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The inspiration for the NBC series *Crossbones*. In the early eighteenth century a number of the great pirate captains, including Edward "Blackbeard" Teach and "Black Sam" Bellamy, joined forces. This infamous "Flying Gang" was more than simply a thieving band of brothers. Many of its members had come to piracy as a revolt against conditions in the merchant fleet and in the cities and plantations in the Old and New Worlds. Inspired by notions of self-government, they established a crude but distinctive form of democracy in the Bahamas, carving out their own zone of freedom in which indentured servants were released and leaders chosen or deposed by a vote. They were ultimately overcome by their archnemesis, Captain Woodes Rogers—a merchant fleet owner and former privateer—and the brief though glorious moment of the Republic of Pirates came to an end. In this unique and fascinating book, Colin Woodard brings to life this virtually unexplored chapter in the Golden Age of Piracy.

The Republic of Pirates: Being the True and Surprising Story of the Caribbean Pirates and the Man Who Brought Them Down Details

Date : Published May 7th 2007 by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt (first published 2007)

ISBN : 9780151013029

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Format : Hardcover 400 pages

Genre : History, Nonfiction, Adventure, Pirates, Historical



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From Reader Review The Republic of Pirates: Being the True and Surprising Story of the Caribbean Pirates and the Man Who Brought Them Down for online ebook

Kristine says

Fun and interesting, but the story got extremely dull. Come on.... how hard is it to make pirates exciting...?

Silvana says

I admit that the main reason I read this book is because of Black Sails, an excellent Starz series about the golden age of the pirates in the Bahamas, set as a loose prequel of RL Stevenson's Treasure Island. After two seasons (of me fangirling over the series' version of Charles Vane, whose cheekbones and penetrating stare can melt me into a puddle of happy goo), season 3 (currently being aired) features this guy:

Yes, that's Blackbeard, aka Edward Thatch (or Teach, depending your source). Played by the amazing Ray Stevenson, whom you might recognize as Titus Pullo from Rome. Yes, the real Blackbeard wore three pistols. There were some added theatrics too, but I won't spoil those. Anyway, I suddenly have the itch to find out more about the real Blackbeard how he lived, what are his exploits and so on.

Then I found this book. I was ecstatic since it apparently it also tells me about Vane, Benjamin Hornigold, and Henry Avery - all legendary pirates PLUS the tragic tale of Woodes Rogers, the man who presided over the Bahamas as governor at that time and saw the pirate reign dwindled. If you expect an all-out war between English man-of-wars vs. pirate fleets, you'll be disappointed.

This happened though... *wink wink*

I expected a historical account and I was not disappointed. Indeed there is a pretty extensive laundry list of various merchant vessels, sloops and frigates captured by the pirates, as well as the names of their captains and their cargos (added with the stories where most of these were released without being harmed), they all just strengthen the fact that the pirate's life were not all swashbuckling, dramatic, action-packed adventures like the Pirates of the Carribbeans franchise, or even the more historically-based Black Sails. This is not boring, it's the fact. Sure, broadsides were fired, ships boarded, swords drawn, violent acts occurred but at the end it's all about pirating, as in, they robbed things in the sea. As simple as that. And if there's no use for bloodshed when the crews surrendered and the cargos were secured, why have one.

The author did a good job in weaving all captain's logs, previous publications and other documents into a readable account on the 'republic' the pirates created as well as the world around it. He debunked lots of myths and legends. He gave quite an extensive background of the politics in the Bahamas: the corruptible governors, the often supportive locales, the rivalries with Spain and France, the colonial treatment by the Crown and most interesting of all, the pirates's indirect involvement in the Jacobite rebellion and the British wars of successions. While the true motivations of such entanglement remain blurry, it is just fascinating to read about these badass pirates actually thought about the political brouhaha far away in Europe. Some of the

ringleaders like Hornigold refused to take English vessels. I guess they were still nationalistic at heart.

