

101 Crackerjack Sea Books

BY DEAN KING

The year is 1902,

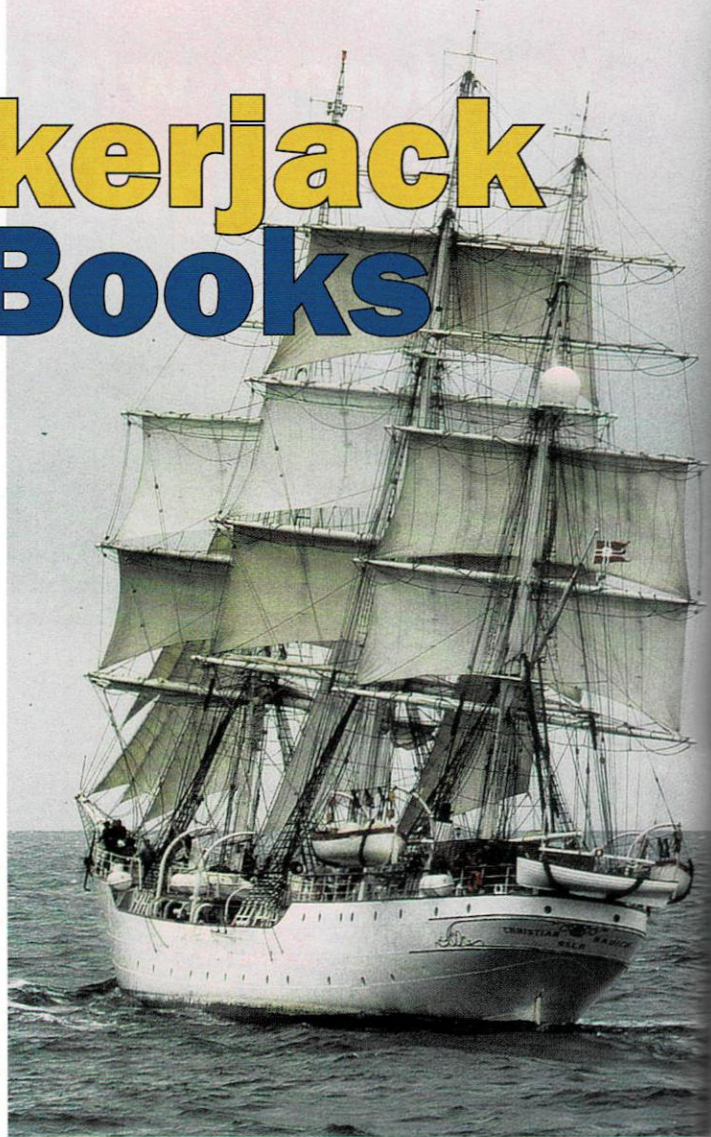
the place Auckland, New Zealand, on the deck of the *Tilikum*. Captain Jack Voss is interviewing yet another potential mate on his two-man round-the-world journey in a sailboat made out of a red-cedar canoe. Since setting out from British Columbia, he has lost one mate overboard and several others to seasickness and temptations in port. After ascertaining that this candidate, an Irish ex-clergyman, can steer a yacht, Voss asks the apparently frivolous and yet perhaps most critical question of all: "Can you tell a good story?"

The would-be mate rips off a tale—a "real crackerjack"—on the spot and earns the dubious honor of a berth in Voss's extraordinary canoe.

Storytelling is intrinsic to the sea. Ever since man learned to sail long distances, he has amused himself and his fellow crew by telling stories. Or, as John McPhee writes in his book *Looking for a Ship*: "All through a voyage while nothing happens, sailors tell stories about things that happen."

Life at sea can be tedious and the hours lonely, but things *do* happen. Just ask Odysseus or the Ancient Mariner, or Cook or Ahab, or Hornblower or Queeg. Since time immemorial, young men have gone to sea to prove themselves, fallen men to escape their troubles, ambitious men to discover new lands or to make fortunes or to gain fame by setting new records of distance and speed. Since time immemorial, men have also gone to sea to fight. And while it may be true, as Joseph Conrad says, that the ocean is a brute that has "no compassion, no faith, no law, no memory," it has been exceedingly generous in one way: sailors and their chroniclers have recorded and conjured up a singular body of literature upon its waves.

This body of work spans three millennia, covers a fascinating swath of history, and includes some of the towering works in the English language. From *Moby-Dick* to *Jaws*, from Scylla and Charybdis to the perfect storm, from the *Pequod* to the *Titanic*, sea literature defines danger for us. In the voyages of Cook, Dana, Riley, Shackleton, Heyerdahl, and Slocum, it takes us on adventures to the boundaries of our globe. And in the strange unhings of Ahab, Queeg, and Crowhurst, it allows us to see the outer limits of the inner mind.



It was Patrick O'Brian's Aubrey-Maturin series, a roman-fleuve of the Age of Nelson only completed in recent years, that rekindled my passion for sea literature, which had been suckled by Homer and Hermann Melville and Conrad. In the wood-paneled library of the New York Yacht Club, for days on end, sailors' stories enveloped me. I could crack open a book and soon find myself on frozen shrouds fighting an angry storm off Cape Horn, shipwrecked on the uncharted Saharan coast, in the midst of an epic sea battle, whaling, pirating, treasure hunting, or trading with natives in the South Seas.

OUT OF THIS WONDERFUL CHAOS OF SEA BOOKS—of memoirs, histories, biographies, and novels—we (for I have had the help of some generous friends) have culled here the best books, regardless of era or genre, that any good library of the sea should possess. Some of the books are recognized classics, while some are mostly forgotten. (Ever heard of *The Lightship*, *The Real McCoy*, or *The Last Grain Race*? You'll be glad you have now.) Some are explorers' firsthand accounts, some are great histories or biographies, others are fiction. All but six of the books were written in the past two centuries.

It has been said that every great book is a response to another. Certainly many a sea book has inspired another voyage, which in turn has inspired another book. In modern times, Thor Heyerdahl's *Kon-Tiki* (list #5) has stirred so many sailor-readers

that there is even a book about the voyages of voyagers who set out to repeat his pioneering raft ride. Before that, Joshua Slocum's *Sailing Alone Around the World* (#16), inspired dozens, including Captain Voss's canoe voyage, recounted in *The Venture-some Voyages of Captain Voss* (#76).

Slocum himself reads Christopher Columbus and James Cook on his way to Cape Horn—a place saturated with the lore of voyagers' battles with arctic winds, violent storms, and warlike natives. The Horn is a palimpsest of stories and histories, layered with Magellan (#92), Cook (#8), Darwin (#13), and Dana (#6). Windjammer sailors of the early 20th century left their mark in such classic accounts as A. J. Villiers's *By Way of Cape Horn* (#36) and Eric Newby's *The Last Grain Race* (#22). Cape Horn continues to be shaped not just by the currents of wind and water but by a tide of sailors' stories.

THE MORE ONE READS, THE MORE ONE DISCOVERS the continuity and interconnectedness of the great library of the sea across the ages. It is fascinating to follow the threads—from *Moby-Dick* (#2) to Nathaniel Philbrick's *In the Heart of the Sea* (#40), from Bligh (#34) to Nordhoff and Hall's *Mutiny on the Bounty Trilogy* (#11) to Caroline Alexander's *The Bounty* (#59). C. S. Forester's Hornblower books (#9), which were the spiritual descendant of Captain Frederick Marryat's oeuvre (#24), gave birth to O'Brian's Aubrey-Maturin series (#4). Upon Forester's death in 1966, his American publisher wrote O'Brian to see if he would like to try his hand at a series. The result: *Master and Commander*.

Richard Hughes's novel *In Hazard* (#19) openly borrows from "Typhoon," and Graham Greene praises Hughes for having the gumption to steal from Conrad's iconic tempest and get away with it. In *The Sea Around Us* (#32), Rachel Carson recommends Conrad's *Mirror of the Sea* (#80). Lothar-Günther Buchheim alludes to the same work in *Das Boot* (#7), as his submarine commander reads an account of a raging Conrad storm to his crew while they themselves are battling a storm in the North Atlantic.

In *Long John Silver* (#46), Bjorn Larsson tells the life story of Robert Louis Stevenson's famous bad boy in *Treasure Island* (#20), and in *The Life and Times of Horatio Hornblower* (#90), C. Northcote Parkinson chronicles the life of C. S. Forester's fictional hero, Hornblower. More recently, Gary Kinder and Robert Kurson have combined new adventures with old stories in their gripping treasure-hunting accounts *Ship of Gold in the Deep Blue Sea* (#26) and *Shadow Divers* (#64), respectively.

These wonderful books are but a few of those that connect with earlier, classic works of the sea. You will undoubtedly make many new such discoveries of your own.

The Art of the List

A BOOK LIST WITH RANKINGS, such as this one, is valuable primarily for opening eyes and starting conversations among readers. Our intention in creating such a list is to increase interest in the books and authors that have earned their way onto it.

We based our choices on a number of criteria. Readability and good storytelling, historical significance, insight into life at sea and the human experience, a gripping plot, humor, and originality all mattered.

While we often found ourselves in the difficult position of comparing apples to oranges, the mixing of the genres serves a

purpose. It introduces more possibilities, particularly for readers who tend to stick solely to either fiction or nonfiction. In order to make the list more well-rounded, we also set seemingly arbitrary parameters. For instance, for the sake of breadth and diversity, once an author made the list with one title, it was more difficult for him or her to land another book on the list. While some notable books by great authors may be absent, the list benefits from having more authors and more subjects. For the same reason, we considered a trilogy or a series as one title. Thus you will find the 20 novels of the Aubrey-Maturin series occupying one line, as you will C. S. Forester's Hornblower series and the trilogies of Golding and Nordhoff and Hall.

