



The Pirate Hunter: The True Story of Captain Kidd

By Richard Zacks

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A literary treasure, *The Pirate Hunter* is a masterpiece of historical detective work, and a rare, authentic pirate story for grown-ups. Captain Kidd has gone down in history as America's most ruthless buccaneer, fabulously rich, burying dozens of treasure chests up and down the eastern seaboard. But it turns out that most everyone, even many respected scholars, have the story all wrong. Captain William Kidd was no career cut-throat; he was a tough, successful New York sea captain who was hired to chase pirates. His three-year odyssey aboard the aptly named *Adventure* galley pitted him against arrogant Royal Navy commanders, jealous East India Company captains, storms, starvation, angry natives, and, above all, flesh-and-blood pirates. Superbly written and impeccably researched, *The Pirate Hunter* is one ripping good yarn.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Entertaining, richly detailed and authoritatively narrated, Zacks's account of the life of legendary seaman William Kidd delivers a first-rate story. Though Kidd, better known as Captain Kidd, was inextricably bound with piracy and has popularly gone down as a marauding buccaneer himself, Zacks (*An Underground Education*) argues that he was actually a mercenary backed by the English government and several New World investors to track down pirates and reclaim their stolen wares. The book is cogent and replete with supporting evidence without the heavy-handed feel of some scholarly work. What really sets the book apart is Zacks's gift as researcher and storyteller. He highlights the role of an undeniable pirate, Robert Culliford, in Kidd's tale and pits the two men against each other from the outset, constructing his book as an intriguing duel. Aside from the tightly constructed plot, Zacks also wonderfully evokes the social and political life of the 17th century at land and at sea, and he takes turns at debunking and validating pirate folklore: while it appears the dead giveaway of a skull and crossbones made it a rare flag choice, Zacks contends that pirates did often wear extravagant clothing and were as drunk, cursing, hungry, horny... and violent as myth would have them. Augmented by such details and driven by a conflict between Kidd and Culliford that keeps the pages flying, Zacks's book is a treasure, indeed.

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From [The New Yorker](#)

William Kidd is remembered as one of history's greatest pirates, and thousands of people have searched in vain for the treasure he supposedly left buried on a desert island. In this fascinating work of historical revisionism, Zacks argues that in fact Kidd was a privateer, commissioned by the British Crown to hunt down pirates. But his mutinous crew was dissatisfied with the slim pickings of buccaneer-hunting, and Kidd himself inadvertently fell afoul of the powerful East India Company, which tarred him as a criminal. Instead of being acclaimed a national hero, he died on the gallows, in 1701. Zacks's detective work here is thoroughly convincing. In addition, he sets the suspenseful tale of Kidd's downfall within its larger historical context, in a manner reminiscent, at times, of Defoe, vividly illustrating the brutalities of life on a seagoing vessel and the chaos of urban society at the end of the seventeenth century.

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From [Booklist](#)

We all know Captain Kidd, the bloodthirsty pirate who murdered and plundered his way across the seven seas, sailing under the skull and crossbones. Well, it turns out that pretty much everything we know about Kidd is wrong. He wasn't a pirate; he was a privateer, commissioned by the British government to hunt pirates. He wasn't ruthless; as a matter of fact, he was a family man, with a wife and daughter waiting back home, which wasn't some decrepit shanty but a well-appointed house on New York's Wall Street. This surprising, eye-opening book completely changes our perception of Captain William Kidd, a nice Scottish fellow who would be quite shocked to learn what we think of him these days. It also introduces us to a genuinely ruthless pirate, Robert Culliford, who was to bring much calamity to Kidd's life. Zacks fills our minds with the sights, sounds, and even the smells of the seventeenth century, and he rescues William Kidd from eternal damnation. A lively, educational, thoroughly spellbinding trip back in time. *David Pitt*

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

William Mayer:

The experience that you get from *The Pirate Hunter: The True Story of Captain Kidd* is the more deep you searching the information that hide inside words the more you get considering reading it. It doesn't mean that this book is hard to know but *The Pirate Hunter: The True Story of Captain Kidd* giving you thrill feeling of reading. The article author conveys their point in certain way that can be understood simply by anyone who read that because the author of this publication is well-known enough. This kind of book also makes your personal vocabulary increase well. That makes it easy to understand then can go along with you, both in printed or e-book style are available. We propose you for having this particular *The Pirate Hunter: The True Story of Captain Kidd* instantly.

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