

The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle Study Guide

**The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle by Avi and
Edward Irving Wortis**

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Overview

In 1832, an American girl who had been studying in England is sent home to Providence, Rhode Island. The ship on which she is to sail is a brig, the Seahawk, a merchant ship that will take about two months to reach Providence. Before the ship even sails, matters grow dark for Charlotte Doyle. The two families that were to keep her company both cancel their plans to sail on the Seahawk.

Twice, porters carrying her luggage bolt and run when they learn that she is to sail on the Seahawk. The man assigned to see her safely on board, Mr. Grummage, is an overbearing, insensitive man, who cares nothing about Charlotte's safety; he dumps her on the ship and departs, leaving Charlotte alone among an unhappy crew. The ship's Captain Jaggery is a madman who is obsessed with orderliness and neatness, the crew is mutinous, and Charlotte has only the rules for a young lady's proper conduct to rely on in a situation that will require all her courage and fortitude to survive.

About the Author

Avi has dysgraphia, a handicap that affects his writing: He transposes words and letters. His manuscripts are often covered with red marks that indicate corrections in syntax and spelling. When his dysgraphia was diagnosed, he was told that he would never become a writer, but Avi had always been an avid reader, and in spite of once flunking out of school because of his bad writing, he strived to become a writer. In the meantime, he took up another seemingly unlikely career, that of librarian. After earning bachelor's and master's degrees in 1959 and 1962 from the University of Wisconsin, he earned a master's in library science from Columbia University.

He worked as a librarian in the Performing Arts Research Center at the New York Public Library from 1962-70, then as an assistant professor and librarian at Trenton State College (New Jersey) from 1970-86.

While attending Antioch University, before going to the University of Wisconsin, he avoided English courses but took play writing courses. He had a strong-minded teacher who showed how to put together a plot and how to develop characters, and Avi credits him with providing a structural foundation for his own writings.

He was born Avi (pronounced Ah-vee) Wortis in New York City on December 23, 1937, into an artistic family. His father was a psychiatrist and his mother a social worker, both of whom loved the arts and populated their home with books. Avi's relatives include other artists and writers, and he seems to have been part of lively discussions of arts and artistic enterprises all of his life. Further, he had a great attachment to books, saying that he learned more from reading on his own than he did in school.

His love of the written word transcended his dysgraphia and the efforts of his elders to discourage him from pursuing writing as a career.

His becoming a librarian may have been a compromise between his passion for reading and his difficulty writing clear prose, although he wrote plays continually. On November 1, 1963, he married Joan Gabriner (they later divorced) and they had two children. Avi found himself telling his children stories, letting them pick a subject. Out of this grew his career as a writer for young readers. Slowly, he was able to illustrate other writers' books, then illustrate his own books, and then move on beyond picture books to long fiction for young adults and middle-aged youngsters. His picture books brought him renown, and he quickly became part of textbooks on children's literature.

He has won a number of awards, and *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle* is his most honored book so far. Among the awards it has won is that of Newbery Honor Book for 1990. Avi lives in Providence, Rhode Island, with his wife Coppelia (nee Kahn), a college professor; he sets much of his fiction in Providence, as he does the conclusion of *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle*.



Plot Summary

Charlotte Doyle is on the docks of Liverpool, England to return home to her family in America. Mr. Grummage has been hired by Charlotte's father to see that Charlotte boards Captain Jaggery's ship the Seahawk safely and on time. Mr. Grummage learns that the other passengers on the Seahawk are no longer coming, making Charlotte the only non-crewmember aboard. Grummage refuses to let her take a different ship, insists that he must carry out his order and promptly walks off, leaving Charlotte by herself.

Charlotte is taken to her small living quarters. Mr. Barlow, a crewmember, comes by and tries to convince Charlotte to leave the ship while she has the chance. Charlotte refuses. An old black sailor named Zachariah visits to offer her some tea. Zachariah tries to befriend Charlotte and gives her a knife so that she can protect herself. She unwillingly accepts the knife. The next day, Charlotte goes up to the deck and introduces herself to Captain Jaggery. The captain is very polite to Charlotte, and she likes him instantly.

Days later, Charlotte finds Zachariah and tries to give the knife back. He refuses to take it and inform her that Jaggery once beat a man so severely the man lost his arm, and the crew is planning on overthrowing the captain. The two are interrupted by the first mate, Mr. Hollybrass, who invites Charlotte to Jaggery's cabin. Charlotte enjoys her time with Jaggery. The captain gets Charlotte to spy on the crew for him. Charlotte is taken beneath the deck to her trunk, where, alone, Charlotte feels she is being watched. Charlotte becomes more comfortable on the ship. She has tea with Jaggery every day, and at one point Zachariah gives Charlotte sailing clothes, which she refuses to wear.

One day, Charlotte enters the crew's living quarters where she discovers a plan to overthrow the captain. Charlotte runs to inform Jaggery, who quickly goes to confront the crew. One of the men involved in the attempted overthrow is the man who lost his arm to Jaggery. Jaggery shoots and kills this man, and the rebellion is halted. Jaggery has the crewmembers beat Zachariah as punishment for the rebellion. Later, Charlotte sees the crew throw something into the sea that she believes is Zachariah's dead body. She feels responsible for what has happened and alone because the captain and crew want nothing to do with her. She decides to become a member of the crew and puts on the clothes Zachariah made her. In order to join the crew, Charlotte succeeds in climbing to the highest point of the ship. She lives and works like all the other sailors. Jaggery is hard on Charlotte and in return she shows him little respect.

The Seahawk runs into a hurricane. Charlotte must climb the mast to cut away the sails. She almost falls to her death and is surprised to see that Zachariah saves her. Mr. Hollybrass is murdered with the same knife Zachariah gave Charlotte, and Jaggery accuses Charlotte of the crime and puts her in the ship's jail. There she sees Zachariah alive and well and explains what has happened. Jaggery comes to bring her back to the deck where she is put on trial, and based on Jaggery's faulty arguments, she is found guilty. She returns to the jail where Zachariah convinces her that it must have been Jaggery who killed Hollybrass. They come up with a plan to steal the guns from Jaggery



and organize the crew for a new rebellion. Charlotte goes to get the guns, but Jaggery is waiting for her. After an argument, Jaggery chases Charlotte around the ship. He slips and falls into the ocean, never to be seen again.

Charlotte is made the new captain, with Zachariah doing most of the work. The Seahawk reaches its destination, and Charlotte is sad that she must leave her friends on the ship. She is reunited with her family. Her relatives are disturbed by or uninterested in stories about her journey. Her father reads Charlotte's journal of her adventures and keeps her in her room until she is restored to the proper way of living. Charlotte, feeling that her family doesn't care for her, runs away from home and joins the crew of the Seahawk as they set sail on a new adventure.



Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

The date is mid-June in 1832, and Charlotte walks through the crowded docks of Liverpool, England with Mr. Grummage, a refined man hired by her father to see that Charlotte boards a ship that will take her to America. A muscular man follows behind them carrying Charlotte's trunk. Charlotte is amazed by the commotion happening all around her. Her current surroundings are like nothing she has experienced before. Mr. Grummage informs Charlotte that she will be traveling on an American merchant ship called the *Seahawk*. Charlotte will be traveling on the ship with other families also headed for America. Mr. Grummage has heard that the *Seahawk's* trip might be canceled but after talking to the captain face to face he is assured that there will be no delay.

Charlotte learns from Grummage that the captain's name is Captain Jaggery. The man carrying the trunk overhears this name and puts the truck down, refusing to go any further even if he were to get twice as much money. This man wants nothing to do with Captain Jaggery, and he quickly walks away. Mr. Grummage grabs the next man that passes by, and after both Grummage and Charlotte pay him a shilling the man agrees to carry the trunk without being told where he is taking it. They reach the area where the *Seahawk* is docked, and when this second man sees the ship he is to take Charlotte's trunk aboard, he drops it and runs off without saying a word.

Mr. Grummage leaves Charlotte on the dock and boards the ship. Charlotte is excited to meet the families as she looks at the large ship in front of her that will carry her across the ocean to America. Charlotte describes the ship using sailing terms, which she admits she did not know before her first voyage. The most unique aspect of the ship is the carved figurehead of a white seahawk displayed below the bowsprit. Charlotte comments that it "looked more like an angry, avenging angel than a docile bird." As she examines the ship, Charlotte sees a man climb the up the side of the ship by a rope.

Mr. Grummage returns from the ship looking angry. Charlotte asks if something is wrong, and at first he tries to assure her that all is going as planned. However, he finally tells her that the two families that were planning to make the trip will no longer be able to make it to the ship before it sets sail. This news upsets Charlotte, and she looks to Grummage for an answer as to what she is to do next. Mr. Grummage informs Charlotte that her father gave him strict orders and only enough money to take this ship to America, and that he will not be able to stay with her, since he has business in Scotland. She does not want to travel alone. Mr. Grummage assures her that she will be with the captain and crew. When she points out that she would be the only girl on a ship full of men, Mr. Grummage brushes her complaints aside and politely orders her to board the ship.



Chapter 1 Analysis

Charlotte lives a sheltered life. This is seen by the fact that her father not only hires Mr. Grummage to make sure Charlotte boards the ship safely and on time, but her father also had a woman, Miss Emerson, travel with Charlotte to the docks. Given Mr. Grummage's heartless reply to Charlotte's concern about being the only girl on the boat, the reader must question whether Charlotte's caretakers do indeed care for her. As hinted at, and will be made clearer as the story progresses, Charlotte comes from a refined high-class family. She has never experienced all the confusion and chaos of the docks. Her eyes will continue to be opened as her adventures progress.

In this first chapter, the author hints at the personality of Captain Jaggery. Long before Charlotte comes face to face with the captain, the reader learns that Jaggery is a man to be feared. Both men hired to carry Charlotte's trunk run off when they learn that Jaggery's ship is the destination. This reveals that Captain Jaggery is not a man to take lightly. When describing the ship, Charlotte even foreshadows the trouble ahead when she says, "To say that I was unduly alarmed when I examined the Seahawk would be nonsense. I had not the remotest superstitious notion of what was to come." Another moment of foreshadowing appears soon after in Charlotte's description of the ship's carved figurehead, which is a symbol for Charlotte. Just as the figurehead is a tame bird that appears to be a conquering angel, Charlotte an innocent girl who will transform into something very different.



Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

Mr. Grummage leads Charlotte aboard the Seahawk, and with Captain Jaggery and the first mate still on land, she is greeted by the second-mate, Mr. Keetch. Mr. Keetch advises Charlotte to take a different ship to America since the other families are no longer traveling on the Seahawk. Mr. Grummage squashes the idea and walks off the ship before the topic can be discussed further. Mr. Keetch leads Charlotte to her room beneath the deck of the ship. Charlotte is shocked at how small and empty her room is. Mr. Keetch leaves her, and a crewmember, Mr. Barlow, comes by to deliver her trunk. While Mr. Barlow is there he makes it a point to plea with Charlotte to get off the ship for her own safety. Charlotte doesn't want advice from the hired help and ignores the men's advice, but his words add to her worry. Charlotte is left alone and starts crying because of her current situation.

An old black man, Zachariah, comes to Charlotte's cabin to offer her some tea. She takes him up on his offer and follows Zachariah to the galley. While still guarded, Charlotte feels mildly comfortable in the organized kitchen. Zachariah tries to befriend Charlotte by saying they have much in common by being outsiders, but she has no interest in a friendship with an old sailor. She is a bit creeped out by Zachariah. Zachariah offers Charlotte a knife for protection. She is resistant, but Zachariah will not take no for an answer. He takes her back to her room, and Charlotte hides the knife under the bed. Outside her door, Charlotte hears Mr. Keetch and a man discussing how Charlotte is the only passenger, and they say that with her on board things will remain calm. Charlotte falls asleep listening to the ship toss in the water.

Chapter 2 Analysis

As in the first chapter, the reader again runs across obvious clues that the Seahawk is a dangerous place to be, clues that Charlotte seems to fail to pick up on. Three people, Mr. Keetch, the crewmember that delivers her trunk and Zachariah, all tell her in some way that this ship is not the place for her. Something seems to be on the verge of happening. The crewmember who brings her trunk brings a message from the entire crew that this voyage on the Seahawk is not a safe place for her. The conversation outside her room at the end of the chapter also supports this, as Mr. Keetch and a man, who could be the first mate or Captain Jaggery, discuss how with Charlotte there "they'll not dare to move." Who "they" are is still unclear, but there is tension present on the Seahawk.