I was also fascinated with the democratic way of life in these pirate ships. Sure, the captains got the absolute authority during certain conditions like during wars, but there was this spirit of equality especially if compared with the Royal Navy, or even the merchant ships. Meanwhile, I wish the author spent more time in describing the lives in Nassau under this pirate republic (e.g. how the non-pirate civilians fared among them, what about the people living in the interior, was there any codependency thing going on), but maybe he just didn't have enough material for that.

All in all, as my first non-fiction book about pirate I find this book highly informative and surely whets my appetite to read some more. Will try to read *Under the Black Flag: The Romance and the Reality of Life Among the Pirates* later.

Anton Tomsinov says

I've never seen another book where adventures of pirates and their hunters would seem so humdrum. The general impression on the Golden Age of piracy that is given by this book is that most activities of sea rovers were rather mundane and petty. Small crews, short careers, sloops with few cannons, surrenders without a fight, prizes mostly full of rum, grain and cocoa but for the few exceptions... Definitely not the rivers of pieces of eight one could conceive! (Sometimes the book mentions that pirates brought commerce to a hold, but without numbers and details I'd like.) On top of it, it turned out that Blackbeard was among the most humane pirates, very loyal, true to his word, savvy and not known to ever kill a prisoner, but spreading rumors in order to facilitate capture by fear...

Very good book, well researched, but some places are a somewhat tedious read.

Michael Jandrok says

Somewhere around this time of year (mid-January or just after one of the big cold snaps that pass for winter in central Texas) I usually get an urge to pick up a book that will put a smell of sea salt in my personal air. I freely admit to a love of coastal areas and good beach time, and I will typically begin to start thinking ahead to planning some playtime in the sand during the many warmer months to come.

Author Colin Woodard's "The Republic of Pirates" is a rollicking introduction to some of the most notorious of the Bahamian pirates and their consorts. It's a colorful romp through pirate history, and it's more interesting than anything that Hollywood could have conjured.

It picks up a few years after Stephan Talty's book "Empire of Blue Water" leaves off, and in fact I recommend reading that volume first as it really puts this book in its historical perspective. "Empire" covered the Henry Morgan era of privateering in the mid to late 1600's, while "Republic of Pirates" takes up the story during the "Golden Age of Piracy" some years later in the early 1700's. During this time, a group of pirate captains settled New Providence with the intention of setting up a pirate headquarters of sorts, a loose society of rogues and vagabonds committed to living life on the account, free to roam the sea lanes and cause as much mischief among the merchant fleets as possible.

Woodard provides good biographies of several of the main figures of the Golden Age, primarily Samuel

Bellamy, Edward Thatch (otherwise known as Blackbeard), and Charles Vane. He also profiles Woodes Rogers, himself a famous privateer and circumnavigator of the globe who eventually took position as Governor of the Bahamas and was charged with restoring order and safety to the shipping lanes by driving out the pirates who had settled the area. Of course many other pirates are given time as well, including some of the lesser known faces of Bahamian pirating such as Benjamin Hornigold and his rival Henry Jennings.

Woodard also covers a lot of the political climate that overshadowed the rise and subsequent fall of the pirate republic. England and the colonies had their share of colorful political characters as well, and some of the stories will amaze. The tale of Blackbeard's North Carolina capture at the hands of a Virginian "invasion" is worth the price of the book all by itself.

This is a fast paced book that moves along with full-throttle narrative force. The author certainly did his research, as the extensive notes and sources will attest to. There are many fascinating details and adventures within these pages, and the characters really come to life under Woodard's skilled prose. The last third of the book especially is a whirlwind of thrills as the pirate empire begins to collapse and we learn of the final fates of many of the book's protagonists.

I had a couple of small issues with the book. It would have been nice to have had a glossary included for those of us who are not familiar with nautical terminology and slang. Also, the dust jacket makes claim that the pirate republic somehow fanned the flames of the American Revolution, but that theme is never really explored much in the book. Benjamin Franklin makes a small token appearance, but it's only a passing reference at best. Small quibbles, though, as the book is very well written and satisfying otherwise.

Missy says

This book read like a high school book report, and what a shame because the subject matter is otherwise so fascinating.

I would have happily traded the 200-page, mind-crushingly dull descriptive laundry list of captured vessels (their total weight, their contents, and their captains' names) for *ten* decently written pages about the Jacobite rebellion, or about the historical relevance of the pirates' republic and how it influenced the American Revolution and the creation of our democracy.

