take him through the morning of the murder. Wilton details his walk, the route he took, that he met a farmer's child who had lost her doll, and he saw Helena Sommers out searching for birds with her field glasses.

When he asks about Wilton's rivals for Lettice, Wilton laughs. The author switches briefly to Wilton's thoughts. It is clear that he is hiding something, and that he loves Lettice Wood very much.

The interview concludes and, on the way out, Mrs. Davenant mentions Mavericks, a village malcontent who had a well-known chip on his shoulder about Colonel Harris. Rutledge makes a mental note.



He and Sergeant Davies next take a look around the village for Hickam, but meet up with Laurance Royston, Colonel Harris's man of business, instead. They go back to the Inn to go over the day of the murder. Royston is the one who saw Colonel Harris's horse come back riderless, and who found the gruesome, headless body in the meadow. He mentions Colonel Harris's will, which he doesn't suspect is out of the ordinary. Denying Captain Wilton as a killer, Royston too mentions Mavericks as a prime suspect.

Having finished for the moment with Royston, Rutledge and Sergeant Davies find Hickam standing in the middle of the village square directing imaginary wartime troop traffic. Through Hickam's bizarre pantomime and Rutledge's own experience, he can see exactly what Hickam is seeing in his tortured waking nightmare: the crossroad in France, the movement of soldiers and equipment, the shelling and explosions. An offhand disparaging comment by Sergeant Davies about the poor accursed soul makes Hamish McLeod speak up in Rutledge's head with enough emotion that Rutledge replies, "I'll see us both dead first."

In Chapter 4, Rutledge and Davies defer questioning Hickam until they can find him more in his right mind. Rutledge goes to see Dr. Warren, who is the village physician. The Doctor admits that he gave Lettice Wood some powerful sedatives to calm her after the murder. She wanted to see the body, but the doctor knew it was a headless mess. He finally had to tell her that and she went into hysterics. He gave her a powder to calm her and help her through her grief.

Rutledge then takes Davies around town and onto the track that Captain Wilton walked the morning of the murder. He needs to get the lay of the land, and how the village connects to the meadow where the body was found. He and Davies talk about the body and that it was found face down. This bit of information invites speculation that the killer turned the body over, because a man shot from the front in the face would fall on his back. They also have no murder weapon.

They walk further along the track, coming upon Helena Sommers. She lives in a little cottage in the countryside that belongs to one of the other local large landowners, the Haldanes. She admits to seeing Captain Wilson that morning but adds little to the case in terms of evidence.

Rutledge reflects that he'd actually seen Colonel Harris in action during the war, inspiring tired troops to take a position one more time. He'd had a true professional soldier's way with them. His speculations lead him to doubt himself because Rutledge is having such a difficult time entering into the mind-set of the murdered man. This was a technique he'd often used before the war to solve a case, and he feels as if it's failing him now. He questions his ability to get this case resolved. Harris was such a "proper English gentleman," but what does that mean?

At the end of the chapter, Dr. Warren bursts in with the news that the town is ready to lynch troublemaker Mavericks.



Chapters 3-4 Analysis

Mrs. Davenant reflects Rutledge's instincts about Lettice Wood as the sleuth finds more detached obfuscation in Mark Wilton's cousin. There is something there but he is either not skilled enough to pull it out of Sally Davenant, or she has too much at stake to reveal it. He also encounters over and over the sentiment that becomes the most frustrating aspect of this case: he can't find anyone who will admit that there is a soul around who has any reason to kill Colonel Harris. A man is dead, someone killed him, but no one will much speculate on how that happened, or why. The irony is that Colonel Harris, no matter what a nice man he was at home, was a very successful Army officer. Harris, himself, had to have been extremely good at killing. And Ian Rutledge knows this. He also knows that Hamish McLeod is not real, that he exists only in Rutledge's mind, but at times his voice rings so true and so appropriately to the current issues that Ian imagines everyone can hear him. He knows and fears that he skirts the edge of madness.

Rutledge battles self-doubt and Hamish's gleeful observations on the case. The more he questions the villagers about the murdered man, the farther he gets from any true, balanced picture of the man. Harris was apparently a paragon of virtues. So why is he dead? The author draws subtle ironic comparisons between the utter chaos and destruction of war—as reflected in the thoughts of Rutledge and the actions of Hickham—and the peaceful scenes of English village life. Facing the confusion of the people closest to Harris, Rutledge debates whether they are hiding something or they are honestly stymied by Harris's violent death.



Chapters 5-6

Chapters 5-6 Summary

In Chapter 5, Rutledge and Davies run out of the Inn to a scene of near riot in the village square. Mavericks, an unpleasant, feral-looking fellow, is down in the dirt. Several of the village men have murder in their eye. Mavericks remains defiant, even as the villagers threaten him. Rutledge bursts into the fray, gathering up Mavericks and dispersing the crowd. Sergeant Davies and Dr. Warren help calm the villagers.

They take Mavericks to Dr. Warren's clinic. Dr. Warren reports he was lecturing the crowd on Bolshevik sentiments concerning peasants and oppressors when he tossed out one insult too many regarding Colonel Harris and they turned on him. Mavericks is unrepentant.

It comes out here, too, however that Colonel Harris's virtues are well-regarded in Upper Streetham. He supported those villagers who sent sons and brothers to the war. Mavericks spews more of his venom and Rutledge sends him home.

He meets up, then, with Catherine Tarrant. She was engaged to Captain Wilton before the war, though they broke it off later. She has come to plead his case with the London inspector. She shares with Rutledge her opinion that Captain Wilton could not have been the murderer.

He asks for background on their previous courtship, and she offers their history, though she claims she is no longer in love with the man.

The author switches to Catherine Tarrant's thoughts in the narrative, showing her fear that in defending Mark Wilton, she has perhaps muddied the case instead. She plots to find out who has provided evidence against Wilton, and goes off on her bicycle to find Inspector Forrest.

Rutledge then leaves the Inn to talk to Mavericks. They verbally joust about oppression and working men. Mavericks tells his story while Rutledge looks around the shabby cottage where he lives. When Rutledge probes into Maver's history with his questioning, Mavericks asks Davies to leave so he can share with the London inspector without Davies standing in judgment. It is clear that Mavericks feels the anger of jealousy toward Colonel Harris. Mavericks's older brother died in the Boer War; then his sister drowned herself in the pond. Mavericks never forgave Harris for dragging him back from joining the Army and forcing him to stay home with Mavericks's heartbroken mother. Harris labeled him a troublemaker and so that's what he became, a thorn in Harris's side.

While Mavericks tells his story, Rutledge continues to look around the cottage for clues, but it is Hamish who points out to Rutledge that there is a shotgun standing in the corner of the room.



In Chapter 6, from Catherine Tarrant's point of view the reader sees her looking for Daniel Hickam in the village. She thinks about the time she asked one of the local ladies of the evening to model for a painting Catherine wanted to do. She was turned down flat. The woman had told her, "I'd rather starve than take money from the likes of you."

Returning to Rutledge's point of view in Mavers's house, he finds out that the shotgun was left to Mavers in Hugh Davenant's will. Rutledge takes the gun with him after signing a receipt for it.

Rutledge finally gets to talk to the local head policeman, Inspector Forrest. They talk about Mavers and the shotgun. Forrest produces a list of people who claim to have seen Mavers making his usual speech in the village square on the Monday morning of the murder.

They turn to Hickam's evidence. Forrest is defensive about Hickam's statement, but can't see why or how Wilton could have killed Harris. They speculate whether Colonel Harris was the intended victim, but come to no real conclusions.

Later, as Rutledge sits down to his dinner, the vicar, Carfield, comes to talk to him. He has the appearance of an actor behind his bland clerical collar. Rutledge asks Carfield about Lettice Wood, knowing that the vicar had courted her for a time. Carfield speaks of Colonel Harris's aptitude for war, comparing it to his prowess at the strategic game of chess. Carfield's evaluation of Captain Wilton is more evasive, and he startles Rutledge with his hard, cold eyes. It becomes clear to Rutledge that Carfield hated the two men.

After Carfield departs, Rutledge goes over his case notes and thinks about why he has been unable to access any emotions of the principle actors in this case. It is a skill he'd relied on many times in his pre-war career, but again he fears he has lost the knack for it.

He goes out walking to clear his head and meets up with Hickam. The man's incoherent ramblings about the war push Rutledge to anger. He fears provoking Hamish, who is hovering just at the edge of Rutledge's consciousness. Rutledge gives Hickam a few coins to buy himself a drink and then flees back to the Inn. He regains control of himself, but returns to his earlier thought. The murder of Charles Harris had been angry, passionate, and vengeful. Where had all that passion disappeared to?

