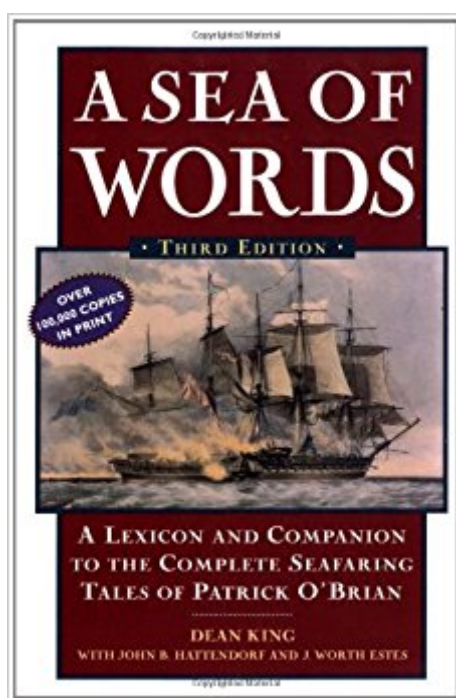


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# A Sea Of Words, Third Edition: A Lexicon And Companion To The Complete Seafaring Tales Of Patrick O'Brian



## Synopsis

This comprehensive lexicon provides definitions of nautical terms, historical entries describing the people and political events that shaped the period, and detailed explanations of the scientific, medical, and biblical references that appear in the novels.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“To any disoriented lubber who needs to take a quick bearing on Aubrey’s world of staysails and sternposts, it will be a useful compass.”  
—The Economist  
“Dean King’s lexicon will charm cultists.”  
—The Philadelphia Inquirer  
“An outstandingly useful passkey to the wooden world of Britain’s Royal Navy in the great age of sail.”  
—Sea History  
“A gem of a book.”  
—Minneapolis Star Tribune

John B. Hattenborf is a professor of maritime history at the United States Naval War College. J. Worth Estes, Ph.D., is a professor of pharmacology at Boston University and a specialist in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century maritime medicine.

Perhaps the most astonishing sentence in the fascinating "A Sea of Words" appears on p. xix: "Our survey of O'Brian's books found more than 8,000 words that could use defining for modern readers, including the names of some 400 ships, 500 people, and 1,200 places." No wonder we wondered as we wandered with Jack & Stephen! After reading this almost 500 page book, many of us will be

wandering considerably less. It even has translations from French, Spanish, and Latin together (for the Latin) with full attribution to the author (such as Horace) and the poem. Two reader alerts: 1. The book is a fine mixture of biography, geography, biology, botany, naval battles, ships, shoes, sealing wax, cabbages and kings. There are good reproductions of portraits & etchings, mini-essays on notable ships & battles, an informative 30 page chapter on the Royal Navy & French wars and a masterful 20 page section on naval medicine at the time. This array of richness is in addition to the more usual lexicon entries such as "Jones, Tom: the boisterous hero of Henry Fielding's novel, 'Tom Jones,'" and "close to the wind: When a ship's BOW is pointing as far into the wind as possible without LUFFING the sails." Readers who like this variety and detail will find every page fascinating. Readers who expect a brief-entry dictionary format may be surprised. 2. The words selected reflect Dr. Maturin's enthusiasm for medicine, botany & biology as well as Jack Aubrey's nautical world. Thus, entries such as "clouded yellow: A butterfly of the genus *Colias*, especially *c. edusa*" are well-represented along with "coaming: A raised border around HATCHES and SCUTTLES that prevents water on deck from running below." Again, thoroughly appropriate selection in a companion to the complete tales, but perhaps also a surprise to those expecting a more exclusively nautical array. "A Sea of Words" is well-worth having, almost like a 21st book in the series, bringing readers vividly into the world O'Brian created. It has additional merit in making clear part of the magic of this world is brilliant reporting of actual events & personages such as Christie-Palliere, Lord St. Vincent, and the determined Queenie Thrale who was the beautiful daughter of no less than Dr. Johnson's Hester Thrale. There are extensive, helpful quotes from letters & naval dispatches, including Lord St. Vincent's exasperation at Queenie's importunings on behalf of one of the real world inspirations for Jack Aubrey. And merit in addition to merit, reading "A Sea of Words" can enrich not only the glorious Aubrey-Maturin canon but also can improve splendidly a reader's delight in other work of the age of sail, such as the Gilbert-Sullivan's "Pirates of Penzance" and "Pinafore." For example, "Though related to a peer, I can hand, reef and steer" may have extra meaning after considering the drawing of sailors dizzyingly shown 100 feet aloft & reading the nautical details of competing approaches to reefing. Here and there, a few minor questions. Perhaps a few of the citations could be more useful if more complete, such as indicating "white letter" or Roman type was used in contrast to the Germanic "black letter" style and perhaps including the slightly saltier meanings (where called for by the text) to terms such as "rove" and "roving." And yes, part of the continued pleasure is the authors' respect for their readers' abilities & at least basic naval knowledge. This makes for participatory rather than passive reading. I'd a USCG Captain's license for under 100 ton sail but reading "A Sea of Words" is still a long, welcome, wonderful voyage of