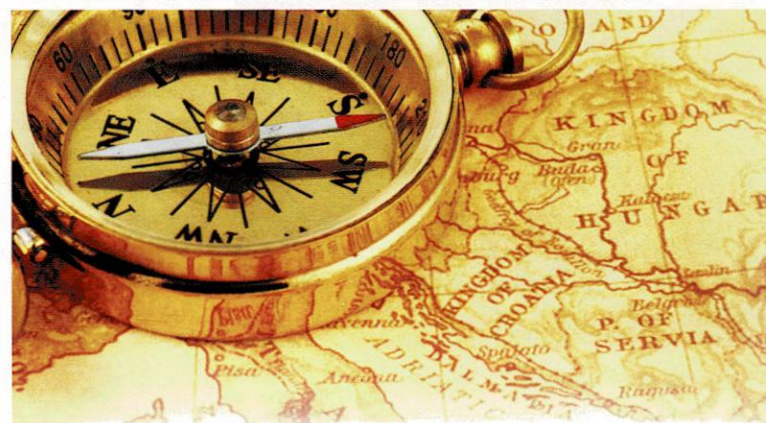
We feel that by exposing readers to a greater number of worthy authors, many of whom might otherwise be lost in the shadows of the canonized authors, we are serving the interests of readers and writers (and sailors) best. We hope that you discover many new books—and even better, many new authors whose bodies of work will reward your continued exploration.

The Contributors

A NUMBER OF SEA-LITERATURE EXPERTS made invaluable contributions to the creation of this list, namely, Ron Chambers, former director of the Naval Institute Press; Tom Cutler, senior acquisitions editor of the Naval Institute Press; Robert Foulke, professor emeritus of English at Skidmore College and editor for literature of the *Oxford Encyclopedia of Maritime History*; Greg Gibson, head of Ten Pound Island Book Co.; John Hattendorf, Ernest J. King Professor of Maritime History at the Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island, and editor in chief of the *Oxford Encyclopedia of Maritime History*; Louis Parascandola, associate professor of English at Long Island University; and Tom Philbrick, professor emeritus of English at the University of Pittsburgh.

Equally as meaningful were the contributions of sea-literature aficionados Bruce Coffey, Sr., Patrick Darby, Mike Douglas, Commander Brad Holt (USN), David Roth, and John Wigmore. Finally, the list would not have been possible without my man Friday, Bruce Coffey, Jr., whose devotion to this project was extraordinary, as is his capacity for devouring books and remembering what is in them. My hearty thanks to all. ■

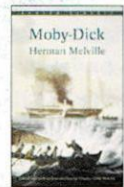
DEAN KING IS THE AWARD-WINNING AUTHOR OF THE NATIONAL BESTSELLER *SKELETONS ON THE ZAHARA: A TRUE STORY OF SURVIVAL* (LITTLE, BROWN, 2004), ABOUT THE WRECK OF THE CONNECTICUT MERCHANT BRIG *COMMERCE* ON THE WEST COAST OF AFRICA IN 1815 AND THE ENSLAVEMENT AND ESCAPE OF HER CREW. *SKELETONS* IS CURRENTLY BEING TURNED INTO A FEATURE FILM BY PAULA WEINSTEIN AND INTERMEDIA AND INTO A TWO-HOUR SPECIAL DOCUMENTARY BY THE HISTORY CHANNEL. KING IS ALSO THE AUTHOR OF *PATRICK O'BRIAN: A LIFE REVEALED*, A *DAILY TELEGRAPH* BOOK OF THE YEAR, AND OF *A SEA OF WORDS*, THE FIRST COMPANION BOOK TO PATRICK O'BRIAN'S AUBREY-MATURIN SERIES.



The 101 Best Sea Books

The date after the title is the date of first publication, or in the case of Homer, the approximate time of composition. The publisher at the end of the entry indicates the most recent or recommended edition of the book, accompanied by the date of publication if it differs from the original. When there are multiple editions but none is preferred, no publisher is listed. A book not currently in print is noted. Most books not in print can still be found in libraries—if not locally, then through interlibrary loan. Or they can be bought from bookstores specializing in used books.

2 Moby-Dick (1851) Herman Melville. The opening sentence, “Call me Ishmael”; the ship name *Pequod*; the maniacal Ahab; the tattooed



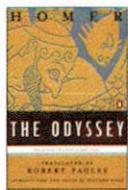
Queequeg; and the search for the great white whale—these are the touchstones of Melville’s masterpiece. But half of *Moby-Dick* documents the whaling practices of the time, what life was like aboard a New England whaler, and the details of the whaler’s prey. (Remember what *amberggris* is?) Melville wove these facts with the mythic quest to create a tale that is the Leviathan of sea literature.

3 A Conrad Argosy (1942) Joseph Conrad. A Polish-born émigré and sailor in the French and British merchant marines, Conrad used the crucible of the sea—and nature in extremis—to explore morality, courage, honor, duty, fear. He excelled in the short fiction collected here half a century after he wrote it. In “The Nigger of the *Narcissus*,” “Typhoon,” “Youth,” and “The End of the Tether,” men respond to ferocious storms and other calamities, baring their souls and revealing the lengths they will go to (and often the depths they will sink to) for



Joseph Conrad

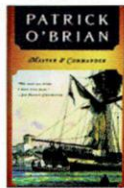
1 The Odyssey (CA. 700 BC) Homer. The battle for Troy won, Odysseus and his men sail for Ithaca, aided by Athena and opposed by Hyperion (god of the sun) and Poseidon (god the sea). The obstacles they



face—the Cyclops, the Sirens, Scylla and Charybdis—are now archetypes, the tale’s structure and themes woven into the fabric of Western civilization. Odysseus is a hero for the ages, but no matter how fearlessly he strives to reach his destination, the Ithaca he left has changed forever. This story perpetually reminds us of the irony of the voyager: often the greatest challenge he faces is returning home again.

survival. Though this book is out of print, Conrad’s short fiction of the sea is collected in a number of volumes.

4 Master and Commander and the Aubrey-Maturin series (1967–2004) Patrick O’Brian. Hailed as the best historical novels ever written, this 20-volume series follows the lives and careers of Captain Jack Aubrey and his surgeon and particular friend Stephen Maturin (who is also a natural philosopher, intelligence agent, and sometime laudanum addict). The two sail, fight, explore, play music, and pursue amours—everywhere from the Baltic to the East Indies and the South Seas. O’Brian’s descriptions of sailing and fighting a square-rigger are textbook, and his erudition and humor are legendary. He captures the culture of Nelson’s Royal Navy like no other writer. The second novel, *Post Captain*, is the seminal one of the series. The third, *H.M.S. Surprise*, is the best. Norton.



5 Kon-Tiki (1950) Thor Heyerdahl. With a crew of five, the Norwegian biologist builds and rigs a primitive raft à la pre-Columbian Indians and sets off into the deep to prove his theory that the Pacific islands were peopled from the east. Storms wash over and through the motley assembly of logs; a curious whale considers the possibilities. Sharks teem so densely that the crew fights back: they hand-feed the voracious beasts, and when the sharks turn to dive back under, momentarily

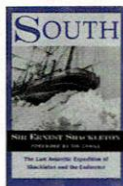
suspending their tails in the air, the sailors grab them and haul them on board to be clubbed to death. Don’t believe it? Then rent Heyerdahl’s 1952 Academy Award-winning documentary and see it with your own eyes. The 101-day ride is pure Indiana Jones at sea. Adventure Library, 1997.

6 Two Years Before the Mast (1840) Richard Henry Dana. At age 21, to cure his ailing eyes, Dana leaves Harvard on a two-year voyage to the American Pacific coast and back. He sails around the Horn, works in icy rigging in rolling seas, packs the ship’s hold with furs beside Kanaka (Hawaiian) sailors, and sees California in its primordial state. In no other sea book will you find a more clear-eyed description of the life of the common sailor in the age of sail. Penguin, 2000.

7 Das Boot: The Boat (1973) Lothar-Günther Buchheim. Life in the Atlantic theater during World War II was as harrowing for German U-boats as it was for the Allied convoys they stalked. Buchheim’s account of one great captain and his crew is as funny, sweaty, gritty, and frightening as any in the annals of sea literature. You’ll empathize with the Germans (the captain has no love for Hitler) as the hunters become the prey, lurking on the bottom of the Strait of Gibraltar, afraid to lower a toilet seat for fear of being heard, unable to keep a cigarette lit as the oxygen wanes ... Cassell, 2003.

