

The Wine-dark Sea Study Guide

The Wine-dark Sea by Patrick O'Brian

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Plot Summary

Surprise, a British hired vessel of war, is nominally commanded by Tom Pullings, but in actual fact is commanded by Jack Aubrey. The ship's secret mission is to transport Stephen Maturin, an undercover agent of the British Naval Intelligence service, to Peru where he will use British money and local contacts to foment a rebellion against Spanish rule in favor of local autonomy. The mission must remain very secret because Spain is a theoretical ally of Britain. Surprise voyages across the Pacific Ocean, taking a few prizes and having some exciting adventures, before landing Maturin in Peru. One of the ships captured by Surprise contains a Frenchman named Dutourd. Dutourd is a champion of civil rights and equality and his radical ideas of free society are quite appealing to some crewmembers of Surprise.

While Surprise refits in port, Maturin begins his mission of intrigue; meanwhile, Nathaniel Martin, a long-time friend, leaves Surprise due to ill health. For Maturin, all goes well at first and the local conditions seem perfect for an uprising. But then Dutourd is smuggled ashore and begins to decry Maturin as a British agent. Aubrey, fearing for Maturin's safety, attempts to go ashore in an open boat, unfortunately spending several days fighting for survival in heavy weather. Meanwhile, Dutourd is not very efficient but he is quite vocal. Eventually he is snapped up as a heretic by the Spanish Inquisition, but his presence ashore has been destabilizing enough that Maturin's carefully laid plans unravel. Within days, he has become a fugitive and Surprise is no longer welcome.

With assistance from Sam Panda, Aubrey's illegitimate son and local priest, a rendezvous is arranged, and Surprise sails away while Maturin travels overland. Maturin is accompanied by Eduardo, a local guide of great biological knowledge. Maturin makes the voyage with difficulty, the altitude and cold are telling and he loses a few toes to frostbite. However, he finds the travel through the high Andes rewarding as he views numerous new types of animal and plant life. Maturin is finally united with Surprise and the long voyage home begins. Surprise meets a pair of American ships in heavy weather, dense fog, and plentiful icebergs near the point of South America. A running fight ensues and Surprise escapes only later to be struck by lightning. Nearly completely disabled, Surprise begins the arduous voyage to Africa but is fortunately rescued by a passing British ship-of-war who renders assistance and supplies.



Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

His Majesty's hired ship *Surprise* chases Franklin, an American privateer, in the South Pacific. The ships head east and south away from the island of Moahu, where they were recently engaged in political intrigue and military battle. Franklin, smaller and lighter armed, runs and attempts numerous methods of escape. *Surprise's* canny and experienced commander, Captain Jack Aubrey, predicts the Franklin's movements with seeming omniscience. For days the chase ensues, occasional gunfire being exchanged when range permits. Captain Aubrey's personal friend and the ship's surgeon, Stephen Maturin, is aboard and anxious to travel to Peru. Maturin is an intelligence agent for the British Crown and has a mission to perform in Peru—to stir up anti-Spanish feeling and hopefully to help bring about a revolution for local independence. In addition, Maturin greatly desires to lay in a private and considerable stock of coca leaves, a drug to which he is much attached. *Surprise's* first lieutenant is Tom Pullings, a long-term acquaintance of both Aubrey and Maturin; the second lieutenant is West, a disgraced former captain who has had various fortunes and misfortunes while in service aboard *Surprise*. West is in a mental frenzy about whether Aubrey will recommend him for reinstatement in the navy upon arrival in England. He is later overjoyed to learn that Aubrey intends so to do. Aubrey also promotes Grainger as acting lieutenant and raises Sam Norton to acting midshipmen—both men coming from the forecabin—to replace recent losses in the *Surprise's* officers.

As the chase continues, Franklin pumps her freshwater overboard to lighten the ship and hopefully gain an edge in speed. During one particularly close approach to Franklin, Midshipman Reade of *Surprise* contrives to fall overboard and *Surprise* falls off. Aubrey, a powerful swimmer, dives in after Reade, who has only one arm, and rescues him from drowning. At about the same time, a telling shot from Franklin brings down some cordage and spars aboard *Surprise*. There is a real chance that this time Franklin will escape, but Aubrey orders rapid repairs and a resumption of the chase. Meanwhile, the seas have turned to a deep reddish color and have strange cross currents and chop, the wind becomes shifty, but the barometer holds steady. A general foreboding comes over the crew, and even Aubrey expresses ignorance of what it can mean. That evening *Surprise* appears to come under peculiar mortar fire from a distant vessel and Maturin retires below to treat the wounded and burned.

Chapter 1 Analysis

Much of the chapter is devoted to a recounting of the previous novel; nearly all of the primary characters appear in an earlier novel in the series and chapter one therefore presents much background and explanation as to why *Surprise* is chasing Franklin and so forth. Most of this explanation is beyond the scope of the novel's primary narrative, except Dutourd's presence aboard Franklin, which is covered in some detail later in the



novel. Additionally, much of the early development of West proves transient because West dies shortly. Of particular significance is Surprise's already short-handed state and her desperately low stores of water and low stores of food. Because of the low water, the crew is unable to bathe or even wash their clothes in freshwater and uses salt water instead. This leaves clothing crusted in salt and leads to skin lesions wherever clothing constantly contacts and rubs the body—notable in the private areas. Aubrey and Maturin receive rather brief glosses which establish them both as masters within their own spheres—nautical and military for Aubrey; medicine, science, and intelligence work for Maturin.

The novel, the sixteenth in a series of novels that runs to twenty completed and one partially completed novels, focuses on the characters of Aubrey and Maturin. The men have known each other for about thirteen years, having first met around 1800 with the current year being a sort of super-prolonged 1813 (twelve of the twenty novels, nine before the current novel, occur in this super-prolonged 1813, though each novel spans many months—the author's prerogative being to re-write somewhat the history on which his novels are based). In a previous novel, Maturin was given the intelligence job of traveling to South America and entering Peru, there to stir up anti-Spanish sentiment and encourage a local rebellion seeking local autonomy. However, with Spain being a nominal ally of England, the mission is necessarily secret. Aubrey has been striving to get Maturin to Peru for quite a while, with many adventures on the way, the Surprise's recent side trip to Moahu, an entirely fictional island, being only the last example.

Surprise is thus a well-appointed ship with a very experienced crew. She is privately owned by Aubrey, who has recently purchased her from Maturin. Surprise is legally commanded by Pullings due to Aubrey's naval appointment status—but during the novel Pullings acts as first lieutenant to Aubrey's command. The bizarre sea upon which Surprise chases Franklin gives the novel its title and also greatly distresses Aubrey and the crew, who cannot interpret the various signs they are seeing—it would seem to portend a violent storm, but the barometer holds steady. The apparent mortar attack that concludes the chapter provides the final clue to the mystery.



Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

Surprise has sailed into a volcanically active region and a new island has emerged from the sea with a volcanic ash cone some hundred feet high; it rapidly erodes into the surf. The supposed mortars are instead firebombs erupting from the volcano and the bizarre weather is thus explained. All around the ship the parboiled remains of sea creatures float in profusion. Many casualties have occurred and the ship is heavily damaged; one of the severe casualties, West, has received a head wound which proves fatal after several hours. Ship repairs are immediately begun—in the distance, Franklin wallows, apparently completely disabled. After some repairs are made Surprise closes on Franklin and compels her to surrender. Franklin's crew has suffered many deaths and severe injuries, and those capable of work are predominantly drunk. Most of the officers have been killed by ash and falling debris and the ship is heavily damaged. Dutourd, the owner and de facto master of Franklin, boards Surprise and skirts the issue of surrender. After investigating Franklin's papers, Aubrey notes that in legal point of fact Dutourd is a pirate, having no commission or letter of marque. Dutourd is a wealthy French philosopher who has long espoused a stateless, classless society where all men are equal in all things. Finding no broad acceptance in Europe, he had commissioned Franklin to sail him to Moahu, along with several dozen followers. There, he planned to set up his Utopian society as a colony. Along the way, his desire became somewhat muddled, however, and he resorted to privateering to gain income and became involved in Moahu's aboriginal power struggle and politics. Whether Dutourd's Utopian colony could have survived remains an unanswered question.

Meanwhile, Maturin and his assistant, Reverend Nathaniel Martin, go aboard Franklin and begin to administer medical assistance. Surprise's crew works hard to repair Surprise and Franklin. The work extends over several days, and most of the men are worked beyond being merely tired. Many of Franklin's crew volunteer to serve with Surprise and Aubrey soon divides the manpower into two crews, giving Pullings command of Franklin. Franklin is armed with carronades taken from Surprise's ballast, but the water situation is desperate. Many of the crew are suffering from skin lesions caused by clothing rendered stiff and salty by being washed in saltwater.