My favorite "WHERE WAS THE EDITOR??" moment came from this sentence: "Thousands of pounds of provisions were ordered: lumber for houses and gun carriages....arms, cannon, and clothing for the soldiers; and enough salt, bread, FLOWER, and preserved food to feed the expedition's 530 people for more than a year."

Flower?

Really?

Nobody caught that?

A minor spelling mistake, sure, but clear evidence that the editors must have dozed off while reading this too.

Still looking for a good book about the golden age of piracy, if anyone can recommend something.

Andrew says

For a book about pirates it was surprisingly dull. I realize that the very nature of pirates means there is not much archival material to work with other than official documents that are very likely biased, but I came away from this book not much more enlightened than when I started.

The title is never really addressed, in my opinion. Mr. Woodard simply states the pirates wanted a base and made one on Nassau. So how, exactly, was it a republic by and for pirates? We never find out. At no point is there any mention of how such a society functioned. Was it rule by the strongest, most daring, the one with the best charisma? Don't know, it is never stated. Instead, we get a pretty complete rundown of ships taken.

And then the pirates themselves. While finding out about the real Blackbeard is interesting (he is not as bloodthirsty as the books I read as a kid made out), there is still way too much about the ships he captured and not enough about him. Charles Vane, another pirate, is mentioned in the introduction as a particularly violent one, but when, after much slogging, we come to the brief section about him it is just more captured ships.

It seems to me that Woodard had a great prospectus and sold the book based on it, and then found there was not much to write about. **UNDER THE BLACK FLAG** was much better. It talks more about the daily lives of the pirates and how the ship hierarchy was organized.

I wanted this book to tell me about how a society of pirates functioned, not an insurance adjustors claim list.

John Nellis says

After watching the last season of **Black Sails**, I wanted to learn more about the true historical pirates rather than Hollywood types. This book gives a very good overview of the golden age of Piracy. Black Beard, Charles Vane, Anne Bonney, Mary Reed and Calico Jack Rackham, as well as many other well known pirates make appearances in this book. It tells of the rise and fall of this golden age of Piracy and the stories of the pirates, and those that hunted them. I found the book very informative and very interesting. It goes over the whole era pretty well, in a very good presentation of stories and facts.

Nikola Jankovic says

Nakon što odgledaš **Mad Men**, **Sopranos** i **Breaking Bad**, nemaš mnogo ?emu da se nadaš od TV serija. **Black Sails** sam po?eo da gledam bez velikih o?ekivanja, nekako mi se ?inilo da te ono pravo interesovanje za gusare pro?e sa 10-11 godina. Ispostavilo se da se radi o jednoj od boljih serija "tamo napolju", sa sjajnim razvojem likova. Poput dobrih romana.

Naravno, istoriju gusarske republike u Nasau sam uzeo da ?itam zbog te serije. Ne bih rekao da sam potpuno zadovoljan. Ima interesantnih anegdota i donekle produbljuje ono što me je interesovalo o pojedinim kapetanima, ali nekako je autor uspeo da vrati gusare me?u ne naro?ito interesantan materijal. Nastala na osnovu obimnog istraživanja arhiva, kao i citiranja (vrlo popularnih) knjiga o gusarima iz 18. veka, zvu?i da

ima sve što je potrebno za uzbudljivo putovanje Karibima 1715. - 1720., ali ponekad za dobru istorijsku knjigu solidne informacije nisu dovoljne. A možda su me samo razmazili istori?ari koji znaju i sa re?ima: Beevor, Hastings i Kershaw.