9 Mr. Midshipman Hornblower and the Hornblower series (1937–1967)
C. S. Forester. Contrary to popular belief, Horatio Hornblower is not a real person but the fictional embodiment of Thomas Cochrane and Horatio Nelson, and perhaps sea fiction's most beloved character. The hero of schoolboys across Britain, Hornblower rises from midshipman to admiral during the Napoleonic wars (1793–1815) with just the right touch of ingenuity, courage, introspection, and zeal. He is a self-conscious and stiff-lipped Everyman whose heroics sometimes go awry and who sometimes stumbles into heroism. Forester's dozen novels and short-story collections are the heir to Marryat's oeuvre and the inspiration for O'Brian's. **Back Bay Books.**

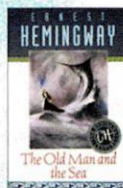
10 South: The Last Antarctic Expedition of Shackleton and the Endurance (1919)
Ernest Shackleton. Shackleton's 1914 attempt to be the first to cross the Antarctic continent overland west to east achieved much more than that—by failing. Had he and his crew of 27 men and lots of sled dogs succeeded, they would have merely adorned the record books. Instead, their story of survival, first in a ship being crushed by the ice pack, then on ice floes, and finally in boats and on a godforsaken patch of Antarctic tundra, became one of the greatest and most enduring songs of community and heroism that we possess. Shackleton's open-boat voyage and crossing of South Georgia Island will stir something deep inside you. **Lyons Press, 1998.**



11 Mutiny on the Bounty Trilogy (1932–1934)
Charles Nordhoff and James Norman Hall. Bligh's disastrous mission to transport breadfruit from Tahiti to the West Indies makes for a whopper of a sea tale. The authors, best friends and World War II aces, went to the records and to the islands to research the legend of Fletcher Christian's mutiny against

the foul-mouthed commander of HMS *Bounty*. Did life among the alluring Tahitians corrupt the sailors' hearts? Was Bligh's cruelty to his men insufferable? What forces compel men to rebel against their leader? These questions endure. When Christian lets the captain and 18 men take the ship's longboat, Bligh makes one of the great open-boat voyages of all time. The trilogy also covers the life of the mutineers in the islands. Available in one volume. **Little, Brown.**

12 The Old Man and the Sea (1952)
Ernest Hemingway. The classic parable of Man versus Fish, but it's really Man against the Sea. For the humble and appealing Cuban fisherman Santiago, who is inspired by "the great DiMaggio," the sea instructs us, in matters great and small, on how to live. This novel helped Hemingway reel in the Nobel Prize in 1954. **Scribner, 1996.**

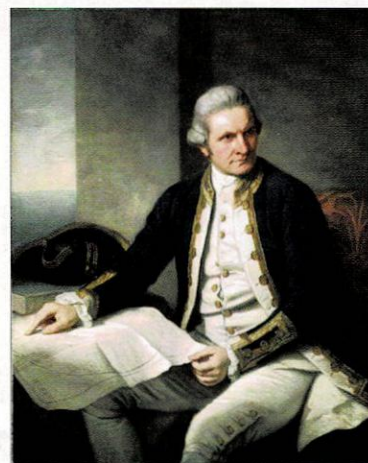


Darwin's HMS *Beagle* by Conrad Martens

13 The Voyage of the Beagle (1839)
Charles Darwin. There's a reason you can navigate Tierra del Fuego via Beagle Channel and anchor in Darwin Sound. Embarking at age 22, history's most famous naturalist spent five years circling the globe on board the *Beagle*, collecting the data from which he would produce *The Origin of the Species*. If you can't get enough of Stephen Maturin, what would be better than to spend 500 pages with Darwin investigating exotic terrain and cataloging the unknown species of the globe? **National Geographic, 2004.**

14 Robinson Crusoe (1719)
Daniel Defoe. The only survivor of a shipwreck on what Defoe calls "the island of despair," Crusoe

8 The Journals of Captain Cook (1768–1779)
James Cook. On three voyages, Cook explores the Pacific from Antarctica to Alaska. Much of his tale is well known: from his interactions with the likes of the famous botanist Joseph Banks, the notorious navigator William Bligh, and the explorer George Vancouver, to Cook's unpleasant demise in the Sandwich Islands. In three hefty tomes—perhaps the richest trove in the annals of discovery—Cook regales us on astronomy, wind patterns, native diplomacy, unknown flora, and the topography of new lands. Dip into these pages and return to a time when undiscovered worlds and peoples were still eagerly sought out by brave sailors. This abridgment of the definitive four-volume edition published by the Hakluyt Society (J. C. Beaglehole, editor) weighs in at a mere 672 pages. **Penguin, 2000.**



James Cook by Nathaniel Dance

must master the uninhabited landscape around him as well as his inner demons during a 24-year stretch. His resourcefulness in building a life and preparing for potential hostile visitors never ceases to fascinate. Crusoe is partly relieved from his loneliness by the stranded Pacific native Friday, who becomes a devoted servant. Based on a true story complete with pirates, hurricanes, and cannibals, this survival tale constitutes one of the first great English novels.

15 Lord Jim (1900) Joseph Conrad. After his ship *Patina*, loaded with pilgrims to Mecca, collides with an unseen object, Jim, the first mate, joins the captain and crew in abandoning the ship's Muslim passengers. Trying to come to terms with this cowardly act, he wanders the East and ends up the protector of a Malaysian tribe, their "Lord." But his demons drive him to self-destructive behavior. This is a classic tale of cowardice and redemption played out at sea, and in the heart and the mind.

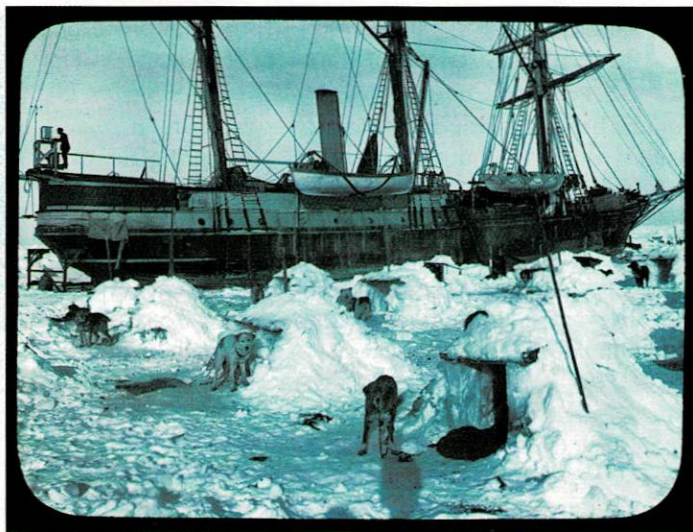
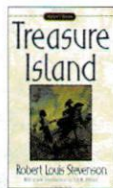
16 Sailing Alone Around the World (1900) Joshua Slocum. The book that launched a thousand boats. Slocum was the first sailor to circle the globe solo—46,000



Slocum's *Spray*

miles in three years—in his 42-foot *Spray*. He inspired a century of single-handed sailors and their accounts of lonely voyages. The best part: his trip through the Strait of Magellan, battling Fuegians all the way (he even leaves tacks on deck at night to keep them away); after he gets through once, the wind blows him off course, and he has to cross the Strait all over again.

17 Treasure Island (1883) Robert Louis Stevenson. The granddaddy of pirate tales, *Treasure Island* has charmed, frightened, and inspired youth for over a century. It's rich with unforgettable moments—the "blind" beggar Black Dog tipping the Black Spot at the Admiral Benbow Inn; Jim Hawkins eavesdropping on the pirates from an apple barrel; and marooned Ben Gunn's cries for "Cheese!" And then there's the richest, most ambivalent yet empathetic villain in the genre—Long John Silver. Do you trust him or not? Through the length of the adventure, young Jim Hawkins wrestles with this enduring question.



Shackleton's *Endurance* on ice

18 Endurance: An Epic of Polar Adventure (1931) Frank A. Worsley. Shackleton's South Pole expedition is told in the slightly more-at-ease voice of the captain, who, after all, had the boss's large shoulders to rest on and more time to reflect. During their 800-mile voyage through furious seas to save the day, Worsley sees the sun only four times but still manages to make the landing. His description of the explorers' descent from the frozen peaks of the island is—there's no other word for it—chilling. Norton, 2000.

19 In Hazard (1938) Richard Hughes. In the Caribbean, the 9,000-ton British merchant steamer *Archimedes*, manned by a crew of Chinese sailors, encounters the mother of all storms, a relentless, blinding hurricane that behaves against science and with almost human vindictiveness. Lean and spare, Hughes's novel excels in crystallizing truths about the sea, sailors, and hu-

"We had nothing to eat but dry biscuits and not a drop of fresh water to drink for three days. I cautioned the men to be careful, and not to drink too much at first, as it would be likely to make them sick, and I was the first one that did it, as I stepped on board and went into the cabin, whilst the Captain & passengers were questioning the men about the wreck, and on the cabin table was a pitcher of water, and I thought I would just take one swallow, but when I put it to my mouth I could not take it away until I had nearly emptied it of its contents."
—Charles Tyng, *Before the Wind*

manity. Capstan Press, 1998.

20 **Journal of a Cruise** (1815) **Captain David Porter.** No other work gives a truer picture of life at sea in the U.S. Navy during the War of 1812. Porter sails the frigate *Essex* around the Horn, the first U.S. Naval warship to enter the Pacific. There he disrupts the British whaling industry to such a degree that the Royal Navy dispatches a force to hunt him down, setting up a showdown at Valparaiso. Porter is so fair-minded and plainspoken, so diligent in his duty, so gentlemanly to his captive enemy, and so attentive to his crew's welfare that when the British captain (a former friend no less) fights unfairly, the result is heartbreaking. **Out of print.**



Captain David Porter

21 **Captains Courageous** (1896) **Rudyard Kipling.** Spoiled young Harvey Cheyne receives an involuntary education aboard a Grand Banks fishing schooner. He soon learns the ways of the seamen—from how to bait a hook to how to swear at rival fishermen. He is thus able to appreciate the unforgettable scene at Virgin Rock, where hundreds of fishing vessels converge after completing their runs, and where Kipling revels in the camaraderie and patois of the sea.



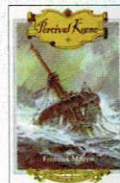
"From the onlookers came a kind or roar, almost a cheer. Not for me but for the prospect of real trouble in a tangible form. Then Hermansson was over the table in a welter of plates. . . . Before he got his great arm around me I got in one good blow that smashed his nose. I didn't think he had ever been hit before from the way he halted and grunted, but in a second we were rolling on the deck, covered in his blood. Hermansson could have won if he had not foolishly chosen to knee me between the legs. It was extremely painful and I saw red. All the humiliations that Hermansson had subjected me to in the last months came to a head. Now I really wanted to smash him."—Eric Newby, *The Last Grain Race*

22 **The Last Grain Race** (1956) **Eric Newby.** Revered for his book on the central Asian wilds, *A Short Walk in the Hindu Kush*, Newby got his start as a travel writer at sea. At age 18, he boarded the four-masted Finnish barque *Moshulu* and sailed to Australia and back to pick up grain. A first-rate writer, whose wry humor will make you guffaw, he proves to be a skilled and fearless topman in the most harrowing of seas. He's also a brawler who shows the Nordic fo'c'sle bullies the mettle of an English jack. *Lonely Planet*, 2006.