Chapter 2 Analysis

Surprise captures Franklin without a fight—both ships have been damaged by the volcanic eruption, but Surprise comes through with less damage and more determination. Casualties aboard Franklin are high, particularly among the officers, and the ship's crew responds by binge drinking. Franklin pumped her water stores overboard to lighten the ship and the combined crews now rely solely upon Surprise's already low water and food stores. But Franklin has been privateering with success and her hold is stuffed with valuable cargo. Martin's behavior shows early signs of becoming



peculiar; Martin's mental state will become a major narrative topic in subsequent chapters.

Dutourd has appeared in previous novels in the series and Maturin knows who he is. Dutourd's concepts of a stateless, class-less society are radical for the time. He is ignorant of sailing custom and has no appointment by any sovereign state to pursue privateering—thus, in Aubrey's interpretation, Dutourd is a pirate. Aubrey treats Dutourd as a prisoner, too, giving him courtesy but not sanction. This eventually develops into a major plot element as much of Surprise's crew comes to view Dutour as a type of natural leader. Maturin fears being recognized by Dutourd, as this would seriously complicate his intelligence mission to Peru. Dutourd becomes a major character in the novel, receives much characterization, and his philosophies of equality and egalitarianism are discussed at considerable length in subsequent chapters.

Much of the chapter is devoted to the types and methods of shipboard repair carried out; this trend continues in the next chapter. West's death continues to erode Surprise's officer corps and Aubrey eventually has a group of lieutenants entirely obtained from before the mast. Special note is made of Aubrey's sea observations for Humboldt. Alexander von Humboldt was a historic figure who compiled and published charts of tides, salinity, current, and temperature of the global oceans. In the days of celestial navigation, these charts were of inestimable worth to navigators and explorers of far-flung locales. Aubrey is a devoted adherent to Humboldt's findings and constantly takes his own readings to supplement those made by Humboldt and many hundreds of other mariners. The narrative allusion to the historic process is compelling and interesting.



Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

Henry Vidal, a fore-castle-hand, is promoted to acting lieutenant to fill West's post. The ships' crews are comprised of a mix of old-timers and recent additions, and various ransomed individuals freed from Franklin fill the ranks. Among Surprise's old-time hands are a variety of men from the town of Shelmerston, famous for producing excellent seamen but equally famous for a wide variety of religious beliefs. Among the crews are found adherents of various Christian-like religions including Sethians, Thraskites, and Knipperdollings. The various religious groups share a common hatred of imposed tithes, but are often at odds about things such as the nature of the trinity, infant baptism, the practice of communal property, and polygamy. Ashore, the groups are usually at bitter odds, but aboard ship, they set aside their differences and worship as Anglicans. Aubrey inquires of Martin, regarding the different beliefs of the various sects and receives a rather lengthy reply. Meanwhile, Dutourd makes a nuisance of himself by ignoring various naval traditions and acting as Aubrey's esteemed guest rather than as a suspected pirate. Meanwhile, Surprise and Franklin continue to be repaired and start sailing east. The crews' carpenters and carpenters' mates perform a complex series of tasks to create a new mast.

Martin and Maturin, long-standing friends of intimate acquaintance, begin to suffer minor difficulties in their relationship. Martin withdraws largely from life, confiding in Maturin that he no longer finds interest in seeing new species of birds. Martin writes a lengthy letter to his wife Diana, in which he confides in her his observations of Martin. Maturin sometimes does not send these types of letters, but uses them as a sort of diary instead. Maturin reflects on the events of a few previous months during which a midshipman had smuggled aboard a young woman named Clarissa Harvill. The Surprise had proceeded too far from land when the stowaway was discovered and she thus remained aboard for a considerable period of time. Aubrey caused Martin to marry Clarissa and midshipman Billy Oakes. However, having a woman aboard—especially a young, attractive, and beautiful woman—proved nearly disastrous. Clarissa did not reject the sexual advances of various crew members and within a few weeks was having regular sexual intercourse with a variety of men—including West—causing her new husband a great amount of distress and threatening to ruin the crew's morale. Because Martin was a surgeon's mate and a reverend, he spent much time with Clarissa both above- and below-decks. He had cause for lengthy conversations about intimate subjects and performed several physical examinations upon her. After her departure, Martin had become deeply interested in the diagnosis and treatment of syphilis. Maturin confides to Diana that he suspects Martin had some type of sexual relationship with Clarissa and is now suffering a moral conundrum about being a married Christian reverend on the one hand and a lustful adulterer on the other.



Chapter 3 Analysis

Martin's lengthy relationship with Clarissa fully is detailed in the previous novel in the series (published as *Clarissa Oakes* in England and titled *The Truelove* in the USA). Within the current novel the particulars are largely irrelevant, though Clarissa appears again in subsequent novels in the series. In the current novel, Martin's mental collapse and subsequent physical collapse result from an unspecified transgression of a sexual nature involving the married Clarissa. Martin, himself a married Anglican cleric, condemns his own actions as adultery. However, his inquiries to Maturin about the possibilities of contracting venereal disease by kissing, petting, and other non-penetrative acts rather suggests something less than full sexual intercourse. Maturin briefly even theorizes that Martin's great sexual desire for Clarissa might have caused his mental collapse even in the absence of any actual act of impropriety. Martin's personal withdrawal excludes gradually his closest friends and the rift between Martin and Maturin deepens for several weeks. Like Martin, Aubrey too lusted after Clarissa; unlike Martin he does not trouble himself about it.

The second major theme developed in the novel is the fractured religious beliefs of the crew. In past novels, Aubrey has dealt occasionally with the peculiar beliefs and practices of the Sethians; in the current novel he will have to deal with the Knipperdollings. The actual religious dogmas of the groups are not fully developed, but Martin theorizes about some of their atypical Christian beliefs. The Knipperdollings are philosophically descended from the Levelers and believe in social justice, democratic principles, and freedom in fairly expansive interpretations. Martin's extended discussion of Knipperdolling dogma heavily foreshadows later events. Vidal, promoted to acting lieutenant, is a Knipperdolling. His station aboard ship gives him great power and discretion and also establishes him as the de facto leader of the Knipperdollings aboard ship. This subtle fact becomes enormously significant later in the novel. For his own part, Dutourd finds the Knipperdollings a receptive audience to his own brand of social reform.



Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

Dutourd continues to discuss his democratic and social philosophy with the crew and continues to blunder over the traditions of the navy. He appears to expect Aubrey to welcome him as a friend, whereas in truth Aubrey views him as little better than a pirate. Meanwhile, Martin becomes pedantic and abrasive with Maturin and their friendship becomes quite strained. Repairs to both ships continue and Maturin visits Pullings aboard Franklin, where he is entertained by a quite thorough tour of the ship. Later, Maturin speaks with Vidal, who complains of salt sores on his privates and makes a passing comment about how agreeable Dutourd is as a conversationalist and about how Dutourd's ideology is attractive. For his own part, Maturin avoids Dutourd, afraid that he might be recognized. Later, Maturin sees Martin mixing a dose of medicine and drinking it off; Martin hides the fact that he is self-medicating and becomes even more morose. Maturin continues to write his letter to Diana, concluding that Martin considers himself to be unclean with sin and "persuaded that he is diseased". As the days go by, so the relationship between Martin and Maturin decays to the point of near hostility; Maturin simply retires.

Though developments in the crew are underfoot, Maturin luxuriates in the constant sailing through fine weather and anticipates his arrival in Peru. Maturin dissects various animals. Maturin and Aubrey play music often, and develop their friendship. They particularly discuss Dutourd and his philosophical ideas, which Aubrey refers to as revolutionary and bloody. Maturin disagrees with Dutourd but not as adamantly as Aubrey, though during one dinner Maturin directly attacks Dutourd's championing of Rousseau. Everyone seems to be opposed to slavery, though. Finally, Aubrey summons Dutourd. Dutourd initially is pleased, expecting a pleasant welcome. Instead, Aubrey demands an accounting of Franklin, a review of documents, and a tallying of the prize's worth. Dutourd is taken aback by his sudden great loss of prosperity. Of course, the Surprise's crew, sharing in the monetary award, is happy. The voyage continues.