Chapters 5-6 Analysis

The author takes quite a bit of time in each interview of each witness to explain to the reader Rutledge's emotional response to the case and to the people of Upper Streetham. Rutledge shows himself to be sensitive, observant, a good listener, insightful, and courageous, but his own self-image does not reveal any of these qualities. His war experiences have stripped him of self-confidence, though he retains enough skill to question the suspects and witnesses thoroughly. He doubts his abilities, but the reader gains confidence in them as the story progresses.



The scene in Catherine Tarrant's point of view allows the reader to see that there is more to this village than what the inhabitants are showing to the Inspector from London. Catherine can't get a lady of ill repute to pose for her; why? Meanwhile, the vicar manages to paint a more well-rounded portrait of the murder victim, through his hatred for these men of privilege, Wilton and Harris. Harris, according to Carfield, was a man who was good at war-making. And it is doubtful that such a man would have no enemies at all. However, just when Rutledge seems to be closer to a solution to the murder, his feelings toward the witness, Hickam, surface to torture him. Hamish, the voice in his head, laughs in scorn at Rutledge's conclusions, and Rutledge seems to be back where he started.



Chapters 7-8

Chapters 7-8 Summary

In Chapter 7, the next morning Rutledge goes in search of Hickam, asking Davies where he might be. A switch to Davies's point of view lets the reader see that he is disgruntled and impatient to wrap the case up. Davies speculates whether the killer could have come from elsewhere. Rutledge reminds him that before they can accept "persons unknown" as the murderer, they must clear every suspect in Upper Streetham, including Captain Wilton. The two drive out to Helena Sommers's house so Rutledge can ask her if she noticed if Wilton was carrying anything when she saw him on the path by the meadow.

They arrive at the cottage, but have to defend themselves against a very aggressive goose. Helena Sommers is not there, but her sister Maggie answers the door. Maggie is shy and withdrawn to a painful degree. Between the goose and Maggie's ineffectual manners, Rutledge decides to depart, leaving the message with Maggie that he needs to see Helena. Rutledge contrasts the two women in his mind, pitying the feeble Maggie while admiring Helena.

Upon their return to the village, they receive a message from Dr. Warren. Rutledge rushes to the clinic to find that Hickam is extremely ill with alcohol poisoning. He has drunk enough to nearly kill himself and will not be sensible for several days, if ever. When the doctor scoffs at Hickam's ability to provide any useful information, ever, Rutledge blows up. He orders the doctor to keep Hickam there until Rutledge can question him. Even if he has to tie him to the bed.

He decides to head back out to Mallows to question Lettice Wood again. She is now more in her right mind and she greets him more normally. He notices that her eyes are two different colors and has to tamp down Hamish's grumbling comments about witches. As they talk about his progress, or lack of progress, on the case, he realizes she is fishing for information from him.

He asks about Colonel Harris's state of mind in the days before the murder. She says that he was very, very happy. When Rutledge asks why, however, she shuts down. "He just was."

He asks her about Harris's argument with Wilton, but she denies knowledge of what they discussed. Growing impatient, she asks him why he came out to see her again. He realizes he's angry but doesn't know why. Hamish pipes in with the comment that she's got the courage Rutledge's fiancée Jean lacked.

Rutledge brings up Catherine Tarrant and her testimony about Mark Wilton. Lettice's reaction is that Catherine's motives are spite, but she won't explain what she means. She hints at a lover, then backs off.



He asks her why she didn't go riding that last morning. The question takes her by surprise and she shows a strong physical reaction, like a punch in the stomach. "I thought I had all the time in the world." Through all her vagueness, Rutledge finds himself admiring Lettice Wood.

She shuts down the questioning then, and he asks to speak to her servants again. With the maid, Mary Satterthwaite, he goes over the evening and the argument with Captain Wilton. She says again that something had upset Miss Wood that night; she'd gone upstairs with a headache.

When Rutledge probes the maid about Catherine Tarrant's maid, who is related to her, she bursts out with the fact that Captain Wilton was a true gentleman, not like the German. Rutledge is surprised at this piece of news, but no further questioning will get Mary to tell him the story.

In Chapter 8, Rutledge goes to see Catherine Tarrant in her studio. He has finally connected Catherine Tarrant, resident of Upper Streetham, to C. Tarrant, renowned artist. His sister is a great admirer of C. Tarrant's work. He asks her immediately about the German. She becomes upset at people's prying and gossiping, but eventually tells the story.

During the war, the government allowed farm holders to request German prisoners of war to help with their farm work. Catherine applied for such help and, one day, a man showed up who was skilled and helpful and she fell in love with him. Toward the end of the war, Catherine asked Lettice to write to Charles to ask for his help, to intercede so that they could be married. But shortly after, it went wrong. The German, Rolf Linden, was taken away and no one would tell her where. She found out nearly a year later that he'd died of the influenza. In her grief, she blamed Lettice and then Charles, but eventually, for the sake of her sanity, she decided she would have to forgive and forget.

Touched by the story, Rutledge looks around at her studio. The paintings are virtuoso depictions of life and suffering. The emotions displayed on the canvases are harsh, unwomanly even. Hamish stirs uncomfortably in Rutledge's mind. Catherine sees him looking around and agrees that they seem to most more masculine in their execution.

He asks her if she'd thought about taking revenge for what happened, but he is convinced when she denies she could have acted in such a way. She adds that her experience with Rolf made her more accepting. When you don't have anything to lose, she says, you don't know fear.

Later, as he is returning to town he sees Laurance Royston and follows him back to Mallows to take a look at Harris's will. The wording is very straightforward, no unusual bequests. Rutledge asks Royston if he ever borrowed money from his employer. The answer is yes; when he was a young man he was in an automobile accident and borrowed the money to settle it. He eventually paid the money back but he had nightmares about the accident for many years.



At Sally Davenant's house, she and Mark Wilton discuss why he hasn't been to Mallows to talk to Lettice since the murder. He prevaricates some and then admits he's not sure of his welcome. She asks what his quarrel with Harris might have been about, but he doesn't tell her. Sally encourages him to go to Mallows soon, not only for Lettice, but for the sake of appearances.

Rutledge, on his way out from his meeting with Royston, sees Lettice again. He poses a theory that Catherine Tarrant might have shot Harris in revenge for the death of her German lover. Caught by surprise, Lettice collapses in tears. Rutledge holds her while she cries, but her violent reaction convinces him that she has no idea who killed Charles Harris.

Chapters 7-8 Analysis

Chapter 7 is all about the women in this story: Helena and Maggie Sommers, Lettice Wood, and Catherine Tarrant. While Ian Rutledge questions Lettice, he thinks about his own relationship with his former fiancée, Jean. Hamish accuses him of being drawn to Lettice, but Rutledge disagrees. It's more that he identifies with her emotional state. As with every other witness in this case, Lettice is not telling the whole truth. Rutledge wonders why, and we, as readers, wonder why as well. The suspense then draws us farther into the story. The sense that the clock is ticking gets stronger in these middle chapters, and Rutledge's frustration with the case builds as his time to figure things out grows shorter. The maid's revelation about the German picks up the pace too, and gives the impression that everything is not as it originally seemed. Still, there is little to find in the character of the murdered man, Harris, that would point toward a violent death.

Catherine Tarrant's story is heartbreaking and finally the reader has an alternative theory to account for Charles Harris's death. But it is difficult to believe that Catherine would have killed Harris now for revenge, so long after the initial discovery of the German's death. Even Lettice rejects the idea in her grief.

The conversation between Sally and her cousin Mark Wilton finally gives the reader insight into what Wilton, the main suspect, is thinking. He is devastated by the thought that Lettice doesn't want him at Mallows. He loves Lettice, but he fears that he cannot shake a murder charge.



Chapters 9-10

Chapters 9-10 Summary

In Chapter 9, Dr. Warren is out on his medical rounds and stops at Agnes Farrell's house to look in on Agnes's granddaughter, Lizzie. He doesn't know what is wrong with the child. She won't eat or sleep, or speak of what might be bothering her. In addition, when her father, Ted Pinter, comes near his daughter she becomes terrified. Ted is the groom on the Haldane's estate. The doctor is at a loss when Lizzie's mother, Meg, asks what they can do. He knows the little girl has suffered some emotional trauma but is helpless to draw her out of it.

At Mallows, Rutledge calls Lettice's maid to help calm her after her crying jag. Lettice tells a small lie to the maid to avoid connecting her tears with Catherine Tarrant. She wants to avoid gossip. Mark Wilton arrives at Mallows just as Lettice pulls herself together. Rutledge is fascinated by this reunion, and something in their mutual gaze convinces him that they are conspirators.

