

Teacher's notes

The Citadel

by A. J. Cronin



SUMMARY

D *The Citadel* was first published in 1937, snapped up and made into a film by Hollywood in 1938, and resurrected by the BBC in 1983 as a 10-part dramatisation starring Ben Cross. Idealistic, newly qualified doctor, Andrew Manson, arrives in the small town of Drineffy in the Welsh mountains, determined to improve the health of the miners. Manson meets great hostility among the mining community and is shocked to discover corruption and malpractice within the medical profession. His career takes him from the poor mining towns of Wales to the riches of London. He makes many enemies along the way, but has a faithful, supportive wife and several true friends. Disillusioned by the difficulties that he faces as an honest, caring doctor, Manson loses his integrity and lapses into the kind of corruption he once abhorred. It takes a tragedy and the loyalty of his wife and friends to help him rediscover his moral values.

ABOUT A. J. CRONIN

Archibald Joseph Cronin was born on 19th July 1896 in Cardross near Glasgow on the west coast of Scotland. Cronin's childhood was not easy. His mother had defied her Scottish, Protestant family by marrying an Irishman and becoming a Catholic. When Cronin was seven, his father died, and he and his mother returned to her family, who focused their disapproval and anger for his mother's actions, on him. Cronin was an alien, set apart by his clothes, speech and religion. His main source of pleasure was reading, and a great love of learning. Cronin was very bright and won many prizes at Cardross Village School and the Dumbarton Academy, but this did not endear him to his fellow pupils, and he was a shy and lonely boy. Later Cronin recognised how these youthful experiences would drive him to succeed in life, 'Nothing can exceed the longing of a poor youth, beaten down by circumstances, to rise above misfortune and justify himself, not only in his own eyes but in the eyes of others.'

Cronin graduated with honours from medical school at the end of the First World War in 1919. In 1921, he married Agnes Mary Gibson, also a medical graduate.

Cronin's ensuing career as a doctor gave him rich experience and a deep insight into a vast variety of characters, relationships and emotions. In the mining towns of Wales, he saw the human spirit fighting poverty and hardship. In his London practice, he encountered the spoilt, neurotic rich, happy to spend money like water. He stored these experiences in his journal ready for his books.

Cronin's writing career began in 1930 when he had to give up his medical practice in London because of a duodenal ulcer. He returned to his native Scotland with his family, to recover and write *Hatter's Castle*. His career as an author was very successful. He had a great following in America and in 1939 moved with his wife and three sons, to New England where they lived for 17 years. However, at the height of his fame, success and wealth, Cronin was deeply dissatisfied. He had neglected his religious spirit since his father died, and now felt a keen need for spiritualism. He returned to Catholicism with a vengeance. Cronin was a moralist, greatly affected by human suffering, especially if it was caused by injustice. Cronin spent his final years in Switzerland, where he died in 1981.

BACKGROUND AND THEMES

In 1937 when *The Citadel* was published, A.J. Cronin was well established as a popular writer. His first book, *Hatter's Castle*, had launched him to fame in 1930. It was acclaimed by the Book Society as a 'Book of the Month' and was an instant success, selling 30,000 copies. Hugh Walpole deemed it 'the finest first novel since the Great War.' *Adventures of a Black Bag* which followed *Hatter's Castle*, is full of characters and stories that Cronin met and experienced as a doctor. These characters are now familiar to many people, for this book was the foundation for Dr Finlay's Casebook, a popular British TV programme in the 1960s.

The Citadel was greeted with dismay and hostility by the medical profession, who said it overemphasized the small percentage of evil in the profession. Many people believe that *The Citadel* contributed to the creation of a free National Health Service, because it exposed deeply inadequate and unfair practices.

The Citadel has been called a protest novel because its key themes deal with injustice and inequality in the medical system in Britain in the 1930s. Interviewed by the *Daily Express*, Cronin said, 'I have written in *The Citadel* all I feel about the medical profession, its injustices, its hide-bound unscientific stubbornness, its humbug ... The horrors and inequities detailed in the story I have personally witnessed. This is not an attack against individuals, but against a system.'

Through his characters, Cronin cries out for a system where doctors with different specialist knowledge, work together for the benefit of their patients. He believes that : "

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patients, whether they are rich or poor, should be treated equally, and should pay their doctors within their means.

Dr Manson is a good, caring doctor whose one aim in life is to cure people. However, his idealism gradually turns to cynicism because of the ignorance and prejudice of the miners, and the indifference of his superiors. Abandoning his ideals, Dr Manson becomes obsessed with accumulating wealth. Working with a network of similar-minded gold digging doctors, he exploits his wealthy patients, and neglects the poorer ones.

The symbol of the citadel is central to the book. It symbolises man's ideals - in Manson's case medical integrity - which are enclosed in a castle on a hill. Manson fights against great odds to free himself from materialistic temptation, and climb that hill. At the end of the book he sees the shape of the battlements in the clouds. We are left with the sense that, with Denny and Hope at his side, Manson will scale the walls of the citadel to release his ideals.