Chapter 4 Analysis

The chapter continues to develop three major themes. First, the ships continue their voyage and receive constant daily repairs to enhance their functionality. Second, Dutourd ingratiates himself with many of the crew and several officers. Much of the chapter considers the various notions of slavery, freedom, and politics that are held by Dutourd, Aubrey, Maturin, and Martin. Of the men, Aubrey is by far the most conservative, while Dutourd is the most liberal. Dutourd's philosophy seems to Maturin untenable. Third, the relationship between Martin and Maturin disintegrates to the point that Martin is openly abusive and Maturin is wholly withdrawn. It becomes evident that Martin considers himself to be infected with a venereal disease and is self-medicating. Maturin considers a venereal disease to be almost impossible but does not forcefully

approach Martin. Meanwhile, Vidal complains of salt sores in the private regions and this foreshadows Martin's eventual diagnosis.

The narrative device of having Martin write a letter to Diana allows a voyeuristic look into his thought processes without authorial exposition and is quite effective. The previous chapters' development of the Knipperdolling belief, coupled with the unusually high rate of churn in Surprise's crew, heavily foreshadow future difficulties. That Dutourd is intimately connected with Vidal, the de fact Knipperdolling leader, suggests the difficulties will involve both men.



Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

The voyage continues as Aubrey hopes to find and take a prize or two. His desires are answered when a sail is raised. It is an American whaler from New England, returning home with a nearly full load of whale oil. As *Surprise* closes the ship, Maturin watches the whaling operation with much interest. *Surprise* flies the British flag while Franklin flies the American flag—the whaler runs for Franklin, fooled by the deception. The whaler leaves her boats behind, and when they eventually regain the ship, one incensed harpooner kills the whaler's sailing master.

Edward Shelton is an Englishman who is serving aboard the American whaler. Shelton explains that he had joined the American ship prior to the outbreak of war between America and England and is thus not in legal trouble for being a traitor. Shelton knows who Aubrey is and is impressed with Aubrey's reputation. After he is brought aboard the *Surprise*, he volunteers for service, is rated able, and then delivers the startling news that a French privateer is sailing in the area and acting more like a pirate than a privateer. The ship is large and dangerous, but no match for the combined firepower of *Surprise* and Franklin. Shelton is able to discuss the French ship's armament and crew in considerable detail. The captured whaler is crewed and sent off to port to be condemned as a prize. Aubrey immediately sets about to intercept and capture the French ship as a storm develops. Martin calls on the sick berth during rounds and his sick and haggard appearance so startles Maturin that he orders him to bed—later Maturin visits Martin in his tiny cabin and finds him quite ill. Maturin has Martin transferred to the sick berth where he performs an examination on the near-comatose patient. Martin is covered in heavy sores and lesions but Maturin diagnoses them as nothing more than exacerbated salt sores; Martin is not suffering from syphilis—but is nevertheless extremely ill.

During the stormy weather, Franklin and *Surprise* are separated. Franklin draws ahead and encounters *Alastor*, the French privateer, alone. Pullings attacks the heavier ship and engages it in a vicious boarding action. From across the water, *Surprise* hears the booming of guns and makes course to intercept. As *Surprise* arrives, the situation is desperate for Franklin, but taken between the two British ships, *Alastor* is quickly captured. During the boarding action, however, Aubrey is shot in the head and stabbed in the thigh and collapses to the bloody deck.

Chapter 5 Analysis

Aubrey causes the whaler to spread whale oil on the surface of the sea during a choppy blow. This is a well-known and often used technique of calming the ocean's surface in a local area. Maturin's interest in whaling is a long-standing interest and the technical discussions of whaling operations that are offered, though short, are interesting. The



earlier parts of the chapter continue to develop some themes found in previous chapters—Dutourd's popularity with Vidal and others, and Martin's falling out with Maturin. For Martin, the crisis arrives and he physically collapses. Maturin takes him in hand as a physician and quickly realizes Martin's extensive skin lesions are nothing more than very bad salt sores. But something is clearly wrong with Martin as his pulse is erratic and he loses consciousness for prolonged periods. In addition, he is slightly confused and dizzy. But at least he is in competent medical hands.

Developed in parallel with Martin's crisis, Surprise and Franklin encounter Alastor, a French privateer acting as a pirate. Aubrey predicts the encounter will be vicious and violent because Alastor has no legal defense if captured—her officers and crew will be hanged. And the encounter is violent and bloody. Separated by the storm, Franklin finds Alastor and attacks. Surprise is drawn in by the sound of cannon fire. The two-ship duel is a close thing, but Surprise's arrival easily turns the tide. Aubrey leads the boarding charge and goes down almost immediately with severe wounds. He is shot in the head and stabbed in the thigh; of course he survives and recovers. Several other crew are wounded, too, including a severe wound to Barrett Bonden, a long-time character in the series of novels, though in the present novel something of a minor character. The naval combat writing is exciting and dramatic and demonstrates one of the primary reasons why the series of novels has achieved such enduring popularity.



Chapters 6 and 7

Chapters 6 and 7 Summary

In chapter six, Aubrey survives his wounds but has a prolonged recovery. In particular, his eye is much disturbed. During his rounds, Maturin is advised that Vidal is much attached to Dutourd and his philosophy. Martin is beginning a prolonged recuperation, but his improper self-administering of various medicinal compounds has left him severely weakened, suffering from vertigo, and unable to continue at sea. Surprise, Franklin, and Alastor reach port at Callao; Alastor is sold, Surprise is resupplied, and Maturin goes ashore alone. His goal is to stir up a local rebellion for local autonomy. Maturin has requested the Aubrey retain Dutourd aboard ship; meanwhile, Martin is transferred to shore and then to a homeward-bound vessel. Maturin ashore meets Sam Panda, Aubrey's illegitimate son, who is a priest. Sam advises Maturin and sets up several political contacts.

In chapter seven, Maturin begins to make contact with local authorities who may prove favorable to rebellion. His Catholic faith and background assists in this endeavor. Of particular significance is Maturin's contact with Pascual de Gayongos, a local official entrusted with funds and information by the British Naval intelligence service. Gayongos provides much information on the subtleties of local politics and discusses a wide variety of options with Maturin. Meanwhile, Aubrey returns to sea in Franklin, hoping to make some prizes, but instead he is caught in a large storm system that proves trying. He then discovers that Dutourd is not aboard—and has in fact apparently gone ashore some days previously. Knowing only the basic premise of Maturin's mission and also knowing that Maturin desired Dutourd to remain aboard, Aubrey sets out in a small boat for shore to attempt to raise the alarm. However, the weather does not cooperate and the craft is driven to and fro for several days without making any progress. During the disappointing voyage, Aubrey's eye improves dramatically; also, Aubrey ponders and realizes that Vidal must have allowed Dutourd to go ashore.

Chapters 6 and 7 Analysis

Chapter six marks a definitive transition in the novel; the narrative proceeds from the sea of the earlier chapters to the land of the latter chapters. Aubrey becomes less significant and Maturin takes center stage. The direct conflict of ship-versus-ship yields to the complex and subtle world of political intrigue. Much of chapter six wraps up narrative threads begun elsewhere in the novel. Aubrey's injuries are treated and prove tolerable; his eye is much affected but not lost and his other wounds heal well. Martin's medical crisis has passed but he has poisoned himself by incorrectly dosing his supposed syphilis. Instead of ingesting about $\frac{1}{4}$ grain or less of mercuric chloride as a treatment, he has consumed roughly sixteen times that amount. All of his subsequent symptoms—vertigo, confusion, nervousness, sickness—are results of unintentional self-poisoning. The narrative treats Maturin's securing passage for Martin at considerable



length. Sam is Aubrey's illegitimate son from a long-past pre-marital affair with a native woman; Sam is ebony black in color but otherwise looks like a young Aubrey. He resists Spanish rule in principle because it is both tyrannical and supportive of slavery; most of the local religious leaders oppose Spanish rule because of Spain's widespread support of slavery. Sam orients Maturin to the local political landscape and helps set up various meetings. Dutourd's disposition in chapter six is significant, though it appears minor—he is not allowed to go ashore, but Maturin is told that Dutourd has unusually great influence over Vidal, who during Aubrey's convalescence has an unusual degree of authority and latitude. In a rare lapse of judgment, Aubrey ignores the thinly-veiled warning.

Chapter seven continues the transition begun in the previous chapter. Maturin begins his political intrigues in earnest, meeting with his primary local contact Gayongos and discussing many other men. Most of the local men desire local autonomy from Spain for a variety of reasons, chief among them being hatred of slavery and Spanish corruption. Many, of course, also see personal riches accruing from any successful rebellion. Most of the intricacies of Maturin's discussions have no great impact on the overall narrative, and in any event, his intrigues continue through the next chapter of the novel. Meanwhile, Aubrey makes an abortive return to the sea only to discover Dutourd has been sent ashore against his orders. Aubrey makes the rather heroic decision of launching in a small craft during dirty weather to attempt to warn his friend of possible danger. Aubrey's voyage continues into the next chapter as provisions become critical; meanwhile, it is obvious that Dutourd is ashore and it is likely he is causing trouble for Maturin—the reader is aware of this even if Maturin is not.



Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary

Maturin writes and encodes a missive to Sir Joseph Blaine, his principle contact at Naval Intelligence. In the letter, he expresses great confidence in a local rebellion being successful. General Hurtado is the most powerful local factor in favor of independence. Another significant local figure, Castro, will side with whichever faction appears to be winning. The Viceroy will be out of town during the planned uprising. Maturin also writes a letter to his wife, describing the local flora and fauna. Later, Maturin second-guesses his letter to Blaine and wishes he had not been quite so confident, as he finds it smacks of hubris. Later, Maturin travels outside of Callao upon a mule named Joselito. He ascends high into the Andes to a Benedictine monastery that serves as a meeting place for the local leaders of the planned rebellion. There Maturin meets Vicar-General Father O'Higgins, spends the night, and meets a younger man named Eduardo. Eduardo, a Peruvian Indian, is friendly, straightforward, and very interested in natural philosophy. He is a local hunter and sort of trail guide, familiar with a huge territory, and quite fluent in Spanish. Maturin finds him modest, direct, and simple, and the two men quickly become close friends and share a professional interest in natural history and philosophy.

The meeting is held, general plans and schedules are drawn up, and the decision is made to not allow Castro, as he is felt to be unreliable. Later that day, Gayongos appears bearing the news that Dutourd has reached Lima from Callao and has been vocally spreading insults about Aubrey and Surprise, and has publicly denounced Maturin as a British agent provocateur. Dutourd has claimed that Maturin is plying the locals with English gold to buy a rebellion. Maturin is surprised but not overly-worried, as he considers Dutourd ineffective. He suggests that Gayongos denounce Dutourd to the Inquisition as "a most infernal heretic". Believing that all is ready, Maturin and Eduardo then set out on a day expedition to visit high mountains and view the spectacularly diverse flora and fauna. During the trip, Maturin is butted by one llama and spat upon by others. Returning to the monastery, Maturin finds the Vicar-General much concerned about Dutourd's rumor mongering. Later that day, many proponents of rebellion arrive, but the person who can make it all happen—General Hurtado—declines to participate further. Dutourd's rabble rousing has had enough effect and Hurtado will not participate in a revolution funded by intervening foreigners. Castro is also infuriated that he was not included in the plans and the whole situation has become untenable. There will be no rebellion, and furthermore, Maturin's very life is in danger.

Chapter 8 Analysis

The chapter introduces a fairly large cast of local political characters, none of which are particularly significant to the narrative development. Vicar-General O'Higgins is inferred to be a relative of Bernardo O'Higgins, the historic personage. The events described in



the novel are acceptably similar to historical events of the same basic time period, but as the planned rebellion never occurs, the entire account is easily accepted as purely fictional. The other two men of minor consequence are General Hurtado, upon whom the entire enterprise rests, and Castro, an unreliable local man of considerable influence. Hurtado drops his support for the rebellion because of Dutourd's meddling and Castro, learning of his exclusion from the failed rebellion, becomes angry. Thus, within a single day, the entire carefully-planned enterprise evaporates. Maturin, instead of enjoying a successful mission, finds his life in danger and must flee over back roads. The news that Dutourd's intervention has caused Hurtado to withdraw his support is the crisis of the novel, or at least the crisis of Maturin's narrative arc. For the remainder of the novel, Maturin is in flight and Aubrey attempts to locate Maturin.

The day trip that Maturin takes with Eduardo mirrors the remainder of the novel. They will spend the next several days trekking across the Peruvian highland. The weather is dangerous and the altitude continually sickens Maturin, but he wholeheartedly enjoys the novel plants and animals and is frequently astonished to find animals known in England or Spain living also living at great altitude in the Andes. Note that the warning of Dutourd's involvement did not come from Aubrey but from Gayongos—Aubrey has not yet made landfall. Maturin's regretting his hubris in the letter to Blaine heavily foreshadows the failure of his mission. Maturin's constant use of coca leaves continues throughout the present novel and into subsequent novels in the series.



Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

Pullings completes Surprise's readying for sea and pulls himself from shore to the boat. He is hailed by a raggedy boat full of apparently drunken men, and Pullings begins to feel offended by their persistent and unintelligible hollering. But at the sound of an English profanity from the distant boat, he looks closer and realizes it is Aubrey and his men in the small open boat. They have weathered five days on the open ocean in storm and are little better than corpses. They are taken aboard Surprise and nurtured back to health. Pullings is later able to report that Surprise has been fully refitted and is ready for sea duty. Aubrey explains his reason for sailing in the boat—to warn Maturin. A few hours later, Aubrey's illegitimate son, Sam Panda, comes aboard and delivers some alarming news—Dutourd indeed went ashore and managed to destroy Maturin's careful planning. The rebellion will not take place, Surprise is not particularly welcome in the area, and Maturin is a wanted fugitive. Maturin has been whisked away through the back country to the distant port town of Arica, where Surprise must rendezvous and take him off.

Meanwhile, Maturin travels overland. The enormously high passes cause him to nearly black out and he only persists through generous doses of coca leaves. Even as Maturin struggles with the difficult journey, he is constantly impressed by geological sights and new and fascinating flora and fauna. Eduardo acts as Maturin's guide and protector. At 15,000 feet, Maturin spends much time in a sort of fugue of stupefaction and has bizarre dreams. Then news arrives that Maturin must divert to Arica. The expedition passes 16,000 feet and then makes a side-trip to view a beautiful alpine lake. After enjoying the lake, Maturin and Eduardo are caught in a sudden snowstorm and spend an uncomfortable night wedged in a crevice with a frozen llama. Maturin's foot becomes severely frostbitten and he ends up losing three toes. For a few days the frostbite, cold, and altitude cloud Maturin's consciousness, and he is conveyed a great distance in a Peruvian chair—a sort of framework worn by a sturdy hiker as a backpack, which is used to carry a disabled person.

Chapter 9 Analysis

Both protagonists—Aubrey and Maturin—suffer a prolonged and difficult journey of extremes because of Dutourd's activities. Aubrey and his small crew spend a week adrift in a storm in an open boat without sufficient supplies. On his journey, Maturin tops 16,000 feet and is caught in a blizzard. They both suffer discomfort, peril, and feel their age. Both survive. Note that both men experience their peril on their preferred element—Aubrey on the sea battling weather and Maturin on shore fleeing from political intrigue. Much of the chapter is devoted to Maturin's voyage of discovery with Eduardo as guide and the writing is crisp and the imagery is exceptional. Just as Aubrey received a wound to his eye in the first half of the novel, so now Maturin receives a wound to his

foot in the last half of the novel. The extent of Maturin's frostbite is not exactly determined, but later in chapter ten, he explains to Reade that he lost "a couple" of his toes and indicates that his large and pinky toes remain, suggesting the loss of the three middle toes.

When Sam Panda meets Jack, he summarizes Maturin's adventures ashore. Sam's account is precise and dense and recapitulates the major plot events of the prior chapters in the novel. This recapitulation appears natural enough because Aubrey is unaware of things that have transpired though the reader is not unaware; it is a neat technique of narrative construction. The repetitive nature of Sam's explanation helps reiterate major plot elements and also eliminates the minor characters and much of the minor detail of organization which proves insignificant in the major developments.



Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary

Aubrey sails Surprise toward Arica to await Maturin. He returns the ship to standard order. Prior to making port, however, Surprise spots a small awkward craft coming out from the shore. It proves to be Maturin, alone, in a strange craft laden with specimens. Maturin fumbles his way to Surprise, explaining he has come out to avoid Surprise visibly picking him up in port—he has not wanted further to implicate Surprise in his own failed attempt at political intrigue. Later, Maturin recounts his adventures and misadventures to his shipmates, recalling how he struck off three of his own frostbitten toes with a chisel so stop the spread of gangrene. Maturin also delivers the news to Aubrey of a trio of American merchant ships sailing south around the southern tip of Argentina; Maturin has surprisingly accurate timetables and descriptions. Aubrey at once sails away to rendezvous with the American merchants, hoping for a lucrative and easy prize. Later, Maturin learns that Vidal and two of his Knipperdolling cousins have been discharged for landing Dutourd; also Bulkeley the bosun has been discharged for gross and continued capabarre (theft of ship's stores). Aside from this, the remaining crew is zealous to return home and happy to think of their impending riches upon discharge.