23 **The Perfect Storm: A True Story of Men Against the Sea** (1997) **Sebastian Junger.** A sensation when it was published and now a classic, Junger's work delivers the storm of the ages: mountainous seas, hurricane gusts, desperate wives waiting on shore. While he dishes out copious details of storm formation and the minutiae of deep-sea fishing, the pace never flags as we chart the course of the doomed trawler *Andrea Gale*. Junger deftly connects the fate of six Gloucester longline swordfishermen with the New England sailors who came before them—the ones you'll find in *Captains Courageous* and *In the Heart of the Sea*. *HarperCollins*, 1999.

24 **Percival Keene** (1842) **Frederick Marryat.** A sea captain who served under the great frigate commander Cochrane, Marryat wielded a pen the way a boarder wields a cutlass. Though a bit dated, the novel still offers a rollicking

voyage. Keene survives a stint on the ship of a black pirate, wages war at sea, fights a duel for his father, survives a shotgun blast from his uncle, loses his frigate on a lee shore, and barely dodges execution by Napoleon's cavalry. "I have been chuckling, and grinning, and clenching my fists, and becoming warlike," Dickens wrote Marryat after reading the book. **Out of print.**



25 **Before the Wind: The Memoir of an American Sea Captain, 1808-1833** (1999) **Charles Tyng.** Found in an attic over a century later, this account of a U.S. merchant captain's cruises between 1808 and 1833 is admirably spare, like the captain himself. Fortunately, Tyng's sentences pack as much wallop as the belaying pin he wields when reminding his surly crew of their duty. Tyng is one tough but loveably frank Yankee sailor, whether describing the necessity of kissing a native king's wives "lying on a mat, like three brown hogs, naked, their skins oiled" or discouraging a challenge to his command. *Penguin*, 2000.

26 **Ship of Gold in the Deep Blue Sea** (1998) **Gary Kinder.** In 1857, the steamship *Central America* went down with 400 passengers—and 21 tons of gold. We follow the fate of the steamer and then the exploits of treasure hunter Tommy Thompson 130 years later. Thompson locates the wreck through historical detective work, weathers the labyrin-

thine rules of international salvage law, and develops new submersible technology to enable deepwater recovery (the ship lies 8,000 feet down). This true story culminates in a series of seaborne ruses as the treasure hunters try to evade piratical competitors. Vintage, 1999.



Gold found on the Central America

27 **Admiral of the Ocean Sea: A Life of Christopher Columbus** (1942) **Samuel Eliot Morison.** A renowned Harvard historian and devout sailor, Morison retraced Columbus's route for this 1950 Pulitzer Prize-winning biography. The attention he devotes to explaining navigation is invaluable in showing Columbus's genius. If you can't get enough of the wiles of dead reckoning, seek out the original two-volume edition. Little, Brown, 1970.

28 **The Saga of the Cimba** (1939) **Richard Maury.** It's just a voyage from New York to Fiji (via the Panama Canal). But Maury's bittersweet telling is so enthusiastic and lyrically beautiful that it takes your breath away. Jonathan Raban calls it "the most eloquent prose hymn ever written to the exhilaration, the beauty, and the sheer joy of being at sea." The voyage's abrupt end will wring tears from your eyes, but as Maury notes, "We cannot hold the same poetry throughout life." McGraw-Hill, 2001.

29 **Passage to Juneau: A Sea and Its Meanings** (1999) **Jonathan Raban.** An incomparable lit-

"His back still sways as though he were riding a swing, and the tiller feels hot in his palms. The schooner forges over the sea, slower now, her masts moving pendulum like, with the precision and the majesty of a big ship's spars. An hour of lassitude is setting in, affecting the wind, the sleepy sea, the sails, and the helmsman himself. He is in a warmed loneliness, feeling an outreaching isolation without distaste, without conscious revolt. In the idle moment he hears the voices of the Shore: 'Isn't the monotony great?' In one of the lockers of the well lies a book. It is a good tale, and yet it has not been opened. Perhaps monotony is what one makes it; perhaps there is a monotony in the real sense at sea—no boredom, at least. 'You should have a radio'—the voices again. But somehow there is no desire for a wireless, no craving to be further amused, no desire to be in touch with that which was intentionally left behind." —Richard Maury, *The Saga of the Cimba*

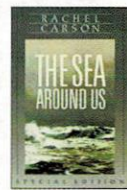
erary companion with whom to share a boat, Raban explores the Inside Passage from Seattle to Juneau and encounters Indians and all manner of serendipitous acquaintances. His reflections upon Captain George Vancouver and other predecessors are rich for being informed but never effete. How did the Polynesians navigate? With their testicles, of course, sensing variations in the sea swell through their most sensitive parts. Vintage, 2000.

30 **The Princippall Navigation, Voyages, Traffiques, and Discoveries of the English Nation** (1589–1600) **Richard Hakluyt.** At a time when maps still had lacunae labeled "here be dragons," Hakluyt published 12 volumes of the accounts of English explorations around the globe. His intent was to spread English might Elizabethan-style, to curry enthusiasm for settlement and expansion, and—oh yes—to make good on his own investments. But the accounts became an end in themselves as he recorded the tales of Portuguese and Spanish explorers, too. Some say he invented travel literature. An abridged edition, *Voyages and Discoveries* (1972), is available from Penguin.

31 **Typee** (1846) **Herman Melville.** Before he was a great novelist, Melville was a ship jumper. At age 22, he and a friend left a whaler in the Marquesas Islands and lived among the natives for four months. This, his first novel,

was based on that experience and is a classic of the sailor-in-a-strange-land genre. There is much to admire in the land of Typees, many sensual pleasures, and much, it turns out, to fear.

32 **The Sea Around Us** (1951) **Rachel Carson.** This is the centerpiece of a trilogy that Carson, a trained zoologist, wrote describing the origins, evolution, and characteristics of the sea, from topography to waves and currents to ocean minerals. It's all here and charmingly readable. Why do penguins thrive on the Galapagos Islands near the equator? Because the Humboldt Current brings icy waters and marine life from Antarctica. Oxford University Press, 1991.



33 **To the Ends of the Earth: A Sea Trilogy** (1980–89) **William Golding.** In 1813 a decrepit man-of-war sails from England to Sydney with a load of "pilgrims" and a tyrannical captain—the perfect hothouse setting for a Nobel laureate to explore the British class system. A homosexual chaplain lusts for sailors. A passenger is beaten in a pagan equator-crossing ritual. A young aristocrat wrestles with the nature of justice at sea and his desire for a young woman of dubious repute. The trilogy is chock-full of literary and operatic allusions and stunning descriptions of ship squalor. The mood is dark and the plot as cross-grained as the sea.

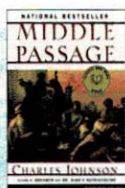
Faber and Faber, 1991.

34 Mutiny on the Bounty (1790) William Bligh. Known for expert seamanship and colorful epithets, Bligh nevertheless recounts his ill-fated voyage to transport breadfruit from Tahiti to the West Indies in unadorned words. His equanimity certainly helped him succeed in one of the most appalling open-boat voyages ever—3,600 miles on limited grog from the not-so Friendly Islands to Timor. Whatever else one might say about Bligh, he delivered 17 of his 18 faithful crew to safety, a better fate than that of the mutineers. This is Bligh in his element, before the spin. Available as *The Bounty Mutiny* from Penguin Classics.



The mutineers setting Lt. Bligh and part of the officers and crew adrift from the HMS *Bounty*, by Robert Dodd

35 Middle Passage (1990) Charles Johnson. In a story as old as Jonah, Rutherford Calhoun runs to sea to escape debts and a woman. But Calhoun is a free black, the year is 1830, and the ship is an illegal slaver. In a tale rich in symbolism (the ship is called the *Republic*) and sometimes in the grotesque (the captain is a literate, pedophile dwarf), the erstwhile confidence man somehow manages to earn the trust of the captain, the mutinous crew, and the defiant cargo. Johnson's writing is elegant and informed. Scribner, 1998.



36 By Way of Cape Horn (1930) A. J. Villiers. "Out from Wall-roo, by way of Cape Horn," the steel-sided clipper *Grace Harwar*, one of the last of her breed, sails to

England in ballast to pick up a cargo of grain. It's everything you would expect: the hazards of the Horn, disension among the crew, life in the rigging, and death overboard. Author of 25 books on his sea experiences, Villiers makes it all seem fresh on this towering 20th-century square-rigger. Out of print.

37 The Story of a Shipwrecked Sailor (1970) Gabriel García Márquez. Talk about luck. Washed off a Colombian destroyer, Luis Alejandro Velasco survives for 10 days on a cork raft with no provisions. The sun blisters him and sharks snap around him. A spectral friend keeps him sane while the current washes the raft to his native shores. And then comes the luck. Not that he is anointed a national hero—a fact that mystifies the humble sailor—but that a Bogotá newspaper assigns a future Nobel laureate to the story. The result: a lyrical rendering that captivates a nation, shuts down the paper, and immortalizes Velasco. Vintage, 1989.



