

1900

JOSEPH CONRAD'S

**LORD JIM**

Jeremy Jericho

**SERIES COORDINATOR**

**Murray Bromberg, Principal,**

Wang High School of Queens, Holliswood, New York,  
Past President, High School Principals Association of New York City

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**Conrad, Joseph** (1857-1924) - Polish-born English novelist who did not learn to speak English until he was in his twenties. Conrad was best known in his day as a teller of sea stories; his technique and style have since come to be recognized as influential in the development of the modern novel.

**Lord Jim** (1900) - Conrad's best-known novel is the story of a man who dreams of heroic acts but is tormented by secret fears. It is the study of one man's lifelong quest to atone for an act of cowardice.

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# THE AUTHOR AND HIS TIMES

No one could have expected Joseph Conrad to become one of the great English novelists. His driving ambition as a youth was to be not a writer but a sailor; on top of that, he wasn't English. Incredibly, English was his third language, and he didn't learn it until he was past 20.

The novelist, whose real name was Jozef Teodor Konrad Korzeniowski, was born on December 3, 1857, at Berdichev, a city in Polish Russia that now belongs to the Soviet Union. Both his parents were committed revolutionaries in the Poles' struggle for independence from Russia. His father's subversive activities led to his arrest in 1861 and the family's exile to the remote Russian city of Vologda. Traveling there, four-year-old Jozef was stricken with pneumonia. Illness dogged his childhood, and as an adult he suffered from recurrent bouts of ill health.

Life was hard in Vologda- too hard for Conrad's mother. The family eventually received permission to move to a less severe climate, but she died of tuberculosis when her son was only seven years old. Conrad's father was broken in health and in spirit. Once an original poet, he turned to translating to make a living; Conrad's first contact with the English language occurred when he observed his father translating Shakespeare. Although the father was finally allowed to return to the Polish city of Cracow, he died after a year there, in 1869, when Conrad was eleven.

Conrad's maternal grandmother took over the job of bringing him up, and a stern but devoted uncle, Tadeusz Bobrowski, oversaw his education. Conrad wasn't an easy charge. He was a less than spectacular student. (His talent for languages didn't become apparent till much later. At this stage, even his Polish needed work.) To make matters worse, the boy decided when he was 14 that he wanted to become a sailor- an unusual ambition in landlocked Poland. His uncle sent him on the Grand Tour of Europe with a tutor who was supposed to bring him to his senses. It didn't work. The tutor ended up pronouncing Conrad a "hopeless Don Quixote," and in 1874 the 16-year-old youth journeyed to the French port of Marseilles to learn the ropes as a sailor. Many readers have found echoes of Conrad's youthful idealism and romantic outlook in Lord Jim.

Conrad's four years in the French merchant marine included voyages to the West Indies and, possibly, the Venezuelan coast, as well as a gun-running adventure in Spain. He took advantage of Marseilles' cultural life, but the city's social life proved a little too intense for the young man to handle. Ultimately he found himself desperately in debt, and one evening he invited a creditor to tea and shot himself before the man arrived. In early 1878 an urgent telegram reached Bobrowski saying his nephew was wounded and needed money. Bobrowski went to Marseilles and was relieved to find his nephew's health, if not his pocketbook, in reasonably good shape. Young Conrad was handsome, robust, and well-mannered, and he had become an accomplished, though impoverished, sailor. (The



author would later romanticize the bullet mark on his left breast into a dueling scar.)

Since Conrad could no longer remain in the French merchant marine without becoming a French citizen- entailing the peril of conscription into the French military- later in 1878 he signed on an English freighter. He served with the British merchant marine for the next 16 years, becoming a British subject in 1886. Conrad sailed to Asia and the South Pacific, where he collected the raw material for novels that- amazingly- he still had no ambition of writing. However, his irritable and gloomy disposition didn't work to his advantage. He had quarrels with at least three of his captains, and periods of poor health and terrible depression continued to immobilize him.

During the 1880s, Conrad made voyages to such Asian ports as Singapore, Bangkok, and Samarang (on Java). All three have their place in *Lord Jim*: Singapore as the unnamed city where the Patna inquiry is held; Bangkok as one of the ports where Jim works as a water-clerk (and gets into a fight); and Samarang as another of these ports, and the home of Marlow's friend Stein. On one of his voyages, Conrad was injured during a storm, much as Jim is in Chapter Two, and was laid up in the same Singapore hospital where Jim recuperates. After his recovery, he signed up as mate on the steamship *Vidar*, which traveled around the islands of the Malay Archipelago. It was in these exotic islands that Conrad found the raw material for his first two novels, *Almayer's Folly* and *An Outcast of the Islands*.

He transformed one Borneo locale into the fictional Patusan, where the last half of *Lord Jim* is set.

By 1888 he had risen to the rank of captain, and he received his first command on a small ship sailing out of Bangkok. On his return to England, he was unable to find another command, and so through the influence of relatives in Brussels he secured an appointment as captain of a steamship on the Congo River. But once he reached Africa, Conrad fell prey to fever and dysentery that left his health broken for the rest of his life. Though his experiences there were to form the basis of his most famous tale, *Heart of Darkness*, he returned to England traumatized. His outlook, already gloomy, became even blacker.

Captain Korzeniowski (as Conrad was still known) didn't realize it, but he was approaching the end of his sea career. In 1889 he had begun a novel based on his voyages to Asia. He continued work on it in Africa and afterward, and in 1895 the book appeared as *Almayer's Folly* by Joseph Conrad. (After putting up for years with British garblings of "Korzeniowski" he decided to put something they could pronounce on the title page.) Like most of the books he wrote for the next 20 years, the novel was a success with the critics but not the public. It was dedicated to the memory of his uncle Bobrowski, who had died in 1894.

Writing was difficult, even painful, for Conrad. He was agonizingly slow, though financial pressures drove him to work faster than he liked. Consequently, he was almost always dissatisfied with the finished product. (He called *Lord Jim*, the novel that many regard as his masterpiece, "too wretched for words" and la-

mented, “How bad oh! HOW BAD!”) His already wobbly finances became even shakier after his marriage, in 1896, and the birth of two sons, in 1898 and 1906. There were periods of remarkable productiveness (he completed *Heart of Darkness* in less than two months), but these alternated with periods of despair in which he could write nothing; in addition, he had recurrent bouts of nervous exhaustion and gout to contend with. Conrad once described his father in words that could have well described himself: “A man of great sensibilities; of exalted and dreamy temperament, with a terrible gift of irony and of gloomy disposition.”

Although his income from his books remained low, Conrad’s reputation grew steadily higher. He was a “writer’s writer” whose friends and admirers included such famous authors as Ford Madox Ford, Stephen Crane, John Galsworthy, W. H. Hudson, H. G. Wells, Bertrand Russell, and his idol, Henry James. His well-received books included *Typhoon* (1902), *Nostromo* (1904), and *The Secret Agent* (1907). After 1910 he finally became financially secure. In that year, he was awarded a small pension. He was able to begin selling his manuscripts to an American collector. In 1911, Conrad published *Under Western Eyes*. And he finally attained best-sellerdom with his novel *Chance*, serialized in 1912 in the *New York Herald* and published in book form two years later in Great Britain and America. Victory followed in 1915. In 1923 Conrad enjoyed an enthusiastic reception during a visit to the United States. He was dogged by serious illness by this time, however, and died on August 3, 1924, in England.

Conrad's work was crucial to the development of the modern novel. In his use of the limited point of view- that is, presenting a tale through a single consciousness (in the case of *Lord Jim*, through Marlow)- he was the literary heir of Henry James, the novelist he admired above all others. But Conrad took the device farther than James had, limiting the point of view so strictly to one character (and removing the impersonal "narrator") that he paved the way for such 20th-century writers as James Joyce and William Faulkner, who delved directly into their characters' minds through the device known as interior monologue. Conrad's use of fractured chronology- that is, narrating events out of their time-sequence, a later one before an earlier one- became a major technique in 20th-century fiction. (See this Guide's section on Form and Structure.) His early novels, especially *Heart of Darkness* and *Lord Jim*, are more experimental in this direction than his later ones. In addition to Conrad's influence on the style and technique of fiction writers, the profundity- and bleakness- of his vision have shaped the outlook of many writers.

# THE NOVEL

## THE PLOT

Jim is a young man with a vivid, romantic imagination, who decides to become a sailor after reading sea stories. He loves picturing himself as a hero, but he misses his chance when it comes. As a student on a training ship, he hangs back from a rescue mission during a storm because the storm frightens him so.

Later, Jim signs on as first mate of the *Patna*, a rusty old ship that's been hired to take 800 Muslims on a pilgrimage. One calm night the ship is damaged at sea, and the other white members of the crew- the obese German captain and the three engineers- decide to flee in one of the lifeboats. Jim is horrified: They're responsible for 800 other lives. But considering the damage, the *Patna* seems certain to sink any moment. At the last minute, Jim leaps overboard and into the escaping lifeboat.

The five men are soon rescued, and they report the sinking of the *Patna*. But later it turns out that the *Patna* hasn't sunk: A French gunboat discovered it and towed it into port. Jim and his mates look like cowards to the rest of the world. An inquiry is held, though Jim is the only one of the runaways who actually attends. The German captain has fled; the first and second engineers are hospitalized; the third engineer died during the escape. At the end, the court revokes Jim's license to serve as a ship's officer.

During the course of the inquiry Jim meets Captain Marlow, who's twenty years his senior. Marlow becomes interested in Jim's story and invites Jim back to his hotel; Jim, relieved to have a sympathetic ear, supplies all the painful details. Though there's no excusing Jim, it's also clear that he's not as great a scoundrel as the other crew members. Marlow develops some compassion for the young man. (It's Marlow who narrates most of the novel.)

One of the judges at the inquiry is a highly successful and extremely conceited captain named Montague Brierly. The inquiry disturbs him, and he tries to talk Marlow into bribing Jim to run away. Brierly is so anguished by the potential for human cowardice that Jim has demonstrated that he kills himself at sea a short time later.

After the inquiry, Marlow comes to Jim's aid by recommending him to a friend who owns a rice mill. Jim does well there, but when the second engineer of the Patna shows up looking for work, Jim leaves. He can't stand being reminded of his humiliation. For the next several years he drifts from port to port, working as a water clerk for suppliers of provisions to ships. As soon as he's recognized, he leaves. But eventually he becomes so well-known that there's almost no place left for him to hide.

At this point Marlow seeks advice and help from his old friend Stein, a wealthy German merchant whose chief interest is collecting butterflies and beetles. Stein hires Jim as a trade representative in the remote district of Patusan. The district is tyrannized by its ruler, the Rajah Allang. The Rajah's main rival is old

Doramin, who leads a settlement of Muslim immigrants and is, incidentally, an old friend of Stein's. A third political force is Sherif Ali, a cult leader who has terrorized the countryside.

The Rajah takes Jim prisoner as soon as he arrives. But Jim escapes and seeks out Doramin, who protects him for the sake of his old friendship with Stein. Jim hatches a plot to rout Sherif Ali, and with the help of Doramin's son, Dain Waris, they drive him out of Patusan. Jim rises to a position of leadership in the community, and the Rajah's power is curbed.

But the person who hates Jim most isn't the Rajah but Cornelius, the man Jim replaced as Stein's representative. Cornelius' dead wife bore a daughter by another man, and Jim falls in love with this daughter. He calls her Jewel. Jewel loves Jim fiercely, but she's terrified he'll abandon her as her father abandoned her mother.

Under Jim's leadership, life for the villagers becomes stable and secure. But that changes when a malicious British pirate named Gentleman Brown invades Patusan, bent on plunder. Jim is away when Brown's men sail up the river, but Dain Waris leads the defense, cornering Brown and his men on a hill. When Jim gets back, he negotiates with Brown, who agrees to leave quietly. Jim's decision to let him go without a fight is controversial, but Jim thinks it's best to avoid bloodshed.

But Brown wants revenge, and Cornelius is ready to help him. He knows that Dain Waris is camped downstream with a group of men who are guarding the

river, and he leads Brown and his men up behind the camp, where they stage a sneak attack. Dain Waris and a number of others are killed. Jim's servant, 'Emb' Itam, witnesses the massacre, and he manages to kill Cornelius before speeding to the village with the terrible news.

Jim and Jewel know that Doramin is going to want revenge for the death of his son. Jewel begs Jim to either put up a fight or escape with her; but Jim refuses. Proving once and for all that, no matter what happened on the Patna, he's not afraid of death, he goes to face Doramin. The angry old man shoots him through the chest, and Jim falls dead.

## THE CHARACTERS

### JIM

Conrad's title character is a complex intellectual puzzle, and it is very difficult to judge him. In deserting 800 pilgrims aboard the Patna, Jim commits an action that's utterly inexcusable. But Conrad provides facts that soften the crime in every possible way. Jim genuinely believes that the ship is about to sink, and that he can't do anybody any good by staying aboard. Besides, his escape owes far more to an impulse- an inexplicable impulse- than to any conscious decision. Moreover, Jim has so many admirable qualities (which he demonstrates amply in the second half of the novel) that it seems unfair to remember him as the man who jumped off the Patna. And yet that's how people do remember Jim- even his friend and champion Marlow and, from what Marlow can gather, Jim himself.



According to Marlow, Jim is finally “not clear” to him. So it’s no wonder that the readers have reached no consensus about Jim, either. The second half of the novel remains particularly controversial. Some readers believe that Jim’s accomplishments in Patusan make up for his cowardice aboard the Patna. Others are equally certain that his final blunder of judgment, a blunder that costs many lives, is intimately linked with his behavior on the Patna. (A deeper question arises: Is there a scale on which you can balance a person’s good acts against his bad acts?)

Considering this moral ambiguity surrounding Jim, it’s fitting that the image he’s most often associated with is mist. Marlow complains that he can never get a clear picture of him, because Jim always appears, metaphorically speaking, in a fog or mist. Occasionally the mist parts, allowing Marlow (and the reader) a deeper glimpse into Jim’s inner workings. But the mist always closes again. This image undergoes a metamorphosis in the last part of the novel, where Jim repeatedly appears “under a cloud.” “Cloud” retains the associations of “mist,” suggesting that it’s difficult to see beyond the surface of Jim’s actions into his motives. But the phrase also carries its usual implication of a damaged reputation. Jim dies “under a cloud” in that he leaves so many people both in Patusan and in the wider world thinking that he deserves to be condemned. But the wording also suggests that those who condemn Jim don’t see or understand him clearly. Surely, for example, Doramin is wrong to think Jim is guilty of any kind of treachery toward Dain Waris.

Jim is the victim of his own vivid imagination. He tends to freeze in difficult situations because he's so adept at picturing the worst possible outcomes. He's also a romantic idealist- that is, he thinks perfection is really within his grasp, and so he's doubly hard on himself when he fails to be perfect. He may not live up to his vision of himself, but he's no hypocrite, either- he strives to live up to it. He's naive, even immature, to have so little perspective on his ideals. But if he's naive he's also admirable. After all, he does manage to impose his vision of order and justice, at least for a while, on troubled Patusan.

Jim's naive idealism isn't his only boyish trait. He has a youthful exuberance that borders on impulsiveness, and doesn't always serve him well. His response to an insult is either to blush or to fight. And he occasionally stammers like a tongue-tied boy. Marlow frequently notes this inarticulate quality but admits that it doesn't keep Jim from being "wonderfully expressive." He has a sulky side, which comes to the fore when he's criticized, combined with a stiff-upper-lip British pride that makes him want to hide his feelings. Thus, in Chapter Six he tries to pick a fight after he hears someone call a dog "that wretched cur" and mistakes the words for an insult directed at him. But what humiliates him most deeply is having his wounds exposed: Until then he had faced his loss of reputation with a public air of indifference that was a long way from his true feelings.

Jim's judgment may (or may not) be unsound, but he does at least prove by the end of the novel that he's not afraid of death. He arrives in Patusan, knowing the danger, with an unloaded gun. He leads the assault on Sherif Ali at great risk

to his own life. He regularly demonstrates his fearlessness by drinking the Rajah's coffee, which he has good reason to believe may be poisoned. And finally he goes to confront Doramin knowing that he will almost certainly die. Whatever Jim's faults, he rebuts the charge of cowardice in the face of death.

Those faults may have to do with his egoism, a characteristic to which Marlow refers again and again. Jim is ultimately obsessed with himself, his image of himself and his own behavior. He isn't very concerned with the rest of the world (which is not to say he's selfish). His good deeds in Patusan satisfy a test he's set for himself- fine as he is, he doesn't go there out of charity. He takes great satisfaction in being loved and trusted and revered, and in knowing that nobody in Patusan would call him a coward. But in the end he places his own ideals, and his own needs, far above Jewel's or the community's- whose interests aren't served by his death. Jewel is left widowed and alone; the community loses a leader who's brought peace and curbed the tyranny of the Rajah. In fact, the only interest served is an abstract one: Jim's egoism, his personal ideal of bravery, at the cost of his own life.

## **MARLOW**

Although Marlow, the ship's captain who tells most of Jim's story, plays only a small part in the action of Lord Jim, he's as important to the novel as the title character. Almost everything that happens is filtered through Marlow's consciousness via his narration. As a thinker, Jim is rather dull. His ideas are simple and

boy-scout naive. What gives the novel its verve and its complexity is Marlow's wide-ranging observation and analysis.

Marlow is a practiced observer- the very opposite of the egoistical Jim. While Jim is obsessed with himself, it's other people (particularly Jim) who fascinate Marlow. He complains about the way men and women constantly seek him out to spill their innermost thoughts, but you can see why they do: His interest and compassion, his need to understand, make him a natural confessor.

Conrad had already used Marlow as a narrator, in the short story "Youth" (1898) and the short novel *Heart of Darkness* (1899). But in those works Marlow was little more than a fictional stand-in for the author; his attitudes, perceptions, judgments were Conrad's. In fact, their only major difference was their birth-places- Britain for Marlow, Poland for Conrad. But in *Lord Jim* the relationship has altered. Marlow is no longer simply a stand-in, though his moral and ethical judgments still resemble Conrad's. Now Marlow allows his affection for Jim to soften his judgment. Deep down, he wants to find a way to excuse him. Conrad, in contrast, presents the evidence with rigorous objectivity. For example, in his talk with the French lieutenant (Chapters Twelve and Thirteen), Marlow wants to think that the lieutenant's sympathy and understanding of human fear will lead to his pardoning Jim. Conrad lets Marlow build this house of cards out of his hopes- then has the lieutenant topple it with a few words about a topic Marlow has been avoiding: honor.

Jim's emotions are essentially simple because he views the world in simple, even naive terms. Marlow, on the other hand, is endlessly complex in his responses to events and his analyses of them. He's exasperated by Jim's immaturity, though he's also drawn to the way Jim has held on to his youthful illusions. But though Marlow may have lost his own illusions, he's anything but a cynic. In fact, he's the opposite- a moralist. Marlow is concerned with the essential goodness or badness of people, their "butterfly" or "beetle" natures. (See the Note in Chapter Twenty.) He readily condemns the Patna's captain and engineers, or Cornelius and Brown; and he doesn't hesitate to heap praise on characters like Stein and Dain Waris. What disturbs him about Jim's case is the ethical problem. Marlow is an adept enough judge of character to recognize that Jim is a far cry from the scoundrel he would have expected in a first mate who deserted his ship. In fact, his confidence in Jim goes so far that he's willing to make himself "unreservedly responsible" for Jim's behavior by recommending him for employment in terms you would use only for a close friend. So Marlow faces the moral puzzle: how could a genuinely good man behave like a very bad one?

Philosopher though he is, he balks at the one answer that might let Jim off. He's unwilling to concede that the "fixed standard of conduct," the code of ethics by which we behave, isn't grounded or "fixed" in any cosmic sense as, for example, the law of gravity is fixed. He refuses to believe it's an arbitrary standard, "fixed" only for our own convenience but dispensable in certain situations. For Captain Marlow the good sailor, a ship's officer doesn't abandon the passengers

under any circumstances- period. But Jim seems no more villainous, really, for his action. This moral puzzle is part of what draws Marlow to Jim. In addition, of course, he likes him. And he feels a certain responsibility, recognizing that nobody will help the young man if he doesn't, and that without help Jim is probably bound for a future of alcoholic ruin.

And yet for all his kindness Marlow is so reserved that he seems cold. He seems to have difficulty handling affection. Whenever Jim tries to express friendship or gratitude, Marlow dodges with a joke or a gruff reply. He actively avoids moments of what he calls "real and profound intimacy," preferring for such intimacy to be understood rather than expressed. Marlow's formality keeps the prose from turning mushy. Marlow is an admirable man, but he doesn't like to claim his own virtues; he'd rather come across as bad-tempered and gruff.

