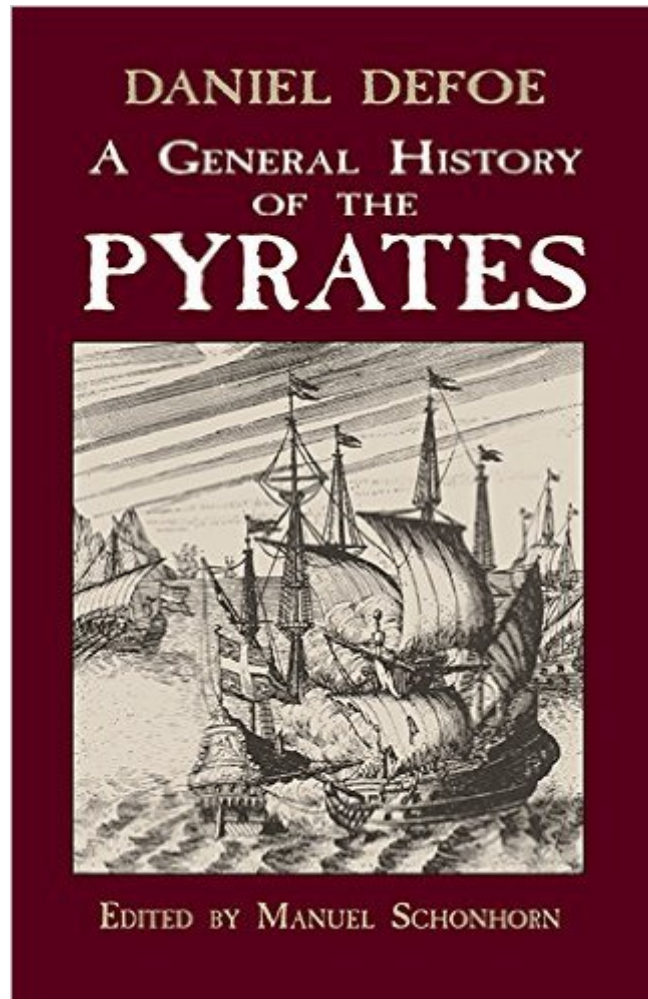


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A General History Of The Pyrates (Dover Maritime)



Synopsis

Immensely readable history by the author of Robinson Crusoe incorporates the author's celebrated flair for journalistic detail, and represents the major source of information about piracy in the early 18th century. Defoe recounts the daring and bloody deeds of such outlaws as Edward Teach (alias Blackbeard), Captain Kidd, Mary Read, Anne Bonny, many others.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is the most complete and authoritative version of the General History that you'll be able to find. It contains both Volume 1 and Volume 2 and is superbly edited with extensive footnotes and a graceful treatment of the language. It preserves the eighteenth-century feel while making some subtle changes in spelling and punctuation to make it more comprehensive to us. Also, Volume 2 originally contained an appendix with corrections and additions to the biographies contained in Volume 1; this edition places those sections with the chapters in Volume 1 to which they correspond, and indicates clearly when this has been done. A word of warning: Defoe sometimes takes off on long tangents that digress quite far from the subject at hand, and these sections have not been omitted; but as a reader I personally appreciate the editor letting me decide which parts I do or do not wish to read. As a point of interest, I originally sought out this edition because it's the same one that David Cordingly used to write his excellent book *Under the Black Flag*. I highly recommend it for anyone seriously interested in piratology, history or literature.

Pirates, when we think of them we think of good for nothing brutes who plagued the seas and made their prisoners walk the plank, in fact it's far from the truth. First of all let me point out that the plank walking is a myth and that most pirates were not blood thirsty murderers. Daniel DeFoe wrote an excellent book, he gives you enough background on the person or place, before you read about him or it. Pirates for the most part were sailors who had lost their jobs after the big wars, and turned to robbing the great ships like the Great Monghol's vessels of silver, gold, fabrics, spices and goods. All the captains especially Blackbeard (yes there really was a blackbeard) have great and colorful personalities and backgrounds. My favorite story in here would have to be the sad story of Cpt. Thomas Tew, one of the bravest pirates ever, why should I tell you his story, read it for yourself, it's tragic and inspiring a great read. For an interesting piece of work, filled with a lot of information and short stories look no further than Daniel Defoe's: A General history of pirates.

While excellent, this book is the same volume also published under the name of Captain Johnson, sold in a different edition, with a different cover, etc. I was in a rush to read several authentic pirate stories, and bought both books. Don't make the mistake I did!

This book contains short biographies of pirates. It was first published in 1724, but these stories read fast despite the antiquated language. The biographies focus on the most interesting parts of each pirate's life instead of dry facts. There are plenty of more "serious" facts here, but the biography goes into more detail just when the reader is getting curious. So we are told any interesting anecdotes about each pirate in the course of reading their biographies. For example the biography of Anne Bonny tells about her life and exploits as a pirate. But we also are treated to a description of the bedroom farce by which Anne's mother, a household servant, was discovered by the lady of the house to be having an affair with the man of the house. She caught the maid accidentally because of a prank involving spoons hidden in the bed sheets. This event doesn't take place during Anne's life. (It involves her conception, and leads into why her father left for the New World.) But really we are told about it because it is a good entertaining story. So this book is highly readable and entertaining despite the language. This is a good book for you if you are into pirates, history, or the adventure genre (this book is factual, but it inspired many fictions).

"Under the Black Flag", and all the rest of the pirate history books used this one as their basic reference. It's a lot of material, and took me several months to read as I'd read single captain's

history before turning the lights out for the night. The stories are not watered down, there is enough murder, mayhem, robbery, thuggery, and general bad treatment of one person against another to fill years of "Pirates of the XXXX" movies with Johnny Depp scripts. I did like this book, even though after about the 200th captain's adventure its sort of repetitive narrative. The other interesting thing was that amid this culture of mayhem there was a strong democratic theme. Captains and bosun's are elected positions on most of the boats! Colonies elect a "governor", they have jury trials to settle disputes and yet the economy revolves around ripping off passing merchant boats. As for whether "Captain Johnson" or "Daniel Defoe" wrote the text, I can't tell. But it doesn't matter, there are no copyright royalties to be paid to the author at this point. The stories are just as good. Anyone who is really interested in Pirates would enjoy this book. (Although I got my copy from the public library.) I especially found the history of Annie Bonny and Mary Reed to be absolute soap opera story. History is stranger than fiction. (Oh and read Richard Zack's book on Captain Kidd, Defoe got it wrong, and Zack's found the original documents to explain what really happened.) Zack's book is easier to read too.

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