For many days, Surprise makes good sailing in fine weather while Maturin studies and prepares his numerous specimens. As the weather turns cold, the crew dresses warmer and eats more. Aubrey and Maturin spend time in the cabin discussing old adventures together. The rendezvous spot near the island of Diego Ramirez experiences heavy weather and thick fog. Surprise cruises for the supposed prizes and sees them. She also sees two warships, and for a time mistakenly believes them to be Spanish. As Surprise closes for the attack on the prizes, Aubrey is concerned to find much floating ice in the area. And then the two warships appear out of the fog and are discovered to be American ships. They fire upon Surprise and a general mêlée beings. The American ships far outclass Surprise and Aubrey abandons his pursuit of prizes and makes a run for survival. Amidst falling ice and icebergs, Surprise flees the American pursuers and manages to damage the smaller ship's rigging. At one critical point, Surprise barely clears a massive iceberg that calves off a huge piece of ice just as Aubrey runs by. The larger American ship cannot weather the point and falls off. Later pursuit ends when the American goes down a long split in sea ice only to become trapped and turn back. Surprise has escaped capture, though the accurate American gunfire has destroyed her mizzenmast. A few days later, Surprise is struck by lightning, which utterly destroys her mainmast and rudder. Maturin knows enough to deduce Surprise is in grave danger, but the crew seems unconcerned because the lightning strike has killed a Knipperdolling, assumed to be a type of Jonah. Things indeed appear grim for several days until a friendly British warship, commanded by Aubrey's longtime friend Heneas Dundas, appears on the horizon. The two ships meet with much joy and Dundas offers spare spars, rigging, food, and water.



Chapter 10 Analysis

Reade's mathematical calculations seem wrong to a modern reader but they were based on the units prevailing at the time. A hundredweight as used by Reade was 112 pounds, with twenty hundredweights to a ton—a ton in this definition weighing 2,240 pounds avoirdupois—thus his calculation that four hundred hundredweight is 44,800 pounds or 716,800 ounces. Reade does not multiply the ounces by three pounds seventeen and ten pence halfpenny and also notes his weights are in avoirdupois and not Troy, but concludes correctly that the answer is well over two million pounds (actually 2.79 millions). The lightning that strikes Surprise is heavily foreshadowed. First, Bulkeley has stolen and sold the "Snow Harris lightning-conductor", exposing the ship. Second, the prolonged discussion of lightning strikes at sea that transpires during one dinner leave most hands quite uncomfortable. The past voyages that Aubrey and Maturin discuss are detailed in previous novels in the series. Aubrey's reference to "gabardine swine" is an amusingly inaccurate reference to the Gadarene swine of e.g. the Gospel of Matthew 8:28-34.

The concluding chase, involving a total of six ships, is well-written and exemplifies the type of nautical adventure that has made the series so enduringly famous. Surprise closes on supposed prizes only to discover that she herself is the target of two American warships, one very much more powerful than Surprise could hope to defeat. The pell-mell chase transpires through heavy seas, dense fog, and masses of dangerous floating icebergs. Accurate gunfire from Surprise disables the smaller American ship; accurate sailing and navigation allows Surprise to escape from the larger American ship by turning around the corner of a large iceberg. Later, the American ships get caught in pack ice and must abandon the chase. Their message of well-wishing the British ship is a quite handsome gesture. Surprise's plight then becomes seriously dangerous as lightning strikes, leaving the ship with only one mast and no rudder. All hands prepare for a prolonged and slow voyage to somewhere on the African coast and Aubrey reduces food allowances to compensate. Then, as a sort of *deus ex machina*, Dundas' Berenice appears and offers salvation.



Characters

Captain Jack Aubrey

Jack Aubrey is one of two principle protagonists of the novel and shares the narrative focus with his close friend and confidant, Stephen Maturin. Aubrey is a larger-than-life character with charisma and dash. He is an unchallenged master in his element of the sea; a legendary captain, a masterful navigator, and a superb tactician. He is widely considered by superstitious seamen to be lucky. Although he is intelligent, he relies on experience, insight, and a nearly infallible instinct to carry him through the situations he encounters.

Aubrey wears his blond hair in a long queue and dresses as a traditional ship's captain. Aubrey is athletic, possessed of exceptional vigor, great strength, and an incredible constitution. He is also particularly fond of food and drink, and Maturin often cautions him against becoming overly corpulent—at the end of the novel his weight stands at seventeen stone, or about 238 pounds. Aubrey is handsome and fairly useful, though his good looks are marred by a variety of scars and combat-related wounds, including an ear sliced apart in an old encounter and various scars on his head, including one received during the current novel which leaves a streak of white hair on the scalp. Aubrey is usually somewhat less useful on land.

As described in previous novels of the series, Aubrey has been once tossed out of the navy upon conviction of certain financial crimes that he did not commit. His resounding successes in *Surprise*, as a private man-of-war, have earned his reinstatement to the Royal Navy. During the current novel, *Surprise* is technically commanded by Tom Pullings, though Aubrey is in actual command. Aubrey's financial status has varied widely during his career but at the moment he is very well off; indeed, rich.

Stephen Maturin

Maturin is one of two principle protagonists of the novel and shares the narrative focus with his close friend and confidant Jack Aubrey. Maturin is a quiet man who much prefers the closeness of his study to the attention of others; his personal expertise lies in the area of medicine and he is also a natural scientist of repute. He is an unchallenged and undoubted master in his element of medicine and science and his medical opinions are often surprisingly modern and nearly always correct. Although possessed of great financial means, he cares nothing for the finer things in life and champions political causes that are obviously doomed simply because they are philosophically correct. Maturin, in addition to being a physician and scientist, is a pro bono agent for the secret intelligence network of England. Indeed, Maturin's mission to Peru is secretly endorsed by British government and forms the narrative plot of the novel.



Maturin is a small, squat man who in many respects is the antithesis of Aubrey—he is said to weigh nine stone, or about 126 pounds. Maturin is much given to introspection, subtle interpretation, and analysis of the current situation. He is nearly entirely mental, with little interest in physical activities—though capable enough if needed. Although he is possessed of a nearly preternatural constitution, Maturin is not notably dexterous or strong, though his physique is rarely a handicap to his desires. His difficulty breathing at altitude in the Andes is a notable exception to his constitution. Although he can be overconfident of his abilities, he is nearly always correct in his analysis of situations and people. This aspect of Maturin is much-developed in the latter half of the novel as he works to foment revolution in Peru. Like Aubrey, Maturin derives great pleasure from music and is a capable musician.

Reverend Nathaniel Martin

Nathaniel Martin is a man of the cloth and devoted to religion, though seamen are notoriously unsympathetic to a parson aboard their ship—for superstitious reasons. Thus, Maturin engages Martin's assistance as an assistant surgeon and not as a preacher. Martin's financial situation ashore, previously uncertain, is made good by Aubrey's offer of positions. Throughout the novel, Martin serves with reliability even as he becomes quite distanced, personally, from Maturin. Martin is very educated, speaks several languages, and knows volumes about religion—as made obvious by his lengthy explanation of the Knipperdolling faith. He is naturally inquisitive and, like Maturin, a competent naturalist, artist, and musician. Within the narrative, Martin functions primarily as a student of Maturin, and some of the more risible early sections of the novel deal with Maturin's nautical instruction to Martin. In a previous novel, Martin had found the married Clarissa Oakes incredibly attractive and had felt feelings of nearly overwhelming desire for her. Whether or not these feelings were consummated in any physical way is uncertain. In any event, Martin becomes convinced that he has contracted syphilis. His close questioning of Maturin about the nature of that disease's communicability heavily suggests that sexual intercourse did not occur, but that perhaps kissing and some petting did occur. Martin's mental breakdown ensues and he begins to self-treat with enormous doses of medicine—doses that lead him to collapse and to partial disability. Maturin finally diagnoses Martin's physical symptoms as nothing more than salt sores. By this time, however, their friendship is severely damaged and an ashamed Martin departs Surprise for England as an invalid.

Tom Pullings

Pullings has served under Aubrey as a lieutenant during previous novels in the series. He eventually gained promotion to captain, largely through Aubrey's efforts. He is an enthusiastic and optimistic captain, a devoted supporter of Jack Aubrey, and an extremely capable navigator, seaman, and officer. During the novel, Pullings is appointed the official captain of Surprise in its hired capacity as ship of the Royal Navy. In fact, Pullings acts as the first lieutenant unless Aubrey is not aboard, such as when Aubrey takes Franklin out cruising. Pullings' entire reliability allows Aubrey much



discretion in handling the ship and is a constant comfort to both Aubrey and Maturin. During the current novel, Maturin comments on a livid, frightful, and disfiguring scar that runs across Pulling's entire face; in fact the scar, received during a long-ago boarding action, has partially ruined Pullings' jawbone so that his mandible becomes unhinged from time to time. Maturin resets it once during the present novel. Pullings is always dependable and is an always memorable minor character.