## **THE CAPTAIN OF THE PATNA**

Jim's captain, a vulgar, obese German by way of Australia, is everything a captain shouldn't be: irresponsible, corrupt, and contemptuous of his passengers (he calls them "cattle"). When his ship is damaged at sea, he wastes no time trying to save the passengers, and abandons it without a second thought. Later, before the inquiry, he vanishes- apparently having (unlike Jim) some place to go, some connections who will take him in. Conrad has a good deal of fun at his expense, ridiculing his vulgarity, his bad English, and his grotesque bulk.

## **THE CHIEF ENGINEER**

The chief engineer is a cohort of the captain's, and just as corrupt. They're a team of embezzlers. Physically they look grotesquely like Laurel and Hardy: the captain revoltingly fat, the chief engineer bone-thin, with sunken cheeks, sunken temples, and sunken eyes. It's the chief engineer who, once the Patna has been deserted, has the illusion of seeing it sink. His illusions continue back on shore, where he succumbs to hallucinations after three days of heavy drinking. He claims to have a clear conscience about abandoning the ship ("I could look at sinking ships and smoke my pipe all day long"), but his drinking suggests he's trying to forget. The toad visions seem to be displaced guilt: His deranged mind has transformed the abandoned pilgrims into vengeful toads. His distress suggests that breaking the "fixed standard of conduct" carries heavier personal consequences than Marlow first thought.

## **THE SECOND ENGINEER**

The second engineer is a nasty, obnoxious little man who talks too much. He's as corrupt as the captain and the chief engineer, but he does at least show a little spirit during the Patna crisis by running to the engine room, at great risk and in great pain from a broken arm, to fetch a hammer. Months after the inquiry, he turns up destitute at Mr. Denver's rice mill, where Jim has found work with particularly good prospects. His offensive familiarity eventually drives Jim away. There's a hint in his fawning that he intends to blackmail Jim.

## **THE THIRD ENGINEER (GEORGE)**

Poor George surfaces just long enough to die of heart failure during the Patna crisis. He's in bed when the ship is damaged, and the other officers rouse him. Jim notes the irony of his death: If he had been a little braver and not exhausted his heart trying to get off the ship, he would have survived. When Jim leaps into the lifeboat, the other officers mistake him for George in the darkness, not realizing that George has died.

## **MONTAGUE BRIERLY**

“Big Brierly” is a highly successful and conceited sea captain who serves as one of the nautical assessors, or judges, at the court of inquiry into the Patna incident. He seems like a man who's enjoyed every possible stroke of good fortune. And yet he kills himself shortly after he hears the case.

From what Marlow gathers, Brierly's suicide seems directly related to his high opinion of himself. Brierly perceives that few sailors ever have to confront the kind of moral test Jim has faced (and failed) aboard the Patna. Apparently he becomes obsessed with the anxiety that he would behave the same way. After all, Brierly's life has consisted of one piece of luck after another. What would happen if his luck ran out? Brierly, it would seem, has never thought about that question, but once he starts thinking about it he can't stop. He kills himself out of fear of his own cowardice. He has based his opinion of himself solely on externals- all the awards and honors and praise he's received. He has no fundamental belief in



himself, nothing internal. When he starts questioning his worth, he has no internal confidence with which to fight off doubts and the doubts soon overwhelm him.

## **JONES**

Jones is Brierly's chief mate at the time of his suicide. He detests Brierly so much that he can hardly stand being civil to him. After Brierly's death, though, he develops such reverence for his former captain that he comes close to weeping when he talks about him. His change of heart owes much to Brierly's having recommended him as his successor in a letter written just before he jumped overboard. Jones doesn't get the promotion, but by the time Marlow speaks to him, some two years later, he's taken charge of some other "nautical wreck."

## **THE FRENCH LIEUTENANT**

More than three years after the fact, Marlow encounters an elderly lieutenant of the French gunboat that towed the Patna to port (Chapters Twelve and Thirteen). The lieutenant fills Marlow in on what happened to the Patna after its officers abandoned her. He's a model of military courage and efficiency. The scars on his hand and his temple attest to the action he's seen. He condemns actions on the Patna. Fear may be understandable, but cowardice isn't defensible. The lieutenant's highest value is honor. He would never have the slightest doubts about the fixed standard of conduct.

## **CHESTER**

Chester is an Australian adventurer who accosts Marlow after Jim's trial with a job offer for Jim (Chapter Fourteen). He has a crackpot scheme for hauling guano (sea bird manure, for fertilizer) off a waterless Pacific island, and he wants to engage Jim as overseer for 40 coolies there. Though he derides Jim for taking his punishment to heart so, he also knows Jim doesn't have any other prospects. Chester prides himself on seeing things "exactly as they are," but in fact he's a gross cynic without the least conception of personal honor. His cynicism is the reverse of Jim's idealism; he forms a beetle to Jim's butterfly (see the note to Chapter Twenty). The Chester episode demonstrates to Marlow how vulnerable Jim will be to unscrupulous adventurers, making Marlow feel his responsibility as Jim's only real friend. Chester does eventually set sail for his guano island, but the whole enterprise disappears in a hurricane at sea (Chapter Sixteen).

## **MR. DENVER**

After Jim's trial, Marlow sends him to work for Mr. Denver, a wealthy friend who owns a rice mill (Chapter Eighteen). Mr. Denver is an elderly bachelor who's spent his life distrusting people, but he's so charmed by Jim that Jim has a good chance of becoming his heir. When the obnoxious second engineer of the Patna turns up, Jim runs away, leaving Mr. Denver wounded and bitter.

## STEIN

Stein was born in Germany, as his thick accent and mangled syntax attest. He is a wealthy merchant operating out of Java. As a young man, he was a partisan in the region's bitter power struggles, and his exceptional courage led him through one adventure after another. He married, but both his wife and daughter are long dead. The old man's main interest now is his remarkable collection of butterflies and beetles- Conrad's symbols for the two poles of human nature. You will hear more about these later.

Stein's appearance in Chapter Nineteen heralds a shift in the basic assumptions of the novel. The early chapters are grimly realistic, with heavy emphasis on the futility of illusions. In the first half, Jim's idealism is viewed as commendable, perhaps, but obviously impractical and even dishonest in the distance between Jim's fantasies of himself and his behavior on the Patna. Stein expresses this point of view even as he contradicts it. He explains that the distance between your dreams and accomplishments is necessarily a source of pain. But all the same, he advises, "In the destructive element immerse"- that is, keep following your dreams even though you can't attain them.

The reason Stein partly undercuts his own advice is that he seems to have attained all his own dreams. Of course, as he explains to Marlow, a casual observer can't see his failures, his lost dreams. Still, he seems like exactly the kind of romantic dreamer that Jim was criticized for being- and exactly the kind of man Jim would like to be.

Stein plays a small part in the plot of the novel, sending Jim to Patusan as his trade representative. But his position in the center of the book lends great weight to his words. In fact, the novel ends with Stein and his butterflies.

### **MOHAMMED BONSO**

Mohammed Bonso is Stein's princely ally in the regional power struggles, assassinated when peace was at hand. Stein married his sister, "the princess." Both she and their small daughter, Emma, later died of an infectious fever (Chapter Twenty).

### **RAJAH ALLANG (TUNKU ALLANG)**

The nominal ruler of Patusan is the retarded Sultan (Chapter Twenty-two), but the real power is his corrupt old uncle, the Rajah Allang. The rajah is a dirty, wrinkled opium addict, and he's a tyrant. Any peasant who violates his trade monopoly by doing commerce with someone else faces a death sentence. The rajah takes Jim prisoner when he first arrives in Patusan. Later, after Jim has risen to power, the rajah can't afford to kill him (though he'd like to) because Jim protects him from the wrath of Doramin's followers, who would very much like his head. Jim regularly demonstrates his fearlessness by accepting the rajah's coffee, which he has good reason to think may be poisoned.

When Patusan is invaded by Gentleman Brown and his small army of pirates, the rajah, through his representative Kassim, carries on negotiations with the invaders. This cynical diplomacy comes to nothing, but the outcome of events- the

deaths of Jim and Dain Waris- seems likely to restore the old tyrant's former power.

### **KASSIM**

Kassim, the rajah's right-hand man, is a cunning diplomat who greets Jim on his arrival in Patusan (Chapter Twenty-four) and later negotiates in the rajah's name with Gentleman Brown. Like the rajah, he hates Jim and Doramin.

### **DORAMIN**

Doramin is the leader of the Patusan Bugis, a group of some 60 Muslim families, from the neighboring island of Celebes, who form the faction opposed to the rajah. The old man is immensely fat, but his weight isn't comical; each pound seems to add to his mountainlike dignity. Doramin protects Jim for the sake of his old friendship with Stein. He is, in general, wise and wily; but he ultimately lets his love for his son Dain Waris overrule his good judgment. Thus, he forestalls an attack on the invaders in Jim's absence, fearing that his son will be harmed in the battle. Later, after Brown's men have killed Dain Waris, Doramin takes revenge by shooting Jim. Not only is his vengeance an irrational act, but it's a highly foolish and irresponsible one that will bring great harm to the Bugis he leads, since Jim is their main protection against the tyranny of the Rajah Allang.

## **DAIN WARIS**

Dain Waris, Doramin's son, is a stock figure of adventure fiction: handsome, intelligent, daring, respectful of his parents, and so forth. Marlow sings his praises by listing the ways in which he's "like a white man" (Chapter Twenty-six)- a racist way of implying that Malays who aren't like white men are inferior. Because Doramin is ambitious for his son to become ruler of Patusan, he's not entirely comfortable with Jim's power- especially after Marlow assures him that Jim is never going to leave even though Jim and Dain Waris are best friends. Dain Waris dies through the treachery of Brown and Cornelius, but Doramin's rankling resentment leads him to avenge his son by shooting Jim.

## **SHERIF ALI**

Sherif Ali, "an Arab half-breed" and religious fanatic, has incited the tribes in the interior to rise and terrorize the countryside. He's built a stronghold on one of the twin hills overlooking the village. Both the rajah and Doramin are wary of him. Jim makes his name by leading Doramin's men into Sherif Ali's supposedly impregnable camp and driving him out of Patusan.

## **TAMB' ITAM**

Jim's faithful servant, silent and dour, is another stock character of escapist fiction. This name means "black clerk" in Malay. Like Jim, he's an outsider (a Malay from the north) whom the rajah took prisoner on his arrival in Patusan, and who escaped to the Bugis. He witnesses the massacre of Dain Waris' men, and he

executes the treacherous Cornelius on the spot. Much of Marlow's information about Jim's last days comes from Tamb' Itam, who has escaped with Jewel to Stein's home in Samarang.

## **JEWEL**

"Jewel" isn't her real name (which Marlow never discloses), but the English translation of Jim's affectionate Malay nickname for her. She, too, is something of a stock figure- romantic and tragic- but with slightly more depth of character than the other Malays. Jewel's father abandoned her mother, who then married Cornelius. Now the mother is dead, and Cornelius has transferred his long bitterness to poor Jewel, whom he browbeats constantly. She leads a miserable life until Jim arrives and falls in love with her. But she's terrified that Jim will leave her, as her father left her mother. When, at the end, he marches off to die, her fierce love turns into bitterness. Essentially she goes from one false picture of Jim to another. During his lifetime, she won't believe anything bad of him; after his death, she won't forgive him because, she insists, he has abandoned her.

Though Jewel is fairly helpless in her dependency first on Cornelius, then on Jim, she's nonetheless spirited and resourceful. She saves Jim from Sherif Ali's assassins. Later, when Brown's men invade and Jim is away, she proves herself a natural leader of the community. But her judicious call for strong action against the invaders is thwarted by Doramin's over-cautiousness.

## **CORNELIUS**

Cornelius, a Malayan-born Portuguese, lives in Patusan as Stein's thoroughly incompetent trade representative before Jim is appointed to the post. He got the job only through Stein's regard for his wife, who was pregnant by another man and needed a refuge. Cornelius never forgives his wife, and he never forgives her daughter, Jewel. Marlow dislikes Cornelius so much that his descriptions are almost funny in their disgust. One scathing adjective follows another. Cornelius even moves like some kind of vermin, "skulking" or "slinking" or sidling." The only thing that keeps him from being really dangerous is his cowardice. It takes Brown to give Cornelius' malice some teeth.

Cornelius despises Jim, presumably because Jim has replaced him. But there's something deeper in his hatred- the natural animosity (like Brown's) of a low creature for a superior one. He assists Sherif Ali's plot to assassinate Jim, but doesn't get punished for it. (Jim spares him out of deference to his position as Jewel's "father.") He ingratiate himself with Brown's men, he pleads with Brown to kill Jim, and he leads the invaders to the position from which they stage their sneak attack on Dain Waris and his men. Tamb' Itam stabs him to death in retaliation for his part in the massacre, and so he never has the satisfaction of seeing his treachery lead to Jim's ruin.

## **THE PRIVILEGED MAN**

Marlow's spoken account ends at Chapter Thirty-five. Chapters Thirty-six through Forty-five comprise a written addendum that Marlow sends, more than



two years later, to one of his original listeners. This “privileged man” (privileged because he’s the only member of that audience to learn the rest of Jim’s story) is never named. He seems to be elderly (“his wandering days were over”), and the city he lives in forms a geographical contrast to the remote village he’ll be reading about. The privileged man’s outlook is racist, in that he has criticized Jim for deserting his own culture to live among a people he likens to brutes.

### **GENTLEMAN BROWN**

Gentleman Brown is called “Gentleman” because he’s supposed to be the son of a baronet, but in fact he’s the lowest kind of pirate. He has virtually no morals. His only display of feeling is reported in a tale about his weeping over the corpse of a woman he’d stolen from her missionary husband. Brown and his men invade Patusan because they need food and money, and the village looks prosperous and vulnerable on a map. But it proves to be difficult prey. Brown’s men are soon surrounded on a hill in what looks like a hopeless position- until the rajah, via Kasim, opens negotiations. It’s then that he hears about Jim. Brown is such a low creature that he can’t imagine Jim as anything other than a plunderer like himself. But when they meet, and he perceives his error, his hatred is immediate and absolute. Later, as the dying Brown relates his story to Marlow, it’s clear that his hatred is instinctive: it’s like the natural enmity of, say, a cobra for a mongoose. But Jim is too innocent to feel this kind of enmity. He lets Brown escape with his life, never dreaming that Brown could be so despicable as to stage a sneak attack on innocent men- exactly what he does as he’s leaving Patusan.

## SETTING

Most of the action of *Lord Jim* takes place in and around Singapore and the Malay Archipelago, a chain of islands extending from southeast Asia to just north of Australia, including Indonesia and the Philippines. Conrad was familiar with the area from three visits he had made, during his sailing years, between 1883 and 1888.

Marlow never names the city in which the Patna inquiry is held, but his description of the harbor office, the hospital, the hotel, and so on suggest that it's Singapore. The city is a port situated on the small island of Singapore, off the southern tip of the Malay Peninsula. In Conrad's day Singapore had already long been under British rule. (It became independent in 1959.)

For a stretch midway through the novel, Jim works as a water-carrier in various ports, notably Bangkok, Siam (present-day Thailand) and Samarang, Java (present-day Indonesia), which is where Stein lives as well. After that, the action shifts to the fictional district of Patusan. Conrad appears to have based Jim's refuge on a settlement on the Berau River, on the island of Borneo (mostly part of present-day Indonesia) that he had visited himself. Although Conrad spent only a brief time there, the locale proved to be a fertile starting point for his imagination; he had used a similar setting for his earlier novels *Almayer's Folly* (1895) and *An Outcast of the Islands* (1896). But since he was only loosely acquainted with the settlement, he probably supplemented his knowledge with various books about the area.

The shift from a bustling port city to a remote island village signals a shift in the novel as well. After Jim arrives in Patusan, the fantasy element grows stronger. The novel becomes much more like escapist fiction, with less emphasis on the troubling moral questions that dominate the first half. Remote villages are much more the stuff of romance than cities are. The shift to such a picturesque setting probably has much to do with the change in tone, especially since the protagonist, Jim, is so given to fantasies to start with.

## **THEMES**

The following are major themes of Lord Jim.

### **1. THE FIXED STANDARD**

Twenty years before Lord Jim, Dostoyevsky suggested in his masterpiece, *The Brothers Karamazov*, that if there is no God, then everything is permitted. The agnostic Conrad doesn't mention God, but the great underlying theme of Lord Jim is related to this dictum. Does a "fixed standard of conduct" exist- or is everything permitted? The behavior of the Patna officers, and the fact that at least some of them escape punishment, lead Marlow to wonder whether the standard of conduct isn't really artificial, "fixed" for our own convenience but without any basis in truth. Jim's case disturbs Marlow even more deeply, because it raises the question, are there circumstances under which the fixed standard may be violated? If there are, then the standard isn't "fixed" at all, but movable. If it's mov-

able, then what kind of truth could it rest on? Are these questions answered in Lord Jim?

## **2. A SECOND CHANCE**

After you have violated the standard of conduct, what kind of second chance can you expect? Many readers put this question in terms of salvation or redemption. Some argue that no matter what kind of glory Jim attains in Patusan, he isn't redeemed. Others say he does achieve salvation. Still others claim that these terms are all wrong for Lord Jim because Conrad isn't the kind of religious writer for whom they would have any meaning: Jim may not be "redeemed," but he's certainly rehabilitated. The only person who seems unable to forgive Jim is Jim—the Patna scandal keeps gnawing at his memory. Several times Conrad pictures Jim's second chance as a "veiled opportunity," an image that culminates in opportunity removing its veil at Jim's death. If in fact Jim's second chance comes only when he looks death in the face and doesn't turn away, proving once and for all he's not a coward, but at the cost of his life— if that's Conrad's meaning (but it's a big "if")— then the ending is very bleak indeed.

## **3. ILLUSIONS AND DREAMS**

Jim is so hard on himself after the Patna disgrace because he's spent much of his life fantasizing about being a hero. Marlow criticizes this aspect of Jim in the first half of the novel. Jim's illusions seem useless and, in view of his cowardice, even hypocritical. But at the same time Marlow is drawn to Jim's naive ideals, be-

cause they remind him of his own youthful dreams. With Stein's pronouncements in Chapter Twenty, Jim's ideals become a much more positive character trait. You may not be able to accomplish all your dreams, Stein advises, but you should keep following them all the same. Jim's stupendous success in Patusan seems to justify Stein's words. Is there a difference between ideals and illusions?

#### **4. BUTTERFLIES AND BEETLES**

Stein is a naturalist who collects butterflies and beetles, and these two insect types crystallize another theme, the two poles of human nature. Jim may be fascinating because his behavior is ambiguous (more so in the first half than in the second), but the other characters fall pretty clearly into two groups. The butterflies are the idealists, the romantic dreamers, the people who aren't corrupted by the dirt that surrounds them. The beetles are the cynics, like Chester and Brown, and the cowards, like Cornelius and Jim's fellow Patna officers. Whatever Marlow's doubts about the fixed standard, he's confident enough that morality is based on some kind of truth that he isn't afraid to pass judgment on the behavior of others. Are his judgments accurate?

#### **5. FRIENDSHIP**

Friendship is a subtle theme that runs like a thread through the novel. Marlow immediately feels his kinship with Jim, and keeps referring to him as "one of us" (see the note to Chapter Five). He also sees in Jim a reflection of his younger, more naive self. Marlow doesn't sermonize about the rewards of friendship. But

he goes out of his way to help Jim, and he expends a lot of energy thinking and talking about him. Because Marlow tends to be unsentimental, even gruff, and because his affection for Jim is sometimes obscured by the relationship of narrator to subject, this theme stays a little below the surface. It's still the novel's basic plot mechanism. Without the friendship, there wouldn't be a novel.

## STYLE

Conrad wrote in a famous statement that his task as an artist was “by the power of the written word to make you hear, to make you feel- it is, before all, to make you see.” To achieve this goal, he fills his pages with one image after another. Conrad's prose is rich, complicated, and sensual. It frequently verges on excess. His reputation as an “impressionist” novelist stems from his dependence on sense impressions to create his images and make his points. Such a dependency is fitting for an agnostic novelist: someone who doubts that there are general truths you can depend on- who isn't sure whether there's a God or not- will be likely to rely on what he can perceive directly with his senses rather than on abstract ideas.