Cronin is regarded as one of the first of the formula writers, relying on his publisher's marketing skills to sell his books. In this case, Cronin's publisher, Victor Gollancz, did an excellent job. *The Citadel* was a 'blockbuster'. It broke all publishing records, and sold 10,000 hardback copies a week, for months on end.

Communicative activities

The following teacher-led activities cover the same sections of text as the exercises at the back of the reader, and supplement those exercises. For supplementary exercises covering shorter sections of the book, see the photocopiable Student's Activities pages of this Factsheet. These are primarily for use with class readers but, with the exception of discussion and pair/group work questions, can also be used by students working alone in a self-access centre.

ACTIVITIES BEFORE READING THE BOOK

Give students a list of the medical words in the book, so they can look up ones they don't know. Make a wordsearch out of all the words, and below the puzzle write an explanation for each word. In pairs students complete the wordsearch and match the words to the explanations. Finally pairs of students make sentences with the words.

CHAPTERS 1-7

Divide students into two teams. Within each team, divide students into small groups or pairs. Give them each the name of a different character in the book. Students write down several sentences to describe that character. Students read a sentence to the opposite team, which tries to guess the character. The team which guesses gets a point for each sentence they need before they guess correctly. The team with the least points wins.

CHAPTERS 8-15

Divide students into groups of 3 or 4. One student takes on the role of Andrew, the others as interviewers. The students who are interviewing take it in turns to ask Andrew questions. Encourage them to find out why Andrew is leaving Drineffy, how he feels about the medical profession, what he would do in certain situations etc..

CHAPTERS 16-23

If possible, record a radio news broadcast. Play this to the class and have a discussion about the way the information is presented. Divide the class into small groups. Ask some groups to produce a short radio broadcast about the accident at the mine, and the other groups to report on the discovery of Andrew's experiments. They may include interviews if they wish. Each group reads their broadcast to the rest of the class. Discuss which broadcast was most successful in conveying the information, and why.

CHAPTERS 24-31

Divide the students into small groups. Give each group the name of one of the characters. The group retells this section of the book through the eyes of that character. Each group reads their story out and the class must guess the character.

CHAPTERS 32-39

Hold a 6 minute debate. Choose five students to debate for the motion and five to debate against the motion. The motion is: Andrew acted in the best interest of his patient, Mary Boland. Allow the two groups six minutes to get their arguments together. The other students will form the audience and can be thinking up questions to ask the speakers. During the debate each of the five students in the debating groups must give one argument. Each member of the audience must then ask a question. After the debate all students vote on the motion. Ask if anybody has changed their minds because of the debate.

ACTIVITIES AFTER READING THE BOOK

Divide the class into small groups. Groups write down three major events that take place in one section of the book. Write in chronological order on the board. Ask each group to look at a specific event and discuss what could have happened if the main character had acted differently at this point. Each group reports back to the rest of the class.

Glossary

It will be useful if your students know these new words. They are practised in the 'Before You Read' sections at the back of the book. (Definitions are based on the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English.)

Chapters 1-7

bacteria (n) very small living things related to plants, some of which cause disease

carriage (n) vehicle with wheels that is pulled by a horse

hormone (n) a chemical substance produced by your body that influences your body's growth, development, etc

microscope (n) a scientific instrument that makes extremely small things look larger

misery (n) great suffering or discomfort

quality (n) something such as courage, intelligence or loyalty that someone may have as part of their character

scorn (n) the feeling that someone is stupid or is not as good as other people

sewer (n) a pipe or passage under the ground that carries away waste material and used water from buildings

surgery (n) a place where a doctor or dentist gives treatment

suspicion (n) a feeling that something has happened is true

typhoid (n) a serious infectious disease that is caused by dirty food or drink

Chapters 8-15

aneurism (n) an illness affecting the blood vessels in the head which can lead to death

experiment (n) a scientific test

research (n) a lengthy study of a problem



Student's activities

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These activities can be done alone or with one or more other students. Pair/group-only activities are marked.

Activities before reading the book

- Look at the titles of the chapters. What do you think is going to happen in this book?
- Read the introduction, close your book, and answer these questions.
 - Why was Cronin brought up by his mother's family?
 - What did Cronin research when he was working in Wales?
 - Why did Cronin stop being a doctor?
 - Where did Cronin die?
 - What nationality was Cronin?
 - What was Cronin's first book called?
 - Which of Cronin's novels deals with a subject close to his own childhood?
 - What was Britain the first country to do in 1948?

Activities while reading the book

CHAPTERS 1-7

Chapters 1-3

- Complete the following sentences.
 - The people are getting typhoid fever because
 - Although Andrew has only just left college he is expected to
 - The doctors blow the sewer up so that
 - Denny is critical of other doctors because they
 - Miss Page thinks Denny is a bad doctor because
 - The Mining Company pays part of the miner's wages to
 - Jenkins makes medicines out of

- Imagine you are Andrew. Write an entry in your diary for the night you and Denny blow up the sewer.

