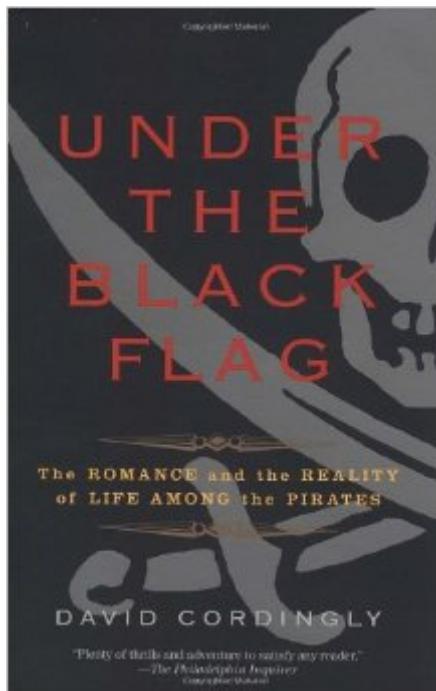


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Under The Black Flag: The Romance And The Reality Of Life Among The Pirates



Synopsis

For this rousing, revisionist history, the former head of exhibitions at England's National Maritime Museum has combed original documents and records to produce a most authoritative and definitive account of piracy's "Golden Age." As he explodes many accepted myths (i.e. "walking the plank" is pure fiction), Cordingly replaces them with a truth that is more complex and often bloodier. 16 pp. of photos. Maps. From the Hardcover edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I liked this one. It is more of an overview of the the history of piracy and of the period than the in depth study for which I hoped, but it is presented in no nonsense manner with many references to resources should you wish to go farther into any of the myriad of topics the David Cordingly introduces. His writing style is in the more popular vein (for an historian) and he supplies many anecdotes and popular myths about pirates in general and some specific characters as well. In places he seems to draw heavily on "A General History of the Robberies and Murders of the most Notorious Pirates" by Defoe or Johnson (which ever you prefer). For people not willing to wade through Defoe's (or Johnson's) style - it is a good synopsis of those chapters, even if the common conceptions of the time have been removed. He over states his point that Hollywood, Stevenson and others have romanticized the pirate life and proceeds to give the reader a quick dose of reality. However, I think for people approaching this book with the idea it is history, it is an overdose. There are too many regressions and comparisons to popular novels and movies. While the title implies such comparisons - they are rather obvious ones. My main critique of this book is similar to others I

have seen here. It was to much and too little. If you want an introduction to the history of piracy and some of the better known pirates - then this book is perfect. If you want an in depth study of the lives or even of the marauding of specific pirates sprinkled with eye witness accounts and embroidered in the telling - read Johnson (or Defoe) instead. But the book holds many gems of information that may not be found in other histories and analyses. I just wish that some topics had been better developed.

I liked David Cordingly's "Under the Black Flag: the Romance and the Reality of Life Among the Pirates." The sea terms glossary was useful: I didn't know that "pink" and "snow" were types of sailing ships. I like my books to have a bibliography, a table of contents, a list of illustrations, and be indexed so that I can find citations rapidly-Cordingly also put in four appendixes, documents supporting his thesis. Pirates have been around since before recorded history. Pirates prey on society-they cannot exist without prey. Pirates are still active today-especially in the Far East. Cordingly mentions them (publication date is 1995)-my personal experience is that pirates are still a problem for security professionals."Under the Black Flag" explores both fact and fiction. The romantic image is examined through books, plays, and movies. Captain Hook from "Peter Pan" and Long John Silver from "Treasure Island" are said to be the two most famous pirates. The historical pirates included the Chinese pirate queen Cheng Shih, Molly Read, Anne Bonny, Henry Morgan, Blackbeard, Captain Kidd, and Sir Frances Drake-to name the most notorious and famous. Some, such as Drake, became national heroes and were made legitimate. Others, such as Captain Kidd, were railroaded. The Blackbeards earned every bit of notoriety. How did the pirates live-and die? My "day job" is working as a supply technician for the Nevada Army National Guard, and while on active duty I was an Army intelligence analyst-so details on how the pirate ships were kept in good repair and provisioned were right up my alley. Most pirate loot was hardware, food, sail cloth, and other such items that kept their ship afloat and their crews alive (if not healthy).

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