Conrad employs a wide-ranging vocabulary, much of it drawn from sea life or from the exotic eastern regions that form the setting of the novel. A big vocabulary is typical of Victorian novelists, but Conrad doubtless took special pride in his command of English, since it wasn't his first language. By the time he was writing *Lord Jim*, he had achieved such fluency that he could enjoy playing with the language- as he does, for example, in the various non-English accents (like

Stein's) that find their way into the book, or in the public-school slang ("bally" this and "bally" that) that Jim is prone to use.

It would be exhausting to attempt to point out every noteworthy image. Many of the images- for example, the moon over Patusan- have a deeper symbolic significance. But much of the pleasure you'll get out of Lord Jim will come simply from the hundreds of lovely or strange or shocking word pictures, and you should keep yourself open to this remarkable beauty as you read.

## **POINT OF VIEW**

The first four chapters of Lord Jim are written in the voice of an omniscient narrator- that is, a narrator who has the ability to pry into a character's thoughts, in this case, Jim's. Conrad thus lets you get to know Jim quickly, and what soon becomes obvious is that Jim is a dreamer whose heroic fantasies are a long way from reality.

With Chapter Five, Marlow takes over the narrative; from that point on, you're allowed to know only as much about Jim as Marlow knows. But aside from the fact that you no longer get to listen in on Jim's thoughts, this shift in point of view isn't as significant as you might expect. The main advantage the impersonal narrator gets from his omniscience is a thorough knowledge of Jim's fantasies- something Marlow understands after speaking with Jim for only a few hours. This omniscient narrator doesn't enjoy certain other advantages that the typical omniscient narrator has at hand. For example, when the Patna strikes what-

ever it is she strikes at sea, he doesn't fill you in by saying, "It was an old shipwreck." This surmise, in fact, comes later, from Marlow, and it's only a guess.

Conrad is a "skeptical" novelist, skeptical about the kinds of information that are available to human beings. Just as Conrad the agnostic doubts the existence of general certainties, Conrad the novelist believes that what a narrator (or anybody) can know is what he can see, hear, taste, touch, and smell- and deduce from that evidence. So he limits the novel to Marlow's point of view. (The narrator of the first four chapters resembles Marlow in every aspect but his omniscience.) Marlow could be Conrad's double as far as general character traits and outlook go, so using him allows Conrad to speak, more or less, in his own voice (but without the Polish accent).

However, limiting Jim's story to Marlow's point of view requires some structural gymnastics on Conrad's part, since Marlow has to have contact with everybody who has important information about Jim. When Jim is leaving one job after another, Marlow has to trail around getting his employers' side of the story. For Marlow to relate in full the events leading to Jim's death, Conrad has to arrange an interview between him and Gentleman Brown. This interview, with Brown on his deathbed, is vividly described, but it's one of the less convincing sections of the novel.



## FORM

Instead of narrating events in a strict time sequence, Marlow jumps back and forth among the events of Jim's life, as well as events in his own life (like meeting the French lieutenant) that have a bearing on Jim. Consider, for example, the events in Chapters Twenty-six through Twenty-eight. This is how they occur chronologically:

- 1. Jim and Jewel fall in love.
- 2. Jim leads the assault on Sherif Ali.
- 3. Marlow, approaching Patusan, hears a rumor about Jim owning a precious Jewel.
- 4. Marlow, visiting Patusan, talks with Jim (a) and Doramin (b).

But these four events are described in this order: 2-4a-2-4b-1-3. This fracturing of chronology was one of Conrad's most important contributions to the development of the novel, though he didn't take it as far as later writers such as William Faulkner. In fact, the novel overall has a conventional chronological structure, beginning with Jim's early days and moving on from the Patna incident to Jim's stint as a water clerk in various ports, then to his eventual success in Patusan and, finally, to his death. This overall chronology stays intact, even though within chapters, or groups of chapters, the time sequence is radically rearranged.

Structurally, the novel breaks into two parts that might be called “Patna” and “Patusan,” with Chapters Eighteen through Twenty forming a rough transitional link. Conrad admitted that the halving was a “plague spot” in the novel. There’s nothing inherently wrong with a two-part structure. But many have argued that the Patna and Patusan episodes of Lord Jim are so different in tone and in their basic assumptions about dreams and heroics that they make it difficult to see the novel as a unified whole. Do you agree?

# THE STORY

# CHAPTER ONE

Lord Jim opens almost exactly midway through the plot, with Jim holding a series of jobs working for ship-chandlers (suppliers of provisions to ships) in various Eastern ports. The first half of the novel will bring you up to this point in Jim's life. The second will take you beyond it. Your first view of Jim is mysterious, and rather tantalizing. He works incognito, you learn, in order to hide some disturbing fact, but you don't learn what the fact is only that when it makes itself known, Jim will drop everything and take off for another port. The author, Joseph Conrad, is playing with your curiosity; it will be several chapters before he reveals exactly what it is that Jim is concealing. The narrator does go so far as to mention, however, that whatever this circumstance was, it finally drove Jim away from civilization and into a remote village, where he became known as "Tuan Jim: as one might say- Lord Jim."

NOTE: FIRST VIEW OF JIM. In the very first paragraph, Jim wears "immaculate" white from head to toe- a symbol that will be used again and again in the novel. It's almost as if Jim the idealist were purer than the soiled, earthy world around him. Note also that in the first sentence, Jim is described as being "an inch, perhaps two, under six feet"- just short of the stature you might expect of a hero. Jim may not be quite the hero he would like to be.

Translating “Tuan Jim” as “Lord Jim” has a similar twist. The Malayan word “Tuan” is a form of respectful address that comes closer to “Mr.” than “Lord.” “Lord Jim” is an inflation, a slightly mocking exaggeration at Jim’s expense.

The rest of the chapter fills you in on Jim’s background. It’s significant that Jim decides to go to sea “after a course of light holiday literature.” His image of life aboard ship isn’t a realistic, mature one- it’s one formed by adventure stories. You soon learn that he likes daydreaming, and that in his daydreams he is always a hero. Jim takes a romantic view of himself. He’s an idealist, a person whose behavior is based on his conception of the way things should be; and he pictures himself living up to his very highest ideals. (As you read, you’ll note that this tendency to romanticize his self-image is an important side of Jim’s personality.) But, as if to burst Jim’s romantic bubble, Conrad immediately presents a scene in which Jim fails to live up to his high opinion of his own courage. Jim is a student on a training ship moored in port; during a storm, two nearby ships collide, and quick action is called for. But Jim holds back from the rescue, paralyzed by fear of the storm. Later he explains that he was simply caught unawares; the incident doesn’t reduce his high opinion of himself. But it should make you wary of accepting Jim as a typical hero. This lapse foreshadows the more serious one that is to follow- the terrible fact that he will someday seek to hide from his series of employers.

## CHAPTER TWO

Life at sea turns out to be more boring than Jim expected. He doesn't find the heroic adventure he had dreamed about. But he's capable, and in a short time he rises to the rank of chief mate (second-in-command). However, he receives his promotions "without ever having been tested." It remains to be seen whether he'll turn out to be the hero he thinks he is. And when a week of furious storms gives him a chance to show his mettle, an injury lays him up and the opportunity passes.

You learn more about Jim while he's shut up in his cabin. Most of the time he's frustrated or bored. But occasionally he's overcome by terror of the storm. Jim's imagination makes him a lively and intelligent man, but it also makes him have vivid fears. He can picture the sea's anger and brutality too powerfully for his own good. But this storm passes, too, and- as with his momentary paralysis on the training ship- Jim soon forgets his fear.

After a stay in a port hospital, Jim does something else unheroic- he signs on for a job that promises to be easy. The Patna is a creaking, corroded vessel that has been hired to transport 800 Muslims on a pilgrimage, a journey to a holy place. The ship's captain is a fat German who has only contempt for the Muslims.

NOTE: The captain's first words to Jim- "Look at dese cattle"- tell you a good deal about him. He's nasty and racist. Conrad also lampoons

the way the captain mauls English- which is amusing, since the Polish Conrad spoke English with a pronounced accent to the end of his days. Various characters in Lord Jim speak with accents- German, Scottish, Irish, French. Conrad had developed a fine ear for speech, and he obviously enjoyed showing it off. Moreover, some of the national pride of the naturalized Englishman shows through in this rather mean portrait of the fat and brutal German.

## CHAPTER THREE

The exquisite descriptions of the nighttime sea, which open this chapter, contain some thickly laid-on irony. These thoughts about “everlasting safety” and “the scheme of a safe universe” will seem like a bad joke in the ugly light of the disaster that occurs at the chapter’s end. There’s even heavier irony in the description of the sleeping pilgrims having “surrendered to the wisdom of white men and to their courage, trusting the... iron shell of their fire-ship.” The white men, it will turn out, are anything but wise and courageous; the rusted-out old ship is anything but safe.

And still, Jim’s daydreaming continues, so heroic and so vivid that he’s convinced he belongs to a higher order than the rest of the crew. Indeed, they’re a low-comedy group. The obnoxious captain and his chief engineer have a reputation for peculation (embezzling), and the second engineer is strident and obviously drunk. (His claim of fearlessness is a degraded version of Jim’s fantasies, and it too will soon be put to the test- and shattered.) No wonder the sensitive, intelligent Jim feels superior.

A comic brush between the tipsy second engineer and the irritable captain is interrupted, at the end of the chapter, by a puzzling mishap. Notice the way that Conrad, who has often been called an “impressionist” writer, describes the event purely in terms of the men’s sensations or impressions. Instead of telling you the ship hit something, he restricts himself to showing you the results: the second en-



gineer falls down, the captain and Jim stagger forward “by common accord,” and so forth.

## CHAPTER FOUR

A sudden flashforward- typical of the way time is fragmented in Lord Jim- shifts the scene to Jim's testimony, about a month later, at an official inquiry. The presiding officers are a magistrate and two nautical assessors (experts who have been appointed as assistant judges). Jim testifies that the Patna hit something, probably the floating remains of an old shipwreck, that knocked a hole in it. The front of the hold (the lower part of the ship) quickly filled with water. The only thing keeping the rest of the hold from flooding, and thus sinking the ship, was a single rusty bulkhead (partition).

One mystery- what happened?- has given way to another- why is Jim in hot water? Instead of clearing it up, the narrator focuses on the inadequacy of facts- "as if facts could explain anything!" Whether they can, or whether the facts can differ from the truth behind an incident, is one of the questions you will have to consider. Just as Jim is despairing that it's useless trying to explain his actions, a new character, Marlow, appears on the scene.

NOTE: MARLOW. Up to this point, Conrad has used an omniscient narrator who could listen in on Jim's thoughts. From here on, Marlow will narrate, and so the kind of information available to you will change. You'll have to rely on what Marlow sees and hears (fortunately, he's a keen observer) and on his interpretation of these impressions.

Conrad had already used the crusty, philosophical sailor Marlow as narrator in two other works, the short story “Youth” (1898) and the short novel Heart of Darkness (1899). (Lord Jim was originally planned as a short story, “Jim: A Sketch,” to round out a volume of the three Marlow tales.) In the earlier works, Marlow is Conrad’s alter ego- his judgments reflect the author’s. But the case in Lord Jim is more complex. There’s still a lot of Conrad in Marlow, but the author has distanced himself somewhat. Author and character share a sympathy for Jim, but the character is perhaps a little more eager to find reasons to excuse him. The author marshals evidence objectively, pro and con; he doesn’t load the dice.

## CHAPTER FIVE

Launching before an after-dinner audience into his garrulous, digressive monologue, Marlow steers clear of just what it was that happened on the Patna. Instead, he describes the arrival of the Patna officers in town. The Master Attendant (the British officer in charge of the port) bawls out the captain. The captain, in turn, deserts his three officers, disappearing in a gharry, a horse-drawn cab. Jim, on Marlow's first view of him, appears so unconcerned that Marlow would like to see him squirm for his offense. You might think at this point that the officers are guilty of deserting a sinking ship- which would be almost, but not quite, correct.

Already Marlow's attitude toward Jim is complex. When he says that trusting a ship to Jim wouldn't be safe, he comes closer than anywhere else to condemning him outright. Jim looks "as genuine as a new sovereign" (a gold coin), when in fact there is some "infernal alloy" mixed in. And yet Marlow is also ready to regard Jim's offense as the result of a weakness from which "not one of us is safe." Here is the key to Marlow's interest in the case. He doesn't care about the captain or the engineers, but Jim makes an impression on him, he explains, because "he was one of us"- a phrase he will use again and again.

NOTE: "ONE OF US." Whom does Marlow mean by "us"? The phrase refers, on one level, to a specific group: British, white, educated

men of the sea. But it also carries a deeper, moral meaning. Marlow describes himself as a member of a community held together “by fidelity to a certain standard of conduct,” and what horrifies him in the Patna incident has to do with “the doubt of the sovereign power enthroned in a fixed standard of conduct.” The Patna officers don’t even seem to care about their offense, and their attitude calls the standard of conduct into question. If they can break it so casually, how valuable can it be?

In the longest anecdote in this long chapter, Marlow visits the local hospital, where he encounters the Patna’s chief engineer, laid up with a severe case of D.T.’s (delirium tremens- hallucinations brought on by excessive drinking of alcoholic beverages). The engineer claims to have seen the Patna go down, a claim Marlow dismisses (for reasons the reader can’t know yet) as a “stupid lie,” though the man seems to mean what he says. Marlow realizes that he’s suffering from hallucinations- he thinks he’s surrounded by millions of vicious pink toads.

NOTE: THE ENGINEER’S HALLUCINATIONS. The hallucinations give form to the engineer’s guilt, and you can interpret them by applying a little amateur psychology. The sinking Patna, he tells Marlow, was “full of reptiles.” He also admits that the officers cleared out of the ship in secret- “on the strict Q.T.” It seems likely that the

800 pilgrims, the white officers' charges, have taken the form of giant toads in his demented mind. The chief engineer, at least, hasn't managed to escape the "fixed standard of conduct" without paying a tremendous price for his offense.

## CHAPTER SIX

Marlow goes off on another digression, this time about Montague Brierly, one of the two nautical assessors assisting at the inquiry. Brierly is a young (32), successful captain, so well-regarded that he considers himself superior to everybody. Why, then, does he kill himself a week after the inquiry ends?

The details of the suicide come from his chief mate, Jones, whom Marlow encounters some two years after the fact. (This complicated device, with the primary narrator relating the words of Marlow, and Marlow in turn repeating Jones' tale- quotation marks within quotation marks- is typical of Lord Jim.) Jones' story is interesting, but it provides few clues to Brierly's behavior. More clues surface, though, when Marlow returns his narrative to the first day of the inquiry, when he speaks at length to Brierly. Brierly feels mortified by the questioning; he can't imagine why Jim has remained to face the court rather than vanish as his captain did. His agitation causes Marlow to reconsider Jim's behavior, and he discovers, for the first time, real courage in Jim's staying to face the court. Moreover, since Brierly's attitude of "contemptuous boredom" on the bench actually masks a profound anxiety, couldn't Jim's appearance of "gloomy impudence" be a mask as well?

In any case, Brierly seems more concerned about Jim's public humiliation than about his pangs of conscience. It becomes clear that for him the "fixed standard of conduct" has less to do with right and wrong than with what people think

of you. It also appears, in view of Brierly's suicide, that Jim's failure has filled Brierly- who to all appearances is a model seaman- with self-doubt. But if Jim has failed the test, at least he's remained to face the consequences of his failure. Brierly, his judge, can't even face the idea of the test, much less the real thing. He tries to talk Marlow into bribing Jim to clear out- not very upright behavior for an officer of the court.

The rest of the chapter deals with Marlow's first encounter with Jim, an awful, comic misunderstanding. On leaving the court, a stranger points out a yellow dog and tells Marlow, "Look at that wretched cur." Jim, hearing but not seeing, thinks they're talking about him, bristles at the insult, and collars Marlow. While Jim is threatening the bewildered Marlow, who has no idea what he's so angry about, Marlow observes the young man closely enough to see that his calm, insolent posture has been a front. Anyone so ready to jump at an insult- an imagined insult, in this case- must be feeling deeply humiliated. Jim, when he finally understands his error, is so abashed at having betrayed his facade that he practically runs away, with Marlow in pursuit.

Marlow has been talking all along about his curiosity, but his behavior indicates more than mere curiosity. Why, in your opinion, is he ready to offer compassion to Jim? An invitation to dine at Marlow's hotel initiates the friendship that will form the core of the novel.



## CHAPTER SEVEN

The empty-headed diners at Marlow's hotel contrast with the troubled, intense Jim in a way that shows him off to advantage. As he begins his long account, Marlow warns his listeners, "I wanted to know- and to this day I don't know." Presumably he is referring to Jim's motivations. Or perhaps he is describing his difficulty in judging Jim. Should you be harsh or lenient? On the one hand, Jim is obviously making excuses, looking for ways to escape the terrible self-knowledge that came when he failed the test of honor. "Ah! what a chance missed!" Jim cries, leading Marlow to observe that his romantic imagination is still too active: Jim focuses not on the honor that he lost, but on the glory he might have won. And Jim's excuse is the same one he made after the storm on the training ship (Chapter One)- he wasn't prepared. It strikes Marlow as obvious self-deception.

Yet other factors argue for leniency. One of them was already noted by Brierly (Chapter Six): Jim may have failed the test, but so few of us are ever tested at all that we had better beware of judging too hastily. "Do you know what you would have done?" Jim asks Marlow. Besides, he had good reason to leave the Patna.

Finally you learn exactly what the Patna officers are guilty of. Marlow remarks, "So that bulkhead held out after all." That thin, rusty partition, the only thing keeping the ship from being flooded, but which was certain to give way, somehow managed to hold. The officers abandoned a sinking ship that didn't

sink. No wonder the case has become well known, and they're so deeply disgraced.

Yet there was every reason to believe the ship would go down any minute. Anybody would have thought so, Marlow assures his audience. To make matters worse, there weren't enough lifeboats for the pilgrims. Jim's overactive imagination (which, you may recall from Chapter Two, is sometimes too vivid for his own good) leads him to envision the scene of panic that's surely imminent, and he's paralyzed with horror.

NOTE: THE JEDDAH INCIDENT. Conrad based the Patna disaster on an actual case. The pilgrim ship Jeddah was abandoned at sea by her white officers in the summer of 1880. When rescued, the officers claimed the ship had gone down, but it was in fact towed into port the day after they arrived. The scandal attracted international attention. Conrad must have read the reports in London, and he probably heard more about it three years later in Singapore, where one of two inquiries was held. Conrad altered various details to suit his purposes. For example, the captain of the Jeddah was English, not German, and he abandoned ship largely out of fear for the safety of his wife, who was on board. The Jeddah's first mate bore some striking resemblances, in looks and in background, to Jim; but in convincing his captain to

abandon ship, he took a more active, more dishonorable role in the desertion than Jim does.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

Jim thinks of readying the lifeboats, but as he's leaving the bulkhead one of the pilgrims grabs him and begins jabbering. The man won't leave him alone even after Jim hits him with his lantern. Jim maintains that he was afraid the shouts would create a panic among the other pilgrims, but he may have struck out of his own panic. It turns out that the man just wants some water for his sick child.

When he reaches the bridge (above the deck), the other three officers- captain, chief engineer, second engineer- are preparing a lifeboat for themselves. They don't care about the pilgrims. Jim is disgusted, and he refuses to help them. But he doesn't do anything to help the pilgrims, either- he just stands there, outraged but immobile. He doesn't ready the lifeboats. He considers trying to reinforce the rotten bulkhead, but it seems hopeless. Besides, he doesn't want to start a panic. And what can he do alone?

But Jim isn't alone. In his paralysis, he forgets the East Indian sailors (lascars) who make up the rest of the crew. The two helmsmen, for example, never desert their post, even though they know something is wrong. Marlow jumps, for a moment, to their testimony at the inquiry. It never occurred to them to desert their posts. Behavior like that is so inconceivable to these honest men that they're convinced the white officers must have abandoned ship for some good, secret reason other than saving their skins. Their "extraordinary and damning" testimony puts

Jim doubly in the wrong- not only for deserting, but also for not trying to avert disaster when there were other sailors on board who could have helped him.

