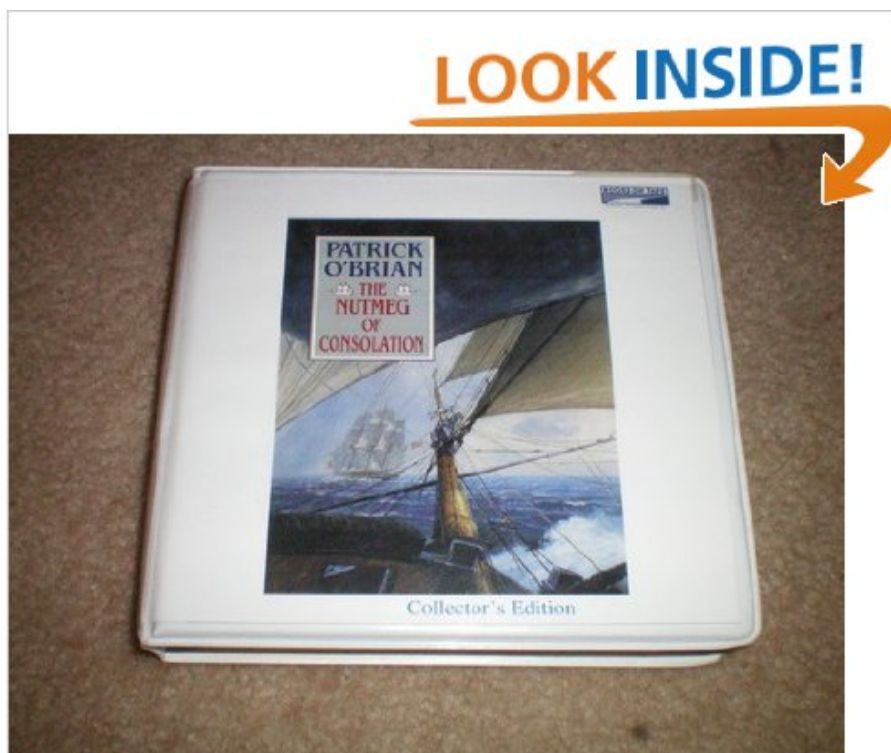


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The Nutmeg Of Consolation



Synopsis

Shipwrecked on a remote island, Captain Jack Aubrey and the crew of the *Diane* fashion a schooner from the wreck, only to have their makeshift vessel burned in an attack by Malay pirates. Their escape from this predicament is one that only the ingenuity of Patrick O’Brian or Stephen Maturin could devise. The dreadful penal colony in New South Wales, harrowingly described, is the backdrop to a diplomatic crisis provoked by Maturin’s Irish temper and to a near-fatal encounter with the wildlife of the Australian outback. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Book Information

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Authors, A-Z > (O) > O’Brian, Patrick #156932 inÂ Books > Literature & Fiction > Contemporary

Customer Reviews

Some critics have referred to the Aubrey/Maturin books as one long novel united not only by their historical setting but also by the central plot element of the Aubrey/Maturin friendship. Having read these fine books over a period of several years, I decided to evaluate their cumulative integrity by reading them consecutively in order of publication over a period of a few weeks. This turned out to be a rewarding enterprise. For readers unfamiliar with these books, they describe the experiences of a Royal Navy officer and his close friend and traveling companion, a naval surgeon. The experiences cover a broad swath of the Napoleonic Wars and virtually the whole globe. Rereading all the books confirmed that O’Brian is a superb writer and that his ability to evoke the past is outstanding. O’Brian has numerous gifts as a writer. He is the master of the long, careful description, and the short, telling episode. His ability to construct ingenious but creditable plots is first-rate, probably because he based much of the action of his books on actual events. For example, some of the episodes of Jack Aubrey’s career are based on the life of the famous frigate

captain, Lord Cochrane. O'Brian excels also in his depiction of characters. His ability to develop psychologically creditable characters through a combination of dialogue, comments by other characters, and description is tremendous. O'Brien's interest in psychology went well beyond normal character development, some books contain excellent case studies of anxiety, depression, and mania. Reading O'Brien gives vivid view of the early 19th century. The historian Bernard Bailyn, writing of colonial America, stated once that the 18th century world was not only pre-industrial but also pre-humanitarian (paraphrase).

Although *THE THIRTEEN GUN SALUTE* was one of the least eventful books in the entire Aubrey-Maturin series, *THE NUTMEG OF CONSOLATION* is one of the most action filled. The books in the series are not, in the end, really about action, but it nonetheless can be a lot of fun when it takes place. The major incident in the previous novel had been the wrecking of the *Diane* on uncharted rocks near a remote island and the start of this one has the surviving crew members working hard to build a smaller vessel out of the remains of the *Diane* to sail to the nearest port. Instead, they find themselves under attack by pirates, led by a memorable female who briefly and seemingly befriends Maturin. Later, after being rescued by a Chinaman who comes to the island looking for the makings of birds nest soup, Jack and his crew take charge of the refitting of a Dutch vessel that had been sunk and salvaged that Jack renames *The Nutmeg of Consolation*. After a long chase of a French privateer and the reuniting with the *Surprise*, the rest of the novel focuses on a trip to Botany Bay, the novel ending suddenly after a near fatal encounter by Stephen with a male duckbilled platypus. All in all, it is an exceptionally satisfying novel, the only possible complaint that there is little time for the political or interpersonal interplay so fascinating in the other novels. Also, O'Brian, who delights in being not only a first-rate storyteller but a teacher and instructor, gets to do less of the latter here. Still, I can't imagine anyone failing to be thoroughly entertained by this fine novel. Some reviewers complain that at this point in the series, it is beginning to get a little tired.

"*The Nutmeg of Consolation*" is the fourteenth volume in the famed Aubrey-Maturin series. Even by Patrick O'Brian's standards, this is a particularly well crafted tale, wonderfully displaying the author's masterly narrative technique. I enjoyed it tremendously! The story begins where "*The Thirteen-Gun Salute*" ended, on an uninhabited island in the South China Sea. Engaged in building a schooner after having suffered shipwreck during a typhoon, HMS *Diane*'s survivors - including Jack Aubrey and Stephen Maturin - soon find themselves under attack by Malay pirates. Once this scare is over, a stroke of luck brings them to Batavia from where Jack puts to sea in command of a Dutch ship

renamed "Nutmeg of Consolation". Once more it is a French frigate our friends are after, and the ensuing chase is yet another testimony to Patrick O'Brian's phenomenal skill of describing a sea action in the age of sail. Reunited with the "Surprise", the party finally reaches Sydney, site of the penal settlements of New South Wales. There, Stephen not only succeeds in finding Padeen, his former manservant who was deported to New South Wales, but he is also provoked into a duel, acquires a boomerang and has his first encounter with a platypus. It is indeed an eventful stopover in Down Under! There certainly is a lot of action in "The Nutmeg of Consolation", settings change quickly and along the way Jack and Stephen find themselves in unprecedented situations. And yet, at the same time, there is more wit and irony in this book than in many of the volumes written beforehand.

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