Monsieur Jean Dutour

Dutour is described by Maturin as a "Frenchman with enthusiastic visionary notions about an ideal community...[with] no Church, no King, no laws, no money, everything held in common, perfect peace and justice" (p. 195), all unfortunately established by the wholesale slaughter of the natives living on the island of Moahu, the presumed location of Dutour's ideal society. Dutour's philosophy is backed up by considerable wealth and, as detailed in a previous novel of the series, he has hired an American privateer, the Franklin, to convey him and his followers to Moahu. There, his attempts at conquest were stymied by Aubrey's intervention. Franklin fled the island, pursued by Surprise, and is captured during the volcanic disturbance described in the early novel. Aubrey notes that, legally, Dutour is nothing better than a pirate, as he carries no commission nor letter of marque. Dutour immediately begins expounding his theories of social equality to the crew of Surprise and finds fertile ground among a sect of crewmen known as Knipperdollings, led by Vidal. While Maturin is organizing a revolution in Peru, Dutour contrives to sneak ashore where he ruins Maturin's plans by loudly decrying British intervention. Maturin's associates denounce Dutour to the Spanish Inquisition with probably fatal results.

Edward Shelton

Edward Shelton is an Englishman who is serving aboard an American whaler that is captured by Aubrey. Shelton had joined the American ship prior to the outbreak of war between America and England and is thus not in legal trouble for being a traitor. Shelton knows who Aubrey is and is impressed with Aubrey's reputation. After he is brought aboard Surprise he volunteers for service, is rated able, and then delivers the startling news that a French privateer is sailing in the area and acting more like a pirate than a privateer. The ship is large and dangerous, but no match for the combined firepower of Surprise and Franklin. Although Shelton is a minor character, his appearance marks a major turning point in the narrative.

General Hurtado

General Hurtado is a local dignitary of considerable influence and some avarice. He is not physically described, and in the narrative he is frequently alluded to as the most significant factor in any local movement for independence. He places an inordinate value on his genealogical pedigree, is quite haughty, and is estranged from the Spanish



monarchy for a minor slight on his honor—having once been referred to in a letter as a relative instead of as a cousin. He enjoys military pomp and circumstance but is known as honest. He is a Knight of Malta. During the planning phases, Maturin and Hurtado become close associates. In the end, however, Hurtado withdraws his support of the planned rebellion, causing the enterprise to fizzle, because of Dutourd's vocal vituperation of Maturin.

Henry Vidal

Vidal is the acting second lieutenant on *Surprise*, having been raised from the forecastle. He is a master mariner and belongs to a religious group known as the Knipperdollings. The Knipperdolling faith is explained at some length by Martin during the novel, though the particulars are largely insignificant. They believe in an egalitarian and free society, and thus Vidal is easily swayed by Dutourd's constant philosophizing. While Vidal is a shrewd seaman, he is unused to the relatively free atmosphere of discussion and chatter allowed in the officers' mess—this may partially explain why he finds Dutourd's talk so compelling, as he perhaps mistakenly believes Dutourd's opinions are shared—at least tolerated—by the other officers. Such is not really the case, however, and most other officers and especially Maturin find Dutourd objectionable. Vidal's appointment is due an unusually large number of vacancies created because of combat or detached duty. He functions well enough as an officer except that he assists in smuggling Dutourd from *Surprise* into Peru. For this he is dismissed, along with his Knipperdolling cousins, who participated in the violation of Aubrey's orders.

Sam Panda

Sam Panda is Aubrey's illegitimate son, a recurring minor character in numerous previous novels in the series of novels. Sam is described as the spitting image of a younger Aubrey, though less corpulent, larger, stronger, and of course ebony black, as was his mother. Sam is exceptionally well-educated and intelligent but does not know much about the sea. In many respects, Sam represents what Aubrey could have become if not a naval man. Sam is also a Callao local religious leader of sorts, and a priest in the Catholic faith. His fortuitous presence allows Maturin rapidly to meet many other men who are anti-slavery and sympathetic to the cause of local autonomy. Sam does not directly participate in the revolutionary plans but certainly acts as an enabler of them. He holds strong anti-slavery views and resists the tyrannical and corrupt Spanish government. After the planned revolution falls apart, Sam works behind the scenes to ensure Maturin's escape and *Surprise*'s notification of events. He comes aboard *Surprise* nearly every day for a week until Aubrey finally returns from his ill-fated open boat voyage. Sam and Aubrey share an enjoyable but somewhat restrained meeting and exchange much news. Sam is a minor character in the novel but plays a significant role in the crisis and resolution of the narrative.

Eduardo

Eduardo is a local Peruvian Indian guide, descended from Inca heritage. Eduardo is Catholic but also fiercely loyal to his cultural roots, Maturin reflecting that Eduardo's Catholicism is not entirely correct in principle. Eduardo is exceptionally intelligent and possessed of the great strength and vigor of a young man leading an always-active life. Eduardo is quite educated about the local plants and animals, knows a great deal about geology and meteorology, and has traveled widely throughout Peru, especially in the high Andes. Eduardo proves the perfect traveling companion for Maturin as the men both enjoy the sights of nature and share a deep love of learning. Eduardo escorts Maturin on several day hikes in the local area before becoming his guide on a hasty overland escape. Eduardo demonstrates a rare lapse in judgment when taking Maturin to view an alpine lake at about 16,000 feet elevation—a storm drives them into meager shelter for the night and Maturin's leg and foot become frostbitten. Eduardo then fashions a Peruvian chair—a sort of framework to hold Maturin and mount him on another man's back like a giant-size backpack. After seeing Maturin safely to his destination, Eduardo vanishes from the narrative.



Objects/Places

HM Hired Vessel Surprise

Surprise is a private man-of-war owned by Jack Aubrey and hired by the Royal Navy to prosecute official business as a hired vessel. As such, she is technically under the command of Tom Pullings, though Aubrey is the de facto commander. She was French-built and has previously been known as L'Unité, Retaliation, and Retribution. Her figure-head is a gilded woman with an ample bosom and a surprised look on her face. She displaces about six hundred tons, has a crew of about two hundred men, and carries a main armament of twelve-pounder long guns. She also carries thirty-two pounder carronades as ballast, and these carronades are used in the novel to arm Franklin.

Franklin

Franklin is a privateer bearing twenty-two nine-pounder guns. She is captained by Jean Dutourd, who has appeared in previous novels in the series. Crewed by Frenchmen, Franklin flies an American flag. Although a powerful ship for the region, Franklin is not the equal of Surprise. Franklin is seriously damaged during a volcanic event and thereafter is easily captured by Surprise. Aubrey arms Franklin with carronades and takes her cruising for prizes before selling her.

Alastor

Alastor is a heavy French privateer turned pirate in the South Pacific. She is widely known and feared and becomes the special article of Aubrey's attention. Alastor is found first by Franklin and minutes later by Surprise. A fierce action ensues, during which Alastor is captured by boarding from both sides. The ship is condemned as a prize and sold in Peru.

Joselito

Joselito is a particularly stalwart and tame mule that Maturin uses throughout the middle portion of the novel as he moves across the countryside organizing a rebellion for local autonomy. When Maturin makes his escape through the high Andes, he leaves Joselito behind.

Quipus

Quipus is a type of 'written' language used by the Peruvian Indians in general and Eduardo in particular. A quipus consists of a mass of knotted strings and strips of cloth.



The types and positions of the knots record the words and the message is encoded as a security measure.

Andes

The Andes are a high mountain range running from north to south throughout the length of Peru and Chile. In the novel, much of the action centered around Maturin transpires in the Andes at considerable heights. Maturin spends much time at about 15,000 feet and even tops 16,000 feet on a few occasions. He finds the local flora and fauna distinct and compelling.

Cape Horn

Cape Horn is the southern-most tip of South America and is a notoriously dangerous area for sailing. Late in the novel, *Surprise* attempts to capture three American merchantmen near Cape Horn but is instead nearly captured herself by two American warships. Cape Horn is noted for stormy weather, harsh seas, high winds, and masses of dangerous floating ice.

