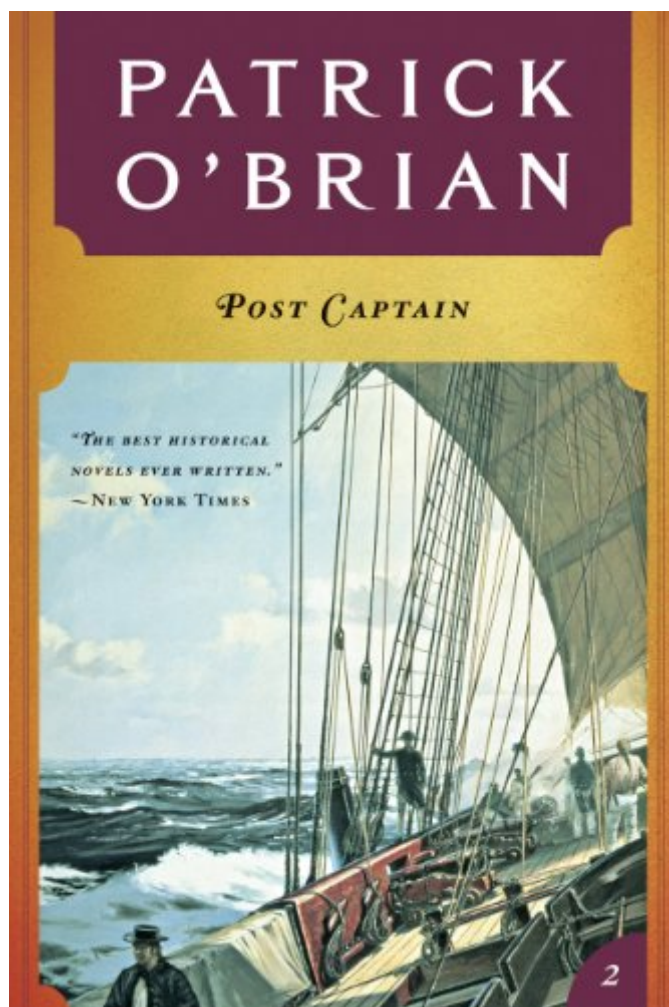


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Post Captain (Vol. Book 2) (Aubrey/Maturin Novels)



Synopsis

"Master and Commander raised almost dangerously high expectations, Post Captain triumphantly surpasses them...a brilliant book." "Mary Renault" "We've beat them before and we'll beat them again." In 1803 Napoleon smashes the Peace of Amiens, and Captain Jack Aubrey, R. N., taking refuge in France from his creditors, is interned. He escapes from France, from debtors' prison, and from a possible mutiny, and pursues his quarry straight into the mouth of a French-held harbor.

Book Information

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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).

Post Captain is the second in the Aubrey/Maturin series and perhaps the first written with the knowledge that it was part of a series. O'Brian's first novel in the series was published shortly after C.S. Forester's death and the publication of Pope's and Kent's first novels in their series of wooden ships and iron men. O'Brian found a different niche within the genre and one that ultimately led to his recognition as a serious author of historical novels. If one has read Pope or Kent and even Forester, then the reader might have some difficulty getting into O'Brian's novels. If one accepts that O'Brian is a longer read and that the emphasis is more on character and historicity than violent action then one can enjoy this novel thoroughly. I read the first book in the series, Master and Commander, and was disappointed. I enjoyed Post Captain more. Perhaps that was due to knowing what to expect and perhaps it is because Post Captain is better than its predecessor. However, it is not your typical naval action adventure. In fact, the first few chapters sounded a bit like Pride and Prejudice from Mr. Darcy's perspective. The fact is that O'Brian writes well enough to pull it off. Post Captain does pick up when war is declared and Aubrey goes back to sea. One area of conflict that I found strangely missing in Master and Commander was that between Aubrey and Maturin. I had expected that Maturin would be critical of Aubrey taking the ship into actions that caused wounds Maturin would have to treat. There is a serious conflict between the two in Post Captain although it's not over Aubrey's naval actions. Since the series has 18 more novels one knows that the conflict will be resolved.

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