As a result of Charlotte's refined upbringing, she has become more like a cherished possession than a loved human being. Mr. Grummage has Mr. Keetch sign a receipt for the delivery of Charlotte, as if she has been purchased. Then, she asks Mr. Keetch to

lead her to her room as if she were a dog on a leash. Later, Charlotte comments how this is the first time in her life she is without someone to protect her.



Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

Charlotte awakes feeling confused and seasick. Thinking that the Seahawk has yet to set sail, Charlotte climbs to the deck in hopes of getting off the ship, only to find the vessel out in the middle of the sea. Trying to keep her weak body standing and out of the way of the sailors, Charlotte sees a man standing on an upper deck. This man is Captain Jaggery and Charlotte is overjoyed to see a finely dressed gentleman. The men gather to hear their Captain. Jaggery inspects the crew and comments to his first mate, Mr. Hollybrass, that since they are short a crewmember the rest of the men will have to work harder.

After roll is called and Jaggery comments that a Mr. Cranick is not aboard, Jaggery tells the men that this is the last time they will probably see or hear him, since he will communicate to them through Mr. Hollybrass. With the crew dismissed, Charlotte approaches Captain Jaggery, and when Jaggery sees Charlotte, his stern face changes to a smile. Charlotte pleads with the captain to take her back to England, but he will not even entertain the idea. Jaggery promises to watch over her, and while Charlotte is upset that she is stuck on the ship, she is impressed with the captain. Charlotte returns to her cabin and is very ill for a long period of time. She is barely conscience, and Jaggery and Zachariah come and check on her. At one point, she is so out of her mind with sickness that she pulls out the knife from under her bed and throws it at a rat.

Chapter 3 Analysis

Naturally, Charlotte would be drawn to Captain Jaggery. In a foreign environment, the average person is drawn to what they are familiar with. On a cramped ship with an uncivilized crew, Captain Jaggery, with his fine clothes and proper manners, appears like a breath of normalcy in Charlotte's eyes. She has instantly forgotten the signs and warnings of others and sees no danger in a gentleman such as Jaggery. Since she will not be leaving the ship until it reaches America, Charlotte will continue to look to Jaggery for comfort. This is already displayed as Charlotte notes how having Jaggery at her bedside while she is sick helps her survive and recover.



Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

Charlotte awakes feeling much better, and as she climbs out of bed she stumbles upon the knife given to her by Zachariah. She makes up her mind to return it to him. She climbs to the deck, where the weather has turned gray and overcast. She finds Zachariah, who convinces her to join him in tea and something to eat. She learns that she was sick for four days. Charlotte tries to give the knife back to Zachariah. Zachariah tells her that there may come a time where she would want the knife, since the ship is under the control of Captain Jaggery. Charlotte defends Jaggery as a gentleman. Zachariah tells her a story about Mr. Cranick, a name Charlotte remembers Jaggery mentioning. Captain Jaggery was very hard on Mr. Cranick, and at one point Jaggery beat him so severely that one of Cranick's arms had to be removed. Once ashore, the crew tried to have Jaggery punished for what he did, but to no avail.

Charlotte cannot believe what she is hearing, and she now understands why the two men carrying her trunk refused to go near the Seahawk. She wonders how Jaggery could hire a crew if he is so feared and hated. Zachariah informs her that the crew has all worked for Jaggery before and is here to seek revenge. He tells Charlotte that she might be in danger, since the crew assumes her alliance is with the captain. The two are interpreted as Mr. Hollybrass enters to invite Charlotte to Captain Jaggery's cabin for tea.

Chapter 4 Analysis

Charlotte meets Captain Jaggery and is impressed by his refined demeanor, and then she immediately hears the story from Zachariah. She is conflicted regarding whether she should believe the story or not. She views Captain Jaggery as a gentleman with fine clothes and proper manners. She cannot imagine how a man such as Jaggery could treat a crewmember so poorly unless that man deserved it. While Charlotte is beginning to understand why people avoided going near the Seahawk, seeing is believing, and at this point, Charlotte has no firsthand evidence of Captain Jaggery's supposed dark side. It is strange that Zachariah trusts Charlotte to keep quiet about the crew's plan for revenge. Zachariah is well aware that Charlotte sides with Jaggery, and while Zachariah is trying to convince her of what Jaggery is truly like, if Charlotte told someone great harm could come to Zachariah from the crew or the captain. One reason Zachariah is so trusting with Charlotte is because he sees them both as outcasts. He is an old black man who must be intelligent since he plays so many roles on the ship. Charlotte is a young girl from a high-class upbringing. Both are outsiders on a ship full of sailors with rough appearances and personalities.



Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

As Mr. Hollybrass leads Charlotte to Captain Jaggery's cabin, she is disgusted with Zachariah and his negative comments about the captain. Charlotte walks into Jaggery's cabin and is amazed by its fine furnishings. Captain Jaggery greets her and makes her feel at home. He impresses her with his courtesy. Jaggery learns that Charlotte's father is an officer for the company that owns the Seahawk. Jaggery establishes a friendship with Charlotte before warning her that since the crew is unrefined there may come times when he must act harshly toward them to maintain order among them. He tells Charlotte that the only arms on the ship are locked in his safe.

Captain Jaggery asks Charlotte to be his eyes and ears on the ship and let him know about what the crew is doing. He especially wants her to be on the lookout for a round robin, a drawing of a ring with signatures inside it. This is a symbol of a pact among the crew that Jaggery only describes as trouble. Charlotte pulls out the knife Zachariah gave her, wanting to give it to the captain. Jaggery asks her where she found the knife, and not wanting to get Zachariah in trouble, she lies and answers that she got it before she came aboard. He makes her keep the knife for protection and escorts her out of the cabin.

Chapter 5 Analysis

Charlotte is prejudiced in the sense that she assumes that because Captain Jaggery is a "gentleman," he can do no wrong. A dirty sailor such as Zachariah cannot be trusted. This prejudice makes Charlotte overlook what could possibly be true. In the presence of Captain Jaggery, in his comfortable, furnished cabin as he reads the Bible and talks about his daughter, Charlotte can barely imagine anyone thinking poorly of the captain. It is interesting to see how negative Charlotte is at the beginning of the chapter when she thinks about Zachariah and what he said, and yet she lies about where she got the knife in order to protect him. This shows that there is a part of Charlotte that cares for Zachariah and his wellbeing.

Charlotte could have easily told the captain about the crew's plan for revenge in order to warn him, and it is surprising that she never even hints at what she has heard from Zachariah. Jaggery makes sure to justify any nasty behavior Charlotte sees from him by explaining that he must conduct himself in that way in order to get positive results from his crew. This is more than acceptable to Charlotte, since she believes that this may be the only way to manage the "uncivilized."

When a group of sailors signs a pact in a round robin, signing their names within a circle symbolizes that they are equally responsible and supportive of whatever they are planning. There is no one leader who would be punished or praised more than the rest.

It can be assumed that if the crew plans to seek revenge, they have signed a round robin.



Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

Charlotte feels like royalty as Captain Jaggery walks with her across the Seahawk. Charlotte notices that the ship is moving slowing through the water. Jaggery agrees, and feeling that the wind will soon pick up, orders all the men on deck to prepare the sails. Charlotte comments to the reader that it is all quite a sight, but she sees no change in the ship's movement. Jaggery has Mr. Barlow take Charlotte to get things out of her trunk. Mr. Barlow is the man who brought Charlotte her trunk when she first arrived on the ship. Charlotte follows Mr. Barlow beneath the ship where the cargo is stored, a level above the ship's jail. She also sees a large pump used if water ever gets into the ship. Mr. Barlow opens her trunk, and Charlotte selects things to bring back to her room. While she is doing this, Mr. Barlow reminds her of his warning and tells her that all the work the captain had them do before she went for her trunk served no purpose other than to abuse them as well as her. Charlotte refuses to listen to him, and Mr. Barlow leaves her alone to look through her trunk. Charlotte is by herself beneath the ship when she senses someone watching her. She looks behind her and sees a head smiling at her. As she screams, her candle blows out, and it is completely dark.

Chapter 6 Analysis

Charlotte spends this time in awe of Captain Jaggery as the perfect gentlemen. In this chapter, she is in the company of Mr. Barlow, whom she considers to be a dirty, uncivilized sailor. Thus, she is unwilling to listen to what Barlow has to say. Mr. Barlow claims that Captain Jaggery has the men work not because he thinks the wind is going to pick up, but rather to display his power over the crew. He says that the captain pushes them hard simply to be cruel. Charlotte disagrees and probably feels that since Jaggery is the leader, he has every right to force the men to work hard without complaint. Mr. Barlow makes the comment that not only is Jaggery abusing the crew but also Charlotte. He may mean that Jaggery feels that since Charlotte is present, the crew will not get out of line because she is a young girl as well as being the daughter of the man owns the ship, giving Charlotte the ability to get the crew in trouble. Jaggery also probably enjoys showing off for Charlotte, as she is one of the only ones who is impressed by him.



Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary

Charlotte is in the dark and scared to death. She pulls out her knife and calls out, but no one answers. As she slowly moves towards the head, she notices that it is not moving. With a closer look, she discovers that it is nothing more than a carving of a head. Relieved, she grabs her clothes and goes back to her room to change. While she is putting on her clean clothes, Charlotte thinks about the carved head, and she wonders how the candle went out. Was it a gust of wind or did someone blow it out? She thinks she saw a real human head. The person must have blown out the candle and then placed the carved head there. Thinking that she has been seeing things, she brushes the thoughts aside in her mind, but not before considering telling Jaggery. She decides against this course of action, fearing the captain would see her as nothing more than a foolish child.

Charlotte then starts thinking about Zachariah and Captain Jaggery. She comments on how both men want her friendship very badly. She is pleased at this realization and decides to try and stay friendly with both men, while staying slightly closer to the captain. Charlotte is very hungry and decides to go to the ship's kitchen. She considers bringing the knife along and throwing into the ocean, but after considering how both Jaggery and Zachariah urged her to keep it, she places it underneath her bed.

Chapter 7 Analysis

Charlotte reflects on the carved head and thinks she first saw a human head. This should be a sign to the reader that there is a very good chance that someone was down there. If she had gone and told Jaggery, this would be a very different story. As Charlotte is well aware, she is currently in the middle of a struggle between the crewmembers and Captain Jaggery. While she is more loyal to the captain, the fact that she allows herself to have a friendship with Zachariah gives her the opportunity to be influenced by Zachariah and the rest of the crew. Obviously, Charlotte enjoys the attention, and because of this she is becoming more and more involved in a conflict that has nothing to do with her. At some point, she will not be able to play both sides. She will have to give her loyalty to one or the other. While it is unclear which side she will choose, the reader does know that some sort of escalated conflict will take place, since Charlotte puts the knife under her bed and hopes to forget about it but says, "Alas, such would not be the case."



Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary

A week passes by and Charlotte is becoming more and more comfortable living on the ship. Charlotte usually wakes up early in the morning and dresses. Many of her clothes are becoming dirty and worn. Washing her clothes is not an easy task, so she decides to save one dress for when she arrives in America. The food on board is bland, with little to no variety. On Sundays, Charlotte reads to the men from the Bible. She is becoming increasingly bored with daily life. The highlight of every day for a half a hour is when Charlotte has tea with Captain Jaggery in his quarters. Up to this point, Charlotte has tried to avoid interacting with the crewmembers, but she soon finds herself spending more and more time around the crew, learning about what they do and being entertained by their stories. The crew also becomes more comfortable with Charlotte, and Charlotte's friendship with Zachariah becomes even closer. Charlotte almost feels sorry for Zachariah, as he is the oldest of the crew, can't read or write and knows little about Christianity. Zachariah no longer discusses the knife or Captain Jaggery. Noticing that the dresses Charlotte wears are not ideal for moving around on a ship, Zachariah makes Charlotte a blouse and pair of pants. Charlotte accepts the gifts but feels it is inappropriate for her to wear such things.