Carronades

A carronade was a short smoothbore cannon used by the British Navy until about 1860. They were designed as short-range cannons. Light-weight and devoid of many of the features of long guns, carronades were devastating at short ranges but notoriously inaccurate beyond pistol-shot ranges. A carronade weighed approximately one quarter as much as a long gun throwing an equal weight of metal. Aubrey uses carronades as ballast on *Surprise*, allowing him to transfer them to *Franklin* to re-arm that ship.

Coca Leaves

Maturin frequently chews coca leaves and constantly extols their virtue as a panacea and stimulant. One of his first acts upon gaining Peru is to secure a large quantity of coca leaves. He uses them throughout the remainder of the novel and believes that without them he could scarcely have survived his Andean adventure.

Mid-ocean Volcano

During the early portion of the novel, *Surprise* is near an eerie mid-ocean volcanic event that creates a new island of cinder and ash. The island subsists for only a few hours before eroding back into the sea. The bizarre weather accompanying the eruption initially confuses Aubrey. The magenta color of the water surrounding the eruption give the novel its title—'The Wine-Dark Sea'.



Themes

Friendships

One of the dominant and recurrent themes of the novel is that of friendships. The most obvious example is that of Jack Aubrey and Stephen Maturin, who have been particular friends for many years and have shared various types of experiences together. They form an intimate pair with complementary skills and shared goals. Indeed, the close friendship between Aubrey and Maturin is the backbone of the narrative that runs through the twenty volumes in the series of novels. The current novel features numerous other friendships, however, that support and develop the theme of friendship. Maturin and Nathaniel Martin begin as close friends and share much common interest in natural philosophy, science, and medicine. As Aubrey has little formal education and demonstrates little interest in animals—apart from whether or not they can be eaten—Maturin finds Martin's interest and education compelling. Throughout the first half of the novel, however, their relationship degrades alongside of Martin's collapsing mental health, and the two men end up as mere associates. For his own part, Aubrey finds in Tom Pullings a reliable friend, though their friendship is somewhat constrained by the nature of the rigid militaristic structure in which they serve. Maturin's long friendship with Padeen Colman is noted, as is Aubrey's constrained friendship with Bonden, Plaice, and Killick. Within the crew, the nature of friendship is examined through the portrayal of close-knit groups of men, for example the Knipperdollings aboard. The burgeoning friendship between Vidal and Dutourd causes much difficulty for Maturin in the novel. Indeed, the novel is replete with various types of friendships and their comparison and development forms a major theme in the narrative.

Politics

The novel spans two major political involvements. The first deals with the capture of Franklin and Dutourd and his subsequent rabbleroxing among the British crew. Aubrey considers Dutourd's situation carefully. Dutourd has been sailing on a private ship committing acts of war but has no commission and does not carry a letter of marque. In other words, he is a pirate and should be returned to England where he will be hanged. However, Aubrey intends to allow Dutourd to go free in Peru. Dutourd immediately begins preaching his own brand of social justice among the crew of Surprise and finds the Knipperdolling faction, led by Vidal, a receptive audience. This agitation eventually leads to Vidal smuggling Dutourd ashore against Aubrey's explicit orders—an act that gains a dismissal for Vidal and his accomplices. Maturin spends the middle portion of the novel attempting to arrange a local Peruvian revolution against Spanish rule. While Britain and Spain are technically allies, the French invasion and stranglehold on Spanish government makes any weakening of Spain beneficial to Britain, but the mission must remain underhanded and secret. Maturin at first makes great strides, enlisting local pro-autonomy factions to his cause. However, Dutourd comes ashore and begins loudly to proclaim Maturin a British agent and the revolution finances by British



gold. Though Dutourd has no proof and is inelegant at best, his insistent proclamations cause several key players to rescind their support of the impending revolution. Thus, Maturin's efforts fail—even as Dutourd is handed over to the Spanish Inquisition as a heretic (probably a fatal incarceration). The novel ends with Maturin fleeing political complications. Thus, simple politics forms the backbone of the narrative plot.

Nautical Adventure

The novel's principle setting is the high seas during a time of war; Napoleon Bonaparte's military adventures threaten the British Empire and only a strong naval response keeps the French aggression at bay and ensures the survival of the empire. The war has driven America and Britain into open hostility, and Spain claims technical alliance with England even as she swoons under Napoleon's tyranny. Jack Aubrey's sworn and obvious duty is to engage, destroy, and hinder the King's enemies at every opportunity. He carries out this duty first with *Surprise* and later *Franklin*, engaging and capturing the French privateers *Franklin* and *Alastor*. Aubrey's particular friend Stephen Maturin also stands in opposition to the French, finding their governmental system tyrannical and offensive. He participates as an intelligence officer—a spy—in the defense of England.

The novel relates a sea voyage in the year 1813; and although the voyage is fictional, it contains many historical elements that often are based on historical accounts. Most aspects of the novel are related to sea adventure; much of the action takes place at sea and even the action which takes place on land generally relates to the sea. For example, the *Surprise's* prolonged stay in Callao is necessitated by the large amount of refitting work and resupply necessary. The strength and popular appeal of the novel is undoubtedly due to the nature of high seas adventure and the conversational way in which it is presented. Although full of accurate descriptions of lengthy nautical maneuvers and frequent technical descriptions of nautical equipment, the text is presented in an accessible and friendly manner which allows the reader to descend to deck-level, as it were, and enjoy the excitement of days long gone.

Style

Point of View

The novel is told from the third-person, limited, point of view. The narrator is reliable, entirely effaced, and unnamed. Jack Aubrey and Stephen Maturin, the main characters, are the protagonists and central figures in all of the scenes in the novel. The narrator divulges some internal thoughts of the protagonists, but not of other characters. The majority of the story is told through action and dialogue. Revealed thoughts are infrequent and are used for characterization rather than plot development. Occasional personal letters allow for some first-person introspection without destroying the cadence of the overall narrative structure; in the novel, these letters are from Maturin to his wife Diana. On one occasion, narrative events are recapitulated by Sam Panda for Aubrey's benefit.

The third-person point of view allows the protagonists to be presented in a highly sympathetic manner. For example, the narrative structure portrays Martin's psychosomatic illness as resulting from a deep-seated grief and shame rather than as simple insanity. The narrative also allows portrayal of characters' life situations as difficult but not pathetic. In this way, the choice of narrative view is appropriate and successful. As both protagonists are roughly equal in significance, the third-person point of view also allows their textual representations to be roughly equivalent. Indeed, the structure of the novel and the method of plot development nearly require the use of a third-person point of view. Finally, the frequent appearance of minor characters is allowed through the point of view selected. It is carried throughout all of the novels of the series and is accessible and successful.

Setting

The novel features two primary types of settings. The first and most significant is aboard *Surprise*, a British private man-of-war, hired into Royal service. The ship is owned and by Aubrey, captained by Pullings, officered by a variety of men, and crewed by a highly proficient but rag-tag assortment of seamen. One of the novel's achievements is the presentation of shipboard life as something intriguing and even desirable while simultaneously presenting a realistic view of the hardships endured. Alongside *Surprise* other ships appear with a similar setting—*Franklin*, *Alastor*, and *Berenice* are all mentioned and examined in some degree of detail.

The second setting presented in the novel is diffuse and consists of ports, cities, and the high Andean countryside of western Peru. Included among these settings are Callao, Lima, Arica, and numerous unnamed locales in the mountains including a Benedictine monastery. In general, these settings are transient, poorly described, and thought of—at least by Aubrey and Pullings—as locations to refit and re-supply. Maturin, however, views them as not only the principle reason for the *Surprise*'s entire mission but also as



places to explore the natural wonders of the world. While the action aboard ship is dominated by Aubrey, the action ashore is dominated by Maturin. This division of the narrative by locale allows each man to figure prominently within his best environment.

Language and Meaning

The novel's language is generally simply and accessible. Standard punctuation is used to indicate dialogue, and interior thoughts and descriptive text are easily distinguished. Some of the places, many of the objects, and even some of the events referenced in the narrative are identifiable as real geographical locations or historic events. It is notable that the novel was originally written and published in England and uses standard English punctuation and spelling styles which may somewhat unfamiliar to American readers. Several of the characters in the novel speak English but with heavy regional accents and dialects, which makes communication among them "almost entirely incomprehensible" (p. 53).

The novel becomes linguistically complex in two primary respects. First, when dealing with nautical events, a somewhat complicated specialized language is used, including references to various parts of sailing craft and sailing techniques probably not particularly familiar to modern readers. The technical language is accurate and interesting, and a reference to a general sailing encyclopedia will assist in a careful reading and complete understanding of the text. Second, the novel makes frequent reference to various events which occur prior to the novel's opening, proper. In many cases, these events are detailed in a prior novel in the series and readers unfamiliar with these novels may find the references vague or puzzling. For example, Martin's nebulous physical interaction with Clarissa Oakes is detailed in a prior novel.