Throughout this chapter, Marlow's view of Jim swings between sympathy and disgust. He suspects, rather uncomfortably, that Jim is looking for an absolution Marlow cannot grant. But he also admits that the issues are more complex than any court of inquiry could handle. Jim, he complains, makes you "look at the convention that lurks in all truth." He makes you notice something arbitrary in the fixed standard of conduct. This is the kind of troubling awareness that nobody wants to face, because questioning the whole structure of morality can drive you to despair. (Compare this with the passage about the fixed standard in Chapter Five.) That's what Marlow's talking about when he says that the case was "momentous enough to affect mankind's conception of itself." There's every reason to excuse Jim except that his behavior calls the fixed standard into question. And without it, there's no sure right or wrong, no sure good and evil; the structure of morality is undercut.

## CHAPTER NINE

As if things aren't dreadful enough, a storm now appears on the horizon. Jim finally cuts the lifeboats loose. But then he plants himself again, immobile, across from the spot where the officers are bumbling with the lifeboat- "as far away as he could get from them," he tells Marlow, which clearly isn't true. The struggle he's watching is as slapstick as a Three Stooges comedy, except that there are now four officers, for the third engineer has joined them. Not for long, though- he presently drops dead from a heart attack. (The ridiculous irony isn't lost on Jim: If the man had been less intent on surviving, he wouldn't have killed himself trying to escape.)

Still insisting that nobody has a right to judge him, Jim virtually bullies Marlow into making "some fatal admission about myself which would have had some bearing on the case"- that is, admitting that he would have acted as Jim did. But Marlow has more self-respect than that. He may be willing to concede that his honor is untried, but not that it's deficient.

By now the officers have launched the lifeboat, and they're shouting for the third engineer (who is lying dead on the bridge) to jump. Jim's description of his final moments on board makes him seem utterly passive. And of course he wants to preserve this illusion, because it's a way to keep from believing that he made the conscious, cowardly decision to jump. He vividly recalls the sensations of that moment, but he can't remember either deciding to jump or jumping. But he does

jump, “into an everlasting deep hole” from which he can’t climb. The deep hole is his shame. No wonder he wishes he could die.

The ultimate question for any of us to answer is what would we have done in Jim’s place. Could you say with any certainty how you would have behaved? Why?

## CHAPTER TEN

Once at sea, the four men quickly lose the Patna's lights and assume it's sunk. The chief engineer even thinks he sees the ship go down- a delusion he retains, you'll recall, when he's delirious in the hospital (Chapter Five). Conrad develops at length the imagery of darkness, quiet, void. Jim really has leaped into an abyss of sorts. "Nothing mattered." The moral world, the fixed standard, has vanished, and Jim is like a man floating in a vacuum.

The storm never amounts to much- a false alarm, In the dark, the others think that Jim is the third engineer, whose death they don't know about. When they discover their error, they let loose a torrent of abuse and threats. Marlow notes the element of "burlesque meanness" in their degraded behavior. It looks, for a moment, as if a fight will break out, and Jim grabs the tiller, a heavy piece of wood, as a weapon. He stands with it, alert and tense in the freezing rain, for six hours- till sunrise. Even in Jim's disgrace, Marlow can't help admiring his heroic endurance.

Remembering the horror of that night, Jim makes an unbelievable attempt to blame his jump on his cowardly companions. Marlow recognizes the absurdity of such a claim, but he consoles Jim that he's been through a lot. "More than is fair," Jim responds, as petulantly as a small boy- a resemblance Marlow has already noted.



The other officers make up a story to have ready when they're rescued. Jim won't have anything to do with them, but they feel he won't betray them. After all, he jumped, didn't he? The memory of their behavior upsets Jim (to the point of knocking over a bottle of cognac) in part because he knows that his actions, if not his intentions, were no better than theirs.

But actions aren't everything. Jim's claim that he contemplated suicide the whole time he was in the boat is believable, for it's becoming apparent that although he jumped, it wasn't solely (as with his companions) out of cowardly fear for his life. Jim is obviously a better man than that. And when Marlow assures Jim that he's ready to believe anything Jim tells him, he isn't being sarcastic. Jim may deceive himself, but he's too upright to consciously deceive others. But the question remains: Why did he jump, then? Recall Marlow's comment (Chapter Seven), "I wanted to know- and to this day I don't know." Does Jim know himself?

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

By now Marlow has developed a somewhat fatherly feeling toward the young man, and he reflects on “the fellowship of the craft,” the emotions that bind an older sailor to a younger one. The illusions that a young man carries to sea differ wildly from the actual drudgery of life aboard ship. Jim, remember, went to sea bolstered by his romantic imagination and the light literature he had read. But abandoning the *Patna* has robbed him of many of his illusions, especially about himself. And watching this young man who is in many ways so admirable, Marlow feels cheated of the last sparks of his own illusions. He’s suddenly so desolate that he now feels, as Jim did in the previous chapter, as if he’s been wandering in a void. Notice that Marlow doesn’t regard illusions as always bad. Some of Jim’s illusions are what’s best in him- they’re an ideal he would like to live up to.

But Jim’s complaint that there was only a thin line (“not the thickness of a sheet of paper”) between the right and the wrong of his action exasperates Marlow. That thin line is just the point. Right and wrong aren’t usually separated by chasms. If they were, it would be simple to choose right all the time. Real moral courage lies in choosing right even when the difference doesn’t seem great; it’s still there, and you can still discern it.

When Marlow says that Jim “cleared out,” Jim corrects him: “Jumped.” He’s determined to maintain these subtle distinctions. “Cleared out” suggests a con-

scious act of will, while “jumped” merely describes an action. Jim wants to believe that he didn’t jump of his own free will, that some other power (he keeps looking for places to lay the blame) was responsible.

He decides that suicide would be cowardly, a form of running away. Instead he’ll “wait for another chance” to prove himself.

## CHAPTER TWELVE

The lifeboat is spotted by a ship just before sunset. Once aboard, the other officers tell the story they've invented about the sinking of the Patna. Jim doesn't contradict them- partly because he thinks it's true in essentials, but more because their story doesn't matter to him. What matters is the fact that he jumped. He'll have to spend the rest of his life with the memory of his cowardice. Whether the rest of the world knows what he did is beside the point (he claims). In fact, he tells Marlow that he was relieved when the truth came out. True, he and the others were exposed as cowards. But for Jim the humiliation is more than balanced by relief that the 800 pilgrims haven't drowned.

Marlow interrupts Jim's account now, and flashes forward to a conversation in Sydney some years later. There he encounters a lieutenant who happened to be aboard the French gunboat that rescued the Patna. Conrad's portrait of this rather austere soldier is almost comical. In remembering the Patna affair, the lieutenant becomes emotional only once, when recalling that, for the 30 hours he spent aboard the Patna as it was towed to port, there was no wine to go with his meals. The memory still upsets him. Otherwise he's a model of brusque efficiency. The scars on his hand and his temple are convincing details; he's a soldier who's obviously seen action.

What he tells Marlow lends some support to Jim's account. The bulkhead, in his version, is every bit as weak as Jim described it, and the French crew agrees

that the safest thing to do is to leave it alone. Jim's failure to reinforce it thus receives some justification. The Patna's situation is so precarious, in fact, that two officers are kept stationed for the whole 30 hours of the towing, to be able to cut the tow lines in case the ship should suddenly go down.

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

When Marlow tells the lieutenant what he knows about the Patna and Jim, the lieutenant seems sympathetic enough. This impression deepens when the lieutenant observes that nobody is free from fear. “Man is born a coward.” Courage is merely a habit you discipline yourself into, aided by the example of others around you. Marlow reminds him that Jim didn’t have any examples of courage (he forgets about the lascar helmsmen) and says he’s delighted at the lieutenant’s lenient view.

The lieutenant immediately stiffens. Conrad describes him in terms of metals, his hair “iron-grey,” his irises resembling “two tiny steel rings,” and his efficiency like “a razor-edge on a battle-axe.” Suddenly he seems almost machinelike- all efficiency, no compassion. He doesn’t take a lenient view at all. Fear is one thing, dishonor another- and that, he informs Marlow coldly, he knows nothing about. (You might ask yourself what the different characters mean by “courage” and “honor.”)

This conversation took place, Marlow recalls, more than three years after the Patna business. By that time Jim was working as a water clerk for a certain De Jongh. (This, you’ll recall, is where you came in on Jim, in Chapter One.) The work is anything but glamorous- a fitting way for Jim to atone for his dreams of glory?

The notion of drudgery takes Marlow off on another digression- this time about Bob Stanton, who once had the boring job of selling insurance. But what Marlow wants to talk about is Bob's death at sea, after he'd left the insurance profession. Like Jim, he was a chief mate involved in a shipwreck. There was time to clear out the passengers and crew, but one hysterical lady's maid refused to leave. Rather than abandon her, Bob drowned with her, hoping he'd be able to save her at the last minute.

The anecdote- which is a sad bit of comedy in its own right- reflects terribly on Jim. Bob's devotion to duty is behavior the French lieutenant would approve of. You don't desert a sinking ship when there are still passengers aboard, no matter what. If you agree, can you say why?

Marlow has to admit that Jim was guilty. (As if to drum home the point, he repeats "guilty" three times in two short sentences.) Yet he wants to see him spared all the same. And his reasons, he says, should be obvious by now, though he's too delicate, or too embarrassed, to spell them out. He is talking about friendship.

NOTE: MARLOW'S FRIENDSHIP. Marlow's interest in Jim goes far beyond curiosity. He has a lot of his ego invested in Jim's case, perhaps because Jim reminds him of his own lost illusions. Thus, he's eager to find excuses for Jim. He's pleased when it appears that the lieutenant takes a lenient view, crushed when the lieutenant turns harsh. In telling his story, Marlow puts up a crusty front, but isn't it becoming

apparent that his view of Jim is softer than he sometimes makes it out to be- even though there's no denying the fact of Jim's guilt? But facts (as in Chapter Four) aren't everything. Marlow's warm regard for Jim isn't incidental to the plot. It's another factor for you to consider in coming to your own final judgment of Jim.

By the end of Jim's narrative, Marlow is so sick at heart that he repeats Briery's offer- the bribe, if Jim would agree to run away, that he had earlier (Chapter Six) refused to make. There's a certain selfishness in this action, in that Marlow wants to spare himself the pain of seeing Jim punished by the court. That's why he grows annoyed when Jim declines the offer, even though Jim is doing the "honorable" thing. Jim explains his refusal in the same terms he had distinguished between "jumped" and "cleared out" in Chapter Eleven: "I may have jumped, but I don't run away." His willingness to remain and be humiliated has more honor in it, at this point, than the "irreproachable" Marlow's attempt to get rid of him. Moreover, Jim is very aware of his dishonor- so aware that he fears (to Marlow's amazement) that Marlow will refuse to shake hands with him. It's an embarrassing, painful moment; but it shows Jim off to advantage. He isn't making light of his offense.

NOTE: FRAGMENTATION OF TIME. Chapters Twelve and Thirteen provide an excellent sample of Conrad's narrative method. The



story is like a jigsaw puzzle or a mosaic: Some pieces of information come from Jim, some from the French lieutenant, some directly from Marlow. Conrad's most radical departure from traditional story-telling is in the way he fragments time. Chapter Twelve begins by jumping between Jim and Marlow's conversation at the hotel and the rescue of the lifeboat. Then it moves briefly to the court of inquiry (where there is a discussion about why the lifeboat couldn't see the Patna's lights). Then a leap three years forward, to Marlow's encounter with the French lieutenant. From there, three years back again, to the towing of the Patna described from the lieutenant's point of view. Forward again, to Marlow and the lieutenant's conversation about fear and honor, and Jim as De Jongh's water clerk. Then back to the unspecified time of Bob Stanton's drowning. Then, finally, we return to Jim and Marlow's conversation at Marlow's hotel.

This time line is very different from one in a traditional novel, which begins, as a rule, at the beginning and ends at the end. But Conrad doesn't really rearrange time. Despite all the internal jumps, the story as a whole still follows traditional chronology. Jim's sea training comes, more or less, at the beginning of the book; the events around the Patna bring us to the point we're at now; and the rest of the book will continue Jim's life after the inquiry. Why do you think Conrad breaks up the story as he does?

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Marlow describes, in some detail, the grim final day of the inquiry, especially his own distress. Sentence is handed down: The certificates of Jim and the captain (who's long since vanished) are revoked, and they can no longer serve as ships' officers.

NOTE: The punishment of the real-life Jeddah officers was less severe. The captain had his certificate suspended for three years; the first mate never even came to trial.

As Jim walks despondently away, Marlow's accosted by a rough Australian by the name of Chester. Chester prides himself on being able to "see things exactly as they are," which is another way of saying that he's a cynic. He has nothing but contempt for the way Jim takes his punishment to heart. Chester is trying to launch a business venture hauling guano (sea bird manure used as fertilizer) from a remote island, and he wants a man like Jim- ruined but capable, with absolutely no other prospects- to oversee the workers. Marlow is horrified. It's a crack-pot scheme: Chester's desolate island has been known to be without rainfall for as much as a year. But what really troubles Marlow is the idea of the sensitive, idealistic Jim trapped at such hellish work, and for such an unscrupulous boss. He refuses to help Chester convince Jim.

Chester's business partner is an ancient sailor named Robinson, pathetically senile now but known in his day by the nickname "Holy-Terror." Robinson, a seal hunter and opium smuggler, was apparently even more of a scoundrel than Chester. On one occasion, when he was shipwrecked, he ate his companions. Three weeks after his rescue, according to Chester, Robinson was completely recovered; and the scandal of his cannibalism didn't bother him at all. The amoral Robinson forms a telling contrast to Jim, who is about to spend several years running from his reputation, unable to bear the mention of the Patna scandal.

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

In a comic echo of the Chester episode, Marlow now must fend off a businessman “fresh from Madagascar,” who wants to involve him in some obscure venture. Marlow finally frees himself and goes in search of Jim. Marlow finds Jim stunned by his misfortune and brings him back to his quarters so that he can at least suffer in privacy. Marlow’s description of the lengths to which he goes to make himself unobtrusive is funny, or it would be if Jim weren’t so deeply anguished.

Jim is now at low ebb: utter disgrace, no future, nowhere to go. He might as well be dead, Marlow reflects- death would make things easier for Jim, and for Marlow as well. The figures of Chester and Robinson keep flashing into his thoughts. He begins to see that Chester’s offer had a certain point. Where else is Jim going to find work? The end result of all this reflection is a dawning sense of responsibility. Of course, Jim has no particular claim on Marlow. But Marlow knows that if he doesn’t intercede in some way, Jim’s future is practically hopeless. You might compare Marlow’s willingness to accept responsibility for the fate of others with Jim’s behavior, both earlier on the Patna, and later on Patusan.

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Marlow drops the thread of the story and jumps forward, mentioning the trying period when Jim worked for ship chandlers. He also refers, rather mysteriously, to Jim's later success, when he was "loved, trusted, admired" and treated as though he really were a hero. Thinking back to Chapter One, you may remember one of the first things the narrator mentioned about Jim: In the jungle village where he fled after something terrible had happened, he earned the title "Tuan Jim"- Lord Jim.

Marlow also lets drop, in passing, that it was lucky he protected Jim from Chester's offer. Chester and his crew ended up sailing for his guano island and disappearing, without a trace, in a hurricane.

Marlow finds that he still has difficulty making up his mind about Jim. "He was not clear." Part of what disturbs him is "that he made so much of his disgrace while it is the guilt alone that matters." In other words, Jim focuses on saving his ruined reputation. But Marlow believes that what others think of you is far less important than what you know, in your conscience, about yourself. Do you sympathize with Marlow's belief? If so, why? How does it compare with Brierly's beliefs? Jim had made the same argument in Chapters Ten and Twelve, when he insisted that the Patna officers' story was of no consequence to him; what mattered was the truth he had to live with. But from Jim's account of the Patna disaster, Marlow isn't sure that Jim has faced that truth. Jim is too eager to lay the

responsibility for his jumping at somebody else's doorstep. Marlow knows he still has romantic illusions about himself. Jim still thinks that, given the right circumstances, he can be a hero. (Marlow's allusions to Jim's heroic future at least hint that Jim may be right.) It's the very fineness of Jim's sensibilities that allows him to keep deluding himself. A "little coarser nature," Marlow reflects, would have had to come to terms with himself and admit that he's no hero. A "still coarser" nature- for example, Holy-Terror Robinson (Chapter Fourteen)- wouldn't care.

These suspicions find support in what Jim, still suffering in Marlow's hotel room, has to say for himself. He's so certain he'll get a second chance that he's apparently learned nothing about himself. In fact, he somehow turns the whole scandal into proof of his spunk: "If this business couldn't knock me over," he tells Marlow, then nothing can. When Marlow comments, "I at least had no illusions," the unstated corollary is that Jim has too many. Does Jim ever learn?

After an awkward exchange in which Marlow remains noncommittal on the topic of Jim's guilt, Jim prepares to leave. At once Marlow realizes that he couldn't forgive himself if he let Jim disappear. There are two reasons for this. One, already noted, is that Marlow feels responsible for Jim: He's the only thing standing between Jim and the Chesters of the world. The other reason may be less apparent because Marlow tends to be reticent about it: He's grown attached to Jim. And he's about to prove his friendship.

## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

A storm rages outside the hotel- a reflection of Jim's turbulent emotions. As Jim gradually calms down in this chapter, so does the storm.

Marlow tries to convince Jim to accept his help. At first Jim, who is still clutching at his pride, resists the proposal, thinking that Marlow is offering to lend him money. But Marlow explains that while Jim has been pacing and brooding, he's been writing a letter to a man he knows. It's a letter of recommendation, in which he speaks of Jim in terms only used when speaking of a very close friend. Since Marlow has known Jim only briefly, he's going out on a limb to recommend him in such terms. But his warm affection for Jim is also apparent.

Jim is so overcome with gratitude that Marlow is embarrassed. Dealing with emotion obviously isn't his strong point. However, there's an element in Jim's extravagance that disturbs Marlow for a more serious reason. Marlow believes his gesture is a small thing: He's simply offered Jim a job as a way to keep him from starving. But Jim's elation comes in part from thinking that Marlow has validated his own romantic view of himself. He exits declaring that Marlow has given him a chance to start over "with a clean slate." In Marlow's view there's no such thing as a clean slate, and Jim is foolish if he hasn't learned a lesson (and forsaken some of his illusions) from abandoning the Patna. Jim, in contrast, would like to pretend that the Patna incident never happened. He wants to believe that his ac-

tion had nothing to do with his true nature. Now he's rejoicing, to Marlow's discomfort, as though he thinks Marlow believes the same thing.

NOTE: MARLOW'S FATALISM. "A clean slate, did he say? As if the initial word of each our destiny were not graven in imperishable characters upon the face of a rock!" These words, which close the chapter, are frequently cited by readers commenting on Lord Jim. You should keep them in mind as you read the rest of the novel, because they have important implications. The second half of Lord Jim is about Jim's second chance, and the question for you to consider will be: Does Jim make up for his cowardly act, or is his nature such that he can't help repeating his mistakes? There won't be an obvious answer- you'll have to sift through the evidence and make up your own mind. Conrad's fatalistic words suggest that nobody can escape his destiny, that Jim will repeat his mistakes. If that's the case, then Jim's certainty that he can become a hero would be completely misguided. He's had one chance, and he's failed; if his destiny is really engraved in rock, there's no reason to think a second chance would make any difference.



## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

In this chapter, Marlow narrates the painful episode of Jim's first job after the Patna inquiry. His employer is a Mr. Denver, the owner of a rice mill and the friend to whom Marlow had written the letter of recommendation. Denver is a wary old bachelor, with little trust in other human beings. Still, he grows so attached to Jim that he seems likely to make the young man his heir.

But a horrible coincidence brings the obnoxious little second engineer of the Patna to the rice mill. He doesn't expose Jim, but his behavior suggests he has blackmail in the back of his mind. Crestfallen, Jim runs away. Poor, wounded Mr. Denver gives every indication that he would have been willing to forgive Jim for anything. But forgiveness isn't enough for Jim- he wants that clean slate. He wants to live as though he never jumped off the Patna. He may be demanding the impossible. But at least you can't accuse him of being a fortune hunter.

Jim's next job is much less glorious. He works as a runner for the ship chandlers Egstrom & Blake, sailing out in a small boat to greet arriving vessels and talk their commanders into trading with his employers. One indication of his fall in status is the way he's addressed. At Denver's he was "Mr. James." At Egstrom & Blake's he's "Jimmy" or even "Mr. What's-your-name."

NOTE: At last the plot has arrived at the point where Chapter One began. You may want to thumb back now and look at those opening paragraphs. Many of the allusions that were mysterious when you started reading will be clear by now.

