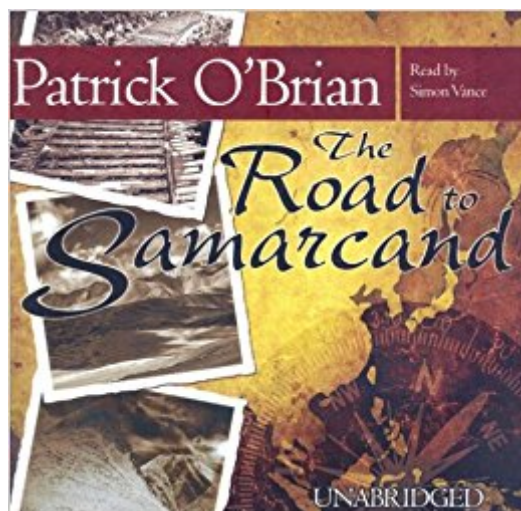


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The Road To Samarcand: An Adventure



Synopsis

This stand-alone adventure from the mighty Patrick O'Brian begins just where his devoted fans would want it to: with a sloop in the South China Sea barely surviving a killer typhoon. But the time is the 1930s and the protagonist a teenaged American boy whose missionary parents have just died. In the company of his rough, seafaring uncle and his elderly English cousin, an eminent archaeologist, young Derrick sets off in search of ancient treasures in central Asia. Along the way, they encounter a charismatic Chinese bandit and a host of bad characters, including Russian agents fomenting unrest. The tale ends in an ice-bound valley with the party caught between hostile Red-Hat monks and the Great Silent Ones, which is how the Tibetans designate the yeti.

Book Information

Audio CD

Publisher: Blackstone Audio Inc.; Unabridged edition (February 1, 2008)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1433206536

ISBN-13: 978-1433206535

Product Dimensions: 6.4 x 6.5 x 1.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 6.4 ounces

Average Customer Review: 3.6 out of 5 stars 27 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #6,371,410 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #96 in Books > Books on CD > Authors, A-Z > (O) > O'Brian, Patrick #11233 in Books > Literature & Fiction > British & Irish > Historical #18427 in Books > Books on CD > Literature & Fiction > Unabridged

Customer Reviews

Years before a top sailor named Jack Aubrey, rising through the ranks of the British Navy during the Napoleonic Wars, joined forces with his best friend-an Irish-Spanish doctor, naturalist and spy called Stephen Maturin-to make the seas safe and profitable for the British Empire, another young spy named Richard Patrick Russ was falling in love with the sea. He began his long and eventually illustrious career after changing his name to Patrick O'Brien, and his first work of oceangoing adventure was this unformed but energetic tale of a teenaged American boy who goes on a dangerous voyage across the typhoon-tossed South China Sea. Originally published in the UK in 1954, this book's stateside debut was in 2007. Simon Vance, who has recorded almost all of O'Brien's work on audio, is perfect; he catches every vocal social nuance and foreign accent without veering into caricature. A Norton hardcover (Reviews, Apr. 16, 2007). (May). Copyright © Reed

"Earthy, sly humor keeps the action set pieces perking along: frigid temperatures, militaristic Tibetan monks, and even the Abominable Snowman await. Six decades later, O'Brian's richly told adventure saga, with its muscular prose, supple dialogue, and engaging characters, packs a nice old-school punch." --Publishers Weekly

Patrick O'Brian consistently blows other writers out of the water. I believe this is his sophomore effort and yet the elegance of his prose already surpasses most writers. There is also, for me, a precious "perils of Pauline" quality to this narrative. I found myself asking "what could POSSIBLY happen next?" with each chapter. Then I would reply "oh no, that can't POSSIBLY have happened!" Then I would read on into the wee hours to see how the protagonists got out of the current predicament. Which makes for a ripping page-turner of a read. But it is O'Brian's heartfelt, poetic prose that makes me fall in love with each character and CARE that they survive each predicament.

Interesting pre-Aubrey/Maturin novel by Patrick O'Brian. A neat glimpse into his early storytelling before embarking on the series that made his name. Cinematic in pace and style, but does not suffer for it. There are better examples of the genre, yet worth the read.

I will admit it, I am an ultimate Patrick O'Brian Aubrey/Maturin series fan boy. I have read that series of novels repeatedly and enjoyed each one every single time. When I learned of this book I immediately bought it. It was disappointing in comparison to the Aubrey/Maturin books. I agree with the reviewers who have characterized this as a 'boy's book'. The adventure is wildly implausible, the characters are much more heroic cardboard cutout than his later protagonists and the dialog (something he was clearly gifted with later in his career) seems false. I am not sorry that I read it, as I said, it was more of a quest than a choice for me, but don't expect the same experience as you have had (or hopefully will have) with his later works. Buy a copy for your favorite 12 - 14 year old nephew, it will be a great introduction to Patrick O'Brian for him, then read it carefully before you put it in the gift wrap.

It grieves me to judge harshly one of my favorite authors; but, I am giving this three stars only because I heartily enjoy the writing and vocabulary of O'Brian. Otherwise, the plot was sadly far from those of the Aubrey/Maturin novels. That of Samarcand seemed farfetched and reminiscent of

Hollywood's unbelievable super heroes. AND, it got to the point where the happy ending was anticipated well in advance of it showing up in print. Without the O'Brian connection, this would get one point five stars,

For anyone who enjoyed any of the 20 Aubrey-Maturin novels this adventure set in Central Asia in the 1930's(?) is certainly worth a read. The plot develops gradually to an exciting climax in the last few pages. Character development is not as subtle as O'Brian at his best, and the identity of heroes and villains is fairly clear from their first appearance, but O'Brian still shows the ability to plunge the reader into a realistic alien environment and hold interest page after page.

If you're a fan of O'Brian's later Aubrey-Maturin series, this early work is an excellent way to see the author developing his unique style, blending high adventure with subtle deadpan humor. As with most O'Brian pieces, this is what I call a "quest story" in which the characters set out on a journey towards some goal, encountering lots of challenges and adventures along the way. The weakest aspect of Samarcand is that the purpose of the quest is pretty implausible. I found it hard to believe that his brave band of travelers would endure so many hardships just to satisfy the Professor's desire to explore some ruins and to get young Derrick to Oxford. Also, the story contains numerous improbably close escapes, particularly the final one. But, what the heck, this story is no more improbable than Indiana Jones, so just sit back with a cup of tea and enjoy O'Brian's wonderful writing style.

Great book. I really enjoy Patrick O'Brian and though this is different than his Aubrey/Maturin series, it is still packed full of fun. Well written and very entertaining.

The main interest in this book is to see where O'Brian started -- hard to believe how much better a writer he became with the Aubrey-Maturin series. Perhaps it is because he was writing for teenagers in "The Road to Samarkand", and that isn't his genre. If you want to read a really entertaining kid's adventure set in the same part of the world, see if you can get hold of "Big Tiger and Christian" by Fritz Mühlenweg. It would be great if this tale, (originally published in 1954, reprinted in 1966, 1971) were to become available again, in paperback. However, your library may have it -- check it out!

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