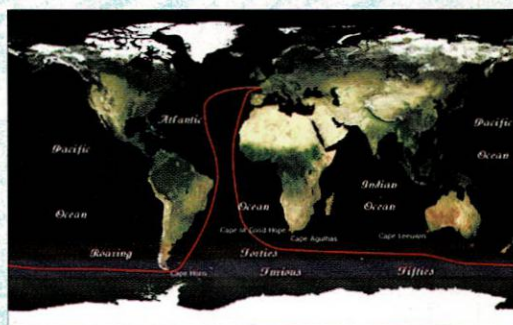
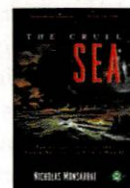
38 Godforsaken Sea: Racing the World's Most Dangerous Waters (1999) Derek Lundy. The Vendée Globe Race—from France around Antarctica (weathering all three great Capes) and back (single-handed, stopping nowhere)—is the most grueling race in the world. In 1996–97, 16 entrants sailed their 60-foot boats into the heart of the fierce Southern Ocean, surfing seas the size of apartment buildings at 28 knots in Force 10 gales. Pete Goss's attempt to rescue a capsized competitor, turning his boat around to sail upwind and find him two days away, is unforgettable. Anchor Books, 2000.

39 The Safe Guard of the Sea (1998) and The Command of the Ocean (2004) N. A. M. Rodger. The first two volumes of a planned three-volume history of the Royal Navy are sweeping and authoritative as they chart the rise of Britain's

supremacy on the sea between 660 and 1815. Rodger, a renowned naval scholar, writes with the congenial ease of a don instructing his eager class. Volume 3 is now in progress. Norton.

40 In the Heart of the Sea: The Tragedy of the Whaleship Essex (2000) Nathaniel Philbrick. An up-to-date version of the sinking of the whaleship *Essex* by a rogue whale in 1820. The story inspired authors from Melville to Edgar Allan Poe. Philbrick fills in the gaps—instructing us on the ways, mores, and economics of Nantucket whaling—and ends up with a hoary tale of men trying to survive alone in an open boat. Viking.

41 The Cruel Sea (1966) Nicholas Monsarrat. This saga of one crew's 68-month experience chronicles Great Britain's war in the Atlantic in microcosm—from the early days of World War II when Germany's U-boats were as inexperienced as the Allies' convoys to 1942, when the chance of being torpedoed exceeded 50 percent, to the turning of the tide, when the Allies' more sophisticated convoy techniques finally brought the German subs to the surface. Monsarrat deliberately reveals the shock and horror Britain's naval shepherds experienced in the Atlantic. Burford Books, 2000.



The Vendée Globe Race route (#38, *Godforsaken Sea*)

42 The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660–1783 (1890) Alfred Thayer Mahan. Mahan is regarded as the Clause-

witz of the Sea, and this is *the* book on naval power. It instructed two generations of leaders, from Theodore Roosevelt (it's why he sent the new American fleet around the world) and Kaiser Wilhelm to Winston Churchill. Mahan explains how a nation's defense depends on protecting its maritime trade and why the principles of strategy are so timeless they are "an Order of Nature." Not beach reading. **Barnes & Noble, 2004.**

43 **The Pursuit of Victory: The Life and Achievement of Horatio Nelson** (2005) **Roger Knight.** He lost an eye and an arm for his country. He had a torrid extramarital love affair and otherwise behaved scandalously. He won the sea battle that ended Napoleon's aspirations on the waves—and died while winning it. Nelson is a biographer's dream come true. With vision and stamina, Knight, a renowned Nelson scholar, emerges from the pack with a showstopper, untangling Nelson the extraordinary man from Nelson the myth. This is the new definitive statement about one of history's great figures. **Perseus.**

44 **The Long Way** (1971) **Bernard Moitessier.** The most romantic of the single-handed chroniclers, Moitessier, a Frenchman who learned to sail in Indochina, is the heir not to Slocum but to Antoine

de Saint-Exupéry, whom he reads on board and quotes from. Moitessier inspired a generation of French sailors by abandoning the 1968 race and sailing on to the east (doubling the Indian Ocean) in pursuit of his sea muse. He also pioneered a new technique for small craft to take on the big waves of the high latitudes, which has been used by racers ever since. **Sheridan House, 2003.**

46 **Long John Silver: The True and Eventful History of My Life of Liberty and Adventure as a Gentleman of Fortune and Enemy of Mankind** (1995) **Björn Larsson.** From his refuge in Madagascar, the fugitive Silver tells his tale of smuggling, slaving, and pirating with the infamous rummy Captain Flint. In this celebration of swashbuckling and paean to myth-making, the Swedish author imbues Stevenson's most fascinating character with wit, flash, and insight. Silver even smugly recounts watching the hanging of pirates at London's Execution Dock with Daniel Defoe. **Harvill Press, 1999.**

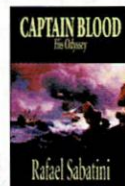


47 **Gipsy Moth Circles the World** (1967) **Francis Chichester.** The greatest single-hander since Slocum, Chichester, at age 64, sets out to round the globe in a 52-foot ketch and beat the clipper ships'

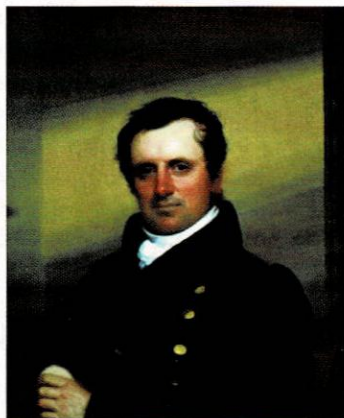
speed record. Irascible, undaunted, meticulous, he recounts everything in such detail—huge seas, capsizing and injury, mold on the garlic, and his boat's many failings—that you feel you are right there with him, solving problems one at a time, day by lonely day. **McGraw-Hill, 2001.**

48 **John Paul Jones: A Sailor's Biography** (1959) **Samuel Eliot Morison.** Named a rear admiral in the U.S. Naval Reserves for his massive history of U.S. actions in World War II, Morison bagged a Pulitzer (his second) for this biography of the great American commodore. An eccentric, swaggering Scot, Jones earned the fear and scorn of the British, who denounced him as a pirate, and the reverence of American sailors, who admired his fierceness. Morison's account of the glorious Battle off Flamborough Head—two ships locked in a death struggle—is staggering. The author also deftly chronicles the fitful birth of the U.S. Navy. **Naval Institute Press, 1999.**

49 **Captain Blood: His Odyssey** (1922) **Rafael Sabatini.** Sabatini is synonymous with "swashbuckling." This tale of Peter Blood, an Irish-born doctor and adventurer with principles, is a melodrama with shades of Lemony Snicket's sardonic humor, flashes of George MacDonald Fraser's wit, and historical fidelity à la Patrick O'Brian. The prolific Sabatini writes with the flourish suitable to his 17th-century setting as Blood is swept away in England's political maelstrom, landing on the Spanish Main to pursue his own brand of justice. Sabatini also wrote the sequel story collections *Captain Blood Returns* (1931) and *The Fortunes of Captain Blood* (1936).



45 **The Pilot** (1823) **James Fenimore Cooper.** Though his laurels rest on *The Leather-Stocking Tales*, Cooper, who was both a merchant and a naval sailor, wrote ten sea novels and a highly regarded history of the U.S. Navy. *The Pilot* was his first serious sea novel. Modeled on John Paul Jones, the story's mysterious hero leads American ships in perilous raids on the English coast. Two young lieutenants complicate matters by trying to steal away their lovers and carry them home.



James Fenimore Cooper
by John Wesley Jarvis

50 **Adrift: Seventy-Six Days Lost at Sea** (1986) **Stephen Callahan.** In 1986, during a solo crossing of the Atlantic, Callahan's 21-foot sailboat sank in a blink of the

51 **Decision at Trafalgar: The Story of the Greatest British Naval Battle of the Age of Nelson** (1959) **Dudley Pope**. Pope is better known as a writer of sea novels, but his best work might have been gripping naval histories. In this account of Admiral Nelson's crowning (and last) achievement, Pope paints a full portrait of the Royal Navy's greatest victory—from the politicians in London and Paris to the gallant officers and foremast jacks who fought their battles. C. S. Forester called the book "a remarkable achievement." Owl Books, 1999.



The Battle of Trafalgar by J. M. W. Turner

eye some 600 miles off the Canary Islands. As his survival raft drifted 1,800 miles toward Bermuda, the naked American sailor battled thirst and starvation, sharks, and tears, plus the agonizing sight of nine passing ships. His story is a model of survival against the odds. Random House, 1996.

52 **Tom Cringle's Log** (1829) **Michael Scott**. Teddy Roosevelt referred to it as "that delightful book" and Coleridge called it "excellent." The action comes fast and furious as Cringle serves in the West Indies, fights smugglers, survives as a captive of pirates, and battles yellow fever. Though occasionally overwrought, Scott's powerful and original descriptions of all things nautical make this novel a classic. Out of print.



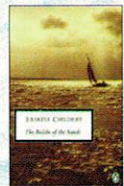
53 **The Toilers of the Sea** (1866) **Victor Hugo**. After a languid start, this epic tale of the Channel Islands erupts in a thrilling battle against the sea. As the illiterate fisherman Gilliat struggles to free a ship run aground and win the hand of his would-be love, he battles wind, wave, and sea monster, not to mention social injustice and prejudice, in an exhilarating test of will and resourcefulness. The humble Gilliat emerges as an inspiring hero. The new unabridged edition from the Modern Library, 2002, is a must.

54 **Looking for a Ship** (1990) **John McPhee**. In this exploration of the atrophying U.S. merchant marine, the author catches a lift on a South America-bound freighter, delivering and picking up such "said-to-contain" cargos as spare tires, toilet pedestals, fertilizer, and fruit. Teasing out the reluctant tales of a veteran captain and crew, McPhee turns the

tedium of the sea into riveting prose. "All through a voyage while nothing happens," the supreme stylist notes, "sailors tell stories about things that happen": storms, strife, wrecks, and piracy (the last of which occurs twice on the voyage). Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

55 **White Jacket** (1850) **Herman Melville**. If you don't yet know your way around the ships of the Age of Sail, who is a better tour guide than Herman Melville? In this novel set on board the U.S. naval frigate *Neversink* in 1850, decks and sails, spars and yards, warrant and petty officers are all clearly explained. Melville elucidates the unique nature of life in the navy. His depiction of its cruel discipline is said to have influenced Congress to ban flogging. Naval Institute Press, 1999.

