

L. Ron Hubbard's *While Bugles Blow!* Discussion Guide



STORY SUMMARY & OVERVIEW

An American lieutenant commanding sixty French Foreign Legionnaires at isolated Harj intervenes when Morgiana, a beautiful Jeppa warrior, is sold at a slave auction. His decision ignites conflict with Caid Perviz al Bahman and exposes a larger Jeppa plot to seize Harj. Besieged by overwhelming forces, the Lieutenant uses discipline, deception, explosives and daring tactics to save his men. Captured by the Jeppas, he turns their scheme to his advantage, retakes the fort, defeats Perviz and imposes peace. Finally, Morgiana's hidden American origins are revealed, clearing the way for the Lieutenant to ask for her hand in marriage, which she accepted.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT: MOROCCO AND THE FRENCH FOREIGN LEGION

While Bugles Blow! is set in Morocco during the era of French colonial expansion in North Africa. The story's references to the French Foreign Legion, Fez, the Atlas Mountains, the Rif, Berbers, Arabs and isolated military garrisons place its fictional conflict against the broader background of European attempts to establish and maintain authority over fiercely independent communities. The Lieutenant's tiny garrison illustrates one of the difficulties of colonial occupation: a small military force might claim territory but remain dependent upon reputation, diplomacy, alliances and the threat of reinforcements to maintain control. The story also presents slavery, tribal warfare, gender roles and cultural conflict through the conventions of 1930s adventure fiction.

CHAPTER ONE: THE LIEUTENANT GETS A PROBLEM

📖 The Lieutenant refuses Sergeant Germaine's suggestion that he take armed men into Harj because he believes displaying force might make the population think the Legion is afraid. Discuss the importance of appearances in maintaining authority when actual military strength is limited.

📖 The Lieutenant discovers that women are openly being sold despite French law prohibiting the practice, yet he recognizes that sixty Legionnaires cannot instantly transform the customs of a newly conquered city. Discuss the conflict between enforcing a law believed to be morally right and imposing that law upon another culture by military power.

📖 The Lieutenant buys Morgiana intending to free her, but his action immediately creates political problems involving Harj, the Jeppas, his soldiers and his own reputation. Discuss how a morally understandable decision can produce consequences that the person making it never anticipated.

CHAPTER TWO: AND TROUBLE GATHERS

📖 Germaine disobeys orders and secretly follows the Lieutenant to his meeting with Perviz al Bahman because he believes his commander will be murdered. Discuss when loyalty might justify disobedience. Is Germaine being insubordinate, responsible or both?

📖 Perviz offers money and security in return for cooperation, while the Lieutenant insists that his military pay is enough. Discuss why refusing personal rewards is particularly important when someone holds political or military authority.

📖 Perviz argues that Morgiana should be returned to the Jeppas even though she will probably be killed, because sacrificing one person might prevent the deaths of hundreds or thousands. Discuss the moral problem created when the safety of a community appears to depend upon sacrificing an innocent individual.

CHAPTER THREE: THE RISING HORDE

📖 The Lieutenant deliberately waits until attackers carrying a battering ram are close to the fort before ordering his men to fire. Discuss how discipline and patience can become as important as courage during a military crisis.

📖 Morgiana notices that the Lieutenant becomes happier and more confident once the fighting begins. She realizes that political responsibility frustrates him while danger seems to bring out his abilities. Discuss whether someone who thrives in dangerous situations necessarily makes a good leader during peaceful ones.

📖 The Lieutenant jokes that there may be little difference between a fool and a hero because becoming a hero sometimes requires taking apparently foolish risks. Discuss where you would draw the line between heroic courage and reckless behavior.

CHAPTER FOUR: NIGHT SLASHED WITH FIRING

📖 Morgiana insists upon visiting the battlements despite the danger. Discuss how her willingness to expose herself to gunfire challenges the Lieutenant's assumptions about protecting her and reveals her identity as a warrior rather than simply someone needing rescue.

📖 The Lieutenant remains cheerful throughout the siege, but Germaine understands that this humor actually means his commander believes their situation is hopeless. Discuss how leaders use humor, confidence or ceremony to influence morale even when they privately expect disaster.

📖 Morgiana mysteriously escapes after leaving the Lieutenant a farewell message. Discuss how her disappearance changes the situation both strategically and personally. Why does her safety matter so much to the Lieutenant even though he suspects she has helped manipulate him?

CHAPTER FIVE: THE LIEUTENANT TRIES A TRICK

📖 Food, water and ammunition are nearly exhausted and the story observes that courage and strategy cannot compensate indefinitely for their absence. Discuss why logistics can determine the outcome of wars even when one side possesses superior leadership or fighting ability.

📖 The Lieutenant disguises Schmaltz as Morgiana so the besiegers will continue believing she remains inside the fort. Discuss how deception functions as a weapon in warfare. Are there ethical limits to deliberately misleading an enemy?

📖 The Lieutenant orders his men to escape while he and Piccard remain behind to draw the enemy through the gate and detonate their enormous improvised explosive. Discuss a commander's responsibility toward the people under his command. Should a leader accept greater personal risk than the people he leads?

CHAPTER SIX: A PRISONER GIVES ORDERS

📖 Caid Kirzigh tells the Lieutenant that his men surrendered because they were without his leadership. Discuss how much the effectiveness of a military unit or any organization should depend upon one individual. What are the dangers of becoming too dependent upon a charismatic leader?

📖 The Lieutenant finally reconstructs the Jeppas' scheme: Morgiana's capture and sale were deliberately used to provoke a war between him and Perviz so the Jeppas could attack the weakened survivors. Discuss how recognizing another person's strategy can transform someone from a pawn into an independent player.

📖 Although wounded and technically a prisoner, the Lieutenant begins issuing orders and persuades Kirzigh to provide horses, cavalry and weapons for an immediate counterattack. Discuss why confidence and a clear plan can sometimes create authority even when someone possesses no formal power.

CHAPTER SEVEN: THUNDER OVER THE FORT

📖 The Lieutenant realizes that the fort which three thousand men could not capture can be taken by his small force because he knows its defenses intimately. Discuss how knowledge of terrain, defenses and an opponent's expectations can sometimes overcome numerical superiority.

📖 After retaking Harj, the Lieutenant refuses to allow Kirzigh to treat the victory as an opportunity to conquer his rivals. Instead, he arrests Perviz and threatens intervention against either side if the feud continues. Discuss whether the Lieutenant is establishing peace or simply replacing local authority with colonial military authority.

 The final revelation that Morgiana was born to American parents changes what she and the other characters believed about her identity. Discuss whether ancestry should determine a person's identity after she has been raised entirely within another culture. How might Morgiana herself answer the question of where she truly belongs?

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