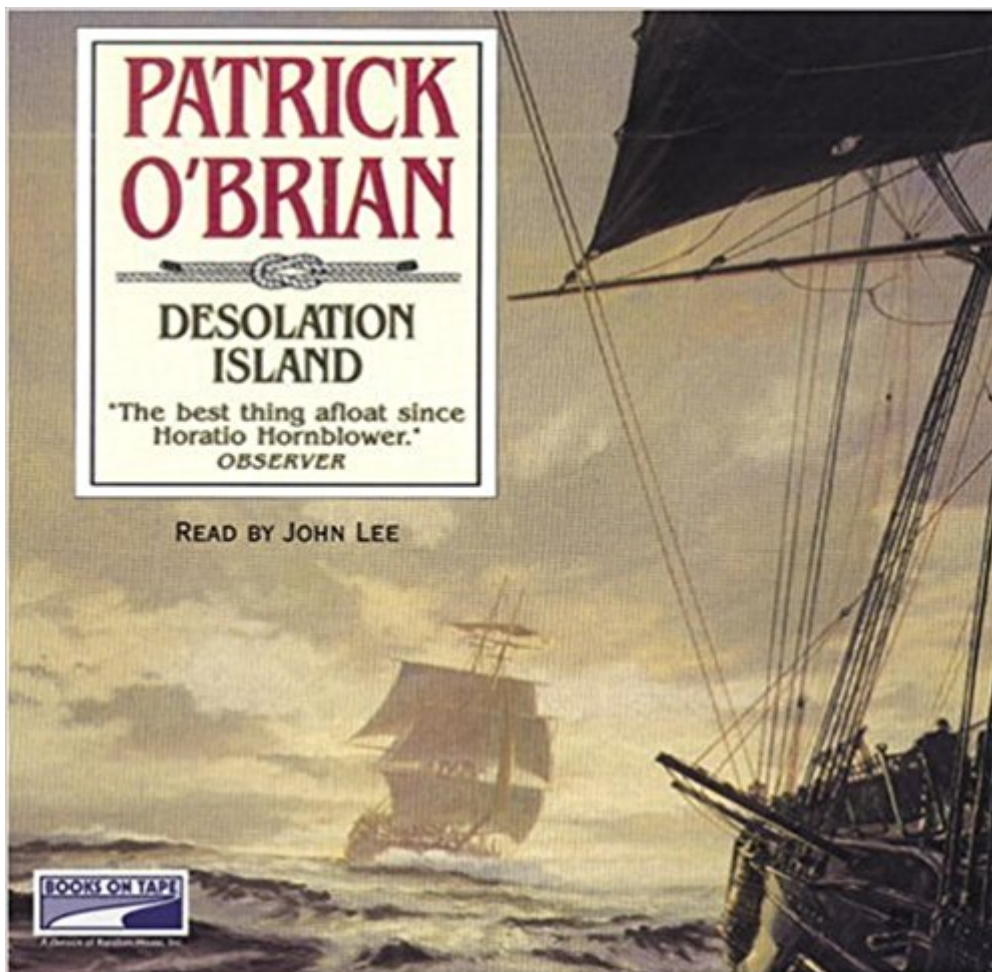


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## Desolation Island (Lib)(CD)



## Synopsis

Patrick O'Brian's Aubrey-Maturin tales are widely acknowledged to be the greatest series of historical novels ever written. Now these evocative stories are being re-issued in paperback by Harper Perennial with stunning new jackets. Commissioned to rescue Governor Bligh of Bounty fame, Captain Jack Aubrey and his friend and surgeon, Stephen Maturin, sail the Leopard to Australia with a hold full of convicts. Among them is a beautiful and dangerous spy -- and a treacherous disease which decimates the crew. The ingredients of a wonderfully powerful and dramatic O'Brian novel are heightened by descriptive writing of rare quality. Nowhere in contemporary prose have the majesty and terror of the sea been more effectively rendered than in the thrilling chase through an Antarctic storm in which Jack's ship, under-manned and out-gunned, is the quarry not the hunter.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Captain Bligh (yes, the guy from the Bounty) needs to be rescued, and the Royal Navy has the perfect man for the job: Captain Jack Aubrey. With his friend and cloak-and-dagger expert Stephen Maturin in tow, Aubrey sets off for Australia. Several factors, including an attractive spy and a small-scale epidemic, conspire to change his plans, and before long his frigate is being pursued into Antarctic waters by a Dutch man-of-war. Five installments into the series, the Aubrey-Maturin story remains (to quote The Observer) "the best thing afloat since Horatio Hornblower."

'Full of the energy that comes from a writer having struck a vein!Patrick O'Brian is unquestionably

the Homer of the Napoleonic wars.' James Hamilton-Paterson 'You are in for the treat of your lives. Thank God for Patrick O'Brian: his genius illuminates the literature of the English language, and lightens the lives of those who read him.' Kevin Myers, Irish Times 'In a highly competitive field it goes straight to the top. A real first-rater.' Mary Renault 'I never enjoyed a novel about the sea more. It is not only that the author describes the handling of a ship of 1800 with an accuracy that is as comprehensible as it is detailed, a remarkable feat in itself. Mr O'Brian's three chief characters are drawn with no less depth of sympathy than the vessels he describes, a rare achievement save in the greatest writers of this genre. It deserves the widest readership.' Irish Times

The best nautical historical fiction ever written, period. O'Brian researched exhaustively and infused a lifetime of passion, expertise, and emotion into every volume. The books are not only infinitely readable, they're page burners, each and every one, with laudable character development and environmental description that put you firmly in the midst of what you're reading, There is such a wealth of description, you'll want a dictionary, thesaurus, and an atlas at hand when you dive in. Trust me when I tell you, buy them all, because you won't be able to put them down, and when you're done with one, you'll simply have to have the next.