discovery. Authors: sail on, blue pennant at the mast. Many readers already have appreciated your book and new readers are likely to enjoy most thoroughly this splendid companion & lexicon for O'Brian's Glorious Series.

I love the sea. I love reading about the sea. But sadly, I am a landlubber, and don't speak 18th century Napoleonic era Navy English. When I started reading the Patrick O Brian novels, I understood less sea-term-ese than Stephen Maturin - having this book helps a lot. Arranged alphabetically, it defines all those sailing terms, places, actions, and the like, so a reader can quickly look up something if the novel's characters use an unfamiliar term. My copy of this book sits on top of the author's Harbors and High Seas (more about maps and locations in the novels than just terms), and Patrick O'Brian's Navy. The only thing missing from these books, that I'd love to see, would be drawings of the various kinds of uniforms, hats, and items of clothing. O'Brian's writing is very vivid, but it would help to see how a Rear Admiral's uniform differs from that of a surgeon, or Lieutenant, or Midshipman, or one of the Royal Marines on board.

I really appreciate this book; it is a necessity for anyone interested in the Aubrey & Maturin series. So many of the words in the books are not in a collegiate dictionary, or even on the internet; this book has a couple chapters of explanation and historical background which is relevant to the O'brian tales. The money shot here is the extensive glossary which comes after the 2 background chapters. My biggest regret with this book is that I could NOT set this book as a default dictionary; so that while I am reading I can just click on the word that needs identification and voila; I would (in theory) get the glossary definition. Because this book cannot be set as a default dictionary, my BEST ADVICE is to load this book on to a separate kindle from the ones you may have the O'brian books on OR simply get it as a paperback...that way you do not have to close the book you are reading in order to open the "Sea of Words" glossary, etc...

Understanding the seagoing language, culture and history of O'Brians's novels is enhanced and with this book. One can follow the marvelous story in O'Brian's narrative, but the seagoing terms that deal with the ship's architecture were new to this land lubber. Mr. King's book allowed me to understand a bit more about the incredibly deep research behind O'Brian's fiction and to be able to picture the space of an 18th century ship.

A gift for my husband to accompany his reading of the series by Patrick O'Brien turned out to be a

hit. He references many words and phrases in the collection using this book. Highly recommend to anyone who is a fan of this author.

Indispensable concordance that explains, magnifies, and elucidates the world of Jack Aubrey and Stephen Maturin. Before I picked up this little book (the same size as the paperback novels themselves), I was surrounded by a world atlas, two dictionaries, and a stack of pages I downloaded from the Internet showing the parts of frigates, schooners, corvettes, and so on. Now, I hold A SEA OF WORDS directly behind the novel I'm reading (at this writing, No. 7: THE SURGEON'S MATE), and when a word or phrase or -- in O'Brian's most pernicious -- an entire Latin sentence comes up, I just lay the novel forward and find the unknown in this great little book. While it's fun at this point in my life to be surprised occasionally by a word I haven't heard, it can become daunting when they appear twice on every page. Yet I detect that O'Brian isn't trying to show off; he's trying to put me into the time and place. And were I time-traveler going back 200 years, I would take this book with me as a sure guide.

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