However, Charlotte does try the clothes on, but feeling guilty for doing so, she sits down and writes an essay on the proper behavior of young women. During tea with the captain, Charlotte reads the essay to Jaggery, looking for his fatherly approval. Charlotte then describes to the readers Captain Jaggery's handling of the ship. His focus is always on the ship and the work done by the crew. He is very hard on the men, always expecting perfection from them. He is especially hard on his first mate, Mr. Hollybrass, and his second mate, Mr. Keetch, giving the two men orders and having them punish the crew. Jaggery punishes the crew with physical abuse, hunger or near drowning in the sea. Charlotte tells Captain Jaggery of any negative behavior she observed from the crew, and Jaggery is committed to breaking the crew's will. For many days, there is no wind, and Jaggery has the crew use rowboats to pull the Seahawk through the water. The crew is becoming angry, and Charlotte informs Jaggery that the men are tired. He replies they will wake when the first storm comes. Charlotte comments that that this is true, but at first the storm is man-made.

Chapter 8 Analysis

In this chapter, the reader sees the beginning of a change in Charlotte. She is clearly becoming more comfortable on the Seahawk and around the crew. This is because, with few people to talk to and little to keep herself occupied, her social needs take priority over her high-class attitude. Not only is she interacting with the crew, but she is also learning about the ship and the work that goes into it. She is doing things she would have never chosen to do in a different environment. She is interacting with an



unrefined group of men, eating bland, boring food and getting her dresses dirty by climbing around the ship. Charlotte's calm mention of finding fleas in her hair shows that she is a very different girl than the one who first boarded the Seahawk.

Charlotte is still not quite one of the boys. Wearing the clothes that Zachariah gives her is not a step Charlotte is ready to take. She also thoroughly enjoys her daily allotment of cultured life during her half-hour spent with Captain Jaggery. During Charlotte's time with the captain, it is clear that although she enjoys being around the crew, her loyalty is still with Jaggery, since she informs him about what the crew is saying. Her dresses and Captain Jaggery are the two reminders of her life before boarding the ship. Perhaps Zachariah has stopped discussing Captain Jaggery with her until he knows that Charlotte is more willing to hear and agree with what he has to say.



Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

Still without wind, Jaggery continues to work the men hard. One day, Charlotte is reading to a crewmember named Ewing as he sews a patch onto his clothes. He breaks his needle, and Charlotte offers to fetch him another one from his trunk. In order to do so, she must enter the forecabin, a place she has never dared to enter before. As she approaches Ewing's room, she overhears men talking about how many men have joined their group. The men do not like having Charlotte on the ship. Charlotte knocks on the door, and Fisk opens it. She is let into the dark, smelly room, and while she can see that there are other men in the room, she is unable to tell who they are. She finds Ewing's trunk, and when she opens it, the first thing she sees is a pistol. This surprises her, since she remembers Jaggery telling her that he had the only guns locked away in his cabin. She finds a needle and makes her way out of the room, but not before stumbling and discovering a piece of paper with a round robin on it.

Scared and overwhelmed, Charlotte tries to seem calm and make it back to her cabin. Once there, she reflects on what has just happened and the men who must have been in the room. She can account for all the men except one. She then remembers seeing a man climb the side of the ship while she was standing on the docks. She realizes that it must have been a stowaway and the same man she saw when she was under the ship at her trunk. She knows that she should tell the captain. As she heads to talk to him, she runs into Morgan, a man she knows was probably one of the men in the dark room. Morgan says nothing to her but makes a cutting action across her throat. This is clearly a threat, and seeing another crewmember watching her from above, Charlotte retreats to her room. Knowing that she is the only one who can save Captain Jaggery, she rushes to Jaggery's cabin. She enters, and the captain is with Mr. Hollybrass. She tells them about everything that has happened. Hearing the information, Mr. Hollybrass is white as a ghost, while Jaggery is red with rage. Jaggery is mad with Charlotte for not telling him sooner and tells Hollybrass to gather the men because Jaggery intends to ruin the crew's plans.

Chapter 9 Analysis

Just when Charlotte is getting comfortable on the ship and feeling safe around the crew and the captain, she stumbles upon the crew's plan to overthrow the captain. Charlotte displays her keen memory and attention to detail by remembering the man climbing up the side of the ship in the beginning of the book and realizing that there must be a stowaway on board. Charlotte is not worried for Captain Jaggery's safety but almost more importantly for her own safety. If she hadn't overheard the men talking about her in their room, and if Morgan had not threatened her, Charlotte might have had to debate whether or not to tell the captain. At the very least, she might have considered not telling the captain all the things she seen and figured out. One thing is clear, the comfort and

balance that Charlotte has felt between the two sides will never be the same. Conflict is unavoidable between the ship's crew and Captain Jaggery.



Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary

Captain Jaggery unlocks his gun safe and arms himself and Mr. Hollybrass. Jaggery grabs Charlotte, and the three exit the cabin. Jaggery rings the bell, calling all the men on deck. Mr. Keetch is the first and only man on the deck. Just as Jaggery questions the second mate's loyalty, a group of armed crewmembers, including Zachariah, appear. They stop in their tracks at the sight of Jaggery's guns. Charlotte notices that one of the men has only one arm, and she instantly recognizes him as the stowaway, Mr. Cranick. Mr. Cranick, acting as the leader of the rebellion, shows Jaggery the round robin and informs him that they intend to put him on trial on the ship, so that justice can finally be served. Jaggery, not interested in listening any further, shoots Cranick directly in the chest. Cranick falls backwards and the other crewmembers lose their courage. They drop their weapons, and as Cranick lies on the deck, Zachariah approaches him. Jaggery threatens to shoot Zachariah if he moves any further, but as Zachariah kneels down, Jaggery takes his hand off the trigger. Zachariah announces that Cranick is dead, and Jaggery wants the body thrown overboard. Zachariah wants Cranick to have a proper funeral first and refuses Jaggery's request. Charlotte is horrified when Jaggery asks her to open the gate, and she also refuses. Jaggery opens the gate himself and has Hollybrass throw the body overboard. Jaggery decides that since the leader of the crew's rebellion is dead someone else should take the punishment Cranick would have received. Jaggery wants Charlotte to choose which man will be punished. When Charlotte says she will not, Jaggery selects for her, choosing Zachariah.

Chapter 10 Analysis

In this chapter, Charlotte sees a very different side of Captain Jaggery. Previously, the only anger Charlotte saw from Jaggery was when he reprimanding men for not working hard enough. She had justified that anger as Jaggery's duty to keep uncivilized men in line. Now, she has seen in Jaggery a heartless cruelty. At the beginning of the chapter, he forces her to follow him out of his cabin, even though it would have been safer to stay there. He does this so he can show off his power to her. He then kills a man and throws the body overboard without a proper funeral. Then, he forces Charlotte to pick someone to punish, and when she will not, he chooses Zachariah because Jaggery knows that Zachariah is the crewmember that Charlotte is the closest with. In this situation, Captain Jaggery cared little about Charlotte's wellbeing and was more focused on himself and his need to display his power.

The other crewmembers of the rebellion quickly abandon their plans and fear the Captain. They outnumbered the captain and first mate, and if they all rushed them, the crew could have easily overtaken the two men. When Jaggery kills Cranick, the crew acts as if they are at the captain's mercy, throwing their weapons down and backing away. The crew's plans for rebellion seem to end before they even began, as if they had

not thoroughly thought through their plans and are truly and dumb as Jaggery makes them out to be.



Chapter 11

Chapter 11 Summary

Jaggery asks Zachariah if he has anything to say for himself before receiving his punishment. Zachariah comments that in all his years as sailor, Jaggery is the worst captain he has ever worked for. Also, Zachariah does not regret the rebellion. He forgives Charlotte for getting him in trouble and the crew for not standing up for him. Amused, Jaggery tries to get the rest of the crew to admit the same thing, but they remain silent. Captain Jaggery has Mr. Hollybrass tie Zachariah so that he is hanging by his hands and can barely touch the floor. Jaggery hands Hollybrass a whip and orders him to hit Zachariah fifty times. As Hollybrass begins, Charlotte tries to leave, but Jaggery forces her to stay claiming that she must act as a witness. Jaggery tells Hollybrass to start hitting harder, and Charlotte begs the captain to stop. Jaggery reminds her that the crew was planning to kill him, so he is within his rights as a captain. Seeing that Zachariah is badly hurt, Charlotte tackles Hollybrass and grabs the whip. As Jaggery tries to get the whip back, Charlotte accidentally hits Jaggery in the face with it, causing him to bleed. He takes the whip back and starts whipping Zachariah violently. Then, he marches away. The crew cuts Zachariah down and carries him into the forecabin. Charlotte is left alone on the deck of the ship.

Chapter 11 Analysis

Zachariah shows a large amount of courage, especially compared to the other crewmembers. Not only does he try to help Cranick, but he is also able to stand up to Jaggery and tell the captain exactly what he thinks of him. He also shows strength of character by realizing that Charlotte has been Jaggery's pawn and is not at fault. Also, he has no ill feelings towards the crewmembers for not standing up and coming to his side. Zachariah actually shows the characteristics that Charlotte believes Jaggery has, even though, by appearance, Zachariah is no "gentleman." Zachariah is an honest man who puts others before himself. Not only does Charlotte see an angry side of Jaggery, but the violent actions she sees him commit are beyond anything she has ever seen or imagined. She will certainly never forget them. Jaggery wants Charlotte to witness everything that happens because he feels that he is delivering justice and that Charlotte will back him up once they reach land. While beating a helpless old man shows that Jaggery will crush anyone who stands in his way, he does not attempt to lay a finger on Charlotte when she hits him with the whip. While he cannot be held in high regard, he has enough sense of chivalry not to hit a girl.



Chapter 12

Chapter 12 Summary

Crying, Charlotte runs to her room and falls on her bed. She cannot believe what the captain has done. Charlotte has no one to turn to. She knows the crew will never trust her again and that she has harmed the captain. She cleans herself up and rushes to Jaggery's cabin. He allows her to come in and Charlotte begs for forgiveness. Jaggery does not want to hear her begging and shows her the wound on his face that she caused by hitting him with the whip. He informs her that he wants nothing to do with her and is in no way concerned with her safety. Scared, Charlotte runs back to her cabin, revealing to the reader that she would do anything to earn Jaggery's forgiveness. She goes to the deck to get some fresh air. She sees the crew gathered around in a group. Charlotte gets closer to investigate and sees Fisk praying as the other men stand around something wrapped in cloth. Charlotte realizes it is the body of Zachariah wrapped in his hammock and that he must have died from the beating he received. After the men say a few words, they throw the body overboard. They turn and see Charlotte. She tries to apologize for what she has caused, but the men tell her to run to her friend, Captain Jaggery.

Charlotte returns to her room and again begins to cry, feeling that she is alone and the cause of everything that has happened. She hears the bells clang, and Mr. Hollybrass calls for all hands on deck. She goes to find out what is going on and sees Jaggery informing the men that Fisk will now take over Zachariah's job. The captain strips Keetch of his position, and the rest of the men must continue in their same jobs, even though they are understaffed. Charlotte goes to the galley to talk with Fisk. She asks him why the captain gave them those orders. Fisk replies that regardless of the fact that they are understaffed, Jaggery intends to work them harder. She asks if there is any way she can help. He expresses that he feels she is unable to do a sailor's work. Then, he informs her that Zachariah once told the crew that Charlotte has honor and "She's the very soul of justice." She goes back to her cabin feeling even guiltier. Soon an idea comes to her, and after some debate, Charlotte decides to put on the clothes that Zachariah made for her. Once dressed, she goes back to the galley and tells Fisk that she wants to be part of the crew.

Chapter 12 Analysis

In less than one day, Charlotte has gone from developing friendships with both the captain and the crew to being despised by both sides. It might seem odd that after seeing the violent nature of Captain Jaggery, Charlotte is quick to run to him and ask for forgiveness. Since the first time Charlotte met Captain Jaggery, he has reminded her of his father, and this may be why she runs to him. In the past, any time Charlotte has been in trouble or made a mistake, she could run to her father for support. Part of her thought that Jaggery, as a father figure to Charlotte, would forgive her, comfort her and



make all her problems go away. Of course, Charlotte no longer has anything to offer Jaggery. Jaggery could care less if she lives or dies.

Charlotte feels guilty when she realizes that she is the cause of Zachariah's death, especially since he was nothing but nice to her. The guilt increases tenfold when she learns that Zachariah always spoke very highly of her to the rest of the crew. Realizing that she has not acted like the person Zachariah described and knowing that Jaggery has disowned her, Charlotte decides to put on the sailing clothes. This wardrobe change also symbolizes an internal change, in that Charlotte will no longer judge a person by outward appearance but rather their personality and character.