Then the momentary spell is broken and they step together to grasp hands like a couple long separated. Still, Rutledge gets the sense that Wilton might be afraid of rejection from Lettice. Wilton asks Rutledge about the funeral arrangements, and then the couple moves off to talk in private. But not before Rutledge overhears Lettice talking about canceling the wedding, and Wilton responding that he will take care of it. Hamish pipes up then with a vicious tear into Rutledge's ability to sort out the women in this case. Rutledge's evil conscience, Hamish, is certain that the women will protect Wilton, but no one will protect Rutledge himself when he fails.

Later, Bowles calls from Scotland Yard to check on Rutledge's progress. Rutledge tells him they've found the shotgun, but he needs more time to be sure of the killer. They have no room to make a mistake on this case. Bowles, after he hangs up with Rutledge, is satisfied that Rutledge seems to be floundering. It is exactly what he intended when he assigned this case.

Inspector Rutledge visits Dr. Warren's clinic (surgery) where Hickam still lies insensible. The nurse taking care of him is sympathetic to Hickam's suffering. Her surprising compassion, coupled with Hickam's pathetic condition, sets Hamish off in Rutledge's head. He barely makes it back to his room at the Inn before a flashback breaks over him.

Hamish McLeod, a corporal under Rutledge's command during the war, refuses to go back under fire and lead the men in an assault on a machine gunner. Rutledge has McLeod arrested and then leads the assault himself. The machine gunner is silenced but Rutledge must now keep company with the condemned McLeod while he awaits a firing squad at dawn. Hamish talks through the long night. Rutledge gives McLeod a chance to recover, but he refuses, having been broken on the endless tide of death and



killing. In the morning, Rutledge orders the firing squad. After the order to fire, Rutledge rushes to Hamish's side, only to find that the firing party's bullets did not strike true in the grey dawn. McLeod is not dead. Rutledge must shoot Hamish in the head himself with his revolver to end the dying man's misery. A German shell explodes on their position right after Rutledge pulls the trigger, burying them all in mud and dead bodies. "And afterward," he remembers, "London had given him a bloody medal—"

In Chapter 10, Rutledge walks down to the Inn's dining room for his lunch, unsure if anyone has seen his breakdown. To his relief, no one has even noted his distress. He, in turn, notices Redfern's limp is more pronounced and speaks to him briefly about his injury.

Rutledge takes the opportunity to pick Inspector Forrest's brain about the details of the case. None of the suspects seem to have an appropriate motive, means, and opportunity according to Forrest. When asked, Forrest speculates that it was the vicar who revealed Catherine Tarrant's love affair with the German to the town. And they have shunned her for it. The inspectors' examination of the statements and the evidence bring them back to Mavers as a prime suspect, but that answer leaves Rutledge dissatisfied.

On his way back to the Inn, Rutledge encounters Mavers himself, who taunts Rutledge with his lack of progress on the case. Rutledge mentions Mavers's pension again but Mavers refuses to tell him who pays it.

Miss Sommers comes to talk to Rutledge, having received the message from her sister that he needed to see her. He asks her again about her encounter with Captain Wilton on the morning of the murder. She doesn't remember that he was carrying anything, but didn't get a clear look at him. She wonders if it isn't possible that the murderer is not someone from Upper Streetham. Doubting the likelihood of that answer, but wanting to make sure all corners are covered, Rutledge sends Sergeant Davies to check on any unknown persons who might have arrived in Upper Streetham by train in the day or so before the murder.

A little later, Captain Wilton comes to see Rutledge about the funeral arrangements. Rutledge tells him the Inquest is set for the next day, and the body will be released after that. Wilton shares the thought that he always felt Charles had a charmed life. Rutledge offers an alternative explanation to Hickam's testimony: that Hickam may have killed Harris in a mad rage. Rutledge can see that this idea startles the Captain, but he makes no real comment.

Rutledge then asks about Catherine Tarrant. Wilton doesn't want to talk about her, but Rutledge persists. Wilton holds that Charles would have done what he could for Catherine and Linden, but it wasn't necessarily up to him. The Captain talks about his homecoming and witnessing the worst casualties of the war. In Wilton's opinion, the poor shell-shocked sods who don't even know the war is over are in a worse case than any other. Hamish, of course, squawks at that but Rutledge forcibly turns his mind back



to the case. He needs, he decides in desperation, to find out more about Catherine Tarrant.

Chapters 9-10 Analysis

The chapter is full of emotions, particularly fear: Mark Wilton's desperate fear that Lettice will not accept him at Mallows, Dr. Warren's fear that he cannot save an innocent child, Lettice's fear of Wilton, and Rutledge's fear that he no longer has the skill to solve this case, and of his horrific past. The flashback to the war finally gives the reader a true picture of Rutledge's relationship to Hamish McLeod, and why the man haunts him now. The reader feels compassion for Rutledge, while still feeling appalled at the stark inhumanity of McLeod's death. Of course Rutledge is haunted; what normal man wouldn't be by such a tragedy?

Rutledge seems to be floundering in Chapter 10. He is no closer to a solution after several days on the case. He is floating his speculation about Catherine Tarrant to get a reaction, but no one wants to take up that gauntlet. Miss Sommers doesn't provide any further evidence of import, but manages to throw more confusion on the case by her talk of an outsider. Finally, Captain Wilton, Rutledge's prime suspect, is still hiding something. In trying to pry the information out of him, Rutledge gets more than he or Hamish bargained for. In self-defense, Rutledge's thoughts turn back to the women who are witnesses because confronting the true suspect has been too difficult for Rutledge's fragile hold on sanity.



Chapters 11-12

Chapters 11-12 Summary

In Chapter 11, the morning of the Inquest, Rutledge asks Inspector Forrest about the source of Mavers's pension. Forrest didn't know he had a pension, but suggests Sally Davenant as a source of information because Mavers's father worked on the Davenant estate as a gameskeeper.

The Inquest is straightforward and proceeds smoothly through the coroner's report. Rutledge catches up with Mrs. Davenant following the proceedings to ask about Mavers's pension. She denies any knowledge of any payments to that man, but she is aware of the bequest of the shotgun.

He then asks about Catherine Tarrant. She tells him a little more about the German, not blaming Catherine, but speaking fatalistically about the potential failure of such a relationship. When he inquires whether Catherine could still be in love with Wilton, she says no but reveals that she thinks Mark always falls in love with the wrong women. She cuts herself off but Rutledge persists and she admits that she feels that Charles would have always come between Mark and Lettice because Lettice was so devoted to her guardian.

The information gives Rutledge a motive for Mark Wilton to have killed Charles Harris, but it doesn't rule out Catherine Tarrant either.

Hickam is still too ill to question so Dr. Warren tells Rutledge to come with him to see the child, Lizzie. Instead Rutledge goes back to the meadow where the body was found. He walks over the ground, trying to picture the sequence of events and come to terms with the emotions of the case. He finds himself once again at Mallows asking for Lettice Wood.

In Chapter 12, Lettice tells Rutledge that she regrets not being able to see Harris's body, and having this horrible image of a bloody thing in her mind. She couldn't tell Charles good-bye, one last time. She can't even bear to think of him because of the gory nature of the killing. She mentions, almost off-hand, that Royston had told her he'd killed a child in a motorcar accident. She says he told her about it to be kind, but to her it was a small comfort.

Lettice chides Rutledge for not having made more progress. He obliquely accuses Lettice of being an accomplice saying, "There are many ways to kill. Cruelty will do very well." As he says it, he thinks of his former fiancée. Lettice reacts badly and tells him to get out.

He begs her to help him solve the case, telling her that he doesn't want to get it wrong. She calms and he has her go over the last evening with him. He talks about Catherine and then Sally Davenant, but he isn't able to draw out any new information.



He takes the time to question the servants again about the argument, but no further information comes to light. He then walks over the ground, the meadow, and the site of the murder again. There, at the side of the field, he finds a child's doll. He gets back to his car, and finds his tire slashed thoroughly and maliciously—Mavers.

Chapters 11-12 Analysis

Sally Davenant is another cipher for Rutledge to figure out, but he is infinitely more patient and persistent with the women than with the men. He listens to the women, tries to sort out the nuances of their replies, but always asks very penetrating questions. He is unable to track down Mavericks's pension source, which proves frustrating since the explanations and possibilities keep rotating through his head. Everything hangs on Hickam's testimony, but Hickam remains unavailable so Rutledge must keep questioning and circling the evidence in his mind.

Chapter 12 has Rutledge pushing the edge of his relationship with Lettice Wood. She puts him sharply in mind of his former fiancée, Jean, but not because he's attracted to her. It is some other quality in her manner he can't quite put his finger on, and from which Hamish's complaints keep distracting him. His further questioning of Lettice and the servants gain him very little, but at the end of the chapter he at last has a breakthrough: he finds the doll of the child Wilton saw on his walk. Finally, another witness, but unfortunately she's just a child.