Bad luck strikes Jim here, too. One day conversation turns to the Patna, and kindly Mr. Egstrom drops the remark that he wouldn't want to be in the same room with its officers. Jim resigns at once.

Jim is being oversensitive. Egstrom's comment, it becomes clear, was a casual exaggeration. Like Mr. Denver, he would happily have forgiven Jim. But again, Jim is really running from himself. In this connection, Egstrom's prediction that the earth won't be big enough to hold Jim- meaning that his past will catch up with him wherever he goes- strikes an ominous note.

## CHAPTER NINETEEN

For several years Jim continues taking jobs and then fleeing them as soon as his real identity becomes known. The more desperately he tries to run from his past, the more inescapable it becomes. Eventually Jim becomes well known in his part of the world. Often he thinks he's hiding when everybody knows exactly who he is.

Marlow finally suggests to Siegmund Yucker, who at this point is employing Jim in Bangkok, that he send Jim "up country"- into the jungle interior- to attend to Yucker Brothers' dealings. Yucker is receptive to the idea. But an incident that evening changes his mind. A Danish lieutenant in the Siamese navy insults Jim in connection with the Patna incident. A brawl ensues. Jim, ever ready to resent a slur (recall the yellow-cur episode in Chapter Six), tosses the lieutenant into the local river. Yucker is disgusted, and Marlow once again has to find work for Jim, this time with De Jongh. But Marlow is becoming worried, because Jim is less able to bounce back from setbacks. What Jim wants is more than a living- "something in the nature of an opportunity," a second chance to prove he's a hero. (You'll note that "opportunity" is a word with much significance in Lord Jim.)

At a loss, Marlow decides to seek advice from a merchant named Stein, whom he describes as one of the most trustworthy men he has ever known. Stein's younger days were loaded with adventure, and he was a model of physical

courage. Now he's a serious naturalist, well-known in scientific circles for his collection of butterflies and beetles.

NOTE: NARRATIVE CLUMSINESS. You may have noticed that Conrad's device of having Marlow narrate Jim's story, so elegant in Chapters Five through Seventeen, has grown a little awkward in the last two chapters. Marlow can tell his listeners only what he knows, so Conrad has to have him constantly trailing Jim, getting his employers' side of the story and then getting Jim's. Conrad might have made things easier on himself by having Marlow get his information from Jim alone. But then you would lose the picture of Jim as a slightly mad idealist that comes largely from his employers- Jim certainly wouldn't portray himself that way. Fortunately, Marlow is a sea captain, so Conrad has a good excuse for sending him sailing from port to port.

## CHAPTER TWENTY

Before describing their interview, Marlow tells his listeners something about Stein's background. He was born in Germany and fled after participating in the unsuccessful revolutionary movement of 1848, a background that suggests that Stein is, or at least was, an idealist himself. He later worked with a Dutch naturalist, who sparked his interest in butterflies and beetles and brought him to the Malay Archipelago. Eventually he was taken under the wing of a Scottish trader (whose name, you will learn in Chapter Twenty-two, is Alexander M'Neil), who bequeathed him his privileged trading position in the jungle interior. Stein became involved in the struggle over the succession to the native queen's throne, allying himself with her younger son, Mohammed Bonso. The two men were "the heroes of innumerable exploits." Stein married Mohammed Bonso's sister, "the princess," and they had a daughter; but now Mohammed Bonso, the princess, and the daughter are all dead. (This political background will explain Stein's connections in the territory of Patusan, to which Jim will be traveling shortly.) Does Stein sound like the kind of person Jim wants to be?

Marlow and Stein first talk about butterflies. Stein is examining a "rare specimen," and he tells Marlow the hair-raising story of its capture. It happened in the period of his alliance with Mohammed Bonso. He was the victim of an ambush, but he successfully warded off his attackers- there were "only seven" of them. (Marlow has already noted Stein's exceptional physical courage.) The butterfly's

shadow fell over one of the men he had killed. Stein's deep emotion at catching it ("I shook like a leaf with excitement") contrasts amusingly with his perfect calm while defending his life.

NOTE: BUTTERFLIES AND BEETLES. Stein's collection of insects has considerable symbolic importance. Beetles and butterflies suggest two types of people. Likely candidates for the beetle category include the skipper of the Patna and the two engineers. Marlow had felt, when he first laid eyes on Jim, that he wanted to see him "squirming like an impaled beetle" for his crime (Chapter Five). That was before he knew anything about him. By now his opinion has gone up- so far up that he associates Jim with Stein's "rare specimen" of a butterfly. Jim is as superior to the worldly corruption around him as the "magnificent butterfly" Stein describes is to the "little heap of dirt" it sits on. (The frequent descriptions of Jim outfitted in spotless white in the midst of corruption or squalor support this impression.) But Jim, unlike a butterfly, can't soar above the mud, above the ugly and compromising facts- although he'd like to. Stein has a similar disparity in mind when he describes his butterfly as a "masterpiece" of nature and then says, "Man is amazing, but he is not a masterpiece." Man is amazing because he can dream, not quite a masterpiece because he can't always live up to those dreams.

After Marlow has narrated Jim's story, Stein delivers his diagnosis: "He is romantic." When Marlow inquires about a cure, Stein replies that there's only one cure: death. The question, paraphrasing Hamlet, isn't to be or not to be, but how to be- how to go on living with a romantic nature. The romantic wants to be "so fine as he can never be." His dreams are so big that he can't make them come true, and that of course is "not good."

NOTE: "IN THE DESTRUCTIVE ELEMENT IMMERSE." Stein doesn't recommend that you give up dreaming- just the opposite. He offers the following metaphor: "A man that is born falls into a dream like a man who falls into the sea." If he tries to climb out, he's likely to drown. "No! I tell you! The way is to the destructive element submit yourself..."

No pronouncement in Lord Jim has aroused so much disagreement. No two interpretations are quite alike. In general, readers fall into two schools. One school associates the sea with the dream, and thus the dream becomes the destructive element you should learn to live with. (Presumably it's destructive because you wear yourself out trying to attain it.) The other school argues that the sea represents harsh reality, the "facts" that are destructive because they demolish dreams. Part of the confusion you can blame on Conrad. The metaphor isn't fully carried out: The sea is there, but where's the land?

However, if it's difficult to assign a precise meaning to Stein's metaphor, the general sense of his words is clear: keep following the dream. Being a romantic "is very bad- very bad.... Very good, too." It's very bad, in Jim's case, because dreaming impossible dreams makes him thoroughly impractical. But it's also very good, because it underlies his idealism. Continuing to dream is better than becoming a beetle-like cynic. Jim is the troubled person he is because of the "inward pain" that comes from the distance between his dreams and his abilities.

Ultimately, Stein can't advise Jim "how to be." When he tries, the words fail him. Some things, he admits, can't be explained- implying that you can learn them only through experience.

Marlow notes that Stein is as much a romantic as Jim, but with one difference. Stein has followed his dream unflinchingly. But Jim faltered on the night he jumped from the Patna.

Stein's response offers some hope that Jim will get a second chance. He declares that Marlow can't know how many opportunities he let escape. When Marlow retorts that Jim surely let one chance escape, Stein replies that everybody is guilty of that. Not everybody has abandoned the Patna, but we've all done things we would like to undo. And everybody hopes for a second chance. Why do you suppose Conrad created a character like Stein to give Jim a second chance?



## CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

The next morning Stein tells Marlow about the district of Patusan, where he has decided to send Jim as his trade representative. Patusan is hidden away 40 miles upriver, and few Europeans have ever been there. Stein's current representative, a Malayan-born Portuguese named Cornelius, is unsatisfactory. Stein wants him replaced, though Cornelius will probably choose to stay in Patusan with his daughter.

Perhaps the most striking image in the second half of the novel, first described in this chapter, is the moon rising above the two steep hills that overlook the village of Patusan. The hills are so close together that they might be two fissured halves of one peak. If Jim has been buried in Patusan, Marlow's description suggests a rebirth (Jim's "second chance"): The moon rises "as if escaping from a yawning grave in gentle triumph." Perhaps the "everlasting deep hole" into which Jim thought he had jumped (Chapter Nine) isn't everlasting after all. (But this symbol also has a negative side, which will be discussed in Chapter Twenty-four.)

NOTE: BURIAL IMAGERY. Brierly said of Jim (Chapter Six), "Let him creep twenty feet underground and stay there!" - a remark Marlow now recalls. Marlow himself said (Chapter Fifteen), "To bury him would have been such an easy kindness!" Now Stein and Marlow speak of "burying" him in Patusan. The implication- borne out by the

eloquent passage about exile later in the chapter- is that leaving one's civilization is a death of sorts. Patusan has already "been used as a grave for some sin, transgression, or misfortune" of the half-Dutch, half-Malay woman who was Cornelius' wife but is now dead. (This may be a hint that Cornelius wasn't the real father of her child.)

Marlow calls Jim "the youngest human being in existence" because Jim hasn't "grown up" as Marlow has, in the sense of giving up his illusions. Is that the only way Jim hasn't grown up? The chapter ends with a long, rambling, and very beautiful paragraph on the subject of exile. Marlow, of course, is considering Jim's exile from England and, now, from European civilization. But the passage is doubly poignant when you relate it to Conrad's self-imposed exile from his native Poland. It's possible he was thinking of his own sadness when he wrote of Jim's intense loneliness.

Marlow closes by saying, "My last words about Jim shall be few"- a pretty strange statement considering that his "last words" stretch out for another 24 chapters. But in fact Conrad never intended to develop Patusan at length. By the time he reached this point, he thought that he was almost through with the novel. The growth of the Patusan chapters apparently surprised him as much as anybody. But don't you think it's curious that he didn't delete that remark when he revised the serial version for book publication?

## CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

Patusan was once a seat of the pepper trade, but commerce has dwindled so far that now Stein is the only outsider doing business in the district. There is a mentally retarded Sultan, but the real power rests with his uncle, the Rajah Allang, a horrible ruler who robs and terrorizes the Malay populace. Marlow flashes forward to an audience Jim has with the Rajah. The image is memorable: Jim splendid, almost godlike in his immaculate white, surrounded by the dirty Rajah Allang and his squalid court.

Stein's reason for helping Jim is sentimental. He wants to honor the memory of Alexander M'Neil (mentioned in Chapter Twenty), a man who had helped him, by helping one of his countrymen. Though Jim comes "from a long way south of the Tweed" (a river that forms part of the border between Scotland and England), his being English, if not Scottish, is enough for Stein.

As usual, Jim is extravagantly grateful, and Marlow is embarrassed and gruff. Jim particularly appreciates the way Marlow has always trusted him. Marlow replies that he only wishes Jim could trust himself more. The remark makes Jim uneasy. Obviously he still fears that jumping off the Patna proved something about himself he doesn't want to believe.

NOTE: REALISM AND ROMANCE. Look at the sentence that begins this chapter: “The conquest of love, honour, men’s confidence- the pride of it, the power of it, are fit materials for an heroic tale....” As a matter of fact, while the first half of *Lord Jim* was psychologically realistic, the second half is practically a storybook romance (except that few storybook heroes have a Patna in their pasts). The assumptions of the second half are radically different from those of the first half. Jim’s romantic fantasies have so far earned him a good deal of scorn- they were dreams that could never come true. Now, suddenly, they seem to come true, at least for a while.

This isn’t to say that the second half doesn’t succeed on its own terms. What it may not do is succeed on the terms of the first half- a different definition of reality seems to operate in each part. Conrad himself recognized the flaw, calling the cleavage between the two parts “the plague spot” of the novel. As you read you should note the differences between the two parts, then decide whether or not the novel forms a unified whole in spite of them.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

Jim returns from a conference with Stein, who has given him a silver ring as a token for a certain Doramin. This Doramin, an ally from the Mohammed Bonso days, is now one of the most powerful men in Patusan. Stein once saved his life; Doramin gave him the ring when they parted.

Jim is as elated about his prospects, and as talkative as you'd expect of someone who's never grown up. Marlow suddenly feels "thoroughly sick of him." He doesn't like hearing Jim boast about what he'll do- though he admits, returning to an old theme, that illusions are the privilege of youth. Marlow reprimands Jim for approaching his journey in the wrong frame of mind. Jim cuts at once to the root of what's bothering Marlow: He remembers the Patna, as everybody does. Marlow retorts that it's Jim who keeps remembering.

Marlow gives Jim a revolver, which he has every reason to think Jim will need in strife-torn Patusan. But when Jim rushes off to the ship that's to carry him to the mouth of the Patusan river, Marlow notices that he forgot the cartridges and takes off in pursuit. When he reaches Jim's ship, he has a talk with the half-caste skipper, whose conversation is peppered with malapropisms (comic misuses of words). Despite his bad English, the skipper impresses on Marlow that the current situation in Patusan is dangerous. He knows, having almost been killed when he sailed there a year ago. In his view, Jim is as good as dead.

Perhaps because he's so frightened for Jim, Marlow loses some of his usual embarrassment when it comes time to say goodbye. The two men share "a moment of real and profound intimacy," with Jim promising he'll be careful, like a boy reassuring an anxious parent. But Marlow knows that Jim is doing the right thing, and he admits sadly to his listeners that Jim's accusation was fair: Marlow really did remember "his- his misfortunes" (that's as harsh a word as he can bring himself to use) against him. Jim cries out something as he sails away- either "You shall hear of me" or "You shall hear from me." Considering that he wants so badly to be a hero, and that he's shutting the door on his old life, it's probably the former.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

In order for Marlow to continue narrating the story, Conrad has to give him a way of having heard it. So he sends Marlow himself to Patusan, two years after Jim. Marlow describes hearing Jim called “Tuan Jim” and talks about his fame. Jim’s prediction that Marlow would hear of him has come to pass.

The narrative returns to Jim’s first approach. The Patusan river has long been closed; Jim, the first white man to travel upstream for some time, sits tense, attentive to possible dangers. Meanwhile, his opportunity, his second chance, sits “veiled by his side like an Eastern bride”- an image that will recur at the very end of the novel.

Jim travels upriver with an unloaded gun, an act that Marlow, in retrospect, considers foolish. But Jim insists he was lucky the gun wasn’t loaded. Otherwise he might have shot into the hostile crowd that threatened him when he arrived. They, in turn, would have killed him on the spot.

His staying alive, Jim reflects, was as fortunate for Patusan as it was for himself. He’s brought peace to the land; there’s not one household where he isn’t trusted. Marlow assures Jim he knew all along that he was “all right,” but Jim is skeptical. In fact, you know from Marlow’s remark about remembering, at the end of the last chapter, that he wasn’t sure about Jim at all. And he still isn’t, even as he tells the story. Marlow keeps dropping little hints that something in Jim’s success makes him uneasy.

The image of the moon rising, so striking in Chapter Twenty-one, recurs here in a more disturbing context. Declaring that sunlight “is all we have to live by” and thus equating it with truth, Marlow calls moonlight “misleading and confusing” because it gives form to unreal shadows. Thus, even though Marlow insists that Jim’s greatness is “as genuine as any man ever achieved,” the recurring link between the Patusan moonlight and Jim’s exploits creates an aura of doubt. Are Jim’s achievements real or illusory? Has he made up for deserting the Patna, or is he still capable of the same folly? The similarity between the words Patna and Patusan isn’t very reassuring. Will Patusan turn out to be a repeat of the Patna?



## CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

Marlow describes an audience the Rajah Allang (also called Tunku Allang) holds with Jim and him. As they drink the rajah's coffee, Marlow realizes that it may be poisoned. The rajah hates Jim and has good reason to kill him. Jim drinks his coffee in order to demonstrate his fearlessness. Apparently it works; the rajah is terrified of him.

The story returns to Jim's arrival in Patusan. He is immediately taken prisoner by the rajah. On the third day he escapes by leaping over the stockade wall. After frantic effort, he finally reaches old Doramin, Stein's friend, and shows him the ring. Doramin puts him under his protection.

Doramin's power is second only to the rajah's. He leads a faction of Bugis immigrants from the island of Celebes. The friction in Patusan has to do with trade. There is no free trade. The rajah holds a monopoly on commerce. The penalty for trading with anybody else is death.

A third faction is led by an "Arab half-breed" and religious fanatic named Sherif Ali. His followers are the bush people of the interior, whom he's incited to destructive rampages. He has established a stronghold on one of the twin peaks overlooking the village. He's aligned with neither the rajah's nor Doramin's faction, and both groups are extremely fearful of him.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

Marlow describes the wealthy, dignified Doramin, so massive that he can stand and walk only with assistance. Significantly, Doramin carries an immense pair of pistols that Stein presented to him in exchange for the ring. Doramin's only son, Dain Waris ("Dain" is Malay for "heir"), has become Jim's best friend in Patusan.

In describing Dain Waris' virtues, Marlow exposes some of his own racist assumptions. The highest praise he can offer is that Dain Waris thinks like a white man. He shows "courage in the open" (rather than furtiveness?). In addition, his "European mind" gives him "an unobscured vision, a tenacity of purpose, a touch of altruism"- implying that other Malays are nearsighted, irresolute, and selfish. This kind of racism, though commonplace in the imperial Britain of Marlow's day, doesn't surface in Lord Jim very often. Dain Waris, in any case, is distinguished and brave, and he's adored by his parents.

NOTE: FANTASY. Conrad must have perceived the storybook turn his novel had taken. "They are like people in a book, aren't they?" Jim asks Marlow. Earlier (Chapter Twenty-three), when Stein gave him the ring, he had said, "It's like something you read of in books." Do you think the quotations suggest a certain self-consciousness on Conrad's part? Or is Jim confusing reality with the romances he had read?

Marlow describes the preparations leading to the defeat of Sherif Ali. The whole undertaking is Jim's idea, and he promises to pay with his life if it fails. (This isn't the last time he'll make such a romantically heroic promise.) The plan calls, in part, for hauling cannon up the hill across from Sherif Ali's "impregnable" camp. Jim plans the complex assault, and he infects Doramin's men with his own enthusiasm, proving himself a genuine leader. For once his vivid imagination works for him, not against him.

NOTE: MORE LIGHT IMAGERY. Even as Marlow hears Jim tell the story, he connects the landscape of Patusan with gloom- "the light fell on it as if into an abyss," he notes ominously. Even now he can't help remembering Jim's disgrace "like a shadow in the light."

## CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

Marlow finishes narrating the defeat of Sherif Ali. With the cannon firing from one peak, Jim and Dain Waris lead the attackers up the other. Conquest is immediate and total, an outcome Jim never doubted. He had once insisted to Marlow (Chapter Seven) that circumstances on the Patna caught him by surprise but proved nothing about his bravery: “It is all in being ready.” Now he’s proved that under the right circumstances he can be courageous indeed. His dreams have come true.

Jim’s reputation immediately grows to mythic proportions. Even his laughter is “Homeric,” calling to mind the larger-than-life heroes of the Iliad and the Odyssey. The Malays regard him as a white god, and he becomes a local Solomon, meting out justice, settling disputes. Jim complains of the responsibility, but of course the trust of so many people is extremely important to the man who once betrayed the trust of 800 pilgrims.

Marlow briefly describes Tamb’ Itam, Jim’s personal servant. He is, like Jim, a stranger to Patusan, a dark-skinned Malay from the north, morose and taciturn. His devotion to Jim is almost fanatical.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

When the country people whom Sherif Ali has driven from their villages return to them, Jim chooses the headmen. This is one source of his political power. He also protects the Rajah Allang from the vengeance of Doramin's Bugis followers. This is why the Rajah can't afford to poison Jim's coffee: Jim is a safeguard, as well as a threat.

Marlow describes an interview with Doramin. The old man makes no secret of his ambitions for his son, Dain Waris: He wants to see him as ruler of Patusan. Partly for this reason, he's disgruntled when Marlow assures him that Jim won't ever leave. In addition to curiosity (what could make Jim forsake his own people?), there's a hint of resentment in his surprise.

Marlow now turns to a new subject: Jim's love life. Jim has fallen in love with the daughter of Cornelius, the man who was Stein's representative in Patusan before Jim's arrival. Actually, Cornelius is not the woman's real father. Cornelius' wife, now dead, apparently married him after she had become pregnant, to save the girl from illegitimacy. The daughter has her mother's fine, sensitive nature. Cornelius, in contrast, is "awful," "unspeakable."