Chapter 13

Chapter 13 Summary

Dressed in her sailing clothes, Charlotte convinces Fisk that she is serious about joining the crew. He warns her that the rest of the crew will not be open to it, and the two go to the forecabin to tell the idea to the men. Charlotte and Fisk first tell three of the crewmembers. The men express their doubts, and Charlotte tries to assure them she is willing and able to take on all the challenges that come with being a sailor. The men tell her that if she is able to climb to the top of highest point of the ship and back down and she still wants to be a sailor, then they will allow it. She agrees, and the men go to the rest of the crew to inform them. While they are gone, Fisk informs her of the dangers involved and how difficult the task is. News comes back that the rest of the crew has agreed to the challenge, and they want to do it now.

Charlotte is so nervous that she thinks she is going to be sick. There are two ways Charlotte can climb the mainmast, either by climbing the mast pole or by using the ladder-like rope ratlines. She chooses to use the ratlines, and after some encouraging words from the crew, she begins her climb. The higher she climbs, the smaller the Seahawk looks. She also has to deal with the wind and the rocking of the ship. Charlotte becomes tired and has a hard time keeping her grip. At one point, she nearly falls. A task that takes a crewmember two minutes takes Charlotte a half an hour, but she succeeds. Just as she reaches the deck, Jaggery appears, pushing through the crowd.

Chapter 13 Analysis

In the previous chapter, Charlotte decides to make a big change. She not only decides to become a sailor, but she also leaves her refined lifestyle behind. In this chapter, her decision is tested, to see if she is truly committed to it. No one, including Charlotte, believes that this prissy little rich girl will be able to complete this strenuous task. Charlotte has no idea what she is getting into, and the only thing that drives her to complete her task is the desire to prove to the crew that she is willing and able to be one of them. After this rite of passage, everyone will begin to view Charlotte in a new light.



Chapter 14

Chapter 14 Summary

Jaggery confronts Charlotte after her climb, ordering her to change back into her dress and stop being a distraction. She stands up to Jaggery, informing him that she is joining the crew. After repeating his order, Jaggery becomes angry and says that Charlotte is to move into the crew's living area. She will be treated the same as a member of the crew and will be referred to as Mister Doyle. As the captain walks out of sight, the crew cheers. The crewmembers accept Charlotte as one of them, and they are patient with her as they teach her how to work on the ship. Soon Charlotte does all the tasks the crew does on a daily basis, including climbing the mainmast. Captain Jaggery pushes the crew even harder, and Charlotte's body gets used to the physical labor. When she is not working, she sleeps in a corner of the crew's room, with a piece of canvas hung in front of her for privacy. Overall, Charlotte enjoys being a member of the crew.

The crew claims that Jaggery and Hollybrass are not getting along and that Jaggery stays in his cabin because he is embarrassed by the welt on his face. They also say that the only reason Jaggery shows himself on the deck is to watch Charlotte, hoping to catch her making a mistake. One day, on the bowsprit, a pole in the front of the ship, a sail becomes tangled up. Knowing that fixing this is a dangerous situation, Jaggery orders Charlotte to do it. One of the men, Grimes, offers to handle the task, but Jaggery will not allow it. Grimes quickly tries to give Charlotte some pointers, and he hands her his knife before she climbs onto the bowsprit. She cuts the rope, but with the bowsprit dipping close to the water, she loses the knife and almost falls in. She hangs off the ship as the water comes up to her waist. The ship slows down, and she is able to get back on deck. Jaggery calls her over, yells and slaps her in the face. Charlotte responds by returning his insults, causing Jaggery to become flustered and walk away.

Grimes teaches Charlotte how to handle a knife, so she won't experience another close call like that on the bowsprit. Two days later, the sky becomes dark and the air humid. Charlotte sees a bird and thinks that it must mean they are near land. Barlow informs her that the bird was caught in a hurricane and thrown far from land. Charlotte assumes that they will be changing course to avoid the storm, but Barlow tells her that Jaggery is hoping to sail just close enough along the side to allow the ship to pick up speed. However, if the ship gets too close to the storm it could be very dangerous.

Chapter 14 Analysis

Charlotte has entered a whole new world. The high-class, refined young lady is now doing hard physical labor, living and working around rough and rugged men. She seems to have adjusted quickly to this new lifestyle. The rest of the crew seems to have forgotten that Charlotte is responsible for the death of two of their own men. When she makes an effort to be one of them, they take her into their fold. Perhaps they respect



her because of her drive and commitment. They also appreciate that Charlotte stands up to Jaggery, and that Jaggery is offended by Charlotte. Charlotte is willing to take on any task, and even if she does not complete the task perfectly, she learns from her mistakes.

Charlotte has no fear and no respect for Jaggery. She was raised to not disobey elders and those in a leadership position, but she does not hold back in her expression of hatred for Jaggery. While he reacts to her by slapping her in the face, for the most part he has not retaliated. As the captain, Jaggery is within his rights to punish someone who undermines his power, and yet he seems to be holding back. Perhaps the gentleman side of him still sees her as a young lady, or he is saving his retaliation for the right time.



Chapter 15

Chapter 15 Summary

One morning, the ship runs into the storm, and Charlotte is knocked out of her hammock. The whole crew is called to the deck. As she reaches the deck, the rain and wind make it hard to even stand. Hollybrass tries to convince the captain to change course to try and avoid danger, but Jaggery orders them to forge ahead. Charlotte heads towards the forward mast. Jaggery is already there and wants Charlotte to climb up and cut the sails free so the fierce wind does not cause the mast to break. Jaggery hands Charlotte a knife, and she begins the slow climb, fighting against the water and wind. Her long hair blows in her face, making it hard to see. Charlotte grabs her hair and slices it off. She reaches the foreyard and begins cutting away at the ropes. Charlotte notices a man above her and decides that, to be safe, she will make her way back down and allow someone else to finish the job. As Charlotte begins to climb down, she slips and drops the knife. She is hanging high above the deck of the ship. Just when Charlotte is sure that she is going to fall, a hand reaches out and saves her from falling. Charlotte sees that the man is none other than Zachariah, but he disappears as quick as he appeared.

Charlotte reaches the deck. The mainmast has fallen over, and Charlotte rushes over to help the other men clear debris. The ship enters the eye of the storm, and all is calm. Someone lifts a torn sail and finds Hollybrass dead, stabbed in the back with a knife. Charlotte sees that the knife is the one Zachariah gave to her. Jaggery sees the body, and when he turns Hollybrass over, he finds that Hollybrass is holding one of Charlotte's handkerchiefs. Jaggery looks at Charlotte with the knife and handkerchief in his hand, before ordering the crew to prepare for the second part of the hurricane. Charlotte spends the next several hours working the pumps and helping man the wheel. She rests for a short period of time before doing it all again. Finally, the storm passes, and Charlotte can now sleep. She falls asleep pondering the appearance of Zachariah and the death of Hollybrass.

Chapter 15 Analysis

With the storm threatening to destroy the Seahawk and everyone aboard, everyone seems to put their differences aside in order to get through this alive. Under the circumstances, Jaggery seems to put his dislike for Charlotte on the backburner. He offers her his knife so that Charlotte can get the job done. There is so much chaos and so much work to be done that Charlotte is unable to process everything that is happening during the storm. Charlotte and the reader are left with a number of questions at the end of this chapter. Was that Zachariah who helped her, or were her eyes tricked by the wind and rain? Could it be the ghost of Zachariah? If it was Zachariah, why did he fake his death, where has he been hiding, and why has no one told Charlotte about this? Did someone kill Hollybrass or was it an accident? Jaggery



and Hollybrass have not been seeing eye to eye lately, making Jaggery a suspect. Charlotte dropped a knife, but was it the same knife she got from Zachariah? Finally, how and why did Hollybrass have one of Charlotte's handkerchiefs? While the hurricane has passed, another type of disturbance intensifies on board the Seahawk.



Chapter 16

Chapter 16 Summary

After the storm, Charlotte sleeps for fourteen hours. As she awakes, she wonders why she was allowed to sleep so long. She also remembers seeing Zachariah, and she wonders how that could be. She makes her way to the deck and asks a member of the crew why no one woke her. Charlotte learns that the captain has accused her of killing Hollybrass out of revenge for the death of Zachariah. Charlotte tries to defend herself by telling the crew that the knife used was left in her old room. The men reply that Jaggery told them Charlotte would make that claim. Charlotte goes to confront the captain. Jaggery meets her and accuses her of the crime. He tells her that she will stand trial for the crime and orders Barlow to take her to the ship's jail. Charlotte tries to defend herself, but Jaggery will not listen. Barlow escorts Charlotte below the ship and locks her in the cell. She is left on alone in complete darkness. Suddenly, she hears someone, and as the person comes closer, she sees that it is Zachariah.

Chapter 16 Analysis

The crew hates Jaggery and has embraced Charlotte as one of their own, but they do not seem to even question the captain in his accusation of Charlotte. The fact that the crew thinks Charlotte is capable of such an act is surprising. However, Jaggery has incriminating evidence in the knife and handkerchief, and Charlotte has a motive, since Hollybrass was involved in beating Zachariah. Jaggery is getting his revenge on Charlotte for embarrassing him. Again, the crew steps down in the face of Jaggery's power, and they make no attempt to defend Charlotte or think for themselves. Charlotte chooses not to say anything to the crew about seeing Zachariah. She is not absolutely sure that she is correct in what she saw. She might also feel that it is very unlikely that the crew would believe such a claim. Either way, the crew shows no knowledge of Zachariah being alive.



Chapter 17

Chapter 17 Summary

Even with Zachariah standing right in front of her, Charlotte still cannot believe that he is alive. Zachariah informs her that it is an old sailor's trick to fake a death by throwing a stuffed hammock into the ocean. Keetch brings him food every day, and Charlotte was not told because she had told the captain about the rebellion. Zachariah risked being seen by coming out during the storm because he needed to help the crew to ensure that they made it through the storm. Zachariah plans to sneak out when they reach America and report Jaggery to the authorities in order to bring him to justice. Charlotte expresses her doubts that this plan will work, since he is a black man and she doesn't think anyone will listen. Zachariah has no idea why Charlotte is locked in the cell. He cannot understand why the crew believes Jaggery's accusations. Charlotte thinks that Zachariah murdered Hollybrass and the crew is protecting him by letting Charlotte take the fall for it. She cannot bring herself to confront Zachariah with this thought.

Zachariah lets Charlotte out of the cell, and Charlotte tells him that Jaggery intends to put her on trial. Zachariah says that Jaggery is the judge and jury and will find her guilty. The punishment for murder is a hanging. Zachariah wants to know who else might know about the knife. She tells him how she tried to give it to Jaggery, and the crewmember, Dillingham, saw it as she was taking it back to her room. Zachariah concludes that Dillingham could have told other members of the crew, and anyone on the ship might know about the knife. Zachariah continues to talk, and Charlotte is still positive that Zachariah committed the crime. They hear Jaggery coming down the ladder. Zachariah puts Charlotte back into the cell, and he disappears. Jaggery approaches Charlotte and informs her that in order to be fair, the crew will decide her fate. He then takes her out of the cell, since the trial will begin immediately.

Chapter 17 Analysis

Zachariah has lived most of his life on a ship. It is the place he is most comfortable. Sailors live by very different rules than people on land. On a ship, the only distinctions between men are those of rank: captain versus crew. On land, race, age, religion, gender and wealth all create separation among people. Zachariah does not fully realize this difference. He assumes that he can leave the ship, where he is well respected, and find that same respect and kindness on land. However, Charlotte knows that will probably not be the case, since she is well versed in the rules on land.

No one on the crew has informed Zachariah that Charlotte has been accused of murder. Assuming that Zachariah played a part in Hollybrass's murder, and given his fondness for Charlotte, would he allow Charlotte to take the blame for something he did? The crew might want to keep the accusation of Charlotte from Zachariah in order to keep

him safe. However, we don't know for sure that Zachariah committed the crime. Given his personality, it seems unlikely that he is the culprit.

Charlotte might have a chance to win her trial, since the crew will now act as the jury. However, Jaggery would not decide to do something like this unless he knew he had control over the situation. Since Cranick's death the crew has done everything Jaggery orders, and it is highly unlikely they will start to disobey him now.