Chapters 13-14

Chapters 13-14 Summary

In Chapter 13, Rutledge goes back to Dr. Warren's clinic to check on Hickam, but the man's condition is unchanged. He asks Dr. Warren if he knows of any young children living near the meadow where the Colonel was killed. The Doctor replies that there are any number of little ones running about. Then Rutledge asks Dr. Warren for his opinion of the killing. Warren favors Mavericks as a suspect, but Rutledge's questioning irritates him. The Doctor thinks it's time the case was solved.

Rutledge sees Captain Wilton in the Inn's bar. Wilton has been dealing with the difficult funeral arrangements for a headless man. Rutledge shows him the doll and asks him to find the little girl who lost it. The Captain at first thinks the Inspector is joking, but when Rutledge tells him to do it, he says he will. Rutledge will send Sergeant Davies with him to help. Then he asks Wilton once again about the quarrel between Wilton and Colonel Harris. Wilton refuses to answer directly. The lack of free-flowing information irritates Rutledge.

Wilton leaves to find the child and Carfield, the vicar, comes to the bar in search of Rutledge. The Inspector asks Carfield his questions about Mrs. Davenant and Catherine Tarrant. In his response, Carfield lets slip the fact that Mrs. Davenant was a nurse during the war.

Later, Rutledge asks the innkeeper, Redfern, about Mrs. Davenant being a nurse. Redfern confirms it, saying that he saw her there in the convalescent hospital. He didn't want her treating him, but he asked one of the other nurses about her. It seems she showed skill in handling some of the worst cases. And she was very good with the fliers.

Thinking over what he's learned, Rutledge contemplates the fact that he has no motive for any of his cast of suspects. He daydreams of a day after this case is finished when he can train up a young sergeant to help him with some of the work. Hamish breaks in at that moment to tell him it would never work; he'd have to reveal that he was half crazy, with a voice in his head. Rutledge, however, is determined to do it on his own then, or die trying.

He meets up with Laurance Royston outside and asks him about Sally Davenant being a nurse. Royston confirms it as well, saying that she did it to stay busy while waiting for news of her cousin, whose life expectancy as a flier was very slim. Royston makes the comment that the element in all of this which bothers him is that the killer could murder a man and not be marked by it somehow.

In Chapter 14, Inspector Rutledge considers the possibility that Mavericks could have been in the village square preaching his usual harangue, but that he could have slipped away for a brief period. Rutledge looks around the square and then asks one of the women



there whether she saw Mavericks on the morning in question. She pauses to confer with a friend of hers.

Rutledge asked what Mavericks usually talked about. She replies that he has a usual speech about the Russian Czar and the Bolsheviks, to which she doesn't pay much attention. The two women are of a consensus that Mavericks was in the square all morning. The conversation turns to gossip about Helena Sommers and her sister living so far out of town—two single women on their own.

From the women's information, Rutledge concludes that with a little planning, Mavericks could have left the square, come back later, and gotten away with murder.

Crucial to Wilton being the murderer is the testimony of Daniel Hickam. Hickam said that he saw Wilton in the lane arguing with Harris shortly before the murder had to have occurred. Rutledge continues up the lane, knocking on doors and asking the residents what they saw. He has no success until he knocks on the door of the local lady of ill-repute. The woman who answers the door, Mrs. Grayson, invites him in.

She tells him that she did not see Hickam, Mavericks, or Captain Wilton that morning, but she did see Colonel Harris. He had resolved an issue for her regarding her landlord and the Colonel had stopped by with a note to let her know. Rutledge takes a look at the note, knowing it confirms Hickam's testimony by placing Harris in the lane at that time.

Another woman, Betsy, joins them and reports that she didn't see anyone in the lane that Monday morning, but she did see Catherine Tarrant on Thursday following after Hickam. They had a brief discussion and then Miss Tarrant gave him some money.

Rutledge returns to the Inn and finds Wilton and Davies waiting for him. Both men are very agitated. They think they have found the child; her name is Lizzie Pinter. Rutledge has them accompany him out to the house to see her. She is the child who has had some kind of frightful experience and won't eat or sleep.

Rutledge has the doll in hand to take back to the child. He tries to speak to her but he gets no response. He shows her the doll and she screams in terror, but she reaches out to take it. The doll seems to comfort her and she begins to fall asleep, but her father comes in just at that moment. Lizzie starts to scream again, high and terrified. Her father quickly leaves, and she is again comforted by the doll. It is the first time she has been able to sleep in days. Her father, Ted Pinter, is overcome with the idea that his daughter may have seen the murder. Rutledge asks if the child likes horses. Her father answers yes, that he takes her up with him when he has the opportunity. Rutledge asks that the family send for him once Lizzie wakes and can talk.

Riding back to the village in Rutledge's car, Captain Wilton repeats that he didn't kill Harris. He asks if the doll is evidence against him, but Rutledge replies that he doesn't know. The Inspector is closer to an answer, but his case against Wilton, the war hero, is made up of evidence from a child, a doll, and a drunkard.



Chapters 13-14 Analysis

The fact that everyone keeps ruling everyone else out is incredibly frustrating for Rutledge. Captain Wilton is a stonewall of sketchy information and outright refusal to divulge what he knows. There seems to be an unwritten code of gentlemen at work here. Rutledge understands the code, but his job is to get to the bottom of the murder case. He keeps coming back to the women, their protective motivations, and their strength in the face of grief.

In Chapter 14, Inspector Rutledge's persistence starts to pay off. He sees a scenario where Mavers would have been able to slip away and kill the Colonel. But just when he puts his emphasis on that theory, new evidence pops up from Mrs. Grayson to corroborate Hickam's testimony. The Inspector has to feel his way with the little girl, but the reader gets the sense that he is calling on his personal experience to draw her out of her shocked stupor. He mentions to the girl's mother that sleep will help. Rutledge himself has mentioned earlier that sleep is the only place he isn't pursued by Hamish. The anguish of Lizzie's father is particularly touching, as he has trouble reconciling that the little girl might have seen something so grisly as this murder. In the car, Wilton is convincing in his denial that he killed the Colonel, but he is still hiding something. In the end, Rutledge's case against the Captain remains weak at best.



Chapters 15-16

Chapters 15-16 Summary

In Chapter 15, Rutledge takes time to contemplate what he has learned about the case so far. He lays in bed thinking over Lizzie's situation. Why is the little girl so terrified? As he considers the evidence he has so far, Hamish points out that Scotland Yard has surely abandoned Rutledge to this difficult case. He will be made a scapegoat when the Captain draws on his friends in high places to defend himself. In spite of this, Rutledge is determined because what alternative does he have? Only a bullet to the brain will end his misery, and he's not afraid of death.

The next day is Sunday. The village prepares to go to church services. After stopping briefly at Dr. Warren's clinic to check on Hickam, Rutledge goes to church. He has found in past cases that church gives him a chance to get a feeling for the atmosphere of a town. The sermon from the vicar, Carfield, concerns making the best of one's life in the small amount of time we're allotted on Earth.

After the service, Rutledge takes a position in the churchyard to observe the parishioners as they interact. He sees Mavers waiting to speak to Royston. The two men exchange a few words. Royston is clearly giving Mavers some unwelcome news as a one-sided argument breaks out. Mavers, upset and angry, lashes out at the townspeople with vicious words and accusations. Having lived there all his life, he knows people's weak spots and he throws words at them, digging in to insult and shock.

Rutledge intervenes as quickly as he can, moving with Wilton to remove Mavers bodily from the scene. Inspector Forrest takes Mavers in hand and Rutledge runs back to the churchyard to assess the damage. Royston in particular is distraught, saying the cruel outburst was his fault. He'd told Mavers that he would no longer be receiving the pension that Colonel Harris had paid to him all these years. Rutledge assures Royston that he is not responsible for Mavers venomous attack.

That afternoon, after the villagers get their equilibrium back, Rutledge finally has a chance to interview Hickam. He pulls the testimony out of Hickam, nearly disappointed by Hickam's confusion and war scene laden ramblings. It becomes clear however, that the man is honestly trying to sort out his memories about the encounter in the lane. Wilton and Harris were angry, he says, but it wasn't over the war. Hickam heard Harris say that he was going to call off the wedding.

In Chapter 16, Rutledge hides in his room to go over the case without distractions. He looks out his window and sees a woman in the courtyard garden who he thinks is Catherine Tarrant. Redfern tells him, however, when he brings the Inspector's lunch, that it is Miss Helena Sommers. Rutledge takes the opportunity to ask Redfern if the Colonel and Miss Wood dined often at the Inn. Redfern says not really, but they did eat lunch there fairly often. In fact, the Tuesday before he died, Colonel Harris came into the



Inn for lunch. Miss Wood tracked him down there and they had a somewhat heated discussion out in the garden. Redfern offers the opinion, though, that it couldn't have been too serious, because he saw Miss Wood a couple of days later looking radiant.

