

Villains of All Nations: Atlantic Pirates in the Golden Age

By Marcus Rediker



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Villains of All Nations explores the 'Golden Age' of Atlantic piracy (1716-1726) and the infamous generation whose images underlie our modern, romanticized view of pirates.

Rediker introduces us to the dreaded black flag, the Jolly Roger; swashbuckling figures such as Edward Teach, better known as Blackbeard; and the unnamed, unlimbed pirate who was likely Robert Louis Stevenson's model for Long John Silver in Treasure Island.

This history shows from the bottom up how sailors emerged from deadly working conditions on merchant and naval ships, turned pirate, and created a starkly different reality aboard their own ships, electing their officers, dividing their booty equitably, and maintaining a multinational social order. The real lives of this motley crew-which included cross-dressing women, people of color, and the outcasts of all nations are far more compelling than contemporary myth.



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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Rediker (Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea), a historian of maritime labor, opens his immensely readable study of the "golden age" of piracy (1716-1726) with the spectacle of an execution in which a notorious pirate, unrepentant and seemingly unconcerned to be facing death, reties the knot of his gallows noose with defiant ironic humor. For Rediker, pirates were bold subversives who challenged the prevailing social order and empire building of the five main trading nations. Emphasizing the hardship, injustice and brutality the average sailor faced in his career, Rediker suggests that piracy offered a more egalitarian seafaring life, as well as opportunities for revenge on the ruling class. Rediker uses captives' accounts, among other sources, to show how pirates meted out their own system of justice, torturing captains reputed for their harsh treatment of sailors, yet sparing others known for fairness. He explores pirate dialects, rituals and symbols, and shows how pirates inverted social norms, creating a carnivalesque way of life that featured fraternal solidarity, a precapitalist share system and the wanton destruction of property. A chapter on picaresque women pirates reveals links between their iconic image and Delacroix's painting Liberty. Using statistics to show convincingly that by the 1720s piracy posed a real threat to global trade, Rediker describes how nations launched a military-legal campaign against piracy, with cannon battles and gruesome public executions. Rediker uses this apocalyptic close of piracy's golden age to explore its suicidal side. Although Rediker's short study does not tackle later myths of piracy, it provides penetrating background to our enduring cultural fascination with the seafaring outlaws. Illus.

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From **Booklist**

The so-called golden age of Atlantic piracy was the first quarter of the eighteenth century. Lawless rebels, including well-known men such as William Fly and Edward Teach--as well as numerous social outcasts, debtors, escaped slaves, and various predatory personalities--used terrorist tactics to prey upon merchant ships from New England waters to the Spanish Main. Rediker's revealing and often surprising work views pirates and piracy within the context of the social, political, and economic milieu of the eighteenth century. He does much to deromanticize pirate life, for these were brutal, sometimes heartless men, and many of them were prime examples of a variety of social pathologies. Yet, as Rediker illustrates, pirates often did create a distinct subculture with its own set of values, codes of honor, and taboos. Rediker is most interesting and provocative in his comparisons between this subculture and the broader, "respectable" society that helped engender it. An informative look at a popular topic. *Jay Freeman Copyright* © *American Library Association. All rights reserved*

Review

Marcus Rediker knows pirates, and he knows how to tell a story. *Villains of All Nations* is a must read; don't wait for the movie! -Robin D. G. Kelley, author of *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Robin Martz:

The knowledge that you get from Villains of All Nations: Atlantic Pirates in the Golden Age is a more deep

you rooting the information that hide in the words the more you get serious about reading it. It doesn't mean that this book is hard to be aware of but Villains of All Nations: Atlantic Pirates in the Golden Age giving you buzz feeling of reading. The article author conveys their point in certain way that can be understood by means of anyone who read it because the author of this publication is well-known enough. That book also makes your own personal vocabulary increase well. Making it easy to understand then can go to you, both in printed or e-book style are available. We advise you for having this particular Villains of All Nations: Atlantic Pirates in the Golden Age instantly.

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