Chapter 18

Chapter 18 Summary

When Charlotte reaches the deck, she sees that Jaggery has set it up to look like a courtroom. The crew is in two rows, positioned as the jury, and Jaggery has each man and Charlotte swear on the Bible to tell the truth. The trial begins with Jaggery stating the charges against Charlotte. She pleads innocent. Jaggery offers her a choice: she can avoid the trial by using her father as an excuse, or she can remain on trial as part of the crew. She chooses to remain on trial. Jaggery questions her and limits her answers to only what he wants to hear. The crew stays quiet, unable to make eye contact or speak up in Charlotte's defense. Jaggery questions her about the knife, and crewmembers claim to have seen her with it. He addresses the fact that she is the owner of the knife and that she hated Hollybrass for beating Zachariah. Jaggery's main argument is that Charlotte is unnatural because she has done very unladylike things. While a girl may not be able to commit such a crime, because Charlotte is unnatural, she could be a murderer. None of the crew speaks up to defend her. Jaggery finds her guilty and informs her that she will be hung in twenty-four hours.

Chapter 18 Analysis

Jaggery offers Charlotte a chance to avoid the trial by using her father's powerful position as an excuse. While this may seem like an easy way to avoid punishment, by doing so Charlotte would insult the crew. This act would be a clear sign that she was only pretending to be a crewmember and was not serious and committed to the lifestyle. This choice would have also gone against Charlotte's earlier decision to be honorable. Later, Charlotte shows a sign of weakness by trying to bring her father into the argument, but by that time it is too late. The crew clearly feels guilty for not helping her, and yet they are clearly under the control of Jaggery. They are too afraid to speak up. This court scene would have been very different if Zachariah had come out of hiding to defend Charlotte. The crew would have rallied around Charlotte, and Zachariah and Jaggery would be in an uncomfortable position. For whatever reason, Zachariah chooses to stay hidden. Perhaps Zachariah has a plan to help Charlotte, or he too is afraid of Jaggery's wrath. Jaggery is feeling very powerful right now. Not only has the crew been put in its place, but he has also outsmarted Charlotte.



Chapter 19

Chapter 19 Summary

Jaggery takes Charlotte back to the jail and locks her in it. He climbs the ladder, and once he is gone Zachariah comes out of hiding. He lets her out of the cell. Charlotte informs Zachariah about the trial and her punishment. Zachariah cannot understand why no one on the crew stood up for her. She tries to get Zachariah to admit that he killed Hollybrass, but he doesn't understand what she is getting at. Finally, he figures it out and flatly denies her accusations. He realizes that the crew must be keeping quiet because they also believe he committed the crime. Zachariah realizes that Jaggery not only murdered Hollybrass, but also saw Zachariah during the storm. Jaggery planned to set up Charlotte in order to get revenge on both her and Zachariah. Zachariah recalls to Charlotte how during the storm he saw Jaggery and Hollybrass arguing.

Hollybrass blames Jaggery for leading them into the storm. Jaggery almost slaps him for saying that. Hollybrass runs off, and Jaggery turns in Zachariah's direction. Zachariah thinks that Jaggery hasn't got a clear view of him. Based on this, Zachariah figures out what must have happened. Knowing that Zachariah is alive, Jaggery kills Hollybrass and blames it on Charlotte. He knows that the crew will not defend Charlotte because they want to protect Zachariah, thinking he is the killer. Once Charlotte is found guilty and hung, Jaggery will then go after Zachariah. Zachariah tells Charlotte that they must make Jaggery confess to the killing of Hollybrass. The only problem is that Jaggery has all the power, since he has all the guns locked in his safe. If they knew where the key was kept, they might have a chance of getting back at Jaggery. Charlotte says she knows where Jaggery keeps the key.

Chapter 19 Analysis

While Charlotte's decision to become a member of the crew seems to have been a bad one, the experience has changed her for the better. The Charlotte who first boarded the ship was only concerned about herself. Through this experience, she has learned to think more about others. This is illustrated by the fact that she never reveals that Zachariah is still alive, even when it might mean getting herself out of trouble.

Zachariah is just now figuring out that Jaggery saw him during the storm. Perhaps he should have realized it sooner, since the captain looked right at him. Jaggery, as the captain of a ship, would be aware of the sailor's trick of faking one's death by throwing a stuffed hammock in the ocean. He would be unlikely to see Zachariah and think he was seeing a ghost. Zachariah may have thought the storm hid his features, or his old age may have made him less sharp and more forgetful. More likely, it is simply that the author chose to reveal this memory at this time to further the plot.



Chapter 20

Chapter 20 Summary

Charlotte tells Zachariah that Jaggery hides the key to the gun safe behind the picture of his daughter. Zachariah plans to try and get Jaggery out of his cabin, so that Charlotte can sneak in and steal the key. This way, if Charlotte gets caught, Zachariah still has a chance to steal the key. Once the crew controls the firearms, they will be able to succeed in a rebellion. Charlotte is nervous, but she accepts the mission. She will only follow through with the plan if the crew is made aware of who really killed Hollybrass. Zachariah sneaks off to inform the other men, and while he is gone, Charlotte thinks about her family and imagines telling them about her adventures. Zachariah returns with Mr. Keetch. Charlotte is not excited to see Keetch, but she changes her mind after he tells her that she has his support. Keetch informs them that Jaggery believes they will be reaching America in a few days, and that is why he is rushing to hang Charlotte.

Keetch goes to inform the rest of the crew. Time passes, and Zachariah fetches Charlotte once the time is right. It is the middle of the night, and Charlotte will be hung first thing in the morning. Zachariah informs her that Keetch is making sure Jaggery stays away by causing the ship's wheel to become stuck. Jaggery will need to oversee its repair. As Charlotte sneaks towards Jaggery's cabin, she passes up her old room. As she does, she thinks back to her first day on the ship and remembers when she heard two men talking outside her room. She remembers the voices and tries to figure out who the men were, but she cannot figure it out. She reaches Jaggery's cabin and opens the door. There to greet her is Jaggery himself.

Chapter 20 Analysis

This chapter requires the reader to remember two details from earlier in the book. First, Charlotte saw where Jaggery hid the key to the gun safe when he learned of the crew's round robin. Secondly, the reader must remember the conversation between the two unidentified men outside Charlotte's room. Given the surprise at the end of this chapter, it is clear that those two men must have been Jaggery and Keetch. Looking back, it seems odd that Jaggery got along better with Keetch, and yet for seemingly no reason, Jaggery strips Keetch of his title and forces him to become one of the crew. Since Jaggery would no longer have Charlotte to inform him about the crew, Jaggery puts Keetch in a position to spy for him. Once again, Jaggery proves that while he is not an honorable or kind individual, he is smart. He has easily outsmarted the crew.

When Charlotte daydreams about telling her family all about her adventures, she imagines that they will be proud of her decisions. However, the reader has to wonder if they truly would be happy with Charlotte. While her parents might be pleased to see their daughter as a moral and honorable person, they would have a hard time accepting that



their child acted in unrefined and unladylike ways. She wears tattered sailing clothes, climbs the mast of the ship, lives with grown men and disrespects a refined gentleman. All of this may cause a lot of sorrow for Mr. and Mrs. Doyle.



Chapter 21

Chapter 21 Summary

Charlotte is shocked as Jaggery calmly invites her to come in and sit down. He informs her that Keetch was spying for him even before she boarded the ship. Through Keetch, Jaggery knew that the crew was keeping passengers and other sailors away from the Seahawk. He knew that Cranick was aboard as a stowaway, and he knew that Zachariah was faking his death. Jaggery even knows that Charlotte is there to get the key. He admits to killing Hollybrass. He framed Charlotte because she was bringing disruption to life on the ship and undermining him. Claiming that once she is gone everything will be back in order, he lights a candle to reveal that all the once-fine items are now bent and broken. The items were damaged in the storm, but Jaggery has fixed them well enough that they appear to be in perfect condition with the lights off.

Jaggery gives Charlotte three choices. She can get the guns and carry out her plan. He warns that the crimes she has committed will reach those on land. She can choose to go back to acting like the young lady she was when she boarded the ship, and with this offer he brings out her dresses. The third choice is to take her punishment at dawn. She refuses to choose and walks out of Jaggery's cabin. Outside, Keetch has Zachariah tied up, and the rest of the crew is lined up to watch the conflict. Jaggery comes out of his cabin with a pistol, yelling to the crew that Charlotte tried to murder him and would have eventually murdered everyone. Charlotte denies his claims and reveals that Jaggery murdered Hollybrass. While the two yell at each other, the rest of the crew backs off and avoids getting involved. Jaggery chases Charlotte around the ship until he finally corners her. Jaggery tries to shoot her and misses. He then lunges towards her, and just as he does the ship plunges, causing Jaggery to fall off the side and into the ocean, never to be seen again. Charlotte takes a knife from a member of the crew and cuts Zachariah free. Zachariah addresses the crew, saying they need to appoint a new captain. He nominates Charlotte since she was able to do what all of them combined could not.

Chapter 21 Analysis

In this chapter, Jaggery's cabin acts as a symbol for how Charlotte now views Jaggery. When Charlotte entered the cabin for the first time, she was in awe of the many fine things displayed. The first time she meant Captain Jaggery, Charlotte was impressed by his refined, gentlemanly ways. Now, the objects in the cabin have become damaged and lost their luster. The average person would throw them away instead of using them as decorations. Similarly, Charlotte sees that Jaggery is twisted and he has lost his luster. Charlotte now views Jaggery as a foul, violent man, instead of a chivalrous gentleman. The cabin appears to be in perfect order when viewed in dim lighting, just as Jaggery appeared, at first glance, to be a gentleman. Charlotte's first impression of Jaggery was of a man who reminded her of her father. Just as the correct lighting in the



cabin reveals its true conditions, Charlotte's observations of Jaggery have revealed his true character.

The choices that Jaggery gives Charlotte, and her actions, reveal a lot about her character. The first choice, carrying out her plans to overthrow Jaggery, is unacceptable. While Charlotte has conspired against the captain, going through with the plan would mean that she is no better a person than Jaggery. Through carrying out this plan, Charlotte would be acting with a violent nature similar to that of Jaggery's. Charlotte is unwilling to compromise her character even if it means ridding herself of an evil man. The second choice would cause her to side with Jaggery and become the girl she was when she first boarded the Seahawk. Obviously, Charlotte has learned too much to go back to the narrow-minded life she once lived. The third choice, being hung, would accomplish nothing. Instead of choosing within Jaggery's limits, Charlotte displays her powerful character by making her own decision.

Once again, the crew fails to take a stand during the argument between Charlotte and Jaggery. They seem unable to make a decision or carry out any task without first being ordered to do so. Jaggery, a power-hungry leader, commands the Seahawk as if he has control over the water itself. Thus, it is ironic that he dies in the very sea he claims to rule.



Chapter 22

Chapter 22 Summary

Charlotte is made captain but Zachariah actually oversees the Seahawk. Charlotte even refuses to move into Jaggery's cabin, deciding instead to live and work as she did before. Jaggery and Hollybrass's deaths are recorded in the ship's log as heroic lives lost during the hurricane. Soon, the crew learns that they are close to port, and hours later they see land off in the distance. Charlotte fears that those on land will learn of the events that took place in the ship. Zachariah assures her that everyone involved will keep quiet, and those on land will care little for the deaths of a few sailors.

Finally, after two months, the Seahawk rests at its destination. Charlotte changes into her dress and finds it very uncomfortable, but she knows she must never wear the sailing clothes again. Charlotte sees her family waiting for her on the dock. After a quick goodbye to the crew, since they formally said their tearful goodbye the night before, Charlotte reunites with her family. Her parents and siblings remark at her tattered appearance, and Charlotte tells them about the storm that killed the captain and first mate. They go back to their house and have breakfast. Her parents comment how hard the voyage must have been for her, and Charlotte tells them about the sailors and working on the ship. Her family seems disturbed. Not wanting to hear any more, her father orders her to take a bath and rest. Two of the maids assist her in this, and Charlotte tries to make friends with them. They refuse in fear of making her father angry. Charlotte's journal is taken down to her father, and with the exception of the sailing clothes, the contents of her trunk are taken away to be given to the poor. Cleaned and changed, Charlotte sits on the bed thinking about the Seahawk.

Charlotte's parents ask to see her, and as she enters the parlor she sees that her journal is being burned in the fire. Her father goes on to tell her that, after reading the journal, he is highly disappointed with her obviously false tale, as well as the spelling and grammar used to write it. He tells her that he never wants to discuss her voyage ever again, and then he sends her to her room for an extended period of time. After days of being penned up in her room, spent rewriting her journal in the margins of other books, Charlotte convinces the maid to bring her a newspaper every day. One morning, she sees a notification of the Seahawk's next voyage. From that point until the day before the Seahawk is to set sail, Charlotte pretends to be the daughter her parents expect. Then that night, Charlotte puts on her sailing clothes, sneaks out of the house and reunites with Zachariah aboard the Seahawk, which will now be her home.