After he finishes his lunch, Rutledge makes the trip out to Mallows again to see Lettice Wood. He tells her about Mavericks's outburst, and she is surprised that Harris paid Mavericks a pension. Then Rutledge asks her about the argument at the Inn on Tuesday. Why did Harris call off the wedding?

Lettice accuses Rutledge of fishing for information, and tells him that it's his job to figure out who killed her guardian. He begs her to tell him the truth. He has enough evidence to arrest Wilton, but he has to be sure. She admits that she did think it was Wilton at first, but when she saw him here at Mallows, she changed her mind. They are at an impasse.

Chapters 15-16 Analysis

In Chapter 15, the reader gets a chance to see what Rutledge must have been like as Scotland Yard's premiere Inspector before the war. Armed with a new determination to resolve the case or, literally, die, Rutledge is coolly observational and analytic. He goes to church to get the lay of the land, and the undercurrent of emotion bubbles to the surface. Mavericks lashes out verbally in his disappointment, but his cruel words hold grains of truth too. Rutledge also drags significant testimony out of the barely conscious Hickam. The irony is, however, that while his case against Wilton is growing stronger, he still has a feeling he is missing something vital.

Chapter 16 serves as an opportunity for reflection. In his quiet room, Rutledge turns the evidence over in his mind. A chance remark to the innkeeper draws out another piece of evidence that points to an affair between Colonel Harris and Miss Wood. Nothing is said overtly in the book, however. The reader is left to draw that conclusion on his own. Even when Rutledge confronts Lettice with the evidence that he knows that Harris called off the wedding, he doesn't ask her outright if she had an affair with her guardian. Is that manners of the day or because he has not yet pieced together the whole truth? Lettice is still protecting Wilton, even though the case is starting to stack against him. The issue is, Rutledge can't see what Wilton had to gain in murdering Lettice's guardian. Certainly not Lettice herself. Was it plain revenge then?



Chapters 17-18

Chapters 17-18 Summary

In Chapter 17, Rutledge departs Mallows in a driving rain, obsessed with the idea that he is drawn to Lettice Wood for some reason. Distracted by a mental argument with Hamish, he narrowly avoids running into Catherine Tarrant who is in the middle of the road trying to fix her bicycle. She tells him to take her home and they load the bicycle in his car. On the way, she brings up Mavers's scene. He'd had a particularly cutting remark for her about her affair with Linden. Rutledge asks to see the portrait she did of the German.

The portrait is a powerful statement about emptiness and devastation beyond grief and loss. He is familiar with that devastation from his personal experience with Jean, and while Hamish weeps in the back of Rutledge's mind, he thinks about Lettice Wood. She knows that feeling too.

A maid brings them tea and their attention returns to the murder. He asks her why she tracked down Hickam to give him money. Catherine admits it was because she was afraid for Wilton. He tells her that Wilton is his best suspect for the murder. He had means, opportunity, and now, it's clear he had motive. But he wants to find out what she thinks about it. She refuses to believe that Harris called off the wedding; in fear for her former love, she begs Rutledge not to be hasty in his conclusions.

As he drives back to the Inn, Hamish harangues him with threats that he's not done with him yet. In a series of switching vignettes, the reader sees Lettice Wood, Catherine Tarrant, and Mark Wilton thinking about what the murder means to their past relationships. Lettice reveals that she wishes she could turn the clock back. She grieves, but it's still not clear for whom. Catherine thinks of her dead lover, but remembers what she owes Mark Wilton. And Wilton, seeing the handwriting on the wall, is putting his affairs in order. He decides that honesty rather than guile will guide him through what he must do. Meanwhile, the child, Lizzie, sleeps on.

Chapter 18 begins one week from the day Harris was killed. Rutledge stops again at Dr. Warren's clinic to look in on Hickam. Hickam is sleeping, so the Inspector heads over to Mrs. Davenant's house to see Wilton. Sally Davenant offers coffee and the three talk about the funeral arrangements, set for the next day. The two men then leave Mrs. Davenant so they can talk in private. Their very civil discussion concerns the evidence mounting against Wilton. Wilton unemotionally tells Rutledge that he'll fight him in court, that he has the power and the influence to do so, and he knows he has a chance because the evidence is at best circumstantial. But first, a favor. He asks Rutledge to postpone his arrest until after the funeral. He wants to see Lettice through her difficult time. She has no one else.



Rutledge asks him why Harris called off the wedding, but Wilton either doesn't know or is not telling. Rutledge reluctantly agrees to postpone the arrest with Hamish's objections ringing in his ears.

Rutledge spends the rest of the morning consolidating his notes, making reports, and reorganizing the evidence. He calls Scotland Yard. Bowles tells him that he'd better think twice about arresting Wilton. Bowles will wash his hands of Rutledge if he doesn't produce a tight case. Rutledge agrees and hangs up, feeling utterly alone. But in his loneliness, this time, he finds strength. After finishing up his case notes, he goes out for some air.

He sees Helena Sommers talking to Royston. She speaks briefly to Rutledge, indicating that Mr. Royston has promised to send a car for her to attend the funeral tomorrow. He asks her if she saw a little girl on the morning of the murder. She says no, not that morning, but that the Pinter children are always about.

Rutledge goes out to the Pinter house to see Lizzie. The little girl is awake and seems aware. Rutledge cautiously talks to her, but gets no immediate response. Hamish whispers to him that she could be Rutledge's own child; she is like his former fiancée, Jean, in looks. After considering for a few moments, Rutledge instructs the child's grandmother to rock her in a rocking chair. He asks questions about what she might have seen in the meadow, which the grandmother, Agnes, repeats to the child. Lizzie doesn't respond until Rutledge asks about a horse and a man riding it. She begins to scream and call for her Papa over and over. Ted Pinter comes in right at that moment and slams Rutledge up against the wall. Lizzie's father is angry that someone has upset his little girl again.

But then Lizzie stops screaming abruptly, staring in shocked disbelief at her papa. She reaches out to him and Pinter hugs his daughter close. She seems to have come to her senses, but as Hamish repeats in Rutledge's head, "She's naught but a child."

Chapters 17-18 Analysis

Rutledge's meeting with Catherine Tarrant is fortuitous because he can ask her for her opinion on his case so far. The portrait of her dead lover touches Ian and his inner conscience, Hamish, in an unexpected way. It opens up a gateway that Rutledge has been blocking because it's too painful to contemplate. But that gateway is the path to finding the answer to this mystery. All signs point to the fact that Lettice Wood and Charles Harris were having an affair, but Catherine Tarrant is reluctant to admit it because of her fear for Mark Wilton. Wilton seems to be the killer but somehow, even though the pieces add up, that explanation doesn't seem to form the right picture.

There is a sense of a turning point in Chapter 18. Rutledge has pulled his case together, and is intent on arresting Mark Wilton. Meanwhile, Bowles rubs his hands together in glee at the coming downfall of his rival, because even if the case is tight as a drum, Rutledge will suffer in the prosecution of such a man of influence as Wilton. The scene



with little Lizzie is heartbreaking and exhilarating as Rutledge pulls her out of her waking nightmare to see that her Papa is not the awful thing on the horse, but her living, breathing Papa. Rutledge calls on his reserves of inner strength and courage to do this, and even Hamish is impressed, though not silenced.



Chapters 19-20

Chapters 19-20 Summary

In Chapter 19, Rutledge goes back to the Inn again to contemplate whether Lizzie's presence in the meadow changes anything. The facts of the case now seem to rule out Mavers as a suspect. The main thing it changes, however, is that Harris may not have been in the meadow when he was killed. The horse could have carried him, already dead, to the meadow, where Lizzie may have made it shy away, and caused the body to fall forward on its chest. But none of this changes the fact that Wilton is still the main suspect.

Rutledge starts to feel as if time is running out. He goes back to Mallows one more time to roam around the meadow, get the lay of the land, and try to find where a killer might have hidden or waited. The whole thing still evades him, however, and he ends up knocking on Lettice Wood's door at two o'clock in the morning. She comes down concerned, after a servant wakes her.

Rutledge persists one more time in asking Lettice why the wedding with Mark Wilton was called off. He is afraid, he tells her, that the reason may cause Wilton to harm himself in the "gentleman's way out." Lettice is shocked and distressed. She asks Rutledge if he's ever been in love.

He tells her about his former fiancée, Jean. In doing so, Lettice finally reveals something, a nuance or a small sound, that makes him realize that she's grieving for Charles Harris not Mark Wilton. They make eye contact, and she immediately realizes that he knows. She turns as if to run, but he catches her arm and asks her if it's true. She finally admits to it, in relief.

On that Tuesday morning, Charles and Lettice had had an encounter that was unmistakable. Harris kissed her, but then fled to the Inn and denied his feelings for her when she tracked him down there. Later, however, when she examined her own feelings and told him she wanted to call off the wedding, he still tried to be honorable about it. But Lettice wouldn't have it. They'd just had that one night together.

