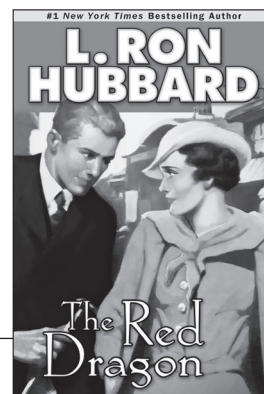


L. Ron Hubbard's *The Red Dragon* Discussion Guide



STORY SUMMARY & OVERVIEW

Betty Sheldon travels to China seeking the mysterious Black Chest discovered by her murdered archaeologist father. She joins Michael Stuart, a former American Marine known as the Red Dragon, who is hunted by Japanese forces. Pursued by the ruthless George Blakely and the Japanese spy Suga, they cross the Great Wall into occupied territory. Stuart survives ambushes, disguises himself and rescues Betty before discovering the chest contains valuable tomb jade. By impersonating Blakely, Stuart deceives General Shimokado, escapes China with Betty and the treasure and prepares to marry her aboard ship.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT: JAPANESE INVASION OF CHINA

The Red Dragon was first published in the February 1935 issue of *Five Novels Monthly*. Its setting reflects the instability of northern China during the early 1930s. Japan invaded Manchuria in 1931 and established the puppet state of Manchukuo in 1932. Jehol, another important location in the story, was seized by Japanese forces in 1933 and incorporated into Manchukuo.

Against this background, the author builds an adventure involving foreign soldiers, spies, archaeological treasures, competing political loyalties and the Great Wall of China. The story also reflects the fascination of 1930s adventure fiction with archaeology and supposedly lost treasures. Michael Stuart moves through a world where governments and borders are changing and where personal loyalty sometimes matters more than official authority.

CHAPTER ONE

📖 Betty Sheldon arrives in Peking determined to continue the search that resulted in her father's death. Discuss what separates courage from recklessness. At what point can determination to complete another person's work become an unhealthy obligation?

📖 Michael Stuart has acquired the mysterious identity of the Red Dragon and is feared by several different groups. Discuss how a reputation can become both protection and imprisonment. How much control does Stuart still have over the identity he has created?

📖 Betty initially has difficulty knowing whom she can trust. Discuss how political instability changes ordinary judgments about loyalty and character. What evidence should a person rely upon when nearly everyone seems to have a hidden motive?

CHAPTER TWO

📖 Stuart's past includes an attempt to interfere with political events in China, leaving him hunted and unable to return to ordinary life. Discuss whether good intentions can justify becoming involved in another country's political struggles.

📖 Betty must decide whether to entrust her safety and her father's secret to a man widely regarded as a criminal. Discuss the difference between reputation and character. When might personal experience provide better evidence about someone than public opinion?

📖 Stuart could avoid considerable danger by refusing to help Betty, yet he agrees to accompany her. Discuss the different motives that may influence this decision—adventure, sympathy, attraction, responsibility or a renewed sense of purpose.

CHAPTER THREE

📖 Betty gradually discovers that the dangerous Red Dragon is more complicated than the stories she has heard about him. Discuss why legendary reputations often simplify people into heroes or villains. What is lost when a person becomes a legend?

📖 Stuart relies on knowledge of languages, customs, geography, weapons and human behavior to survive. Discuss whether adaptability may be more important to survival than physical courage.

📖 George Blakely is willing to cooperate with military authorities and use violence in pursuit of the Black Chest. Discuss how the possibility of enormous wealth can change a person's moral boundaries. At what point does ambition become corruption?

CHAPTER FOUR

📖 Stuart and Betty move through a countryside shaped by military occupation and political uncertainty. Discuss how war changes the meaning of borders, roads, towns and other places that would normally be part of everyday civilian life.

📖 Stuart repeatedly depends upon disguise and deception. Discuss whether deception becomes morally different when it is used for survival rather than personal gain. Are there circumstances in which dishonesty becomes justified?

📖 The Great Wall represents both a physical obstacle and a boundary between increasingly dangerous regions. Discuss how the author uses a real historical structure as more than scenery. What might crossing the Wall symbolize for Betty and Stuart?

CHAPTER FIVE

📖 Stuart kills a sentry because he believes there is no other practical way to cross the Wall safely. Discuss the moral choices created when survival seems to require violence. How should responsibility be judged when every available choice carries serious consequences?

📖 After falling from the Wall and suffering painful injuries, Stuart becomes more concerned about Betty than about himself. He realizes that getting her safely out of China has given him a reason to keep living. Discuss how responsibility for another person can change someone's attitude toward his own life.

📖 Betty secretly leaves Stuart a copy of the chart leading to the Black Chest, trusting that he will continue the search rather than abandon her. Discuss what this decision reveals about trust. What actions have caused Betty's opinion of the Red Dragon to change?

CHAPTER SIX

📖 Stuart follows uncertain information from local inhabitants while searching for Betty. Discuss the difference between gathering facts and interpreting incomplete evidence. Why is the ability to revise assumptions important in dangerous situations?

📖 Stuart kills Suga after recognizing the threat he represents and then uses deception to escape. Discuss how quickly moral decisions must sometimes be made under extreme pressure. Should decisions made in seconds be judged differently from actions planned in advance?

📖 Stuart repeatedly survives because he notices details that others overlook. Discuss the relationship between observation, experience and intelligence. Can careful attention be considered a form of courage in an adventure story?

CHAPTER SEVEN

📖 Stuart discovers Betty's footprint and immediately regains his energy and determination. Discuss how hope can affect a person's ability to endure exhaustion, fear and physical hardship.

📖 At the caves, Stuart discovers that the Black Chest apparently contains only an ancient coffin and disturbed human remains. Discuss the conflict between archaeological discovery, financial value and respect for the dead. Who should have the right to remove objects from an ancient burial place?

📖 Stuart knows that Japanese patrols are closing around him, yet continues toward Betty instead of escaping. Discuss how his priorities have changed since the beginning of the story. Has his decision become more courageous, more reckless or both?

CHAPTER EIGHT

 Betty and Stuart initially believe the objects from the Black Chest are worthless, while Blakely becomes increasingly angry because his pursuit appears to have gained him nothing. Discuss how expectations of wealth can distort judgment. Would Blakely's behavior have been different if he had understood the objects' true value?

 Stuart escapes by exploiting Blakely's assumptions, disguising himself as Blakely and convincing General Shimokado that the dead man is the Red Dragon. Discuss why intelligence and understanding other people can sometimes defeat superior numbers and military power more effectively than direct confrontation.

 The supposedly worthless brown carvings finally prove to be extremely valuable tomb jade and Stuart tells Betty that they will become her wedding present. Discuss how this final reversal changes the meaning of the Black Chest. By the end, which is the greater treasure—the jade, Stuart's freedom, Betty and Stuart's relationship or the possibility of beginning a new life together?

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