Chapter 22 Analysis

For two months, the Seahawk was Charlotte's home, and the sailors were her family. She had the freedom to be the person she wanted to be, and the crew accepted her. She learned a different way of being, one that appreciated character over appearances.



The friendships she made during that time were unlike any she had before. While she once held her real family in high regard, she now sees them as being more concerned with refined living than with love, friendship or the wellbeing of others. Jaggery is more like her father than she had thought, as Charlotte now sees how uncaring and power-hungry her father is. She has tasted freedom and felt love from people who truly care about her. Because of this, it is impossible for her to go back to her old life. In order to be happy, Charlotte must run back to Zachariah and the Seahawk and live her life as a sailor.



Characters

Charlotte Doyle

Charlotte is a thirteen-year-old girl who is the daughter of a wealthy shipping businessman. She has become accustomed to a high-class, refined way of living. Her parents send her to England to a private girl's school so that she can learn to become a proper young lady. At the beginning of the book, she is done with school, and she is headed to her parents' home in America. While her wealthy family has allowed her to have many opportunities, she has yet to experience many things. As a girl, she has been sheltered from seeing many things in the real world. This has caused her to be very narrow-minded about people and things that seem to be much different from her so-called proper lifestyle. Charlotte is a kind girl, who stands up for what she believes, and at the beginning of the book she believes that the only good people are high-class individuals such as Jaggery. She sees members of the crew as uncivilized scum that cannot be trusted. This is what she has been taught her whole life up until this point. The fact that she is rude to the men is not entirely her fault. It is how she has been conditioned to think.

As time passes on the Seahawk, Charlotte discovers that the crewmembers are good, caring people even if they are not "gentlemen." She also learns that a high-class gentleman such as Jaggery is not necessarily a moral human being. Charlotte grows up during her trip. She boards the ship a girl, and by the end is a young lady. She learns that the value of a person does not depend on their social class, but rather on that person's character and interactions with others. Her time spent aboard the Seahawk allows her to see that her parents are no better than Jaggery. Charlotte finds her voice and stands up for herself. During the time period in which this story is set, a girl from a rich family was supposed to be seen and not heard. She had no rights and no responsibilities, and she was treated like a possession owned by her father. A girl was often seen as a burden on the family, and she was given a proper education so that someone would want to marry her. Charlotte is not supposed to think for herself, only do what she is told. During the voyage, she learns to make her own decisions and question authority. She breaks all the rules regarding what a girl should act like.

Zachariah

Zachariah is an old black man who as a young boy ran away from home in search of adventure. He has spent most of his life sailing aboard ships. He is very knowledgeable not only about life aboard a ship, but in many different areas. He is the ship's cook, tailor and surgeon, and he has several other jobs. While Zachariah is an experienced sailor, his old age makes it almost impossible for him to carry out his work like the rest of the crew, and so Jaggery hires him as the ship's cook. Even though he is an old man, he displays moments of strength. He survives the severe beating from Hollybrass and



Jaggery, and during the hurricane, in the strong wind and rain, he climbs the mast and catches Charlotte before she falls.

Zachariah's greatest character trait is his ability to see people for who they truly are. He sees Jaggery not as a great gentlemanly leader, but as an angry power-hungry individual. While the rest of the crew views Charlotte as no better a human being than Jaggery, Zachariah knows that Charlotte is a kind and caring person. Later, she displays the characteristics that Zachariah knows she has all along. Charlotte views Jaggery like a father, but it is Zachariah who truly shows father-like qualities towards Charlotte. He loves her unconditionally and is always there to support her. Zachariah and Charlotte have a strong connection because they are both outsiders. She is a young high-class girl, and he is an old black man. Both are on a ship full of rough and rugged white men. The fact that both are such outcasts draws them together.

Captain Andrew Jaggery

Jaggery is the captain of the Seahawk, a merchant ship. Jaggery is a refined gentleman who enjoys elegant things. He is very hard on his crew, feeling that they are uncivilized and without his direction there would be chaos. He pushes the crew to the limit. He even beats Cranick so bad that he loses his arm, all because he did not tie a knot correctly. Jaggery views the crew as almost slaves, and this causes the crew to hate him with a passion. However, they are still scared of him, and Jaggery uses this to his advantage. He is able to squash the crew's rebellion and maintain control because of how much the crew fears him.

At the beginning of the story, Jaggery acts like a polite gentleman. He is kind and proper, causing Charlotte to compare him to her father. He enjoys a high-class lifestyle much different than that of the crew. As the plot progresses, little by little, Jaggery begins to show his mean, violent side. On the Seahawk, he is king, and what he says goes. Anyone who tries to question him is punished, and he murders Cranick and Hollybrass, beats Zachariah and tries Charlotte.

Captain Jaggery is a smart man who trusts no one. He knows that he is not well liked and makes sure that he is aware of everything that is said and done aboard his ship. He has Mr. Keetch act as a spy even before the voyage begins. He also has Charlotte spy for him. By having two spies, he will know if one of his spies is not trustworthy because their stories do not match up. Jaggery thinks quickly when he kills Hollybrass and frames Charlotte while the ship is in the middle of a hurricane. Ultimately, Jaggery is defeated when Charlotte stands up to him and shows no fear. This causes Jaggery to let his guard down and fall to his death into the ocean.

Mr. Grummage

Grummage is hired by Mr. Doyle to see that Charlotte boards the Seahawk on time. When he learns that Charlotte will be the only girl on the ship, he shows no concern for her wellbeing. He is focused on finishing what he was paid to do and moving on.



Mr. Hollybrass

Captain Jaggery's first mate, Hollybrass loyally carries out the captain's orders, but during the course of the voyage Hollybrass argues with Jaggery about his decisions. During the storm, Jaggery murders Hollybrass and blames it on Charlotte.

Mr. Keetch

The second mate of the Seahawk, Keetch loses his rank after Jaggery becomes upset with him as a result of the failed rebellion. Little does the rest of the crew know that Keetch has been used as a spy by Jaggery since the very beginning, telling Jaggery everything that is happening behind the scenes.

Mr. Barlow

Barlow is the crewmember who brings the trunk to Charlotte's room when she first boards the ship. During that time, he tries to convince her that she should not be on the ship. Later, Barlow takes Charlotte below the deck to retrieve things from her trunk. Again he tries to warn her about the captain, but she will not listen.

Cranick

A sailor who lost his arm as a result of being beaten by Jaggery on a prior voyage, Cranick sneaks onto the Seahawk in order to lead a rebellion. The rebellion falls apart when Jaggery shoots Cranick dead.

Mr. Fisk

Fisk is the crewmember that takes over the cooking after Zachariah "dies." Charlotte convinces Fisk that she should join the crew.

Mr. Doyle

A wealthy businessman working for a shipping company, Mr. Doyle is a refined gentleman who wants and expects the best from his children. He expects nothing less than perfection.

Bridget

A maid around Charlotte's age, Charlotte tries unsuccessfully to befriend Bridget. Charlotte does convince Bridget to sneak Charlotte copies of the newspaper.



Objects/Places

Docks of Liverpool, England

Here, Charlotte boards the Seahawk and begins her adventurous voyage.

The Seahawk

The ship, captained by Captain Jaggery, takes Charlotte from Liverpool, England to Providence, Rhode Island.

Figurehead

Located at the front of the ship, under the bowsprit, is a carving of a seahawk. This is a symbol for Charlotte, as it is a peaceful bird that looks like a powerful angel.

Captain's Cabin

Jaggery spends most of his time in his private quarters. His quarters are decorated with many fine things, and this impresses Charlotte during her visits.

Galley

The kitchen of the Seahawk is where Zachariah prepares the crew's meals.

Forecastle

The forecastle is the living quarters of the crew. At first, Charlotte avoids entering it. It is where she finds the round robin and where she lives when she becomes a sailor.

Top Steerage

Barlow goes under the deck to take Charlotte to the top steerage so she can get things out of her trunk.

Brig

The ship's jail, the brig is where Cranick hides before the failed rebellion and where Charlotte is held before and after her trial.



Royal Yard

Charlotte must climb to the royal yard on the mainmast in order to be accepted as a member of the crew.

Forward Mast

Charlotte climbs the forward mast during the storm in order to cut the sail away. This is where she first sees Zachariah after he is supposed to be dead.

Bowsprit

The bowsprit is the mast in front of the ship where Charlotte must untangle one of the sails.

Docks of Providence, Rhode Island

Providence, Rhode Island is the destination of the Seahawk, where Charlotte is reunited with her family.

The Doyles' House

Located in Providence, Rhode Island, the house is a massive homestead complete with servants. The Doyles own such a big house as a result of the power and wealth of Mr. Doyle.

Charlotte's Trunk

The trunk contains all of Charlotte's belongings and is so heavy that someone must carry it to the ship. It is so big that it must be stored in the top steerage.

Dirk

A dirk is the type of knife that Zachariah gives Charlotte so that she will be able to protect herself if necessary. Jaggery uses this knife to kill Hollybrass and make it look like Charlotte committed the crime.

Round Robin

A round robin is a piece of paper with a circle. Coconspirators sign within the circle, which confirms a pact. The circle assures that no man's name is first or last, and that all



are equally responsible for the pact. The crew of the Seahawk sign a round robin to overthrow the captain. Captain Jaggery warns Charlotte to be on the lookout for a round robin. During her first visit to the forecandle, Charlotte finds the round robin that stands for a pact to overthrow Jaggery.

Sailor Clothes

Zachariah makes sailor clothes and gives them to Charlotte as a gift, so that she can move around the ship more easily. At first she refuses to wear the clothes because it is not ladylike, but she puts them on when she decides to join the crew. The clothes become a symbol for Charlotte's change from a narrow-minded rich girl to an honorable, caring young woman.

Charlotte's Journal

Charlotte writes in her journal on a daily basis to record what takes place on the ship. After her father reads the journal, he throws it in the fire, thinking that she made up the whole thing.

Carved Head

Cranick places the carved head, probably made from a coconut, in the top steerage to scare Charlotte.

Handkerchief

A handkerchief belonging to Charlotte is found in the dead hand of Mr. Hollybrass, making it appear that Charlotte had something to do with his death.



Setting

The ports of Liverpool and Providence are touched on at the beginning and end of *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle*. Neither city is described in detail, although the multitude of ships crowded together at Liverpool is vividly presented. Nearly all the novel's action take place on the *Seahawk*, a brig. Avi provides a diagram of the ship in an appendix to the novel, and this should help readers follow where the action takes place. Although Avi takes care to explain nautical terms as they come up in the narrative, the illustration of the ship clarifies where the different parts of the ship are to be found.

The *Seahawk* is a two-masted ship, with a mainmast and a foremast. Each mast consists of tree trunks bound together; it takes three stages of trunks, one upon another, to stretch the masts to their full heights. In the course of the narrative, Charlotte will learn to scale these masts to their full extent, hundreds of feet above the ship's deck, and she will learn all of their rigging. The rest of the ship is divided into storage areas for cargo, work areas, and living quarters. Charlotte finds herself crammed into a room so small that she cannot stand up in it—even though she herself is small—and her cabin has no room for storing her clothes. Her cabin is near the captain's quarters, a large room with many comforts. The crew is quartered in the forecabin, near the bow of the ship; they are crammed together with little room for movement or privacy.



Social Sensitivity

Avi's insistence on a modern feminist's point of view on the significance of the events on the Seahawk is jarringly anachronistic, although it probably accounts for much of the acclaim for *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle* and for much of its appeal to young people, for whom the feminism is likely to be familiar. Charlotte Doyle is a repressed youngster, although she does not know it. Her education has been aimed primarily at her becoming a proper gentlewoman who knows all the graces that upper-class women are supposed to know. Most of her development in *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle* involves her trying to apply the rules for conduct that she has learned to a tense, eventually desperate, situation on the Seahawk. When she becomes convinced that she was at fault for the crew being short two men, although events eventually reveal that Captain Jaggery had been informed by Keetch of a brewing mutiny and that Charlotte's supposed revealing of the conspiracy was merely a smoke screen that protected Keetch from discovery by his crew mates, Charlotte chooses to take the place of a missing crew member and do the job of a sailor. To her way of thinking, this is the responsible action for her to take. It is when she undergoes her training that the feminist themes become clear, even heavy-handed.