Jim calls her by a word that translates as "Jewel." The name has given rise to another "Jim-myth," which Marlow encounters some 230 miles south of the Patusan River. Jim, it's rumored, has gotten possession of a precious "jewel," supposedly a tremendous emerald. Marlow recounts at some length the version he

hears from a seedy government official, as well as the way various others embroider the tale.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

Marlow continues his description of Jewel. She has the qualities you would expect of the heroine of a romance- beauty, devotion, charm. But there's something additional: her affection is "vigilant." Marlow notices an anxiety in her love, as if she can sense that something is threatening Jim. Marlow describes their relationship, which on the surface looks perfect, as an "uneasy romance."

NOTE: Jim is in a certain amount of danger from the Rajah Allang. But Marlow's vaguely ominous tone, combined with the authority of Jewel's intuition, hints at a deeper danger. The reader, of course, knows what Jewel can't: that Jim is hiding the secret of his past. So the shadow of the Patna incident remains visible on the periphery of an otherwise sunny romance.

Marlow talks some more about Tamb' Itam, another figure typical in this kind of tale. Tamb' Itam is silent, alert, and such a devoted servant that he spends his nights sleeping on Jim's verandah, rather than at home with his family.

Finally, Marlow comes to Cornelius, Jewel's legal father. Cornelius is about as disgusting as a man can become: "unsavoury," "abject," "a loathsome insect," "a repulsive beetle." He is, in fact, the clearest instance of the "beetle" type (see

the Note in Chapter Twenty) in the novel. During the period after Jim's escape from the Rajah's stockade, but before the attack on Sherif Ali, Jim goes to live with Cornelius and Jewel in the decaying house belonging to Stein's Trading Company. Cornelius tends to speak of his dead wife, Jewel's mother, in a way that's so nasty it makes Jewel cry. So Jim has to forbid him to talk about her. Cornelius is abjectly courteous to Jim, but he viciously resents him. (After all, Stein has sent Jim to Patusan as his replacement.) There are also indications that he's mishandled Stein's business, though whether from dishonesty or incompetence isn't clear.

Jim, meanwhile, has other worries. As long as he was living in the Bugis quarter of Patusan, he had enjoyed Doramin's protection from the Rajah Allang's vengeance. He's moved in with Cornelius out of his sense of responsibility to Stein. Now rumors begin to reach him that the Rajah is planning his death.



## CHAPTER THIRTY

You now get a vivid picture of the way Cornelius abuses Jewel- screaming at her, calling her and her mother names, flinging dirt at her, and demanding almost in the same breath that she respect him and call him “father.” But she has too much spirit to suffer meekly. She knows how to turn on Cornelius and make him “writhe” with a word or two.

Cornelius’ behavior is so disgusting that Jim would like to leave. He’d be safer in Doramin’s quarter, anyway. Besides, his original reason for moving in-business responsibilities to Stein- has disappeared. Cornelius has already embezzled whatever he could get his hands on. There are no more goods or money, no account books, and thus no reason to stay- no reason, that is, except Jewel. Leaving her, Marlow notes, would seem like a “base desertion”- a phrase that intentionally recalls what happened on the Patna.

One night Cornelius offers to smuggle Jim out of Patusan for \$80. (Since Jim has no intention of leaving and Cornelius is so eager to get rid of him, wouldn’t it make more sense for Cornelius to do the paying?) When Jim refuses, Cornelius declares that he can no longer be responsible for Jim- as if he ever had been. His warning is absurd on the surface, but it suggests that Cornelius knows something Jim doesn’t. A bizarre night follows. Nobody sleeps. Jim lies awake hatching his plan for defeating Sherif Ali. Jewel stands watch outside. Cornelius sneaks around suspiciously, and there seem to be some others around, too- assassins, per-

haps. Jim is feeling so edgy that finally he loses his temper completely and gives Cornelius the bawling-out of his life.

NOTE: The hints that there are assassins nearby will be reinforced in the next chapter. The native Malays are scared to death of Jim, so the spectacle of him screaming in a strange language (English) probably does much to impress them, and to protect Jim.

## CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

The next morning Jim urges Doramin and his men to take action against Sherif Ali. The Bugis are worried because Sherif Ali is allying himself with the Rajah Allang. His men have been encouraging villagers to kill the Muslim strangers, Doramin's followers.

NOTE: SKEWED TIME. Even though the second half of Lord Jim is more straightforward in technique than the first half, the time scheme remains complex and events do not always follow in chronological order. The events that Marlow is speaking about now happened earlier in time than the defeat of Sherif Ali (Chapters Twenty-six and Twenty-seven).

That night Jewel wakes Jim urgently, claiming there are killers lying in wait for him. At first, Jim is annoyed. He's had so many death threats recently that he's begun disregarding them.

When Jim tells Marlow that at this point he wasn't acting like himself, Marlow contradicts him, "Oh yes. You were though." The reply is significant. He means that the true Jim doesn't fear for his life- suggesting, in turn, that the cow-

ardly Jim of the Patna wasn't the real Jim. It's not direct, but it's as close as Marlow comes to dismissing Jim's transgression out-and-out.

As Jewel warns Jim, he realizes how deeply he loves her. Cornelius, meanwhile, is skulking about, or seems to be. Jim asks who's to give the signal to attack him, and Jewel doesn't answer- but Cornelius is definitely implicated.

Jewel finally takes Jim to the storehouse, where the killers are hiding under mats. They turn out to be Sherif Ali's men, not the Rajah's. One of them rushes him with a kriss (dagger), and Jim easily shoots him. The other three quickly come out of hiding and surrender.

## CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

That night, Jewel and Jim declare their love.

NOTE: SYMBOLIC DETAIL. Like Jim, Jewel is dressed in white, bathed in light- details that imply her superiority to the darkness, the corruption around her. She seems to glide “without touching the earth,” and in the last image in the chapter, when she raises her arms, her sleeves billow “like unfolding wings.” She could almost be a butterfly (see the note in Chapter Twenty), or an angel.

Marlow now shifts the scene to a conversation he and Jim have on Marlow’s last day in Patusan. You learn from it that Jim has not forgotten, and can never forget, the Patna. He’s loved and he’s trusted and he’s revered, but there will always be self-doubt at the back of his mind. And Marlow, for all his warmth and admiration, ultimately can’t give Jim the reassurance he would like. When Jim says that Marlow wouldn’t trust Jim as one of his ship’s officers, Marlow begs for him to stop torturing himself. But Marlow can’t bring himself to say, “You’re wrong. I would trust you.” Jim understands- perhaps he agrees- but there’s a current of pain in his words. Would you trust Jim?

NOTE: DARKNESS. As they speak, Marlow notices “the gradual darkening of the river, of the air” as night falls. Conrad calls attention to his impression in a way that signals symbolic intent. Darkness has been associated, generally, with the corrupt, the deceitful, the bad. The image is pessimistic- counteracting the optimism that Marlow expressed (obliquely) in Chapter Thirty-one. By now it should be clear that he can’t reach a final judgment, positive or negative, about Jim.

Jim leaves, and Jewel finds Marlow. As they talk, it becomes apparent that she’s afraid Jim will leave Patusan, as the whites who visit the village always seem to do.

## CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

Jewel's interview with Marlow is mostly about whether Jim will stay in Patusan. He has sworn he'll never leave, but she still doubts him. Part of her mistrust stems from her mother's experience with her father: He had promised not to abandon her and betrayed his promise. Jewel describes her mother's death, with Cornelius beating on the door demanding "Let me in!" as her mother wept on her deathbed.

NOTE: A WORLD OF DISORDER. The description horrifies Marlow. For a moment, he says, "I had a view of a world that seemed to wear a vast and dismal aspect of disorder." His words recall the passage, in Chapter Five, about how ghastly it is to lose your confidence in the "fixed standard of conduct." The world seems suddenly askew, and utterly amoral. Morality takes on the aspect of a sham constructed for our convenience. Marlow isn't very reassuring; he says he snapped out of his vision for one reason: "One must- don't you know?" His argument for believing in the fixed standard was similarly practical, and dodged the issue of whether that standard is based on truth. If you lose your belief in it, he said, you can't survive.

Jewel knows there's something in Jim's past that's stronger than his love. She senses his obsessive guilt, but she doesn't seem to know the details of the Patna incident. Marlow tries to calm her fears, because he knows that Jim's guilt will, if anything, keep him in Patusan. But he's faced with the delicate task of reassuring her in a way that won't belittle Jim. As she demands whether Jim isn't more true, "more brave" than other men, Marlow has to dodge her questions. For example, he says, "Fear will never drive him away from you."

To still Jewel's fears, Marlow says, would require a "poisoned shaft dipped in a lie too subtle to be found on earth." There's a distinct pessimism in this image of a lie, because it grants that Jewel's fear has some truth at the bottom of it. Jewel senses that Jim's guilt is dangerous because it's stronger than his love, and Marlow, though he can't yet say why, senses that she's right.

Finally, the difficulty of reassuring Jewel drives Marlow to harshness. He says Jim will stay because nobody else wants him, and when she presses him for the reason, he tells her brutally, "Because he is not good enough." Jewel replies that Jim said the same thing- but, she snaps, it's a lie.

NOTE: "NOT GOOD ENOUGH." Marlow's statement might be just another of his mood swings (one moment approving Jim, condemning him the next), except that this time he adds a sentence that radically changes his meaning: "Nobody, nobody is good enough." This suggests that the "fixed standard of conduct" (Chapter Five), necessary



though it may be, is so artificial and inflexible that any one of us may run up against it at some time or other. Marlow doesn't expand on this intriguing statement (perhaps because the implications are too disturbing), but the idea seems to be that we shouldn't judge Jim too harshly because each one of us is capable, under the right circumstances, of jumping off a Patna. Jim had made this argument, rather feebly, when he told Marlow (Chapters Seven and Eight) that no one had a right to judge him because no one had been put to the test as he had. Marlow had resisted that argument on the grounds that it would weaken the "fixed standard of conduct" to the point of collapse. His attitude here is altogether more lenient- but, as usual, it's not his last word on Jim.

## CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

Continuing the theme of the last chapter, Marlow pauses for some gloomy, even cynical, reflections. He quotes, sarcastically, the Latin of the Vulgate Bible: “Great is truth, and mighty above all things.” Truth doesn’t prevail; neither does justice. What rules in this arbitrary world is Fortune. Fortune is with Jim now, and he’s almost satisfied- which is more than most people can claim.

NOTE: OMINOUS IMAGES. By the time Marlow and Jewel have finished their talk, night has fallen. The night-imagery suggests gloom, illusion. Jim finds them, and although he and Jewel greet each other with their usual affection, the greeting sounds “like a moan” to Marlow. He finds it “too confoundedly awful.” The moon-over-Patusan image (see the Notes in Chapters Twenty-one and Twenty-four) assumes its most negative aspect, turning the world into the semblance of a large grave. Its light casts doubt on everything Jim has accomplished in Patusan: “Nothing on earth seemed less real than his plans, his energy, and his enthusiasm....” In this context, Marlow’s reflections about Jim’s being “almost” satisfied seem particularly ominous. What keeps Jim from being quite satisfied is his lingering guilt about the Patna. All this emphasis hints that it still has a dangerous power over him.

Marlow is now waylaid by Cornelius, whom he's avoided the entire month he's been in Patusan. Cornelius wants Marlow to talk Jim into paying him for Jewel. He promises Marlow that he'll also take her back when Jim leaves Patusan. When Marlow assures him that Jim won't leave, Cornelius is infuriated- he hates Jim.

NOTE: "A LITTLE CHILD." Amid his curses, Cornelius makes one shrewd observation about Jim: "He's no more than a little child here." Marlow himself constantly plays up the boyish side of his young friend. Jim is as impulsive and inarticulate and brash- and, on some level, as innocent- as a child. And as Marlow likes to point out, Jim has retained the illusions that most of us (including Marlow) shed when we grow up.

## CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

Jim accompanies Marlow down the river as he departs. It's a melancholy scene, both men silent and thoughtful. When they reach the ocean, Marlow feels an "elation of freedom" at the view. Poor Jim, who knows he can never go back, is more subdued. A couple of Malays approach and start complaining to Jim about some misdeed of the rajah's, and Marlow watches him again playing peacemaker and Solomon. They talk of the way Jim has captured his opportunity, but there's a sadness, a hesitancy, in Jim's conversation. Happy as he is in Patusan, thoughts of the wide world, and especially of home, make him gloomy.

NOTE: LIGHT IMAGERY. In Marlow's last view of him, Jim is dressed from head to toe in white. As the sun sets and the beach darkens and Marlow's boat moves farther and farther away, Jim is eventually just "a tiny white speck, that seemed to catch all the light left in a darkened world." Even associating Jim with all the positive aspects of white and light, he's nevertheless surrounded by darkness. For Marlow he's a "white figure... at the heart of a vast enigma"- a puzzle Marlow can't ever solve. Originally that puzzle was the mystery of Jim's behavior, but it's grown over the course of the novel until now it's the whole "darkened world" itself. The "vast enigma" Marlow faces is,

ultimately, the cosmos: is it chaotic, amoral, and “dark,” or morally ordered and “light”?

With this chapter, Marlow’s after-dinner talk comes to an end. He’s talked for a total of thirty-one chapters, a length some early reviewers attacked as unbelievable. (One of them estimated that he drones on for eleven hours.) Conrad defended the credibility of his device (not very successfully) in the “Author’s Note” he added in 1917. Today most readers regard the debate as irrelevant. We’ve grown used to far less realistic novels, and suspending disbelief about the endurance of after-dinner guests isn’t a problem.

## CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX

The final stretch of the novel begins with a new, nameless character, who was one of the after-dinner guests the night Marlow told Jim's story. This "privileged man" receives a packet containing what Marlow has learned about Jim since that night.

NOTE: JIM'S EGOISM. The "privileged man" criticizes Jim's retreat to Patusan, arguing that you can bring progress to backward places only by representing your civilization, not running away from it. (His position is couched in the racist terms of British Imperialism, which you will probably find offensive.) Marlow counters that Jim's egoism, his concentration on himself, makes him a special case. Earlier (Chapter Sixteen) Marlow had criticized Jim for paying more attention to his reputation than to his guilt. So his egoism, his concern with his guilt, now meets with measured approval. But as usual, Marlow refuses to draw any final conclusions: "I affirm nothing."

There are four items in Marlow's packet. First, an explanatory letter, which makes up most of this chapter and the next. Second, Marlow's narrative, which will form the remainder of the novel. Third, a few tantalizing words in Jim's hand-

writing: “An awful thing has happened. I must now at once....” Fourth, an old letter from Jim’s parson father, written before his son signed on with the Patna.

NOTE: THE PARSON’S LETTER. Though Conrad gets some poignant effects out of this letter, he has two deeper moral purposes in quoting it. First, he contrasts the “easy morality” of the letter with the incredible complexity of Jim’s situation. Once again the moral seems to be that those who haven’t been tested have little right to judge. The air of nostalgia for home further increases sympathy for Jim.

The second, larger moral purpose is to contrast the nearsightedness of a certain religious outlook with the complexity of Marlow’s (and Conrad’s) agnosticism. Jim’s family lives a life of “easy morality” and “undisturbed rectitude” because their morality has never been tested, their rectitude has never been disturbed. Belief is easy, Conrad seems to be saying, when you’re not given any reason to doubt the moral order of things. Marlow’s own doubts about the fixed standard, his fear that the cosmos may be ultimately amoral, obviously don’t attest to a firm religious faith.

## CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

Marlow turns his attention to a certain “Gentleman” Brown. He doesn’t say much about him- only enough for you to gather that “Gentleman” is an inappropriate name for this villain.

NOTE: NARRATIVE STRUCTURE. In order for Marlow to have all the information he needs to finish Jim’s story, Conrad has to have him speak to Gentleman Brown, who sets the catastrophe in motion. So he has Marlow locate him in Bangkok, dying and eager to talk. Do you think Conrad makes this coincidence as convincing as he made, for example, Marlow’s running into the French lieutenant (Chapters Twelve and Thirteen)? Do you find Conrad somewhat clumsy in bringing a major character into the story at this late stage?

Marlow next tells about visiting Stein, eight months before his meeting with Brown. On arriving, he’s surprised to encounter Tamb’ Itam and another of the Patusan Malays, as well as Jewel. He soon perceives that some kind of disaster has occurred. Maddeningly, nobody will explain what happened- Conrad is still playing his game of tantalizing the reader. Jewel claims Jim has deserted her, and she refuses to forgive him. But when she accuses him of being false, both Stein and Marlow jump to his defense.



## CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT

We now move to the second item in the packet, the long narrative Marlow enclosed. Gentleman Brown, it begins, is one of the most savage pirates of the day. (His name comes from his supposedly being the son of a baronet.) He has no fear of death, though he's terrified of prison. But after 20 years as a pirate, he's down on his luck- until he and his men manage to steal a Spanish schooner. But even that success creates problems. A corrupt government official blackmails Brown out of his only money, a bag of silver dollars, and allows all the sails to be taken from the ship, rendering it more or less useless. So Brown and his men are forced to steal a second schooner. But this time they have to operate so quickly that they escape with too little food and water.

Brown then comes up with the idea of raiding Patusan. He knows little about the village, but it looks defenseless enough on a map. If all goes well he can extort food out of the villagers and even frighten them into giving him money. He leaves the schooner with two of his men at the mouth of the Patusan River, and the other 14 pack into the schooner's long-boat and sail to the village, assuming they'll have an easy time subduing the populace. But they've been spotted. To their astonishment, when they arrive the villagers open fire on them. An indecisive battle follows. Two of Brown's men are wounded, and the Rajah's boats cut off their retreat; but Brown and his men manage to entrench themselves on a hill overlooking the Rajah's stockade.

## CHAPTER THIRTY-NINE

As bad luck would have it, Jim is in the interior when the pirates invade Patusan. In his absence, the villagers, close to panic, call a meeting. Jewel urges strong and immediate action to wipe out the invaders. Dain Waris shares her opinion, but he refuses to speak up in the presence of his father, Doramin. And Doramin, the most influential man present, won't give the order to fight.

NOTE: DORAMIN'S SCHEME. In choosing this overly cautious course, Doramin is acting purely out of self-interest. Knowing how brave Dain Waris is, he fears his son might be injured or killed attacking the invaders. So he orders him to take an armed party and blockade the river about ten miles downstream. This is, as it turns out, a tremendous mistake. Brown and his men are virtually defenseless at this point. They could easily be defeated. Doramin's conniving will boomerang on him, and lead to a disaster he'll ultimately refuse to accept responsibility for.

Meanwhile, the Rajah is doing his own conniving, through his diplomatic representative, Kassim. The Rajah and Kassim hate Doramin and his Bugis followers, and they hate Doramin's friend Jim. Their idea is to ally themselves with Brown and rout the Bugis before Jim's return. (Later on, according to their plan,

they can overpower Brown.) So Kassim takes Cornelius (who, of course, also hates Jim) as an interpreter, and approaches Brown for negotiations.

Brown is overjoyed, though he's careful not to show it. His position had been all but hopeless; now, suddenly, it's extremely promising. By allying himself with the Rajah, he may be able to squeeze more wealth out of Patusan than he had ever envisioned. He begins by getting a supply of provisions for his starving men.

Cornelius' main concern is having Brown kill Jim the first chance he gets. But Brown is more interested in double-dealing with Kassim. The rumor has spread that Brown's ship, at the mouth of the Patusan River, is loaded with guns and fighters. (Actually, there are only two weary men on board.) Kassim urges Brown to order the ship upstream for battle, failing to mention the blockade that Dain Waris is setting up. Brown, for his part, pretends to send for it. The deceitful Kassim and the cunning Brown are pretty evenly matched.

## CHAPTER FORTY

Trapped on his hill, the bloodthirsty Brown is itching to kill for the pleasure of it. “The lust of battle was upon him.” He’s the opposite of Jim, whose joy is in the peace he’s brought Patusan. Trying to picture Jim, Brown can only imagine a scoundrel like himself, robbing the village little by little. He decides to team up with him so they can rob at a faster rate. After that, he’ll shoot him.

To petrify the villagers even more, Brown has one of his men shoot a Bugis who thinks he’s at a safe distance from the camp. Brown knows that he and his men are outnumbered two hundred to one, and their only chance is to scare the daylights out of the villagers.

It looks as if the order Jim has established in Patusan is about to collapse in bloodshed. Kassim is proceeding with his double-dealing, having dispatched a message to Dain Waris that the white men’s ship is on its way up the river. His plan is to weaken the Bugis by fighting. (He doesn’t know Brown is deceiving him and there’s no ship coming.)