56 **The Riddle of the Sands** (1903) **Erskine Childers**. Smugglers and small craft nearly always command the intricate byways and inlets of coastal waters. In this novel published on before World War I, two gentlemen of the British Foreign Office pursue a hunch that something is amiss in the sandbars and fjords of Germany's tiny coastline, between Denmark and Holland. Sure enough, the Kaiser has secretly assembled a small-craft armada in the protected waters of the Frisian Islands. Childers' novel anticipated Hitler's planned invasion decades later and helped England prepare for it. Penguin, 2000.

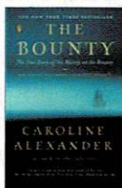


"A round shot came through the head of the mainsail, grazing the mast, and the very next instant a bushel of grape, from one of the bow guns, a 32-pound carronade, was crashed in on us a-midships. I flung down the glass, and dived through the companion into the cabin—I am not ashamed to own it; and any man who would undervalue my courage in consequence, can never, taking into consideration the peculiarities of my situation, have known the appalling sound, or infernal effect of a discharge of grape. Round shot in broadsides is a joke to it; musketry is a joke to it; but only conjure up in your imagination, a shower of iron bullets, of the size of well-grown plums, to the number of from sixty to one hundred and twenty, taking effect within a circle, not above ten feet in diameter, and that all this time there was neither honour nor glory in the case, for I was a miserable captive, and I fancy I may save myself the trouble of farther enlargement." —Michael Scott, *Tom Cringle's Log*

57 **The Caine Mutiny** (1951) **Herman Wouk**. In this Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, the inexperienced officers in the wardroom of the *Caine*, a decrepit World War II minesweeper, struggle with the psychological challenges of service under the paranoid, cowardly Captain Queeg. Queeg's arbitrary enforcement of naval discipline leads the ship's officers reluctantly down the path of conspiracy. The Pacific typhoon that triggers the mutiny is a doozy.

58 **The Sea-Hawk** (1915) **Rafael Sabatini**. Oliver Tressilian, a Cornish gent who helped defeat the Spanish Armada, is betrayed by his half brother and finds himself a galley slave. Eventually, Tressilian is freed by Barbary corsairs and adopts Islam and a roving way of life. When he returns to England, he is a wanted man wanting revenge. Norton.

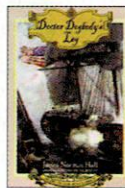
59 **The Bounty: The True Story of the Mutiny on the Bounty** (2003) **Caroline Alexander**. Decide for yourself. Did Bligh get his just desserts? Or has his history done him wrong? This recounting of the historic mutiny is the most thorough and comprehensive yet. Exploring firsthand accounts, court records, and correspondence, Alexander reopens the cases for and against Bligh, Christian, and all the other principals. Penguin.



60 **A Night to Remember** (1955) **Walter Lord**. Lord turned his boyhood obsession with the sinking of the *Titanic*, a disaster that forever changed passenger sea

travel, into this classic account. On April 14, 1912, the "unsinkable" luxury cruise ship struck an iceberg and went down within hours. Because of a lack of lifeboats, John Jacob Astor and more than a thousand others remained on board. Lord interviewed the survivors—the rich, the crew, and the lucky—who escaped in boats, and while he could not completely escape his awe of the aristocrats, he records both the highs and lows of men under extreme stress. His understated prose is just right for this real-life melodrama. Owl Books, 2005.

61 **Doctor Dogbody's Leg** (1940) **James Norman Hall**. In this send-up of the naval tall tale, Hall creates one of the most hilarious characters to sail the seas. The year is 1817. Egged on by his straight-faced, ale-quaffing friends at the Cheerful Tortoise pub in Portsmouth, Dr. F. Dogbody earnestly tells each new stranger a different and increasingly outrageous tale explaining the loss of his "larboard" leg. First it's a cutlass-wielding Indian, later a French guillotine, and then amputation after being shot by a poisoned arrow while clinging to a runaway ostrich. . . . Owl Books, 1998.



62 **The Pedro Gorino: The Adventures of a Negro Sea-Captain in Africa and on the Seven Seas in His Attempts to Found an Ethiopian Empire, An Autobiographical Narrative** (1929) **Captain Harry Dean**. On his first voyage, a three-year world tour with his merchant uncle in 1877, Dean parties with a king in Honolulu and sees a man fight a shark with a knife. In Africa, haunted by tales of

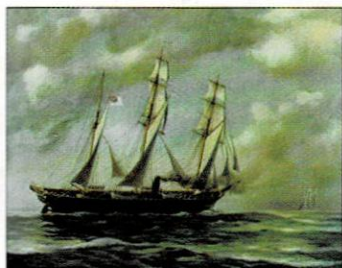
the slave trade, he decides to build a fleet for the Ethiopian race, because "a race without ships is like a man stricken and blind." In time, he buys the schooner *Pedro Gorino* and pursues his extraordinary dream for as long as he can hang on to her. Out of print.

63 **The Real McCoy** (1931) **Frederic F. Van de Water**. During Prohibition, the colorful bootlegger Bill McCoy runs spirits up the East Coast, jockeying with mobsters and the feds. All are out for easy profits; McCoy, however, proves to be an outlaw with principles and a soft spot. Most of all he loves his schooner *Arethusa*, "an aristocrat, a thoroughbred from her keel to her trucks." In this charming as-told-to memoir, there are no good guys, but mobster McCoy steals our hearts. Flat Hammock Press, 2006.

64 **Shadow Divers: The True Adventure of Two Americans Who Risked Everything to Solve One of the Last Mysteries of World War II** (2004) **Robert Kurson**. When an experienced charter captain discovers a submerged German U-boat off the coast of New Jersey, two American divers spend six years trying to identify it. Kurson, a journalist, recounts the dangerous dives (others die while exploring the wreck), the competition, and the jealousies, and recreates the lives of the German sailors aboard the mystery ship. The sleuths dive and dive again, research in national archives, and consult U-boat experts in Germany. In their quest for communion with the past, they honor the entombed sailors and uphold the German submariners' creed—*Schicksengemeinschaft* ("a community bound by fate"). Random House.

65 **The Cruise of the Falcon** (1884) **Edward F. Knight**. As eccentric an English voyage as was ever conceived. On an enticingly sunny day, two free-spirited pals walk away from their jobs in the City and imagine an endless summer at sea. They acquire a yacht and assemble a haphazard crew: two nomadic gentle-

"My desire to some day build a fleet for the Ethiopian race and thus help them to free themselves from bondage had found its immediate source in the story of the Full Moon. My knowledge that Liberia was the one bit of land in all Africa still held by its rightful heirs made me think of its importance as a base of operations. The dark continent held a new interest for me and the troubles of my race had taken on a new significance. Even at that early age I was dreaming of an Ethiopian Empire." —Captain Harry Dean, *The Pedro Gorino*



CSS Alabama

66 Two Years on the Alabama: A Firsthand Account of the Daring Exploits of the Infamous Confederate Raider (1895) Arthur Sinclair.

The fifth lieutenant tells the story of the Confederate cruiser, which plied the whole of the Atlantic (from the Cape of Good Hope to the English Channel) and sank 60 Union merchant vessels. One measure of her success: she started with 15 shipboard chronometers and ended with 75 (at some point they stopped winding them all). Sinclair's account is filled with equal parts whimsical anecdote and misty pathos (you'll weep with merchant captains as they watch their ships go down) before the *Alabama* meets her end outside Cherbourg.

men, a 15-year-old homeless boy, and a kitten. Armed with a swivel cannon (and grapeshot) and an "ample" cask of rum, the *Falcon* promptly sets sail for South America. This jauntily told true story of a two-year voyage of adventure gone awry is an armchair traveler's summer dream. **Out of print.**

67 Endurance: Shackleton's Incredible Voyage (1959) Alfred Lansing.

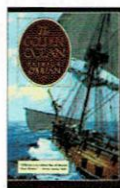
The story of the great failed expedition to the South Pole in 1914 is so moving that it merits an additional perspective. Lansing interviews members of the crew and examines their smoke and blubber-smearred diaries, broadening the take on events already so well described by Worsley (#18) and Shackleton (#10). This is not just the story of the captain or the expedition leader but of the men before the mast, battling tedium, loneliness, close quarters, and short rations before taking to the ice. **Carroll & Graf, 1999.**



68 The Golden Ocean (1956) and The Unknown Shore (1959) Patrick O'Brian.

Loosely speaking, these are prequels to the vaunted Aubrey-Maturin series. Set during Commodore Anson's famed voyage of 1740, in which he circumnavigated the globe and captured a fortune in Spanish gold while losing four of his five ships, these two books show flashes of O'Brian's greatness

and are thrilling reads in their own right. In the latter novel, the protagonists, Midshipman Jack Byron and Surgeon's Mate Tobias Barrow, survive the wreck of the *Wager*, sunk off Chile, and struggle to return home. **Norton.**



69 Spartina (1989) John Casey.

In this 1989 National Book Award winner, an embittered Rhode Islander trying to muddle through his life decides to build his own boat to maintain his self-respect. He navigates Block Island's corner bars, where he cuts deals to realize his dream, and even makes a harrowing drug-smuggling run in the salt marshes. But he's really just like you and me—after the local girl. **Vintage, 1998.**

70 The Cruise of the Nona (1925) Hilaire Belloc.

A prolific essayist and poet, Belloc loved to sail. In 1924, he cruised England's coastal waters—from Holyhead (in St. George's Channel) to The Wash (in the North Sea)—in a small yacht, allowing the sea to rejuvenate and inspire him. "The sea has taken me to itself whenever I sought it and has given me relief from men," he writes. "The sea provides visions, darkneses, revelations." Belloc muses profoundly about his affinity for the sea and digresses pleasingly on history, politics, and religion. **Out of print.**

71 The Silent World (1953) Jacques Cousteau.

The TV shows made it all look so easy. Read today, this book reminds us that Cousteau, a French naval officer, and his fellow early scuba divers really were exploring an unknown world in experimental gear. Under the watchful eyes of German occupiers, their spirit remained indomitable as they tested the "aqualung" and expanded our universe in miraculous ways. **National Geographic, 2004.**

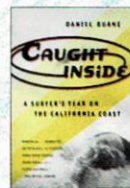


72 Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea (1870) Jules Verne.