"I came to feel a sense of exhilaration in it [her new life] such as I had never felt before," she declares. In the hard work of being a sailor she discovers in herself strength, eventually feeling liberated from the social rules that govern how a woman is supposed to conduct herself.

In the latter part of the novel, Captain Jaggery and Charlotte's father become spokesmen for a patriarchal overclass that is determined to prevent women from having happy lives. In fact, Captain Jaggery's remarks reveal that keeping women in submissive roles is part of the overclass's effort to keep the lower classes in their places, calling it social order: But you, Miss Doyle, you interfered with that order. You presumed to meddle where you had no right. Look at the way you acted! The way you've dressed! It doesn't matter that you are different, Miss Doyle.

Don't flatter yourself. The difficulty is that your difference encourages them to question their places. And mine. The order of things.

Thus Charlotte's experiences are meant to reveal a vast social conspiracy in which privileged men preserve their privileges by forcing women and, by implication, their natural allies, working-class men, into a social order that has been created to preserve upper-class male advantages.

For unclear reasons, Charlotte expects her father, someone as devoted to order as Jaggery, to approve of her conduct on the Seahawk. His reaction is predictably authoritarian, and he is never given a chance in the narrative to become humanized. He seems more like a beast protecting its territory than a human being. On the other hand, his reaction to Charlotte's journal is echoed in the writings of others and has an authentic ring to it. He cannot accept the idea that someone of Jaggery's class would



behave in the manner Charlotte describes, and he burns her diary, declaring it bad fiction. Even Agatha Christie's Hercule Poirot, a man of privilege himself, notes that in the class-stratified society of twentieth-century England, criminals are apt to be undiscovered if they belong to an upper class deemed above reproach because of its exalted station.

Charlotte's fleeing to the Seahawk the night before it is supposed to leave Providence fails to be convincing on the level of the novel's social concerns. It is a typical ending for a young adult book, satisfying a youngster's desire for adventure, and rounding out a plot in which Charlotte has found joy in sailing. As vicarious satisfaction for a reader's desire for adventure, the ending works well. On the social level, it strains to make sense. The ship's sailors had begrudgingly accepted Charlotte as one of them—a feminist victory. Yet, when push came to shove, they were willing to see her convicted of a crime they believed someone else had committed and they would have cooperated in her hanging, unjust though they believed it to be. Their excuse that Zachariah, who they believed to be the murderer, had been one of them longer than Charlotte had and therefore was more deserving of their loyalty is a slap at feminism, even though Charlotte accepts the rationalization. In any purely male profession that a woman joins, she will be the newcomer. The claim of older loyalties is merely an excuse for continuing to discriminate against newcomers—women.

When Charlotte flees to the Seahawk, she flees to adventure and a life in which she feels free of the social restrictions of her upbringing, but she also flees to men who will sacrifice her first of all; in such a situation, rationalizing turning her over to her father's representative in England after the ship arrives seems probable.

Literary Qualities

The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle is told in the first person by the character Charlotte Doyle. The advantages of having her tell her own story include having a youthful voice speak to the novel's young audience and providing a sense of discovery as the plot advances. Charlotte is as unfamiliar with sailing ships as the novel's audience is likely to be, and this provides a good reason for her to explain the different parts of the ship as she encounters them.

Thus, readers are kept in the light on the different aspects of the ship and shipboard life in a manner that seems natural and unobtrusive. On the other hand, the use of Charlotte as narrator mutes some of the novel's suspense. From the beginning, it is clear that Charlotte is looking back on events in her past. Therefore, when, for example, she is climbing to the main-royal yard and even slips and dangles upside down, there is no doubt about her survival. When she is threatened by hanging, the only suspense is in how she will survive, because her survival is a certainty.



Themes

Freedom From an Oppressive Authority

As a young girl from a wealthy family, Charlotte Doyle is not allowed to be a freethinking individual. She is told what to wear, what to say and how to think. Every aspect of her life is predetermined. She is a possession, owned by her family, and she is most likely seen as a burden that they will only be free of if they are able to marry her off. Charlotte, living in a bubble as a result of her upbringing, is unaware of her lack of freedom. She has been conditioned into thinking that a refined lifestyle is the only satisfying and rewarding way to live.

Once she steps aboard the Seahawk, a whole new world opens before her, and it is just a matter of time before Charlotte realizes how restricting her life up to that point has been. Mr. Doyle and Captain Jaggery are practically the same person. Charlotte views Jaggery as a father-like figure because Jaggery and her father live similar lifestyles and try to uphold the same values. However, Charlotte comes to hate Jaggery and truly believes that her father would support her dislike for Jaggery. In fact, her father reprimands her for the disrespect she describes in her journal. By the end of her voyage, Charlotte has experienced true freedom, and she is not satisfied to go back to a life that allows anything less than that. When she returns to her family's home, Charlotte realizes how restricting it is. She is even forced to stay in her room like a prisoner. Charlotte runs away from the oppressive environment of her family's home and back to the place where she experienced true freedom and friendship.

The crewmembers of the Seahawk are obviously under the oppressive authority of Captain Jaggery. However, their oppression is slightly different from that of Charlotte's. Unlike Charlotte, the crew is well aware from the beginning that someone else is controlling them. When Charlotte becomes aware of her oppression, she begins to stand up against Jaggery whenever confronted. The crew, on the other hand, quickly falls back into their place when they encounter a similar confrontation. They have also been conditioned to follow, and being much older than Charlotte, they have been exposed to this conditioning much longer. It is much harder for the crew to stand up for themselves. Ironically, in order to be free from an oppressive leader, the crew needs another leader to head the uprising for them, and Charlotte turns out to be that person.

Judging Character

Like Charlotte, just about everyone is guilty of judging people based on their appearance and lifestyle, instead of their character and personality. At the beginning of the book, Charlotte views Captain Jaggery as a proper gentleman and a fine human being. She bases her view on the fact that he shows signs of a good education, dresses well and has refined manners. None of his personal character traits factor in to her view. Later on in the story, Charlotte's view of Jaggery changes, and she comes to disregard



his education, clothes and manners. This change is due to Charlotte's realization that Jaggery is a power-hungry man who is only concerned about himself. Charlotte is able to look past Jaggery's false outer layer and see what he really is.

Charlotte is also quick to judge Zachariah and the rest of the crew. When she first boards the Seahawk, she can only see what the crew lacks. They lack an education, money, knowledge of religion, manners and a concern for their own hygiene. Charlotte wants little to do with the crew because she feels that they have no value beyond working on the ship. However, with very little to do, Charlotte begins to interact with the Zachariah and the rest of the crew, and she discovers how kind and caring the men really are. Charlotte is also able to look at herself and see that she is not a good person based on her up-bringing alone. By giving up her fine dresses for the sailing clothes, she strips away her false outer layer so that she can prove to everyone, including herself, that she truly is a good person.

Home & Family

At the beginning of this book, Charlotte has one goal: to reach her home and be reunited with her family. She hates the living conditions of the Seahawk, but if that is what will bring her home she will find the courage to bare it. Then a strange thing happens. Charlotte grows closer and closer to the crew, especially Zachariah. This thirteen-year-old girl sleeps in the same area as a large group of sailors. Charlotte feels closer to Zachariah than she has ever felt to anyone else. She feels safe and loved around Zachariah. By the end of the Seahawk's two-month voyage, Charlotte has grown so close to the crew that she considers them family. She is sad to leave, assuming she will never see them again.

After the Seahawk reaches its destination, Charlotte finally reaches her original goal of getting back home. However, once there, her home does not feel loving and comfortable. Her parents do not display the concern and caring that Charlotte wants. Soon Charlotte realizes that the place she wanted to reach so badly is no longer the place she wants to be. When she runs away, she is not running away from home; she is running back to it. She is not leaving her family; she is reuniting with them. The Seahawk is her home, and the crew is her family. These are the people who truly show her love and support.



Themes/Characters

Avi's young characters tend to be repressed people who, during the course of a story, slowly break free of restrictions society has placed on their conduct. For instance, in *The Man Who Was Poe* (please see separate entry), Edmund Brimmer, the young male protagonist, is forever telling himself to defer to what grownups tell him to do; he is even unable to take action without being told to do so. During the novel, he learns to take his own initiative and to act on his own best motives, much as Charlotte Doyle does in *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle*. Not all of Avi's young characters are like this, even though they usually are. For example, in *Nothing but the Truth* (please see separate entry), ninth-grader Philip Malloy yields to his own worst nature, creating a bitter tragedy.

Also typical of Avi's fiction are character studies. He is one of the best authors at working out the intricacies of personality, and much of the appeal of his books lies in how he shows youngsters developing their own personalities by active engagement with their worlds. In *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle*, much of the narrative is an exposition of Charlotte's severely repressed personality. She is almost not an individual person, instead being a model shaped by grownups to do as grownups see fit.

The attraction of Captain Jaggery for her is that he is the sort of grownup Charlotte knows best; he is a dominating dictator quick to praise her submissiveness and quick to tell her how she should behave. The irony of her relationship emphasizes its unhealthiness; we readers are likely to realize early on that Jaggery is insane, and we are likely to note that Charlotte is so extremely repressed that she cannot see anything unusual in Jaggery's talk or behavior.

Accordingly, Charlotte's observations of those around her are at first affected by the prejudices that she has been taught. According to the rules of conduct she has learned, people in authority are not only to be deferred to but to be admired. Thus she mindlessly admires Jaggery, thinking of him as a surrogate father. When she looks at the crew, she says, "They were, in all, as sorry a group of men as I had ever seen: glum in expression, defeated in posture, with no character in any eye save sullenness. They were like men recruited from the doormat of Hell." It does not occur to her that they look as they do because of ill treatment.

Charlotte is at first unaware of it, but events on the *Seahawk* are conspiring to press her into growing up from the moment a sailor approaches her in her cabin and suggests that she should leave the ship before it leaves Liverpool. Through a passivity she has learned from her schooling, she fails to take action in time to escape the ship, finding herself already at sea by the time she has decided that she must leave.

By the novel's end, she will be prepared to take quick, decisive action when necessary.

Her education in self-determination begins with Zachariah, "an old black man who, in the light of the little lantern he was holding, looked like the very imp of death in search of



souls": His clothing, what I could see of it, was even more decrepit than the previous sailor's, which is to say, mostly rags and tatters. His arms and legs were as thin as marlinspikes. His face, as wrinkled as a crumpled napkin, was flecked with the stubble of white beard. His tightly curled hair was thin. His lips were slack. Half his teeth were missing. When he smiled—for that is what I assumed he was attempting—he offered only a scattering of stumps.

But his eyes seemed to glow with curiosity and were all the more menacing because of it.

Zachariah tries to establish a bond between himself and Charlotte, insisting that they have important characteristics in common. "And you, the sole girl, and I, the one black, are special on this ship," he insists.

At first, Charlotte resists any such notion, but the confining dimensions of a ship at sea force her to encounter and even talk with Zachariah and other members of the crew. "I've always been social by nature," she notes. She even says that "I learned the men's language, their ways, their dreams."

It is this coming to recognize Zachariah and the other crew as sympathetic human beings that marks the beginning of her maturation into an independent thinker. It is at this stage that she has one of her most important insights: "Captain Jaggery and Mr. Zachariah! Such unlike men! And yet, quite suddenly I was struck by the thought that each of them, in his own way, was courting me." She may not yet realize why each was courting her, but the realization that they are represents her stepping out of her small, repressed world and taking a look at herself from the point of view of others.

In spite of her affection for Zachariah, Charlotte remains very much the welltrained upper-class girl for most of the novel. When mutiny seems to be brewing, she notes that "It was to him [Captain Jaggery] I owed my allegiance—by custom—by habit—by law." This attitude changes because not only is Jaggery crazy, but he is a fool.

When the mutiny occurs, he puts it down vigorously, showing much courage as he does so. He also shows that he has nothing but contempt for the crew, whom he thinks of as dogs. He insists that Charlotte watch as he kills a stowaway and then as he has one of the men whipped as punishment for the mutiny. Of all the choices he has, he selects Zachariah for punishment, who is not only Charlotte's friend ("Being black, he [Zachariah] was the butt of much cruel humor, which aroused my sympathy," she says) but the ship's cook. Only a fool chooses the ship's cook for a punishment so severe that he is likely to die from it. A captain needs good nourishment as much as the crew does.