Chapters 4-7

- Answer these questions:
 - How do Andrew and Miss Barlow meet?
 - Why does Miss Barlow want the sick boy's brother to keep coming to school?
 - Why is Andrew afraid to fall in love?
 - What does Andrew think is wrong with Emlyn? How does he know this?
 - How does Freddie Hamson make his money?

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- As the dinner party at the Bramwells' house ends, Andrew
 - Emlyn is able to go
 - Christine doesn't like Freddie because
- Work in pairs. You are two miners talking about the new Dr Manson. What do you think of his actions so far?

CHAPTERS 8-15

Chapters 8-11

- Put these sentences in the right order.
 - Andrew tells Miss Page that he is going to leave Drineffy. —
 - The Morgans give Andrew some money. —
 - Andrew discovers that Denny has given him his microscope. —
 - Andrew and Christine move to Aberalaw. —
 - Andrew refuses to become an official doctor to the Mining Company. —
 - Andrew goes for an interview. —
 - Andrew works for half an hour to bring life into the Morgan's baby. —
 - Baby Morgan is born dead. —

- Would you like to be a doctor or a patient in Aberalaw? Why/why not?
Discuss with another student.

Chapters 12-15

- Choose one of the words in italics to go in the following sentences.
 - Andrew refuses to give Chenkin a sick note *because/though* he was not ill.
 - The Area Nurse treats Evans' burn *by/with* oil.
 - Andrew makes enemies *to/of* Chenkin and the Area Nurse
 - Andrew thinks *that/about* coal dust may cause lung disease.
 - Andrew gets a degree *which/who* will help him get a better job.
- Andrew says that the most important rule for a doctor is 'never to believe anything till it is proved.' Do you agree? Discuss with another student.

CHAPTERS 16-23

Chapters 16-19

- Who is speaking? Who to? What about?

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- 'I'm giving you a good chance to test your skill!'
 - 'Didn't I tell you that this would happen?'
 - 'That's how poor people should always pay their doctor.'
 - 'I've been trying to tell you all day.'
 - 'It may take a year, or it may take five years.'
 - 'Nobody is to blame. It was an accident.'
 - 'Did you get permission?'
 - 'I have made a discovery that may improve your conditions of work.'
 - 'We have lost the best man we've ever had.'
- Do you think Andrew is right to give his notice? What will happen next? Discuss with another student.

Chapters 20-23

- Correct these false sentences. Try not to look at your book.
 - Stillman is a qualified doctor. He works in England.
 - Andrew's new job as Medical Officer is exciting.
 - Christine is unhappy when they move to London because she misses the countryside.
 - The Board want Andrew to complete his research in London.
 - Andrew met Abbey and Gadsby when he was interviewed for the job in Aberalaw.
 - Andrew leaves his job at the Coal and Mines Board because it is too difficult.
 - Dr Gadsby praises Andrew for his research work.
- What do you think Andrew will do to make his practice successful? Discuss with another student.

CHAPTERS 24-31

Chapters 24-28

- Put the two parts of these sentences together.

(a) Andrew thinks that he is successful	because he wants her money.
(b) Some doctors get rich	because they are a good influence on Andrew.
(c) Hospitals will not admit Andrew's patients	because he is making money.
(d) Andrew gives Miss Everell her hay fever treatment	because he is not known.
(e) Christine is pleased to see Denny and Hope	because they trick their patients.
- 'The more you charge a patient, the more confidence he has in you?' Do you think there is any truth in this sentence? Discuss with another student.

Chapters 29-31

- Which of the characters in the story:

- finds Andrew attractive?
 - is losing their self-confidence?
 - needs an operation on their foot?
 - always seems to approve of what Andrew does?
 - has studied tuberculosis?
 - was unable to complete a medical qualification because of the death of their father?
 - has a child who has tuberculosis?
 - is a bitter but hard-working person?
 - works at three different places?
- In what way do you think the relationship between Andrew and Christine has changed? Why? Discuss with another student.

CHAPTERS 32-39

Chapters 32-36

- Who is speaking? Who or what does the word in *italics* refer to? Choose one of these adjectives to describe the mood the speaker is in at the time :
trusting sad excited upset happy
annoyed angry
 - 'Oh, God, why did I trust you?'
 - 'I shall feel better after this.'
 - 'Oh, it's so nice to hear you talk like this!'
 - 'You must allow me to treat this case in the way that I consider best.'
 - 'I won't accept any more than it's really worth.'
 - 'Thank you, Doctor, for being so kind.'
- What would happen in your country today if an unqualified person performed a medical operation? Discuss.

Chapters 37-39

- The words in these sentences are in the wrong order. Correct them.
 - blames death. Christine's Andrew for himself
 - patient Freddie Stillman. tells Andrew Nurse that a Sharp to sent
 - doctors don't because qualified Many Stillman is he like a not doctor.
 - inquiry Pasteur. compares the At to Louis Andrew Stillman
 - plan practice Denny, up set together. Hope a Andrew and to
- What effect does Christine's death have on the story? Do you think it would have been better if she had lived? Discuss with another student.

Activities after reading the book

The Citadel has been called a protest novel? Do you agree? Discuss with another student.