Once night falls, Brown starts worrying again: Rationally considered, his chances really aren’t very good. One of his men heads down to the boat for some tobacco, and is surprised by three shots in the stomach. The marksman turns out to be a relative of the Bugis who was shot earlier. Doramin has sent him down to deliver a message to Brown: There can be no peace between the Bugis and the invaders on the hill. He’s just reached the river when he’s startled to see the white

man clambering out of the boat. So he takes advantage of the opportunity to avenge his kinsman, and turns himself into a local hero. Brown's man is wounded but not killed, and he moans horribly all night- until he's drowned by the morning tide.

Finally they hear a great clamor in the town, and Cornelius, who has attached himself to them, explains: Jim is back. The noise is a noise of celebration. Eager to deal with Jim, Brown wants to know how he can reach him. Cornelius assures him there's no need; Jim will come to Brown, because he's "not afraid of anything." (Recall the Patna and you'll perceive the irony of his words.) He urges Brown to shoot Jim as soon as he shows himself.

## CHAPTER FORTY-ONE

Brown and Cornelius spot Jim, who's dressed, as usual, in white. (Notice how Conrad emphasizes the symbolic color contrast between the "immaculate" Jim and the "sun-blackened" Brown.) When at last the two come face-to-face, their antagonism is immediate. Brown recognizes that Jim isn't the kind of man who would team up with him, and his crushed expectations make him all the more bitter.

Nevertheless, Brown must deal with Jim, and he does it cleverly. He admits that he and his men are trapped like rats. But, he adds threateningly, "even a trapped rat can give a bite." His men can still inflict some heavy damage on the village. "Not if you don't go near the trap," Jim replies, "till the rat is dead." Brown's men are surrounded, and the villagers can simply let them starve.

Jim, it would seem, has all the advantages. But Brown is an instinctive psychologist; he manages, almost unconsciously, to locate Jim's weak spot and then go for it. When Jim asks him what made him come to Patusan, Brown snaps, "Hunger. And what made you?" - an answer that causes Jim to start and blush. Brown assumes that everybody's as depraved as he is (that's how he pictured Jim in Chapter Forty), so naturally he figures that any European in remote Patusan must be running from a shady past.

"I am not a coward," Brown insists. "Don't you be one." He's arguing (dubiously) that Jim would be cowardly to let his men starve, but once again he's

touching a sore spot. (Later he tells Marlow with some pride, “I knew what to say.”) When Jim retorts that Brown doesn’t deserve a better fate, Brown turns the judgment around: “And what do you deserve,” he shouts. “And what did you come for?” Lamenting that he and his men are all in the same boat, Brown declares that he’s “not the sort to jump out of trouble” and leave them in the lurch. Quite accidentally, he’s hit on the perfect figure of speech to freeze Jim: the image of a man jumping out of a boat.

Brown’s strategy is working. Jim has started to feel less sure of his superiority. Curious now to compare their pasts, he asks what crimes Brown has committed. Brown avoids specifics, which would quickly reveal how much more malicious than Jim’s his misdeeds have been. But he does make an effective admission, “I am here because I was afraid once in my life.” Afraid of prison, he means, but again he’s touched on the very reason Jim is in Patusan.

No wonder Jim is inclined toward leniency. Do not “judge men harshly or hastily,” his father’s letter said (Chapter Thirty-six). Jim felt, during the Patna inquiry, that his judges were too harsh and too hasty, and for the same reason: because he was afraid once in his life.

NOTE: THE BUTTERFLY IMAGE. Brown tells Jim accusingly, “you talk as if you were one of those people that should have wings so as to go about without touching the dirty earth.” His jibe explicitly recalls Stein’s image, in Chapter Twenty, of the “magnificent butterfly”

on its “little heap of dirt.” But it also captures Jim’s limitations. He doesn’t have wings, he can’t live the perfectly spotless life, above the “dirt” of compromising facts. But he can still excel. As Stein observed (Chapter Twenty): “Man is amazing, but he is not a masterpiece.” For all the flaws that keep him from being a masterpiece, Jim is still amazing.

Marlow closes the chapter with a reminiscence of Brown on his deathbed. Even relishing his triumph over Jim, the dying Brown is fairly pathetic. Marlow recalls a story he heard about Brown weeping over the corpse of a woman he’d run away with. These views show the human, vulnerable side of Brown, but even at his most vulnerable he’s still disgusting- a beetle to Jim’s butterfly.



## CHAPTER FORTY-TWO

Brown's conversation with Jim continues, Brown demonstrating his "satanic gift of finding out the best and the weakest spot" in his opponent. Brown tries to excuse his crew as suffering men down on their luck. He lies (not very convincingly) that they came to Patusan in order to beg, not to plunder. Throughout, he keeps pressing "a sickening suggestion of common guilt" as he tries to convince Jim that they're somehow alike. Yes, there have been casualties in the village, but doesn't Jim understand that when it "came to saving one's life in the dark, one didn't care who else went- three, thirty, three hundred people"? Jim, of course, remembers the 800 pilgrims aboard the Patna. Faced with such awful reminders of his guilt, the ordinarily all-white Jim looks "black as thunder."

Brown is such an expert at manipulating others that he even manages to set the terms for his departure. He absolutely refuses to surrender his men's weapons. Jim, cowed, accepts his refusal, and leaves him promising either "a clear road" out of Patusan, "or else a clear fight"- no starving them out. It's just what Brown had hoped for.

Once Jim leaves, Cornelius appears to scold Brown for failing to shoot him. He's helpless, though, to do anything more than complain. When Cornelius finally leaves his "new friends" he is sulking with disappointment.

Jim goes directly to confer with Doramin. What they say isn't reported, but Jim apparently gets the old man's approval for the course he's formulated. Tamb'

Itam is hoping he'll decide to fight. "What was it but the taking of another hill?" he asked Marlow later, referring to Jim's triumph over Sherif Ali. But other villagers, fearing bloodshed, just want to see the white invaders leave.

Jim calls a meeting to present his plan. He's decided that the invaders should be allowed to leave in peace. For the first time since he's risen to his position as leader, Jim faces severe opposition. But he's arguing the course that he thinks is best for the village- the only course that will prevent casualties. Jim reminds the assembled people of the courage he's shown, and of his love for them. And he makes the same promise he had made before the assault on Sherif Ali: "He was ready to answer with his life for any harm that should come to them if the white men with beards were allowed to retire.

NOTE: JIM'S DECISION. Readers strongly disagree about Jim's decision to let Brown leave. The way you evaluate Jim's motives here will be crucial to how you interpret the novel overall. Is Jim's behavior at this juncture related, somehow, to his behavior on the Patna? Or is he acting differently now?

There are, generally speaking, two schools of interpretation. One school condemns Jim for not taking more vigorous action, pointing to the way he was similarly immobilized on the fateful night when the Patna was damaged. Faced with a sudden crisis then, you may recall, different plans of action occurred to him, but

he failed to carry out any of them. Various pieces of evidence support this view. The similarity between the names Patna and “Patusan” suggests that the second part of Jim’s adult life is in some sense a repeat of the first part. The ease with which Brown convinces Jim of their common guilt doesn’t speak well of Jim, either. Nor does the extent to which Jim accepts Brown’s sentimental self-justification: “They were erring men whom suffering had made blind to right and wrong.” And then there are the foreboding words at the end of Chapter Seventeen: “A clean slate, did he say? As if the initial word of each our destiny were not graven in imperishable characters upon the face of a rock!” (See the Note to that chapter.) These words imply a fatalism of character: we are who we are, and we can’t stop being who we are. If Jim jumped off the Patna once, they seem to say, then he’ll keep repeating that mistake, in some form or other, as long as he lives.

The other school takes a more lenient view of Jim. True, he may be foolish to trust Brown at all. But there are excellent reasons for letting Brown go without a fight. The invaders have already inflicted several casualties on the village; a battle would inevitably lead to many more. At least they’ve been prevented from plundering, and there’s scant danger they’ll return. Jim has already demonstrated his general willingness to forgive, as well as his distaste for bloodshed. When Sherif Ali sent four assassins to kill him, Jim released three of them unharmed (Chapter Thirty-two). He shot the fourth (Chapter Thirty-one) only because the man was rushing at him with a dagger. Jim’s first thought is for the people’s well-being;

he's willing to put their safety above punishing the invaders, which a strict rendering of justice might call for.

Conrad remains carefully neutral, presenting the facts via Marlow, but stopping short of any final judgment. That he leaves to you.

## CHAPTER FORTY-THREE

The villagers are thunderstruck by Jim's decision. Many of them, clearly, want to fight. But, one by one, they assent to his judgment. When, somewhat later, he has a few minutes alone with Jewel, she asks him how bad Brown's men really are. Jim's reply shows either how naive he still is, or how far Brown has duped him into sharing his guilt: "Men act badly sometimes without being much worse than others." The statement may be true of Jim, but Brown and his crew really are "much worse than others."

The village prepares for the invaders' departure. The Rajah flees; Jim's men temporarily take over his stockade. Kassim, having been embarrassed in his diplomacy, does what he can to ingratiate himself and make amends with the villagers. Jim spends a sleepless night, while the faithful Tamb' Itam keeps an eye on him.

Finally Jim sends Tamb' Itam off on a mission. He's to find Dain Waris and his men, who are still downstream guarding the river, and instruct them to let the white invaders pass. Because the message is such an important one, Tamb' Itam asks for a token to verify that it comes from Jim. (Actually, since Tamb' Itam is so well-known, the token is mainly a formality.) Jim gives him Stein's silver ring, the ring that was originally a gift to Stein from Doramin.

In the invaders' camp, the men are preparing to leave. Brown has received a note from Jim, via Cornelius, promising him a clear road out. Cornelius has decided to stay around to goad Brown for not killing Jim. Brown is already furious

enough at losing his plunder. But Cornelius hasn't given up some hope of causing mischief. He tells Brown about Dain Waris and his crew, camped down-river, and reminds him that it was Dain Waris who led the initial, humiliating attack on the invaders. He also tells him about an alternate river route that would take them behind Dain Waris' camp.

Finally Brown takes the bait and lets Cornelius lead them to the back route. (Cornelius' familiarity with the river is particularly useful in the dense morning fog that's settled over Patusan.) As they pass the stockade Jim calls out, with remarkable good-nature, that if they're willing to wait for a day he'll send down food. Jim really is an innocent; he has no inkling of the depths of malice in a man like Brown.

## CHAPTER FORTY-FOUR

Tamb' Itam arrives at Dain Waris' camp and delivers Jim's message, handing over the ring as he does so. Dain Waris toys with the ring and slips it on as he listens to the report. Then he dismisses Tamb' Itam to get food and rest. The men at the camp prepare to return to the village that afternoon.

Cornelius, meanwhile, has led Brown's long-boat into the river channel in back of the camp. Brown promises his men revenge, and they disembark with loaded guns, hiding themselves at the edge of the forest in full view of the Bugis encampment. At a signal from Brown, they fire. A number of Dain Waris' men are hit. Tamb' Itam, realizing at once what's happened, falls to the ground, feigning death. But Dain Waris rushes to the open-shore- just in time to get a bullet in the forehead on the second volley. One more volley and Brown's crew flees, leaving the Bugis camp in total panic.

But Cornelius has been stranded at the camp. He'd talked Brown into bringing a canoe for his escape, but in the rush to get away Brown's men have forgotten to untie it. Cornelius, panicked himself, tries to escape in one of the Bugis canoes. But Tamb' Itam spots him and quickly comprehends his role in the massacre. He stabs the old villain to death before speeding back to the village with the terrible news.

NOTE: A WORLD OF DISORDER, CONTINUED. (See the Note in Chapter Thirty-three.) Conrad has depicted a senseless, cold-blooded massacre; the killers have escaped punishment at the hands of the villagers. Twice before (in Chapters Five and Thirty-three) Marlow has confronted the vision of a cosmos that is morally askew. But Conrad is unwilling to let that vision stand as his final pronouncement. He retains some faith, however measured and tentative, in a moral order. So he has Cornelius executed at the hands of Tamb' Itam. Brown and his crew are more problematic, but they don't get off free, either- at least, not all of them. Marlow supplies a rather vague report that three members of the crew are found dying of thirst in a long-boat somewhere in the Indian Ocean. Three others, reportedly, have already died, and two of the survivors die shortly after their rescue. The third survivor is Brown, who of course has to keep breathing long enough for Marlow to hear his story. But Brown at least dies a ghastly death (if that's justice)- though to the bitter end he gets huge satisfaction remembering how he tricked Jim. There's no information on what became of the rest of his crew.

Thus, Conrad's final vision is neither totally bleak nor particularly comforting. Certainly he has less faith in a moral order than earlier artists who believed in a just God. But he's not convinced that the universe is morally chaotic, either. He



asks, but doesn't answer, How much of the order we do perceive is arbitrary? How much do we invent for our own reassurance? Is the standard of conduct "fixed" in the sense of "stable"? or is it merely "fixed" by our general agreement to adhere to a certain code of behavior?

## CHAPTER FORTY-FIVE

Tamb' Itam, paddling furiously, manages to reach the village before any of the other witnesses. He meets Jewel and discloses the terrible news; she immediately orders the gates shut. Both of them realize that Doramin will want revenge, and their thoughts turn to defense.

But when Tamb' Itam wakes Jim to deliver the news, his master's reaction is very different. At first, Jim is very much the leader, ordering Tamb' Itam to ready a fleet of boats to chase the outlaws. Tamb' Itam gently explains that he can't: The people have turned to revenge, and it's no longer safe for Jim's servant to go out among them.

Jim quickly understands how profoundly his position has changed. Just as a single error of action made European civilization an unsuitable home for him, a single error of judgment has ruined his life in Patusan. For the second time in his life, people have reason to regret having trusted their lives to him. Marlow comments, "I believe that in that very moment he had decided to defy the disaster in the only way it occurred to him such a disaster could be defied": that is, by facing it directly rather than running. (His readiness to face Doramin is not unlike his willingness to face the court of inquiry after the Patna incident.) Notice that Marlow says "the only way it occurred to him." Another man might be able to act differently, defending himself or planning an escape in good conscience. But Jim sees no alternative other than to face death at the hands of Doramin. "The dark

powers should not rob him twice of his peace.” He’s run from death once, on the Patna, and it was the greatest mistake of his life. He won’t run away now. And he refuses to fight, insisting that there’s nothing to fight about. Doramin, in his view, isn’t his enemy. Besides, he can’t tolerate the thought of more bloodshed. It’s at this juncture that he tries to write something, producing the inarticulate note that Marlow includes in his packet to the privileged man (Chapter Thirty-six).

In the Bugis quarter, Doramin and his wife are grieving over the corpse of their only son, which has been returned to the village. As they stare mournfully at it, a bystander removes the silver ring- Stein’s ring, which Jim had given Tamb’ Itam as a token. On seeing it, Doramin roars with “pain and fury” at this evidence of Jim’s complicity in Dain Waris’ death.

NOTE: DORAMIN’S RAGE. There is a certain amount of condescension, and perhaps racism, in this portrait of the bereaved Doramin. You can easily see why Jim isn’t entirely to blame for Dain Waris’ death. Though Doramin’s fury is understandable as a product of his grief, it’s hard to believe that the wise old man would so readily attribute his son’s death to Jim’s treachery. In fact, blame for the death rests partly on Doramin’s own shoulders. If he had agreed to an assault on the invaders in the first place instead of holding off as he did in order to protect his son (Chapter Thirty-nine), Brown and his men wouldn’t have lived to stage their sneak attack. Moreover, Jim is

Doramin's (and the Bugis') most important ally against the Rajah; the people's well-being depends largely on Jim's continued authority. In destroying Jim, Doramin is destroying the very protections Jim has established, the order that ensures safety to every family. The only way to explain Doramin's irrational behavior is by dismissing him as an ignorant Malay chieftain- a racist view that would have been commonplace among the British imperialists of Marlow's day. Unfortunately, Conrad doesn't seem to rise above this view. Marlow's praise of Dain Waris for his "European mind" (Chapter Twenty-six) relegates the rest of the Patusan Malays- including Doramin- to a lower level.

NOTE: JEWEL'S ANGER. Jim's departure from Jewel is a distressing scene. She accuses him of abandoning her just as she feared, just as her father had abandoned her mother. The meaning of her exchange with Marlow (Chapter Thirty-three) now becomes clear. She had expressed her anxiety that something in Jim was stronger than his love for her. That something was his guilt. It wasn't clear then how his love and his guilt might conflict, but they're conflicting now, and Jim's guilt is stronger. If he were to act solely out of love, he would try to stay with Jewel, through either battle or flight. But Jim has lived under the stigma of cowardice, and what's most important to him is proving he's not afraid of death- even if that means going to face an all-but-certain

death at the hands of Doramin. This is what Marlow means by his reference to Jim's "superb egoism." Jim ultimately thinks of neither Jewel nor anybody else- only his own conscience, his own stained honor. When he tells Jewel, "Nothing can touch me," it's not because he has any illusions about being safe from death. As long as he acts in a way that demonstrates he's not afraid of death, he'll be morally- if not physically- invulnerable. No one can call him a coward. Is this courage or egotism?

But Jewel doesn't understand his guilt. In fact, she doesn't believe he could really be guilty. When Marlow told her that Jim was "not good enough" for the world (Chapter Thirty-three), her reply was, "You lie!" Jewel knows only that she's being abandoned as her mother was abandoned- that something is more important to Jim than she is- and she refuses to forgive him.

Tamb' Itam accompanies Jim to Doramin's quarter. The courtyard is crowded with armed Bugis and other villagers. Many are surprised that Jim has come. Doramin sits with the silver ring and the big pair of pistols, Stein's gift, on his lap. His wife is crouched at the head of their son's body.

Jim repeats the pledge he made at the end of Chapter Forty-two: He accepts responsibility for the deaths. "Upon my head," as he puts it. Doramin rises with the help of his retainers and the silver ring, Jim's token, falls from his lap and rolls against Jim's foot. Taking Jim at his word (which, technically, is his right),

he raises one of the pistols and shoots him through the chest. Jim looks left and right at the crowd with “a proud and unflinching glance” before he falls dead.

Marlow adds that Jim “passes away under a cloud” (a clouded reputation, in the eyes of the wide world and of Patusan), “inscrutable at heart” (a lament Marlow has made from the beginning), “forgotten” (by most of the world that condemned him), “unforgiven” (by those few who do remember, especially Jewel), “and excessively romantic.” Jim’s romantic striving is nowhere more evident than in his last act- an attempt to live up to an ideal of himself even at the cost of his life. Employing a recurring image (it makes its first appearance in Chapter Twenty-four), Marlow wonders whether Jim hadn’t at last “beheld the face of that opportunity which, like an Eastern bride, had come veiled to his side.” What could that opportunity possibly have been? If someone stated that it was the opportunity to face death with “a proud and unflinching glance,” what would your reaction be?

The novel ends on a decidedly melancholy note. Jewel is still at Stein’s home, silent and stunned with grief. As for Stein himself- probably the figure in the novel whom Marlow most admire- he’s aged greatly. Stein often hints that he’s preparing for death, “while he waves his hand sadly at his butterflies”- a last symbolic reminder of what Jim aspired to, and couldn’t be: perfect.

# A STEP BEYOND: TESTS AND ANSWERS

## TEST 1

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Marlow draws some small consolation from his visit with the chief engineer (Chapter Five) because the man's hallucinations of fanged toads
- A. make a fascinating after-dinner story
  - B. suggest he hasn't entirely gotten away with violating the fixed standard of conduct
  - C. show how much worse off Jim could be than he is already
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. The "yellow cur" episode (Chapter Six), when Jim first speaks to Marlow, reveals that
- A. Jim's belligerence is only a front
  - B. Jim doesn't understand the severity of his crime
  - C. Jim is more wounded by the Patna scandal than he's let on
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Jim stays to face the Patna inquiry because he thinks
- A. it's his only chance of being exonerated
  - B. it would be cowardly to run away
  - C. he owes it to the 800 pilgrims

\_\_\_\_\_ 4. The French lieutenant with whom Marlow speaks in Sydney  
(Chapters Twelve and Thirteen)

*I. believes that all men are born cowards*

*II. understand's Jim's fear, but can't forgive his dishonor*

*III. declares that Jim has dishonored all sailors by his cowardice*

A. I and II only

B. II and III only

C. I and III only

\_\_\_\_\_ 5. Jim's refusal, once the Patna inquiry is over, to stay  
at a job after he's been recognized shows that he is

A. thoroughly impractical

B. looking for any excuse to get out of such demeaning work

C. aware that no one will tolerate his presence once they know  
who he is

\_\_\_\_\_ 6. Stein advises, "In the destructive element immerse" (Chapter  
Twenty), meaning that you should

A. follow your dreams

B. overcome whatever obstacle you find most difficult



C. keep your integrity even when you're surrounded with cowards and villains

\_\_\_\_\_ 7. Stein decides to help Jim because

- A. Stein recognizes that Jim is a romantic like himself
- B. Stein is eager to do a favor for his old friend Marlow
- C. Jim is the countryman of his old patron, Alexander M'Neil

\_\_\_\_\_ 8. The moon rising over Patusan is

- A. a positive symbol suggesting rebirth, Jim's "second chance"
- B. a negative symbol connoting the illusory quality of Jim's life there
- C. both positive and negative

\_\_\_\_\_ 9. Jewel's conversation with Marlow (Chapter Thirty-three)

reveals that she's uneasy about Jim because she

- I. senses that his guilt over the Patna is stronger than his love for her*
- II. knows that Cornelius and the rajah want to kill him*
- III. fears being abandoned as her father abandoned her mother*

- A. I and II only
- B. II and III only

C. I and III only

- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Jim goes to confront Doramin at the end because
- A. is certain the old man will forgive him
  - B. needs to prove that he's not afraid of death
  - C. is guided by his father's letter
11. Do Jim's accomplishments in Patusan make up for his behavior aboard the Patna?
12. Account for Brierly's suicide.
13. Consider Jim's romanticism in the light of Stein's comment that it is "very bad... Very good, too" (Chapter Twenty).