Charlotte's affection for Zachariah, as well as her deep yearning for companionship on the ship, revolutionizes her thinking. She reasons that she is at fault for the crew being short a member (it turns out that she is not responsible because second mate Keetch had been keeping Jaggery informed of events all along), and she reasons that she should act upon her responsibility. It is crucial to the success of the novel that her shift from passive acceptance of Jaggery's cruelty to active defiance of it be credible, and Avi



masterfully has her think through her options in a manner entirely in keeping with her character, with her even believing that her father would approve of her conduct. She then changes from her conservative dresses to the "canvas trousers and blouse" Zachariah had made for her; this is a symbolic moment. The trousers and blouse represent her shift from passivity to action, from repressed personality to liberated personality. Her subsequent acts of courage and daring all reflect her determination to choose for herself what she will do with her life: "And there I was, joyous, new-made, liberated from a prison I'd thought was my proper place!"

Style

Point of View

The book is written entirely in the first person. The narrator is Charlotte, and she tells of her adventure long after it has occurred. This is evident from the last scene of the book, when she once again boards the Seahawk. She writes in a reflective way that shows maturity and hints at a writer who has grown up and experienced many things. Charlotte is aware of her audience, and at times she addresses the reader directly, such when she admits to the reader, with some embarrassment, that at one point she would have done anything to be in Jaggery's good graces once again.

Charlotte relays to the reader her feelings during the events, but she avoids trying to interpret the feelings and motives of the other characters. An example of this, When Hollybrass is whipping Zachariah, Charlotte describes Hollybrass's body language but not what he could be thinking. The author's choice to tell the story in this way helps the reader focus on Charlotte's personal journey and supports the claim that this story is true. Charlotte seems to be speaking directly to the reader, allowing the reader to have a personal relationship with the main character as she faces obstacles throughout the story.

Setting

The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle is set during the early 19th century. The world at large has a similar view to Charlotte's of social class distinction. Girls, like Charlotte, have few rights. The book opens at the busy docks of Liverpool, England, in important sailing port in England during that time, with Charlotte searching for and boarding the Seahawk. With all the cargo and people coming off and on to the other ships, Charlotte is amazed at all things going on around her.

A majority of the book takes place on the Seahawk as it makes its way across the Atlantic Ocean. The ship is both a microcosm of society, and a small community isolated from the rest of the world, where Charlotte can discover new beliefs. The events occur in various parts of the boat, from atop the masts to below the deck where the cargo is kept. Charlotte goes from hating the ship in its filthy, rugged condition, to becoming comfortable enough that she feels right at home. The reader discerns this change in Charlotte, because after awhile Charlotte doesn't mention the filth, especially in the crew's living quarters. The last part of the book is set in the city of Providence, Rhode Island, at the Doyles' large and elegant home. The fact that the Doyle family has many servants and a library full of books is a clear sign that they are quite wealthy. Finally, Charlotte is with her real family, but she feels too confined, despite the home's elegant comfort. Finally, she returns to the Seahawk.



Language and Meaning

Avi uses simple yet descriptive language, making the book accessible to younger readers. The language is very clean, which might seem unrealistic since many of the characters are rough sailors who realistically probably used a lot of foul language. There is a slight difference between how the sailors speak and the speech of the upper-class characters such as Charlotte, Jaggery and the Doyle family. For example, Zachariah often addresses people in the third person, while Jaggery speaks using long complex sentences. Even though some of the characters are from England and the book takes place in another century, Avi does not attempt to imitate accents. This is probably to avoid confusing the young reader.

The author makes sure to describe items such as clothing and the weather conditions. However, in order to maintain the flow of the story, Avi does not take the time to explain the different sailing terms and parts of the ship. Instead, the book contains an appendix of terms. The appendix becomes a useful tool when reading through the story, and the pictures of the ship are a quick and easy-to-understand reference for a reader who may know little or nothing about sailing.

Structure

The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle consists of 22 chapters, a preface and an appendix. The preface gives a very brief preview of the story and stresses that the events of the book are real. While the story is indeed fiction, the preface establishes the author's goal of making the character of Charlotte as real as possible, by letting the reader preview the plot of the story and challenge the label of "fiction." The appendix's purpose is to help the reader understand details on the ship that will be mentioned in the story. Included is an illustration of the ship with the various parts labeled. The appendix also discusses the crew's work shifts and how time is kept by the ringing of bells. Avi includes this information in the appendix instead of in the story itself so as not to disturb the flow of the plot.

The plot is linear, and ninety percent of the book takes place aboard the Seahawk. The rest set in on the dock of Liverpool, England, and in the Doyles' home. The primary focus is on Charlotte's experiences during the two-month timeframe. Charlotte narrates the book and relays conversations that she hears. Many of the chapters end with a cliffhanger, urging the reader to keep reading. For example, chapter twenty ends with Charlotte sneaking into Jaggery's cabin only to find Jaggery waiting for her.



Quotes

"In the shadowy light that twisted and distorted its features I was struck by the notion that this figure looked more like an angry avenging angel than a docile bird." Chapter 2, pg. 12

"Quite all right, Mr. Keetch. If there has to be only one, she's the trump. With her as a witness, they'll not dare to move. I'm well satisfied." Chapter 2, pg. 24

"But when a ship is upon the sea, there's but one who rules. As God is to his people, as king to his nation, as father to his family, so is captain to his crew. Sheriff. Judge and jury. He is all." Chapter 4, pg. 35

"I don't think you will find the crew to your liking, of course, but there will be no harm in being friendly to them. The truth is, you will do *them* a world of good." Chapter 5, pg. 43

"It should be no surprise that the high point of my day was tea with the captain. It was a cherished reminder of the world as I knew it." Chapter 8, pg. 66

"'They shall wake up when we run into a storm.' How right he was. But the storm was - at first - man-made." Chapter 8, pg. 70

"I can only wish I'd act sooner. I forgive the girl. You used her. She did not know better. I forgive my mates too. They know where Captain Jaggery takes command ... no ... god signs on." Chapter 11, pg. 90

"'Oh, Miss Doyle believes in honor,' he'd say. 'She's the very soul of justice!'...Honor! What you mean to say, Miss Doyle, is that you didn't choose to heed his words because Zachariah was an old black who lacked the captain's graces!" Chapter 12, pg. 104

"The captain's trying to move fast. If he sets us right at the hurricane's edge, it'll blow us home like a pound of shot in a two-pound cannon." Chapter 14, pg. 130

"'So we have in you, Miss Doyle,' the captain pressed on, 'an unnatural girl, dressing in unnatural ways, doing unnatural things, owning the very knife that killed Mr. Hollybrass. And Mr. Hollybrass was the man you disliked for flogging your particular black friend - '" Chapter 18, pg. 169

"What you have written is rubbish of the worst taste. Stuff for penny dreadfuls! Beneath contempt. Justice, Charlotte, is poorly served when you speak ill of your betters such as poorly served Captain Jaggery." Chapter 22, pg. 207

"Something Zachariah told me filled my mind and excited my heart: 'A sailor,' he said, 'chooses the wind that takes the ship for safe port ... but winds have a mind of their own.'" Chapter 22, pg. 210

Adaptations

Avi has written several historical novels for young people, with eighteenth-century America being of particular interest to him.

For instance, *The Fighting Ground* is an account of a day in the life of a thirteen-year-old boy during the Revolutionary War. His experience of battle is harrowing and dispels his romantic notions of combat. Since moving there in 1987, Avi's historical fiction has tended to focus on his adopted home town, Providence. In 1988, he set his ghost story *Something Upstairs in Providence*; the ghost of a slave haunts an old house.

The ghosts in *The Man Who Was Poe* are imaginary, products of Poe's feverish, alcohol-clouded mind, but in *The Man Who Was Poe*, Avi captures some of what early nineteenth-century Providence was like. *The Man Who Was Poe* also indicates some of Avi's interest in the history of seamanship: There is a daring chase across bay waters in a storm. In 1977's *Captain Grey*, a boy is kidnapped by pirates, and the novel indicates Avi's early interest in the sea. He revisits the sea more sweepingly in *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle*.

As of the present writing, Universal Studios has contracted to produce a motion picture version of *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle*, but work on it has yet to begin.



Topics for Discussion

1. When did you realize who the head in the hold had to be? What gave him away?
2. Why would Charlotte Doyle think the Seahawk was her home at the end of *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle*?
3. Did the appendix help you to understand what was happening on the Seahawk? Is there more information you would like to have?
4. Charlotte's father is an officer in the company that owns the Seahawk. How likely is she to escape him by joining the crew of the Seahawk?
5. Why would Charlotte believe that her father would understand what happened to her? Why does he not understand?
6. Charlotte is thirteen years old. Is that too young for someone to run off to become a sailor?
7. The crew of the Seahawk were willing to allow Charlotte to hang for a crime they believed someone else committed. Why would Charlotte forgive them? Why would she trust them enough to rejoin them at the end of the novel?
8. Was Charlotte's joining the crew the right thing to do? Should she have stayed in her cabin instead, or done something else?
9. Why does Charlotte not realize that Captain Jaggery is crazy earlier than she does?
10. What does Charlotte mean when she insists that her joining the crew of a ship is not "unnatural" but "unusual" instead?



Essay Topics

How do both Zachariah and Captain Jaggery act as father-figures towards Charlotte?

How is Charlotte different when she first boards the ship and at the end of the story?

Why is the figurehead a symbol for Charlotte?

Compare and contrast Charlotte's biological family and her family on the ship.

How does Charlotte prove herself as a sailor?

Describe the nature of the crew during times of conflict and why they act this way.

What would have become of Charlotte if the crew did not accept her as one of their own?

How might the addition of passengers on the Seahawk have changed Charlotte's experience?



Ideas for Reports and Papers

1. What was the Atlantic sea trade like in 1832? What sort of goods were transported? Why would it take two months for a ship like the Seahawk to sail from England to America?
2. The Seahawk is a brig. What were brigs used for in 1832? Where were they built? Who built them?
3. How were crews hired in England or America in 1832?
4. How many female sailors were there in the Atlantic in the 1830s? What were they like?
5. Charlotte spends much time learning how to handle the rigging on the Seahawk. Describe the ropes and the sails and explain the purpose of each.
6. What were the laws governing the conduct of captain and crew on a merchant ship in the 1830s? Did captains have as much power as Jaggery claims?
7. What sort of future can Charlotte look forward to, assuming she is not returned to her family? What would her pay be? What opportunities for advancement would she have? Would she be able to have a family?
8. If Charlotte stayed with her family in Rhode Island, or if she is returned to her family, what sort of life could she expect to have in Providence? What would she be expected to do?
9. There are references to class differences in *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle*. How important was social class in Rhode Island (or the eastern United States) in 1832? What social classes were there? What was expected of members of each class?
10. How often were captains killed by their own crews in the Atlantic sea trade of Charlotte's era? What was the punishment for killing a captain?
11. What was "natural order" considered to be in Charlotte's era? How did it apply to women?

Further Study

Benson, Sonia. "Avi." In *Something about the Author*. Volume 71. Ed. Diane Telgen.

Detroit: Gale Research, 1993, pp. 7-15.

Benson lists Avi's books and summarizes his life. She includes an informative interview with Avi.

Bradburn, Frances. *Wilson Library Bulletin* 65, 8 (April 1991): 100-101. Praises *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle*.

Burns, Mary M. *Horn Book* 67, 1 (January/February 1991): 65-66. Recommends *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle*.

Jones, Trev. *School Library Journal* 36, 9 (September 1990): 221-22. Unstinting praise for *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle*.

Nathan, Paul. "Perilous Crossing." *Publishers Weekly* 245, 7 (February 16, 1998): 115.

Notes that Universal Studios and Jersey Films have purchased the rights for making *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle* into a motion picture.

Roback, Diane, and Richard Donahue. *Publishers Weekly* 237, 37 (September 14, 1990): 128. *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle* is not to be missed.

School Library Journal 43, 9 (September 1997): 130. A brief note that *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle* is an excellent book.

"Spotlight." *Time for Kids* 3, 9 (November 14, 1997): 1. Mentions audience reaction to *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle* and includes Avi commenting on the difference between writing short fiction and long fiction.

"Wortis, Avi." In *Contemporary Authors: New Revision Series*. Volume 42. Ed. Susan M. Trosky. Detroit: Gale Research, 1994, pp.

485-87. Basically a summary of Benson's article in *Something about the Author*.



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