In the age of the lowly *Hunley*, the visionary French author conceived of the *Nautilus*, a deluxe, narwhal-horned, sci-fi cruiser of the ocean floor. Captain Nemo takes his misbegotten guests—the scientist Pierre Aronnax, his man Conseil, and harpooner Ned Land—on a zany voyage around the world. They battle a giant squid, joust with a pod of sperm whales, fend off crushing ice pack at the South Pole, and endure hellish seas. Along the way, they discover Atlantis and their captain's eccentricities. **Restored and annotated edition, Naval Institute Press, 1993.**

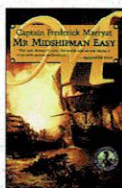
73 Caught Inside: A Surfer's Year on the California Coast (1996) Daniel Duane.

In Duane's words, a surfboard provides "a way of seeing not just the shapes and moods of the waves but the very life" of the sea. Duane takes a year off from college to surf the waters of Monterey Bay, but he is no slacker. He quotes from Cook and Dana, discourses on wave formation and sharks, and reveals the joys of surfing via locals. From his board, Duane sees California afresh and paints a sublime portrait of Santa Cruz's sea and coastal life. **North Point Press.**



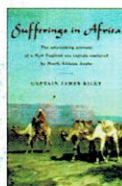
74 Mr. Midshipman Easy (1836) **Frederick Marryat.** In the grips of his father's over-the-top egalitarian philosophy, the naive young gentleman

Jack Easy enters the midshipmen's berth in his Majesty's sloop *Harpy*. This is the Captain's most popular novel, and as always, the action comes fast and furious—gales, broadsides, ruses de guerre, and French prisons. The adventures are thick with social satire, naval-reform politics, and the pursuit of love and friendship.



75 Sufferings in Africa: The Astonishing Account of a New England Sea Captain Enslaved by North African Arabs (1817)

Captain James Riley. The true story of the wreck of a Connecticut merchant brig off the west coast of Africa. The crew of 12 is captured and enslaved by desert nomads. Half the crew perishes, but Captain Riley convinces Arab trader Sidi Hamet to escort him 800 miles across the Sahara to the port of Essaouira, where he can be ransomed. The crew's ordeal is a brutal tale of death, suffering, and slavery on the burning sands. Riley ultimately saves himself and some of the men

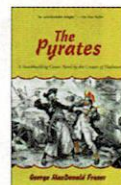


through the bond he forges with Hamet. Abraham Lincoln named this memoir a favorite of his youth. **Lyons Press, 2000.**

76 The Venturesome Voyages of Captain Voss (1913) **John Claus Voss.** After a Canadian journalist asks Voss if he can round the globe in a vessel smaller than Slocum's *Spray*, the captain converts a 38-foot, cedar dugout into a three-masted sailboat. He takes the journalist with him. Short and tough—and a masterful sailor—Voss cruises the South Pacific islands, Australia, and New Zealand, where he proves to be part showman, part huckster, an expert witness, a semi-reliable mailman, and one hell of a raconteur. The ride on the *Tilikum* ("Friend") is so rough that every new mate becomes violently seasick. One disappears overboard, a stigma that Voss never fully recovers from on his otherwise triumphant 1901–1904 voyage. **Available as 40,000 Miles in a Canoe, from McGraw-Hill, 2001.**

77 The Pyrates: A Swashbuckling Comic Novel by the Creator of Flashman (1983) **George MacDonald Fraser.** The author of the inimitable überarch Flashman series sends up the pirate genre, as the all-too-dashing and circumspect Royal Navy Captain Ben Avery, bound for

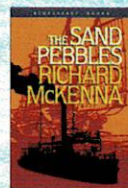
Madagascar with a priceless crown, falls into the hands of pirates. Avery is marooned on a sandbar, while the voluptuous Vanity, an admiral's daughter and passenger with whom he has fallen in love, is sold into slavery. Avery must return to save the day and the damsel against a cast of scurvy characters. All quite silly and hilarious. **Lyons Press, 2003.**



78 The Strange Last Voyage of Donald Crowhurst (1970) **Nicholas Tomalin and Ron Hall.**

In 1968, nine sailors leave Europe on the first nonstop, single-handed, round-the-world boat race. While Bernard Moitessier sails off into the great yonder in pursuit of his muse and Robert Knox-Johnston claims the crown, a third sailor steals the show. Found calmly adrift, the trimaran *Teignmouth Electron* seems normal, except for one thing: she is unoccupied. Gone without a trace is her skipper, Donald Crowhurst, an eccentric who after 240 days at sea had appeared to be the frontrunner. Two journalists discover a failed journey and a wake of deceit—but no body. As with the *Mary Celeste*, this ghost story will haunt sailors forever. **McGraw-Hill, 1995.**

79 The Sand Pebbles (1962) **Richard McKenna.** In this anomalous story, the Sand Pebbles are actually the crew of the *San Pablo*, an antiquated U.S. Navy gunboat stationed up the Yangtze River in tumultuous 1920s China. The isolated crew has adapted to its surroundings in undisciplined ways.



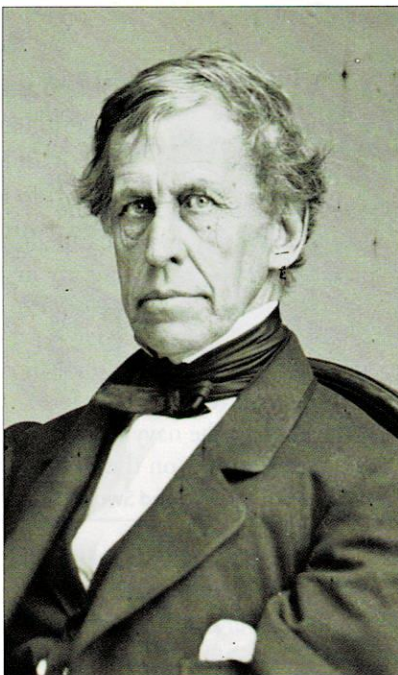
When newcomer Engineer Jack Holman, whose only friends seem to be the engines he nurses, joins the crew, he faces crises in a foreign land. Like *The Heart of Darkness*, this novel reminds us just how strange it is to be an unwanted guest an ocean away from home. **Naval Institute Press, 2000.**

"We had just got the men stationed at the braces

for hauling off, as the man at helm cried 'ten o'clock.' Our try-sail boom was on the starboard side, but ready for jibing; the helm was put to port, dreaming of no danger near. I had been on deck all the evening myself; the vessel was running at the rate of nine or ten knots, with a very strong breeze, and high sea, when the main boom was jibed over, and I at that instant heard a roaring; the yards were braced up—all hands were called. I imagined at first it was a squall, and was near ordering the sails to be lowered down; but I then discovered breakers foaming at a most dreadful rate under our lee. Hope for a moment flattered me that we could fetch off still, as there were no breakers in view ahead: the anchors were made ready; but these hopes vanished in an instant, as the vessel was carried by a current and a sea directly towards the breakers, and she struck! We let go the best bower anchor; all sails were taken in as fast as possible: surge after surge came thundering on, and drove her in spite of anchors, partly with her head on shore. She struck with such violence as to start every man from the deck. . . . There was no possibility of saving her . . . she must very soon bilge and fill with water." —James Riley, *Sufferings in Africa*

82 *Sea of Glory: America's Voyage of Discovery, the U.S. Exploring Expedition, 1838-1842* (2003) **Nathaniel Philbrick.**

Struggling to bear a mercurial captain is one of the enduring themes of sea literature (think Bligh and Queeg). Add to that list Charles Wilkes, a self-described martinet who commanded six ships and 346 men on an 1838 U.S. expedition to chart the Southern Ocean and the Pacific Northwest. The struggles of his officers form the psychological backdrop to this tale of physical endurance. Along the way, the Exploring Expedition does manage to chart 1,500 miles of Antarctic coast and return with the collection that would trigger the founding of the Smithsonian Institution. **Penguin, 2004.**

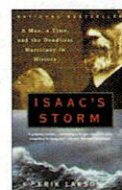


Charles Wilkes

ship and three heavily armed criminals whom they rescue at sea. The mysterious Dr. Caspary, leader of a trio that includes a psychopath and his dim, giant brother, engages Captain Freytag, a man haunted by his World War II past, in a test of wills. Gamesmanship deteriorates into violence. Lenz's dark and disturbing story was made into a film in 1986, starring Robert Duvall and Klaus Maria Brandauer. **Out of print.**

84 *Isaac's Storm: A Man, a Time, and the Deadliest Hurricane in History* (2000) **Erik Larson.**

The hurricane that struck Galveston, Texas, in 1900 was one of the worst natural disasters in U.S. history. Through the reports of meteorologist Isaac Cline, Larson tells the story of what happens when the sea suddenly envelops a city. The tidal surge of four feet turns the low-lying town into a bay and causes horrific suffering. Larson augments the account with modern hurricane science and vividly reconstructs an American tragedy that claimed more than 6,000 lives. **Vintage.**



