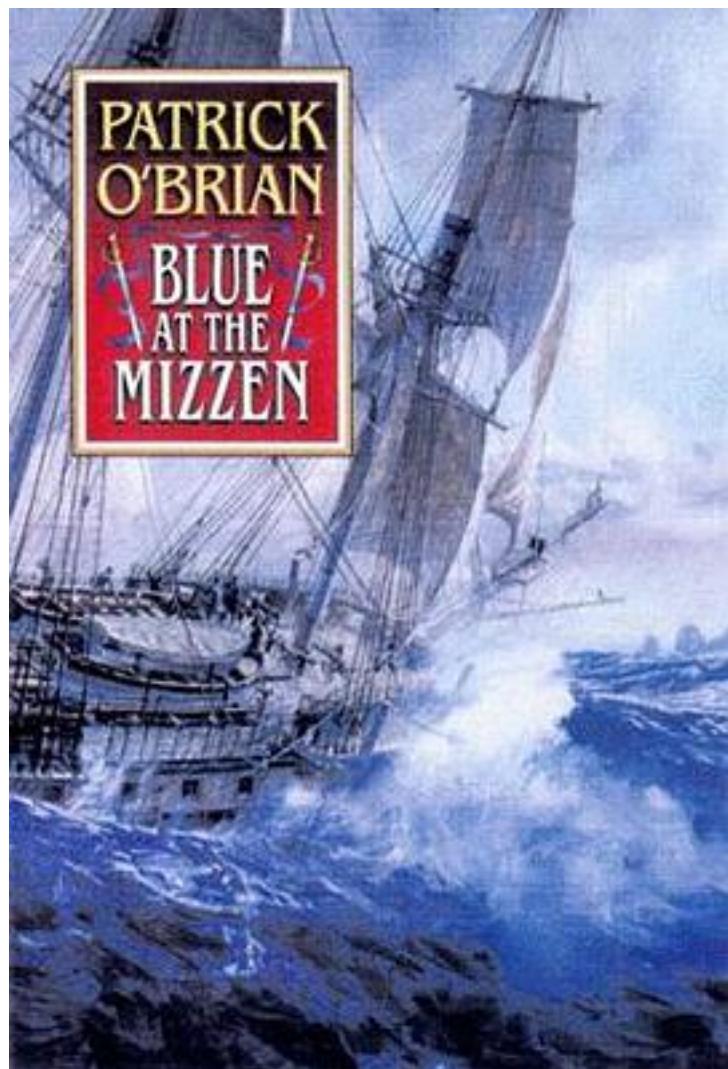


Blue at the Mizzen (Aubrey/Maturin Series)



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The excitement of the Aubrey/Maturin series soars to new heights in this volume, as Jack, again the daring frigate commander of old, stakes all on a desperate solo night raid against the might of the Spanish viceroy in Peru.

Napoleon has been defeated at Waterloo, and the ensuing peace takes on an ugly complexion for Captain Jack Aubrey: drunken, violent celebrations of the English sailors in Gibraltar; the desertion of nearly half his crew; and the sudden dimming of his own career prospects in a peacetime navy. To cap it all off, the Surprise is nearly sunk in a shattering night collision on the first leg of her journey to South America, where Jack and Stephen are to help Chile assert her independence from Spain.

The delay occasioned by repairs reaps a harvest of strange consequences. The widowed Stephen Maturin experiences a startling emotional rebirth, and an amorous adventure in a mangrove swamp with the beautiful and accomplished naturalist Christine Wood leads to a proposal of marriage. Jack, meanwhile, is persuaded to accept as a midshipman the bastard of the Duke of Clarence (later King William IV). Young Horatio Hanson--officially unacknowledged, but clearly his father's favorite--is one of O'Brian's most engaging characters, and the distinction he earns in the coming campaign will have important repercussions on Jack's fortunes.

The South American expedition is a desperate affair, starting with near disaster in the ice-choked seas far south of the Horn, and further marred by bitter divisions in the Chilean naval command. In the end it is Jack's bold initiative to strike at the vastly superior Spanish fleet that precipitates the spectacular naval action that will determine both Chile's fate and his own.

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