She cannot figure it, but even though all the evidence points directly at Mark, she still can't see him as the killer. What would he have to gain by it? Certainly not her. She begs Rutledge not to crucify Wilton.

In this final chapter, the day of the funeral dawns rainy and miserable. Rutledge goes to the church as the villagers start to gather for the ceremony. He asks around for Royston, but cannot find him. Lettice arrives on Mark Wilton's arm. She is calm and composed, as is Wilton.



Rutledge asks one of the drivers where Royston might be, but he has not been seen anywhere this morning. Rutledge sees Inspector Forrest and tells him to keep an eye on Wilton.

Rutledge senses something amiss and the sense builds as he follows Mavers around the church and up to the path that leads to the Sommers cottage and Mallows land. He realizes then that he has never asked Maggie Sommers any pertinent questions. Her manner put him off enough that he underestimated her, just like everyone else has done. He approaches the Sommers cottage and immediately hears the goose creating an awful racket. Under that noise, he can hear a woman screaming. He starts to run. Just as he gets up to the door, Royston bursts out of the house, his shoulder laid open in a wound that shows bone. Royston warns Rutledge that she has an ax. Maggie is just inside. He tells her that he will find Helena, but Maggie says she's in the bedroom. He struggles to understand but finally when Maggie runs in the bedroom and locks the door, the implications sink in. He knocks the door down but he is too late. Maggie has stabbed herself in a fatal wound. She has just enough awareness to explain that Helena was the little girl killed by Royston in that long ago car accident. Maggie was the unlucky, unwanted child who bore the grief of two selfish adoptive parents. She coped by re-creating Helena but the masquerade got out of hand when Helena killed the wrong man. Helena, mistaking Harris for the man in the car, killed the Colonel with the shotgun near the wall of their cottage garden.

Later, Dr. Warren patches up Royston and then Rutledge calls London to report the change of events. Bowles is disgusted that Rutledge has pulled one out again, and has neatly avoided the trap laid by Bowles.

In the end, Rutledge, deeply disturbed by the evidence of how far a mind can deceive a person, vows to fight for his sanity and his livelihood. Hamish scoffs at the idea, but Rutledge replies that before they're through, he'll see what they're both made of.

Chapters 19-20 Analysis

Rutledge's case grows stronger and stronger against Mark Wilton, but his instincts, the ones he thought he'd lost in the war, are telling him to keep looking. He walks over the ground that the killer must have walked over to reach his prey, but he feels nothing. Finally, in distress, he goes to see Lettice one more time. It's his empathetic grief for a lost love that finally reveals the truth. Lettice and Harris were in love. That's why Harris called off the wedding. That's why he was happy. That's why Mark Wilton is unsure of his welcome with Lettice. Her revelation makes Wilton's motive stronger, but at the same time it contradicts it because in killing Harris, Wilton could not have thought he could get Lettice back. What was the purpose of it, Lettice wonders?

The climax and the surprise ending make all the clues come together in a moment of clarity. Everything is explained, the good Captain Mark Wilton is exonerated, and the idea that Harris had no enemies now makes perfect sense. The tragedy is contained in the life of one woman who had nowhere to turn but her own mind. The brush with



insanity is very close to Rutledge, but it only makes him determined to see to his own demons. The second tragedy is the sheer waste of the life of a man killed by mistake, but perhaps that is a more perfect justice for Helena, who was also killed in an instant that was only an accident. Surprisingly, some other threads are left loose for the reader to draw his or her own conclusions: what is Lettice's reaction, how does Royston cope with the guilt of having indirectly caused the death of his employer, does Mark Wilton feel relief? There is a sense that their story goes on, but Rutledge's part in it is now over.



Characters

Inspector Ian Rutledge

Ian Rutledge is the main character in *A Test of Wills*. He is an Inspector/Detective at Scotland Yard, the police headquarters in London, England. His supervisor, Superintendent Bowles, assigns him to Charles Harris's murder case in the hope that he will fail. Prior to World War I, Rutledge was a top-notch investigator with a reputation for solving difficult cases. In 1914, he went off to war, but he has returned to Scotland Yard in 1919 a much-changed man. His experiences in the war led to a severe case of shell shock, and as a result, he no longer has much confidence in his ability to solve the cases that once enthralled him. His mind has coped with the horrific things that happened to him by giving him a voice in his head, Hamish McLeod, who often comments disparagingly on Rutledge's activities and decisions. The other characters in the story describe Rutledge as tall, spare, gaunt, ill, and tired, with a lined face and cold, watchful eyes. During the course of the book, Rutledge shows himself to be physically courageous, resourceful, intelligent, compassionate, ashamed, fearful, honorable, and clever. He is a stranger in Upper Streetham, the village where Charles Harris was killed, but his persistence and calm rationality eventually pull the truth out of the people involved in the murder. He does not fail, much to Bowles's disappointment.

Hamish McLeod

Hamish McLeod is a dead man, killed in France during World War I, but he lives on in Ian Rutledge's head as his conscience and his coping mechanism. McLeod was a corporal under Rutledge's command who, under fire, refused to lead an attack on a machine gunner. With no other choice before him, and pressure from higher orders, Rutledge had McLeod arrested for failing to obey orders. Rutledge himself led the charge, taking the machine gun emplacement. Upon his return to the trenches, however, he had to sit with Corporal McLeod through the rest of the long night until McLeod's execution at dawn. In a clever piece of irony, just as Rutledge pulls the fatal trigger on McLeod's life, the Germans shell their position. The British troops in Rutledge's area are buried in muck and mud and dead bodies. Rutledge lives through the experience, but he is forever altered in mind. Hamish is his constant companion in waking hours; his presence is so real to Rutledge that he is often surprised when others cannot see or hear McLeod.

Superintendent Bowles

A senior inspector at Scotland Yard whose resentment of Ian Rutledge seems to be of long standing, Bowles is jealous of Rutledge's superior birth, background, and ability to solve cases. The book begins with Bowles reviewing a letter in a girlish hand that



reveals something about Rutledge that Bowles can use to torment him. Bowles is sure that Rutledge will botch the Colonel Harris case.

Colonel Charles Harris

The book begins with Colonel Harris's murder. He is shot at near point blank range, while mounted on his horse. The narrator says that he dies hard with a roar of displeasure. In the course of his investigation, Rutledge is frustrated by the fact that Colonel Harris seems to have only one enemy in the village, and that man, Mavers, has a near air-tight alibi. Colonel Harris is survived by his ward, Lettice Wood, and no other family. He served honorably in two wars, and by all accounts was a charismatic, thoughtful, vigorous man.

Inspector Forrest

Inspector Forrest is the head of the local Constabulary in Upper Streetham. When Daniel Hickam, a sad wreck of a man, gives controversial testimony that places war hero Captain Mark Wilton in the crosshairs of suspicion, Inspector Forrest turns the case over to Scotland Yard. Enter Ian Rutledge.

Sergeant Davies

Sergeant Davies is the junior member of the Upper Streetham Constabulary. Inspector Forrest assigns him to assist Rutledge in his investigations. Sergeant Davies provides a list of suspects, witnesses, and information about the scene of the crime and the condition of the body. He is resentful of London's interference, but is determined to do his duty.

Captain Mark Wilton

Captain Mark Wilton is a flyer, a wartime pilot, and a decorated hero, having received the Victoria Cross for his actions during World War I. He is acquainted with the King and the Royal family, and his own family members are wealthy bankers and landowners. He is engaged to Lettice Wood, Colonel Harris's ward. He lives with his cousin, Sally Davenant, at her manor house near Upper Streetham. Before the war, he was briefly engaged to Catherine Tarrant, but that relationship ended when he entered service at the beginning of World War I. He is tall, strong and handsome, a perfect poster boy for heroism and the early days of flying aces. Wilton is the primary suspect in the case, with the motive, means, and opportunity to have killed Charles Harris that morning.



Lettice Wood

Lettice Wood is Colonel Harris's ward. Both her parents died when she was very young, and Charles Harris took over her guardianship and brought her to live at Mallows, his estate in Warwickshire. Their familial relationship is never made clear, but the assumption is that they are distant cousins. She is considerably younger than her guardian, and though she is not beautiful, her striking eyes and elegant manner make her hauntingly attractive. Rutledge finds himself being pulled under her unconscious spell, a detail to which Hamish strongly objects.

Daniel Hickam

Daniel Hickam is a former soldier home from war. The war was not kind to Hickam and he has returned a broken man, shell shocked and delusional. He spends most of his days drunk or lost in flashbacks about the war. Because he is relatively harmless and one of Upper Streetham's native sons, the villagers tolerate his antics. His testimony is key to the investigation because he contradicts what Mark Wilton has said about his whereabouts (opportunity), and it gives Wilton a motive for murder. Hickam heard the Colonel say he was calling off Lettice Wood's wedding.