80 *The Mirror of the Sea* (1906) **Joseph Conrad.** Fifteen essays that amount to a metaphorical meditation and manifesto on the life of the sailor. How does man fare against the sea? Writes Conrad: "All the tempestuous passions of mankind's young days, the love of loot and the love of glory, the love of adventure and the love of danger, with the great love of the unknown and vast dreams of dominion and power, have passed like images reflected from a mirror, leaving no record upon the mysterious face of the sea." **Various publishers.**

81 *The Long Ships: A Saga of the Viking Age* (1954) **Frans G. Bengtsson.** Still the king of books about Vikings, *The Long Ships*, translated from the Swedish, chronicles the Viking conquests from 980 to 1010 through the fictional Red Orme (Snake), who is kidnapped by his own kind, ends up a galley slave in the Mediterranean, a mercenary, and a raider. He attempts to settle down but then heads off again on a quest for gold. As everybody knows, the Vikings liked to row and sail and fight. That's what they do in this action-packed epic, deftly done—for a book

about Vikings. **HarperCollins, 1984.**

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83 *The Lightship* (1960) **Siegfried Lenz.** Translated from the German, this taut novel follows a two-day standoff in the Baltic between the crew of a stationary light-

85 *Under the Black Flag: The Romance and the Reality of Life Among the Pirates* (1995)

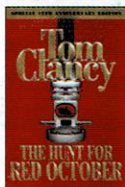
David Cordingly. Want the last word on pirates? Cordingly's exhaustive compendium recounts the exploits of the most famous buccaneers, such as Captain Morgan and Blackbeard;

explores the sources for *Treasure Island*; and dispels commonly held myths about the pirates' code. If you want the first word, find Cordingly's new edition of Captain Charles Johnson's *A General History of the Robberies and Murders of the Most Notorious Pyrates* (1724), the fount of tales of Captain Kidd, Mary Read, and Anne Bonny. **Harvest Books, 1997.**



86 Mr. Roberts (1948) **Thomas Heggen.** Best known as the comic movie starring Henry Fonda, James Cagney, and Jack Lemon, this novel (also a play) is both hilarious and poignant. Set in the South Pacific late in World War II on board the cargo ship *USS Reluctant*, the story captures the tedium, the petty politics, and the absurdities of shipboard life, where often a fine line exists between hijinks and felonies. **Naval Institute Press, 1992.**

87 The Hunt for Red October (1984) **Tom Clancy.** Clancy's first novel isn't just an impeccably plotted Cold War submarine thriller; it also established the genre of the military techno-thriller. (Why do you think it was published by the Naval Institute Press?) Never has learning about the minutiae of SONAR and two dozen other arcane subjects been so compelling—or so much fun. **Berkley, 1999.**



88 The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket (1838) **Edgar Allan Poe.** The master of the macabre seems to cram all he can into his first full-length work—about a sea voyage that includes mutiny, shipwreck, cannibalism, and natives in Antarctica. Throughout the novel, Poe revels in the gruesome—from men eating barnacles on an overturned hull to a seagull pecking flesh from a corpse navigating a ghost ship. So popular was the book in its day that it inspired a sequel from Jules Verne, *The Sphinx of the Ice Fields*.

Penguin, 1999.

89 The Black Ship (1963) **Dudley Pope.** A veteran of the Battle of the Atlantic and a merchant mariner, Pope tells the events of the 1797 mutiny of the *Hermione* under the despotic captain Hugh Pigot, the bloodiest mutiny in Royal Navy history. After this hellish episode in the Caribbean, a daring recapture of the frigate by *HMS Surprise*, also rendered here by Pope, partially redeems the navy's honor. British morale hinges on these highly emotional events. **Pen and Sword, 2003.**

90 The Life and Times of Horatio Hornblower: A Biography of C. S. Forester's Famous Naval Hero (1970) **C. Northcote Parkinson.** So authentic is this pseudobiography of C. S. Forester's fictional naval captain and so straight-faced the author—a British economics professor who, incidentally, invented Murphy's Law—that one reviewer, a naval officer no less, thought it was the biography of a historical figure. Whether you've read the Hornblower series or not, this is an entertaining wrinkle in the annals of seafaring tales. **McBooks, 2005.**

92 Over the Edge of the World: Magellan's Terrifying Circumnavigation of the Globe (2003) **Laurence Bergreen.** In 1519, Magellan leaves Spain to seek out a western

route to the Spice Islands. He quells a high-level mutiny, then brilliantly navigates the glacial Tierra del Fuego strait that now bears his name. (How? By tasting the seawater—fresh water leading inland, salty water to the Pacific.) He comes to grief in the Philippines after violating two cardinal sins of first contact: he takes a side in an interisland quarrel and converts the natives to his religion. In the end, only one of five ships and 18 of 260 men straggle back to Spain. Still, they circumnavigated the globe, a feat not repeated for half a century. **Harper Perennial.**

93 Lord Cochrane: Seaman, Radical, Liberator (1947) **Christopher Lloyd.** Cochrane was to the single-ship action what Nelson was to fleet battle—courageous, daring, ingenious. Marryat served under Cochrane, and O'Brian's Aubrey was in part inspired by him. A Royal Naval College don, Lloyd paints a concise and engaging portrait that suits Cochrane, a master of the ruse de guerre who never backed down from a fight. **Out of print.**

94 Fastnet, Force 10: The Deadliest Storm in the History of Modern Sailing (1979) **John Rousmaniere.** The first racing book to chronicle the tragedy that ensues

91 Run Silent, Run Deep (1955) **Edward L. Beach.** Written by a captain in the U.S. Navy, this is the first famous submarine novel. Set during World War II, an American sub chases her Japanese counterpart, a cruiser under a wily Japanese commander. It turns out he is using his destroyer in tandem with a Japanese U-boat and Q-ship (an armed ship disguised as a merchant or fishing vessel and sometimes used as bait). The first of a trilogy, Beach's novel set the bar for Buchheim and Clancy. **Cassell, 2003.**



Edward L. Beach

100 Island of the Blue Dolphins (1964) Scott O'Dell.

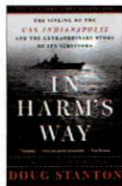
This award-winning children's book tells the true story of an Indian girl marooned on an island off California. At the mercy of the elements and the sea that surrounds her, Karana battles wild dogs, hunts sea elephants, explores a cave of her ancestors in a canoe, and weathers a tsunami. Succumb to the spare beauty of O'Dell's prose and take heed of the patience and perseverance Karana musters to survive.



A photograph of San Nicolas Island, where Juana Maria spent 18 years alone before she was discovered in 1853. Her story is the basis of *Island of the Blue Dolphins*.

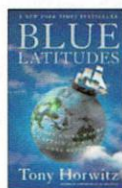
when dozens of racers are caught unawares in hurricane gales. In 1978, 303 boats sail from the Isle of Wight to Fastnet Lighthouse and back. Fifteen racers die. Rousmaniere is at his best when he humanely weighs and balances the blame that is tossed around all too easily, speaking ultimately to the noble spirit of all sailors. Norton, 2000.

95 In Harm's Way: The Sinking of the USS Indianapolis and the Extraordinary Story of Its Survivors (2003) Doug Stanton. Using first-hand accounts, Stanton tells the true story of one of the worst disasters in U.S. naval history. After delivering the uranium that would end World War II to Guam, the USS *Indianapolis* sails to Leyte. Despite assurances of safe waters, she takes a Japanese torpedo and sinks so fast that she can transmit only one SOS. Tragically, because the enemy habitually sends out false SOSs, naval operators ignore unconfirmed signals. The loss of the *Indianapolis* goes unnoticed for days, and sharks and the elements whittle the number of survivors from 1,200 to 300 men. Owl Books.



96 Blue Latitudes: Boldly Going Where Captain Cook Has Gone Before (2002) Tony Horwitz. Don't feel like wading through the

hundreds of pages of Cook's journals yourself? Grab a beer and do it with journalist Tony Horwitz. He's the perfect guide, briskly sharing all the important and juicy bits of Cook's adventures while following in his wake (and footsteps) from Alaska to Australia. The ultimate in armchair traveling. Picador.



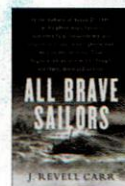
97 Delilah: A Novel about a U.S. Navy Destroyer and the Epic Struggles of Her Crew (1941) Marcus Goodrich. By the author of the original treatment of *It's a Wonderful Life*, a navy veteran of World Wars I and II, and—if that's not enough—the husband (briefly) of Olivia De Havilland, this novel chronicles the life of the eponymous U.S. Navy destroyer in the Philippines just prior to World War I. This complex work, sometimes dark, sometimes humorous, driven by the relationships of the crew, builds to a riveting finale. It was meant to have a sequel, but the nearly completed manuscript seems to have been lost. Lyons Press, 2000.



98 The Sea Wolf (1904) Jack London. Sealer captain Wolf Larsen is a bold vision of man's true nature run amok. When Humphrey von Weydon finds his way

on board Larson's sealer *Ghost*, bound for the Bering Strait, the two men become entangled in a struggle for von Weydon's soul. Eventually, stranded on an Alaskan rookery, they battle for command of the *Ghost* and control of their fates.

99 All Brave Sailors: The Sinking of the Anglo Saxon, 1940 (2004) J. Revell Carr. Carr chronicles the abrupt sinking of the 426-foot British merchant vessel *Anglo-Saxon* by the German raider *Widder*, a converted merchant ship, in 1940. Only seven men make it into a jolly boat, where two survive 70 days at sea. The *Widder's* captain, Hellmuth von Ruckteshell, was charged with war crimes during both world wars for ignoring survivors at sea. Simon & Schuster.



101 Jaws (1974) Peter Benchley. The book that sparked Steven Spielberg's filmmaking career is still a terrific read. Essentially a retelling of Melville's *Moby-Dick*, Benchley's novel pits the town of Amity against a great white shark, and the 5,000-pound shark steals the show. Benchley's in-depth research on the fish that never sleeps is as terrifying as it is captivating. ■