This story says a lot about the characters. We learn the competence, resiliency and positive outlook of Aubrey and his loyal followers. There is so much happening including a sea battle against a superior force, working among traitorous criminals that are spies in reality, surviving in the arctic after holing the hull and dislodging the rudder on an iceberg, cooperating with the enemy for mutual benefit, Maturin spying and a great deal of life at sea. This is a very rich story in the series that entertained me. I didn't put the book down until it was finished. I highly recommend this installment. Enjoy!

If you're a sailor, rejoice. If not, read this series anyway for the incomparably delightful writing, characters, adventures, daily life aboard and ashore, natural history, regular history, settings, spy craft, spotted dick, and above all, humor. You have my grudging permission to skim over the admittedly exhaustive (to some readers, perhaps, but by no means all) details of sails, rigging, and naval battles. Do read. I envy your coming discoveries of the manifold delights of "the canon," as the series is known. Start with Master and Commander, and may god set a flower upon your head.

Exceptional and great books by Patrick O'Brien. You get deeply involved almost immediately. This

story amazes you with the dangers that sailing around the world confronted. Hard to put down.

Different than some others in the series. Less focus on ship battles, but really outstanding descriptions of battles against nature and of survival against all odds by way of superb seamanship.

Desolation Island begins with a picture of domestic bliss: Aubrey at home with wife and children, waiting orders, and a little bewildered at how to fill the role of husband and father (to which is totally unaccustomed) rather than as captain and commander. From personal experience, such adjustment is at best difficult; then, as now, sharing a life at sea with a family can be a cause of friction, resentment and strife (I suspect this is the reason the sea services have such a high rate of divorce.) While awaiting orders, the newspapers are full of the story of Cpt. Bligh and the mutiny on his ship, *The Bounty*. Given the title, I anticipated Aubrey would face a similar fate once underway. I won't go further, for fear of spoilers. Once orders are in hand, Aubrey's new command is almost immediately fraught with troubles: the ship has to take on a compliment of convicts bound for Australia, as well as several women - both are sure sources of conflict on such a long voyage. Underway, problems multiply as the ship is soon beset with disease, chased by a Dutch warship 1/3 again the size of Aubrey's, and his ship is beaten and battered by storms and severely damaged by icebergs. I was initially attracted to the O'Brian series through his almost obsessive detail to life under sail and the vivid writing of naval warfare. Soon, however, I was pulled in by the growth of his characters and the depths of the bonds between Aubrey and Maturin. O'Brian again impresses, this time with the description of daily life at sea (which one would normally imagine to be one of monotony, but somehow here is both romantic and engaging) and the development of Maturin, both as intelligence officer as well as naturalist. The creative ways in which Aubrey addresses and resolves the myriad of problems he is best with also kept me in rapt attention. Further, O'Brian also shows another aspect of life in the Royal Navy at the dawn of the 19th century: that of floating diplomat, Cpt. Aubrey walking a fine line as he negotiates and works with the crew of an American whaler, precisely at a time when tensions between Britain and America are particularly frayed, relations simmering just prior to the War of 1812. That five books in to the series an author can still surprise and create a world with such detail and specificity and can still develop characters without becoming cliched or worn continues to impress me. The series is occupying most of my spare time, such is the way in which my imagination has been captured by O'Brian's writing. The series gets my highest recommendations.

Desolation Island ups the game in this already superb series. Fierce storms, a mortal chase, a floundering ship working against time to stay afloat provide excitement and suspense, while character development, especially for Maturin and supporting players, becomes fuller. Flora and fauna, referred to obliquely in the first few books, finally come into their own here, fleshing out the boundaries of what makes the series so informative and entertaining.

In this installment, which reads more like one long novel rather than a serial, we find our heroes at sea again this time in "The Horrible Old Leopard", who we saw briefly in the last installment, an old ship, slow and with a somewhat tarnished reputation. The first order of business is to ferry convicts to New Holland and Botany bay for exile, naturally plague breaks out and the ships ranks are decimated, to make matters worse harsh weather and a collision with an iceberg leave the Leopard damaged and sinking. there is a wonderful portion of the novel where the leopard is under repair and Dr. Maturin is able to drop the facade he carries as an intelligence agent and and we get to see his true face, that of a naturalist and an explorer. In this novel we also meet the mysterious Louisa Wogan, who has loose ties to Diana Villiers from previous novels and may be a either a spy or a wrongly convicted woman on her way to Botany Bay. she will play heavily in the future of this series. This chapter of the saga has less action but in exchange we delve deeply into the intrigue of spies. I highly recommend this novel for anyone who is a fan or who like historical fiction.

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