Structure

The 261-page novel is divided into ten enumerated chapters of roughly equal length, though chapter ten is fairly lengthy. The narrative is presented in strictly chronological order, with each chapter's events occurring after the events in the previous chapter and before the events in the subsequent chapter. Of course, references to previous events occur with some frequency and characters from time to time think about future events. When Aubrey and Maturin are physically separated, chapters present parallel timelines for overlapping events, though this is not particularly complex in any event. Any deviations from the principle timeline are minor and are clearly identifiable as such. Thus, the novel's principle timeline is accessible and easily followed.

The novel is intended to be read as part of a series of novels; specifically, as the sixteenth novel in a series which extends to twenty volumes. Many of the principle characters presented in the novel and therefore are recurring characters with backgrounds and histories developed in prior novels. Similarly, events happening prior to the scope of the current novel are often referenced. This structure may prove

somewhat difficult for readers unfamiliar with the prior novels. Nevertheless, basic character glosses and event recaps are provided.

The structure is further complicated by adherence to historical events. In broad terms, events in the novel are fictional or fictionalized events which could have occurred in the period of time used as the novel's setting; namely, the war between England and France during the year 1813. Thus, the novel's language, technology, politics, geography, et cetera, are all based upon historically accurate representations. Note that many of the novels are set in 1813 such that the narrative time would consume several years—a problem of chronology acknowledged by the author.



Quotes

"A purple ocean, vast under the sky and devoid of all visible life apart from two minute ships racing across its immensity. They were as close-hauled to the somewhat irregular north-east trades as ever they could be, with every sail they could safely carry and even more, their bowlines twanging taut: they had been running like this day after day, sometimes so far apart that each saw only the other's topsails above the horizon, sometimes within gunshot; and when this was the case they fired at one another with their chasers."

p. 1

"'Larbowlines bowse,' cried Captain Aubrey, watching the spare topmast with anxious care. 'Bowse away. Belay!' And to his first lieutenant, 'Oh Tom, how I hope the Doctor comes on deck before the land vanishes.'

Tom Pullings shook his head. 'When last I saw him, perhaps an hour ago, he could hardly stand for sleep: blood up to the elbows and blood where he had wiped his eyes.' 'It would be the world's pity, was he to miss all this,' said Jack.

pp. 24-25

"'I have rarely known such delightful weather in what we must, I suppose, call the torrid zone,' said Stephen, dining as usual in the cabin. 'Balmy zephyrs, a placid ocean, two certain Hahnemann's petrels, and perhaps a third.'

'It would be all very capital for a picnic with ladies on a lake, particularly if they shared your passion for singular birds; but I tell you, Stephen, that these balmy zephyrs of yours have not propelled the ship seventy sea-miles between noon and noon these last four days. It is true that we could get along a little faster ourselves, but clearly we cannot leave the Franklin behind; and with her present rig she is but a dull sailor.'"

p. 51

"Stephen rose to his feet and coughed. Martin turned sharply. 'Good morning, sir,' he said, whipping the glass under his apron. The greeting was civil, but mechanically so, with no spontaneous smile. He had obviously not forgotten yesterday's unpleasantness and he appeared both to resent his exclusion from the passage to the Franklin and to expect resentment on Stephen's part for his offensive remarks. Stephen was in fact of a saturnine temperament, as Martin knew: he could even have been called revengeful, and he found it difficult to forgive a slight. But there was more than this; it was as though Martin had just escaped being detected in an act he was very willing to conceal, and there was some remaining tinge of defiant hostility about his attitude."

p. 75

"'You left us to starve on the ocean, you rat,' roared the first headsman.

'You made all sail and cracked on—cracked on,' roared the second, shaking his lance, barely articulate.

'Judas,' said the third.



'Now Zeek,' cried the master, 'you put down that lance. I should have picked you up...'
The broad-shouldered harpooner, the man who had been fast to the big bull whale, was last up the side; he heaved his way through the shouting, tight-packed throng; he said nothing but he flung his iron straight through the master's breast, deep into the wood."
p. 100

"'No,' said Jack in a determined voice. 'Killick has looked after me, under your orders, ever since before the peace. This man's name is Fabien. I shall send him over.' Stephen knew that argument would be useless; he said nothing, and Jack went on, 'I shall be sending a whole parcel of them over, those who wish to go.'
'You would never be sending Dutourd, at all?' cried Stephen.
'I had thought of doing so, yes,' said Jack. 'He sent me a polite little note, asking leave to make his adieux, thanking us for our kindness and undertaking not to serve again.'
'From my point of view it might be impolitic,' said Stephen."
p. 121

"For days the wind had kept in the east, and by now there was a considerable sea running across the northward current, causing the Franklin to roll and pitch rather more than was comfortable, rather more than was usual for mustering the ship's company by divisions; but this was Sunday, the first Sunday that Jack had felt reasonably sure that his wounded leg would bear the exercise, and he decided to carry on. At breakfast the word had been passed to 'clean to muster' and now the bosun was bawling down the hatchways, 'D'ye hear, there, fore and aft? Clear for muster at five bells. Dust frocks and white trousers,' while his only remaining mate roared, 'D'ye hear, there? Clean shirts and shave for muster at five bells."
p. 152

"Compline, at San Pedro's, was traditionally very long, and the choir-monks were still singing the Nunc dimittis when Stephen was woken and led through passages behind the chapel. The pure, impersonal, clear plainchant, rising and falling moved his sleepy mind: the strong cold east wind outside the postern cleared it entirely."
p. 175

"A week and two thousand feet higher Stephen and Eduardo walked out across the flank of a quiescent volcano at a fine brisk pace: on the left hand a chaos of rocks, some enormous; on the right a vast sweep of volcanic ash, old settled ash, now just blushing green from a recent shower. They were carrying their guns, for in the puna beyond this chaos there was a possibility of Eduardo's partridges; but their main purpose was to contemplate a lofty rock-face with an inaccessible ledge upon which the condor had nested in the past and might well be nesting now."
p. 201

"Discussing the perils of the sea in general and of lightning in particular came very near to talking shop, an act less criminal than sodomy (which carried the death sentence) but not very much so, and the gunroom cast some nervous looks at their guest the Captain,



a stickler for naval etiquette; but since it was clear both from his thoroughly amiable expression and his own anecdotes that lightning was this side of the barrier between right and wrong, the subject occupied the company for the not inconsiderable time they took to eat a noble turtle and empty the dish."

p. 229

"The well-dried chops sustained him all that night, which he spent in the crow's nest, kept if not warm than at least preserved from death by a sequence of whalers and refreshed every other hour by the truly devoted Killick or his mate who came aloft in mittens, holding a villainous tin pot of coffee, slung by a loop, in their teeth."

p. 248

"They drank it staring at the embers in the hanging stove; and when they had settled what masts and spars the Berenice could give the Surprise, with a long aside about Dundas's tender the Baltimore clipper, picked up perfect but empty—not a soul, not a scrap of paper—in the south Pacific, and her extraordinary sailing qualities, Jack said, 'No. Harking back to this voyage, I think it was a failure upon the whole, and a costly failure; but,' he said laughing with joy at the thought, 'I am so happy to be homeward-bound, and I am so happy, so very happy, to be alive.'

p. 261



Topics for Discussion

Do you consider the book to be a complete novel? Why or why not? Can the novel be read and understood by itself, or does it require a background understanding only available by reading previous novels in the series of novels?

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

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

Martin is convinced that some type of physical intimacy with a young woman has left him infected with syphilis. As a medical man, he should easily discern the difference between syphilis and salt sores, his actual ailment. But his overwhelming personal shame and feelings of guilt lead him to an improper diagnosis and very improper treatment. Why is it sometimes so easy to see the truth in others while it is so hard to see the truth within ourselves? Discuss.

Surprise's crew is made up of men coming from various walks of life, countries, and regions. There are numerous types of religious belief aboard and, naturally, men sharing a common heritage and religion tend to spend time with each other. But Aubrey notes (perhaps somewhat optimistically) that on board religious intolerance is set aside. Yet divisions remain. Besides religion, what other divisions are apparent among the crew of *Surprise*?

Do you find Aubrey to be more compelling than Maturin? Or is Maturin more interesting than Aubrey? Could either character capture your imagination alone? Discuss how the two protagonists build upon each others' strengths within the narrative framework.

The novel features a large cast of male characters. There are no significant female characters in the narrative—and indeed, there are hardly any female characters at all. Is the narrative essentially sexist? Or does it merely portray the reality of life at sea during a time of war?