## TEST 2

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Jim's case disturbs Big Brierly because
- I. Brierly feels Jim is being humiliated when it's really the captain who should be on trial*
  - II. Brierly thinks it reflects badly on the dignity of all sailing men*
  - III. it makes Brierly wonder whether he could pass the kind of moral test Jim failed*
- A. I and II only
  - B. II and III only
  - C. I and III only
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Jim is unable to take prompt action during the Patna crisis because
- A. the bulkhead would almost certainly break if he tried to reinforce it
  - B. the other officers won't come to his assistance
  - C. his vivid imagination leads him to picture a panic, and he freezes
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Chester and Robinson (Chapter Fourteen) contrast with Jim in that they
- I. wouldn't be bothered by scandal and dishonor*

*II. see things exactly as they are, while Jim is the victim of illusions and hallucinations*

*III. are cynics, and he's an idealist*

A. I and II only

B. I and III only

C. II and III only

\_\_\_\_\_ 4. Stein's butterflies and beetles symbolize two types of people:

A. dreamers and cynics

B. merrymakers and hard workers

C. aristocrats and peasants

\_\_\_\_\_ 5. When Stein says, "Man is amazing, but he is not a masterpiece"

(Chapter Twenty), he means that human beings can't

A. compare with butterflies in physical beauty

B. understand the perfection that butterflies represent

C. attain the kind of perfection he ascribes to butterflies

- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Even though the Rajah Allang hates Jim, he can't afford to poison him because
- A. Jim protects him from the vengeance of Doramin's followers
  - B. he thinks Jim is a white god and fears his revenge
  - C. if Jim dies, Stein will cut off trade with the rajah
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Marlow particularly admires Dain Waris'
- A. hospitality
  - B. respect for the sultan
  - C. European mind
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Conrad has Marlow locate and interview the dying Brown because
- A. he needs to show Brown in his death agonies in order to convey his vision of a world in which justice is finally rendered
  - B. Brown has information about the events leading up to Jim's death that Marlow needs to hear in order to finish his narration
  - C. Brown has to narrate the events that Jim is too inarticulate to explain fully

- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. In their confrontation (Chapters Forty-one and Forty-two),  
Brown gets the better of Jim by convincing Jim
- A. that he and his men came only to beg
  - B. of their common guilt
  - C. that his men will give up their weapons and go quietly if Jim will guide them out
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Jewel refuses to forgive Jim because
- A. she believes he deserted her as her father deserted her mother
  - B. he never told her the truth about the Patna incident
  - C. he let Brown and his men leave without a fight
11. Show how Jim's behavior on the training ship (Chapter One) foreshadows his later behavior on the Patna.
12. What is it about Jim that draws Marlow to him?
13. Describe the way Conrad fractures traditional chronology.

## ANSWERS: TEST 1

1. B   2. C   3. B   4. A   5. A   6. A   7. C  
8. C   9. C   10. B

11. Since Conrad provides no clear answer to this question, you'll have to make up your own mind as to whether Jim redeems or, at least, rehabilitates himself in Patusan.

If you take a negative view, you can point to Jim's ultimate failure as a leader. As aboard the *Patna*, lives entrusted to him are endangered through a serious error in judgment. (The second time around, in fact, is worse, in that innocent people actually die.) The similarity of the names "Patna" and "Patusan" suggests that Conrad regarded the later episode as something like a repeat of the earlier one. You can also point out Jim's inability to put the *Patna* behind him. Neither he nor Marlow can stop remembering it; it even poisons his romance with Jewel. Jim's failure to take action against the invaders recalls the way he freezes aboard the *Patna*. Finally, you can cite Jim's deep sense of shared guilt with Brown as evidence that he still regards himself, on some level, as a criminal.

But you can also make a strong argument that Jim becomes a better man in Patusan. If Jim flees the *Patna* because his nerve fails in the face of death, in Patusan he proves he can face death bravely. He risks his life in the assault on Sherif Ali; he regularly drinks the rajah's potentially poisoned coffee; and he goes to face Doramin at the end. Moreover, if the younger Jim dreams of being a hero

but acts like a coward, the Jim of Patusan fulfills his deepest heroic ambitions. And his heroics do more than bolster his own position: they bring peace to the community and curb the tyranny of the Rajah Allang. Finally, while it's true that Jim's decision to release Brown backfires, there are excellent reasons to defend that decision. It's made with the safety of the community in mind: a battle would probably end in more deaths than the massacre. It isn't necessarily a fault- in fact, it's a sign of fundamental innocence- that Jim doesn't expect Brown to sneak up and murder men in cold blood.

12. Brierly's suicide seems mysterious at first, in light of his success and self-esteem, but some of the reasons emerge during his conversation with Marlow. Because he's so intent on public opinion, he thinks the Patna scandal diminishes the dignity of all sailing men. In fact, it seems that he regards himself so highly just because everybody else does. (He's received numerous honors.) Thus, a lessening of esteem toward seamen would mean a lessening of esteem toward Brierly- an idea that shakes his confidence. Brierly would suffer deeply if he had to face the kind of public censure that Jim does. Since Brierly, unlike Jim, has so little built-in self-respect, he starts to wonder how he would have behaved in Jim's shoes. After all, few sailing men are ever tested the way Jim was. Self-doubt begins, and since he has no built-in defenses (like belief in himself), it completely takes over. Brierly kills himself, finally, out of self-doubt- out of fear of his own cowardice.

13. Jim's romanticism- his tendency to set his goals in unreachable ideals (like storybook heroism)- is very bad, as Stein observes, because the distance be-



tween his dreams and his achievements is a constant source of pain and disappointment. He wants to be “so fine as he can never be” (Stein’s words), and he’s depressed when he fails. This problem is especially apparent in the first half of the novel: Jim keeps dreaming of heroic action, and acting- aboard the training ship, aboard the Patna- in unheroic ways. But being a romantic dreamer can also be “very good.” Jim’s stubborn belief in his ideals keeps him from growing disillusioned, like Marlow, or- worse- cynical, like Chester and Brown. He may not be able to reach his distant goal, but setting them high makes him reach that much farther (and attain that much more) than if he hadn’t dreamt at all. None of the men in Patusan, for example, has the daring to come up with a scheme like Jim’s plan for defeating Sherif Ali. Jim’s big dreams are the foundation of his amazing success in Patusan.

## ANSWERS: TEST 2

1. B   2. C   3. B   4. A   5. C   6. A   7. C  
8. B   9. B   10. A

11. Jim spends much of his time on the training ship daydreaming about the amazing hero he'll be someday. One day he's called to help with a rescue during a storm. Confronted with a real rather than a fantasy crisis, he freezes, while the other boys rush to board the rescue cutter and row away without him. Jim's vivid imagination keeps him from being able to act: the whole fury of the gale seems directed at him personally. But Jim learns nothing from his failure to act. Instead of admitting his fear (so that he could learn to deal with it), he decides that the rescue mission was child's-play, beneath him.

Later, faced with disaster on the Patna, Jim freezes again. Once again, he's the victim of his own overly vivid imagination, envisioning a scene of terror if the ship starts to go down and the 800 pilgrims wake and panic. Instead of efficiently taking what precautions are possible (for example, reinforcing the rusty bulkhead that's the only thing keeping the ship afloat), Jim stands stunned, as he had on the training ship. Faced with the terrible prospect his imagination creates, he finally abandons the ship with the other white officers- once again missing an opportunity to prove himself the hero he dreams of being.

12. At first Marlow is repelled by Jim's sullen insolence, his apparent indifference to the enormity of his offense in deserting the Patna. But with the "yellow-

cur” episode (Chapter Five), in which Jim unintentionally shows the depth of his humiliation, Marlow’s opinion starts to change. He admires the stiff-upper-lip control with which Jim is facing the scandal. As Marlow talks to Brierly, who wants Jim to run away from the inquiry, he perceives how courageous Jim is being to remain and face his accusers. For Marlow, Jim is “one of us”- a phrase that refers on one level to white, educated British mariners, but on a deeper level to persons who adhere to a certain fixed standard of conduct. Indeed, Jim has remained to face the court of inquiry precisely because running away would go counter to his firmly- held principles of honor. Marlow also admires Jim’s stubborn idealism, though he occasionally becomes annoyed with his impracticality (for example, in refusing to stay at a job once he’s been recognized). And he sees in Jim’s ideals and illusions an image of his own lost illusions- lost because growing up is a disillusioning process. By implication (it’s never stated outright), Marlow has a certain fatherly feeling for Jim- which isn’t surprising, since he is twenty years Jim’s senior.

13. Most novelists who wrote before Conrad told their stories in a straight time line, starting at the beginning and finishing at the end, with few jumps back and forth in time. (An occasional flashback to explain something was about as far as they went in breaking up the time structure.) Lord Jim, in contrast, is told with frequent jumps backward and forward in time- from Marlow narrating Jim’s story, to Marlow listening to Jim at his hotel, to Jim aboard the Patna, back to

Marlow and Jim, and then, perhaps, to Marlow's encounter with another character, such as the French lieutenant, who has information pertaining to Jim's case.

Your best strategy for answering this question is to pick out a section of a few chapters and simply analyze the time shifts. The time sequence is slightly more broken up in the first half of the novel, but Conrad uses time shifts throughout, and there are few sections of two or three chapters that don't include significant jumps backward or forward.

You should also keep in mind the extent to which Conrad's method remains traditional. Despite all the jumps back and forth, the overall time line follows Jim's life in the conventional way: from his early days (Chapter One) to his death (Chapter Forty-five).

## **TERM PAPER IDEAS AND OTHER TOPICS FOR WRITING**

### **JIM**

1. What is your own verdict of Jim? Do you think he ever makes up for abandoning the Patna?
2. List several examples of Jim's childish or immature qualities. How do they relate to his overall character? (Some childish traits- innocence, for example- aren't necessarily bad.)
3. In what subtle ways does Jim present the facts about what happened aboard the Patna in a manner that's advantageous to his case?

## **OTHER CHARACTERS**

1. Examine Marlow as a character, paying special attention to (a) the way others are constantly drawn to tell him their stories; (b) his deep friendship for Jim; (c) his embarrassment about expressing emotion or accepting thanks.

2. Do you think Marlow is an entirely reliable narrator? Consider (a) whether you can safely accept all his judgments at face value, and (b) whether you think he always speaks for Conrad.

3. What is the meaning of the chief engineer's hallucinations (Chapter Five)?

4. Compare Big Briery's sudden, unexpected suicide to those of Richard Corey, in Edward Arlington Robinson's poem of the same name, and Seymour Glass, in J. D. Salinger's short story "A Perfect Day for Bananafish."

5. Consider some or all of the villains in the novel (the Patna officers, Chester and Robinson, the rajah and Kassim, Cornelius, Brown). What do they suggest about Conrad's view of human nature.

6. Do you think the Malay characters are less fully developed than the characters in the first half of the novel? Or are they fully developed, but in a different way? Explain.

## **THEMES AND SYMBOLS**

1. What does Marlow mean by the "fixed standard of conduct"? Explain its relevance to the novel.

2. Locate several of the numerous references to fog or mist. How does Conrad use them to develop Marlow's view of Jim? of moral problems?

3. "A clean slate, did he say? As if the initial word of each our destiny were not graven in imperishable characters upon the face of a rock!" Are Marlow's fatalistic words at the end of Chapter Seventeen a fair summation of what happens in the novel, or are they misleading?

4. Write an essay carefully analyzing Stein's pronouncements about romanticism and the "destructive element" (Chapter Twenty). How do they explain Jim's behavior, both aboard the Patna and in Patusan?

5. Write about the symbolism of Stein's collection of butterflies and beetles, making reference to specific characters who represent both types.

## **TECHNIQUE**

1. Henry James once described Conrad as "a votary of the way to do a thing that shall make it undergo most doing." Relate this description to Conrad's complicated technique in *Lord Jim*.

2. Focusing on a section of three to five chapters, analyze in detail Conrad's use of fractured or fragmented chronology. What is the effect of all the time shifts? Could Conrad have simplified his method?

3. Marlow tells several stories that are only loosely related to Jim's case, if at all. What are the purposes of these digressions? Pay particular attention to the

chief engineer (Chapter Five), Big Brierly (Chapter Six), and little Bob Stanton (Chapter Thirteen).

## GLOSSARY

**ABSIT OMEN** Proverbial Latin saying: may there be no ill omens.

**BALLY** British schoolboy slang for “damn,” originally a euphemism for “bloody.”

**BETEL, BETEL-NUT** Seed of the betel palm, chewed by many Southeast Asians.

**BOAT-CHOCK** Cradle on which a ship’s boat rests on deck.

**BRIGANTINE** Kind of two-masted sailing ship.

**BUGIS** Malay people from the island of Celebes and nearby islands.

**BULKHEAD** Upright partition separating one part of a ship from another.

**CAMPONG** Malay village or hamlet.

**DAIN** Bugis title of respect.

**DAVIT** One of the small projecting cranes used for raising and lowering a ship’s boats.

**DRILL** Strong, durable cotton fabric.

**FOREPEAK** Part of a ship below the deck and toward the front.

**GHARRY** Kind of horse-drawn cab.

**GHARRY-WALLAH** Driver of a gharry.

**GUANO** Sea bird manure, used as fertilizer.



**GUNWALE** Upper edge of a boat's side.

**HAWSER** Cable or rope used to moor or tow a ship.

**HELM** Ship's steering mechanism.

**KRISS** Malay dagger.

**LASCAR** East Indian sailor.

**LONG-BOAT** Longest boat carried on a sailing ship.

**MALACCA** Port on the Malay Peninsula, about 125 miles north of Singapore.

**NAKHODA** Bugis merchant class, or a member of that class.

**NAUTICAL ASSESSOR** Person with marine expertise, appointed to assist a judge.

**PANGLIMA** Malay chief.

**PUNKAH** Kind of Indian fan, consisting of a large palm leaf or canvas strip stretched over a frame suspended from the ceiling, and operated by a servant.

**SCHOONER** Kind of ship with two or more masts.

**SERANG** Officer of an East Indian ship's crew.

**SHERIF** Muslim title indicating descent from Muhammad.

**SHIP-CHANDLER** Supplier of provisions and supplies to ships.

**SPAR** Any of the poles on a ship for supporting or extending the sails.

THWART Plank extending across a boat and used as a seat.

TIFFIN Anglo-Indian word for lunch.

TILLER Bar or lever used to turn a boat's rudder.

TUAN Malay title of respect (see the Note to Chapter One).

TUNKU Malay word meaning "my lord."

## GERMAN WORDS AND EXPRESSIONS

ACH! Oh!

BLEIBT GANZ RUHIG Stays very still.

EWIG Always.

EWIGKEIT Eternity.

GELUNGEN Successful.

GEWISS Certainly.

JA Yes.

NICHT WA[H]R? Isn't that so?

SCHWEIN Pig.

SCHON Good, fine.

SEHEN SIE You see.

SO HALT' ICH'S ENDLICH DENN IN MEINEN HANDEN, / UND NENN'  
ES IN GEWISSEM SINNE MEIN. "So I finally hold it in my hands, /  
and call it, in a certain sense, mine" (from Goethe's play Torquato Tasso,  
Act I, Scene iii).

VERFLUCHTE Cursed, damned.

WIE? WAS? GOTT IM HIMMEL! How? What? God in heaven!

# THE CRITICS

## ON CONRAD'S VIEW OF JIM

The crux of it all is that at the end we ask what precisely Conrad's intentions were- did he approve of Jim or did he not? And there is no answer to that question- none but the simple, all-sufficing one, that he strove "to make us see." We do see Jim as Conrad, a man of vision, saw him, and we are left with that spectacle to make what we can of it for ourselves.

Edward Crankshaw, Joseph Conrad:

Some Aspects of the Art of the Novel, 1936

## ON JIM'S DENIAL

In contrast with the captain of [Conrad's story] "The Secret Sharer," Jim repudiates the other-self that has been revealed to him; at no time does he consciously acknowledge that it was himself who jumped from the Patna- it was only his body that had jumped; and his career thenceforth is an attempt to prove before men that the gross fact of the jump belied his identity.

Dorothy Van Ghent, The English Novel:

Form and Function, 1953

## **SYMPATHETIC IDENTIFICATION: MARLOW AND JIM, BRIERLY AND JIM, JIM AND BROWN**

Dramatically as well as theoretically, Lord Jim is a story of sympathies, projections, empathies... and loyalties. The central relationship is that of Marlow and Jim. We can see why Jim needs Marlow, as an “ally, a helper, an accomplice.” He cannot believe in himself unless he has found another to do so. And he needs a judge, witness, and advocate in the solitude of his battle with himself. All this is evident. But why does Marlow go so far out of his way, very far really, to help Jim? He speaks of the fellowship of the craft, of being his very young brother’s keeper, of loyalty to “one of us,” of mere curiosity, of a moral need to explore and test a standard of conduct. And we may say with much truth that this is a novel of a moving and enduring friendship between an older and a younger man. But Marlow... acknowledges a more intimate or more selfish alliance. He is loyal to Jim as one must be to another or potential self, to the criminally weak self that may still exist....

Marlow is not fatally paralyzed or immobilized by this young “double.” But Big Brierly is.... Marlow sees, in retrospect, that “at bottom Poor Brierly must have been thinking of himself” when he wanted Jim to clear out. He had recognized in Jim an unsuspected potential self; he had looked into himself for the first time.... But the episode’s chief function is to prepare us to understand (or at least accept) Jim’s paralyzed identification with Gentleman Brown and suicidal refusal

to fight him; and to prepare us, also, for the deliberateness of Jim's march up to Doramin.

Albert J. Guerard,  
Conrad the Novelist, 1958

### **ON TRUTH vs. FACTS**

The horizons Jim dreamed of are unattainable, the heroic dreams he imagined to himself he cannot realize in action, life consecrated to an ideal of conduct cannot be lived, not only because of the ungovernable hostility of baser men but also because of the inexpugnable weaknesses in the ideal itself. But the feelings that lie at the root of all these aspirations and ideals- you cannot give the lie to those. Such would seem to be Marlow's point.

And it is because of the unflinching persistence of those feelings, their determination to operate at the highest attainable level, that both Marlow and Stein are inclined to speak of the "truth" of Jim's later life.

...The terrible unavoidable truth about Jim is that "he is not good enough"- the worst truth to Conrad is that "nobody, nobody is good enough." Jim cannot triumph over the ugly facts (a key word in the novel) though he spends his time trying to: he cannot "lay the ghost" of the ugly fact that he himself embodies and must carry with him wherever he goes.... But these facts are true- which is why truth is always referred to as "painful" or "sinister" in the later Conrad. Jim, despite the Platonic halo and the author's efforts to shore him up poetically, is not fi-

nally true. Or not true enough for the relentlessly penetrating eye of Conrad. The realists have no ideals- thus their lives are ugly. But the idealist has no grip on reality: he cannot live properly at all. Lord Jim is a prelude to profound pessimism.

Tony Tanner, "Butterflies and Beetles-  
Conrad's Two Truths," 1963

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**THE END OF BARRON'S BOOK NOTES**  
**JOSEPH CONRAD'S LORD JIM**

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