Catherine Tarrant

Also known as C. Tarrant, the renowned artist, Catherine Tarrant is a young woman who lives on one of the estates near Upper Streetham. Her involvement in the case becomes suspicious when she gives Hickam money and he promptly drinks himself almost to death. In addition, her shadowy past is revealed when it comes out that she had a love affair with a German prisoner of war. She asked Charles Harris, via a letter from Lettice Wood, to help her with her case because she and her German, Rolf Linden wanted to be married. Instead Rolf was taken away and she found out much later that he died of influenza in London. Catherine, who is dark-haired and attractive, was once engaged to Mark Wilton, to whom she still owes loyalty. Rutledge is drawn to her art, and to her inner pain. The town shuns her for her involvement with the enemy.

Laurance Royston

Laurance Royston is Charles Harris's land steward. He has taken care of Mallows for Colonel Harris since he was in his twenties, almost twenty years. During the course of the book, it comes out that Royston was involved in a terrible automobile accident when he was young. He killed a child and was injured himself. He borrowed money from Colonel Harris to settle the accident, but it has haunted him in nightmares at times.



Rolf Linden

Rolf Linden is deceased. He was a German prisoner of war who came to help Catherine Tarrant on her estate farm during World War I. He was strong and capable and good, and they fell in love. But their relationship ended abruptly when, after she'd written a letter of appeal to Charles Harris, the authorities took Linden away. Catherine didn't find out that he'd died of influenza until almost a year later.

Sally Davenant

A cousin to Mark Wilton and widow of Hugh Davenant, Sally Davenant is a member of one of the landowning families in Upper Streetham. She holds her opinions and emotions close under a veneer of polite chatter. She may be in love with her cousin, which is revealed when Rutledge finds out she was a nurse during the war in order to be close to Mark when the news of his death came.

Reverend Carfield

Reverend Carfield is the local vicar. He is not well-liked and is a bit of a showman.

Mavers

The local rabble rouser, Mavericks had a long-standing feud with Charles Harris, even while Harris was paying him a pension initially to help take care of Mavericks's mother, then later to prevent him from getting into real danger. Mavericks is cruel enough and intelligent enough to stir up a lot of trouble in the village, but his alibi for the morning of the murder is airtight.

Helena Sommers

A youngish woman whose main occupation seems to be bird watching with her field glasses, Helena Sommers lives with her sister in a small cottage on the Haldane's estate. Her main contribution to the investigation is that she saw Mark Wilton walking on the path above Mallows land on the morning of the murder. In the last chapter, the author reveals that Helena Sommers and Maggie Sommers are one and the same person. Helena is the true killer, wreaking a horrible revenge on the wrong man for a wrongful death.

Maggie Sommers

Helena Sommers's sister Maggie is an extremely shy, retiring young woman. She never leaves the little cottage and is extremely intimidated when Rutledge and Davies come out to ask Helena some questions. At the very end of the book, the author reveals that



Maggie is clever enough, and aware enough of her mental state, to know that she must die so that her creation, Helena, whom she can no longer control, can die too.

Lizzie Pinter

Lizzie Pinter is a very young girl who happens to be out picking flowers in the meadow on the morning of the murder. Believing that the gory, headless man on the horse is her beloved father, Lizzie withdraws into her mind, refusing to eat or sleep or speak. It takes Ian Rutledge finding the little girl's doll, and showing her some insightful compassion to make her realize that her dear Papa is alive. She did not witness the murder, however, only the aftermath.

Meg Pinter

Meg Pinter is Lizzie's mother.

Agnes

Agnes is Lizzie's grandmother.

Gorgina Grayson

Gorgina Grayson is a lady of the night who is able to confirm Colonel Harris's presence in the lane where Hickam saw the Colonel and the Captain arguing. She has a dated letter from the Colonel resolving an issue she had with her landlord.

Betsy

Betsy is another lady of the night who has information that Catherine Tarrant followed Daniel Hickam and gave him a wad of money.

Ted Pinter

Lizzie's father, Ted Pinter, is a groom on the Haldane estate.

Dr. Warren

Dr. Warren is the town doctor. A busy man, he took care of Colonel Harris's body, gave Lettice Wood a sedative powder to help her deal with her grief, pumped Daniel Hickam's stomach when he almost drank himself to death, and found himself at a loss when faced with Lizzie Pinter's mental anguish.



Jean

Ian Rutledge's former fiancée, Jean accepted Ian's offer to let her out of the engagement when he came home so changed from the war. He still grieves for her, or for the woman he thought her to be.

Frances

Frances is Ian's sister. Ian mentions her, or thinks about her several times. He is grateful for her intervention in his hospital care. She saw to it that he received a doctor who could help him find a way out of his mental black hole.



Objects/Places

Scotland Yard

Headquarters of the British police, mainly the investigative arm. Located in London.

World War I

A devastating global conflict from 1914-1918 that pitted Germany and its allies against England and France and their allies. The war was characterized by mass casualties and long lines of defensive trenches stretching across Belgium and France.

Trench Warfare

A type of warfare where armies dug deep, extensive, defensive ditches in order to save their soldiers from getting mowed down by technologically advanced weaponry, such as the machine gun.

Shell Shock

An older term for what is now known as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. This mental condition is often experienced by soldiers returning from combat, and is characterized by nightmares, flashbacks, depression and hyper awareness or vigilance.

Upper Streetham

A fictional, typical English village in *A Test of Wills*.

Manor House

A large house generally on a large piece of land owned by a family from the English gentry or nobility.

Honor

A concept of integrity that holds adherents to a strict code of right and wrong.



Hero

A person admired and rewarded for his or her accomplishments, bravery, or selflessness.

Victoria Cross

The highest military award given by the British for heroism. Named after Queen Victoria.

Ward

A person who is subject to a legal guardianship.

English Landed Gentry

A class of people in England whose wealth was tied up in their ownership of land. They developed a privileged life over many centuries, but were essentially farmers.



Themes

Love Lost

One of the major themes that runs through the story in *A Test of Wills* is the idea of love lost. This is a traditional theme, though it doesn't regularly show up in murder mysteries, but the character of Ian Rutledge and the delicate balance of his psyche invites the reader to probe deeper into the motives of the characters. What drives these characters? Why do they keep secrets in the face of a murder investigation concerning a man they all seemed to care for? What quality connects them all? One answer is that they are all grieving for lost loves.

Ian Rutledge, newly returned from four years of devastating conflict, offers to let his fiancée, Jean, out of her commitment to marry him. She accepts willingly, and he must face the fact that it is not only relief he sees in her eyes, it is also fear. He grieves for her love, and for his previous self, the one who was not damaged, bitter, and disillusioned. The self that Jean loved.

Catherine Tarrant must deal with the consequences of loving a man her friends and neighbors consider to be the enemy. She fell in love in a time and a circumstance that were unusual, but when things start to return to normal, her love is taken away. She grieves for him, for not knowing that he died or how for an entire year. She also grieves for the acceptance she had in the village before she committed herself so irrevocably to loving an outsider.

Lettice has the most unenviable position in that she has loved two men and she stands to lose them both because of one horrible, accidental death. She loved Charles Harris all her life, but it was only recently that that love blossomed and matured. She has one night to share her love, and then Charles is cruelly obliterated. Her grief is fresh and raw, but she does not turn on the only man who seems to have had the motive, means, and opportunity to kill Charles. Mark Wilton should be guilty, but he convinces her otherwise. And, in the end, she is right to trust him.

Mark Wilton's loss is less obvious because it is a clue to the accidental, wrongful nature of the murder. Before Charles was killed, Mark had already lost. His unwillingness to share himself fully has cost him two women he loved, first, Catherine Tarrant, and last, Lettice Wood. He is hurt enough to be angry, but he is loyal enough to be discreet. He grieves for Lettice, who was possibly his best hope for post-war salvation.

The idea of love lost can even be carried through the character of the little girl, Lizzie, who is so devastated to lose her beloved father that she shuts down and refuses to eat or sleep. Maggie Sommers created Helena out of loss too. The loss of her childhood companion and the parents outsized grief for their child, which left no room for Maggie, led the girl to create a facsimile in herself.



The Wastefulness of War and Violence

Since four of the main characters are soldiers who have just returned from one of the most devastating and bloody conflicts in history, the wastefulness of violence is a logical theme to follow through the narrative. Ian Rutledge, Mark Wilton, Charles Harris, and Daniel Hickam all indicate at various times in the narrative, or through various people, that they had seen much more of death and killing than they ever wished. Though Hickam never mentions the idea of the waste of a life, himself, Catherine Tarrant brings up the fact that this broken, drunken man was once a skilled cabinet maker in the village, with a thriving business.

Charles Harris, widely regarded as an excellent, charismatic officer, dies in a shotgun blast on the morning after he has declared his love to Lettice Wood. In an instant, all of their hopes and plans are blotted out. Meanwhile, Mark Wilton rejects the plotting and scheming of the war machine in London, where they are readying for the next war, to come out to the country and woo the woman he loves. He mentions that he no longer has any love for the one thing that he loved the most, flying. Finally, Ian Rutledge struggles daily to keep a grip on his sanity. His promising career as an investigator was put on hold and he doubts whether he can regain his former skills. How many more positive contributions to society would these men have been able to make if they had not been sidetracked by violence?

Persistence

The idea of persistence runs through many murder mysteries. The sleuth must be methodical, organized, and persistent to break through suspects' natural resistance to intrusion into their personal business. The witnesses tell what they think they know, but it is the persistent investigator who digs for what they really know. Ian Rutledge personifies this type of persuasive, persistent detective. He keeps circling back and circling back. He gets a new piece of information and he circles back to see his witnesses reactions. He persists when things seem bleak, he persists in the face of upper-level pressure to find the quick answer, and he persists against all boundaries of proper, polite behavior. He must, because he is driven to find the answer to the puzzle, and the resolution to the mystery.



Style

Point of View

The point of view in *A Test of Wills* is shifting third person limited omniscient. It is called shifting because while the story mainly unfolds from Inspector Ian Rutledge's point of view, the narrative shifts to other characters' points of view to illustrate clues or to give the reader background or internal thoughts. The point of view is third person in that it is told with the "he/she" pronoun. Limited omniscient means that there is sometimes an all-knowing narrator who gives the reader an overall perspective, but more often the narration hones in on what just one character is seeing or doing at that particular moment in the story. Most of the time that character is Rutledge.

The storytelling is a mixture of dialog, exposition, and internal thought. The reader stays focused on what Inspector Rutledge learns with every question and every nuanced answer, even to the point that clues can only be evaluated initially in terms of what Inspector Rutledge already knows and believes. The author has purposely set up Rutledge to be an acutely observant man. If he weren't, he would not be a high-caliber investigator.

Setting

The very beginning of the book is set in the office of police headquarters in London at Scotland Yard. Soon thereafter, Rutledge drives to Upper Streetham, a fictional English village in the fictional county of Warwickshire. The rest of the story plays out in the houses of the suspects and witnesses, the meadow where the body was discovered, the Inn where Rutledge is staying, and the important places of the small town such as the village square, the church, and the doctor's clinic. The setting is a very typical English one that the reader knows well from this type of story, and from similar movies in the same genre. The only deviation from this setting is a brief flashback to World War I France in the trenches.

Language and Meaning

The language and word choice in the story tend to be upper crust British, but not too snooty. Ian Rutledge has had a privileged upbringing, but he is not a member of the aristocracy. However, he is comfortable among the landed gentry, who generally served as officers in the wars. His comfort in this environment is reflected in his speech and thoughts which make up the bulk of the book, and is contrasted with Hamish McLeod's more working class observations in his Scottish accent. Rutledge's background is a perfect blend that allows him do his job: not so upper crust that the working man—like Pinter—is intimidated, but not so lower class that the gentry—like Mrs. Davenant—won't speak to him. It is this quality that Bowles resents, because his accent and background are much harder and less refined.



Structure

The structure of *A Test of Wills* is a classic mystery or puzzle structure. Someone is murdered, an investigator or sleuth shows up to find out who murdered him or her and why. This structure allows for questioning of witnesses, gathering physical clues, evaluating evidence, and taking time to draw conclusions. The book itself is made up of twenty chapters, each with several scenes, mostly from Ian Rutledge's point of view. In the first five chapters, Inspector Rutledge gets the lay of the land, the set up. In the middle ten chapters, he circles back to previously questioned witnesses and digs deeper, forcing revelations and experiencing set backs. In the last five chapters, the narration picks up speed. Inspector Rutledge has found his killer, it's just a matter of solidifying his case, or is it? In the last chapter, or climax, a new insight comes to light, which leads the sleuth to the surprise ending. The killer is not who we thought it was, but explanations and clues introduced earlier become clear. The last few pages are saved for the denouement, or wrap up. Our sleuth lives to investigate another murder.



Quotes

"It seems a shame for a fine man like the Captain to be under suspicion of murder on the evidence of an acknowledged coward like Daniel Hickam, doesn't it? It isn't right, sir, is it?"

A Test of Wills, Chapter 1, p.16.

"We've got ourselves a paragon of all virtues, a man no one had any reason to kill. If you don't count Mavericks—who happens to have the best alibi of the lot—you're left with Wilton and that damned quarrel. Tell me, Sergeant. What was Harris really like?"

"Just that, sir . . . A very nice man. Not at all the sort you'd expect to end up murdered!"

A Test of Wills, Chapter 3, p. 54.

Something had triggered the chain of events that ended in that meadow. Something said—or left unsaid. Something done—or left undone. Something felt, something glimpsed, something misunderstood, something that had festered into an angry explosion of gunpowder and shot.

A Test of Wills, Chapter 4, p. 72.

"He's a war hero, isn't he? . . . A man like that doesn't go around killing people!"

With a wry downturn of his lips, Rutledge silently asked, How did he win his medals, you fool, if not by being so very damned good at killing?

A Test of Wills, Chapter 7, p. 110.

"I've seen more shell shock cases than you'll ever attend, Doctor, and they're tormented people with no way out of the prisons of their minds. You weren't in France or Gallipoli or Palestine, and there's nothing in your medical practice to tell you what it was like. . . . I was there."

A Test of Wills, Chapter 7, p. 115.

"You aren't afraid until you've got something to lose. But when you love someone or something, you're terrified—there's so much at stake, then, so much at risk, you see. . . ."

A Test of Wills, Chapter 8, p. 132.

"I don't know any of these people very well. But I have met them, and I'd hate to think one of them is a murderer. 'Not someone I know, surely!' You must have heard that often enough!"

A Test of Wills, Chapter 10, p. 165.

"Death is seldom tidy. . . . Sometimes for the very old, perhaps. Nothing is finished by a murder, whatever the killer may expect."

A Test of Wills, Chapter 12, p. 185.



She looked up at him, eyes defensive but resolute. It was a strange test of wills, and he wasn't sure exactly where it was leading.

A Test of Wills, Chapter 16, p. 245.

"When you're lonely, it can hurt, watching others in love."

A Test of Wills, Chapter 16, p. 239.

"If I can't do any better than this, I deserve to be locked away in that damned clinic with the other wretched dregs of humanity. If I want to survive, I've got to fight for it . . ."

A Test of Wills, Chapter 18, p. 267.



Topics for Discussion

Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). In the twenty-first century we know that soldiers returning from war often are victims of a mental condition called PTSD, where they are subject to flashbacks, depression, nightmares, and other mental disturbances associated with witnessing traumatic events. During World War I this condition was generally known as shell shock. Many considered shell shock a by-product of cowardice, and it was not really known how to treat soldiers suffering from it. Discuss when and how PTSD affects the characters in *A Test of Wills*. Does it make the witnesses' testimony more or less reliable? Does it only affect the former soldiers? In the case of Ian Rutledge, what impact does his PTSD have on his ability to do his job as an inspector?

The main character, Ian Rutledge, is a former soldier who has returned from war to pick up his old life. How does his wartime experience help him solve this case? How does it prevent him from solving it more quickly?

Discuss the love relationships in *A Test of Wills*. Why was it so important that Lettice Wood keep her love for Charles Harris a secret, even after he is murdered? What impact does Catherine Tarrant's love affair with a German prisoner have on the case? Did Ian Rutledge's loss of his fiancée make him more sensitive or sympathetic to the love stories of the various suspects?

The rhythms of a small town, specifically a quiet English village, play a big part in tracking down the killer in the story. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of living in a village from the point of view of a killer, and the point of view of a detective.

The fact that the murdered man, Colonel Charles Harris, seems to have no enemies in Upper Streetham frustrates Inspector Rutledge. In the end, this is explained by the fact that the murder was a case of mistaken identity. Does this fact make the murder more or less tragic? Is murder ever justifiable?

Discuss grief. How do the people in the story grieve for the dead man? Who is the most affected by grief? Can a person ever get used to the idea that people die and are killed? Is grief more painful when the death is sudden? Can a person grieve for something other than a death?

Discuss heroism. The main suspect in the case, Mark Wilton, is a decorated war hero. Does this automatically make him less likely to be a killer? Why or why not? Is Mavers more likely to be the killer because he is a troublemaker in the village?

When Inspector Rutledge uses his knowledge of how traumatic events can affect the mind to help the little girl, Lizzie, do his actions make him more sympathetic or less as a character?