Matt says

This is a fun, fascinating book! It doesn't go into this aspect quite as much as I would like, but the book does nicely delve into the political aspects of the Golden Age of Piracy. In many ways, it was a rebellion against the abuses of Empire, the horrible treatment of sailors in the British Navy and merchant marine, and the racism of the day. Though sometimes pirates treated captured slaves as "booty," often they would allow black slaves to join their crew as equals. In an era of harsh authoritarianism, pirate ships were little experiments in anarchist principles of organization: they would collectively elect their captain and could recall him any time except for in the midst of battle, and they mutually agreed upon their course of action. They usually restrained from excessive violence, keeping to their word, and only using the threat of violence to ensure the surrender of targeted ships, which often reduced the amount of violence used in the long run. Blackbeard was perhaps the prime example of this, using intimidation tactics to reduce the fighting needed. Lastly, the pirates largely shut down the machinations of Empire (British, Spanish) in the Caribbean for a period of time, and they had the beginnings of their own democratic "republic" (hence the book's title) before the forces of State and commerce crushed them.

This is a well-researched book, and you'll find a lot of stereotypes of pirates to be torn down. Here are many details about the lives of Blackbeard, Charles Vane, Calico Jack, Bellamy, etc., drawn from primary materials. An excellent book!

Bettie? says

This is the book inspiring the new NBC series with Blackbeard played by Hugh Laurie.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/...>

The untold story of a heroic band of Caribbean pirates whose defiance of imperial rule inspired revolt in colonial outposts across the world

In the early eighteenth century, the Pirate Republic was home to some of the great pirate captains, including Blackbeard, "Black Sam" Bellamy, and Charles Vane. Along with their fellow pirates—former sailors, indentured servants, and runaway slaves—this "Flying Gang" established a crude but distinctive democracy in the Bahamas, carving out their own zone of freedom in which servants were free, blacks could be equal citizens, and leaders were chosen or deposed by a vote. They cut off trade routes, sacked slave ships, and severed Europe from its New World empires, and for a brief, glorious period the Republic was a success.

Brendan Monroe says

The most boring book about pirates you'll ever read. Really though, it's shocking how uninteresting the whole thing is. I made it about 2/3 of the way through before finally coming to the realization that this was it - the damn thing simply wasn't going to get any better.

FAR too much of this is given over to lists. Lists of the provisions carried aboard a particular pirate ship, lists of the measurements of a particular type of ship, lists of the plunder taken from a particular ship. I forgot it all in a matter of minutes. I mean, seriously though, why go into that much detail? Even the descriptions of the sea battles lack intrigue. Simply put, nothing in this book is all that interesting.

I always feel bad when I fail to finish a book, but in this case reading it was just worse. This should have been great and the fact that it isn't can only be blamed on the author because the history itself is fascinating!

Brittany says

I'm not sure how I feel about this book. It gave a disclaimer talking about how people have this romanticized view of pirates and then went on to give a similarly golden picture of freedom-loving rebels, the forerunners of the American founding fathers who never killed anybody without need and, no doubt, nursed orphan puppies back to health. It also had one of the most skewed, over-simplified summaries of the Jacobite Rising that I have EVER seen outside of a third-grade textbook. It did get marginally better after the first chapter, but I didn't end up finishing the book. It was too much work staying alert at all times to watch for lazy scholarship for me right now.

Nicola Sheridan says

Wow, this was super informative book. If you're not really interested in the subject matter, you may find it a bit dry, but I personally found the attention to detail wonderful. This is a really gritty, close up look into the life and times of some of the world's most famous pirates. Sam Bellamy, Blackbeard, Henry Avery and Charles Vane to name a few. You certainly come away with the sense these were some very, very rough men, who lived rather short lives to their own code.

The issues around slavery and child labour during this era although not new to me were very confronting and there were a few bits I simply wished I hadn't read. However, Woodard sets the scene in with incredible thought - right down to the last, smelly, cruel, scurvy detail.

If you're interested in pirates, like real history with all its glorious plunder and sordid realities then this is an absolute must read.

Alex Telander says

THE REPUBLIC OF PIRATES: BEING THE TRUE AND SURPRISING STORY OF THE CARIBBEAN PIRATES AND THE MAN WHO BROUGHT THEM DOWN BY COLIN WOODARD: Welcome to the Golden Age of Piracy, at least that's what it can be considered from the pirates' point of view. The ten years between 1715 and 1725 was the time when pirates ruled the high seas of the Caribbean. This is their story

during those ten years when they had the times of their lives, and had it all brought to a halt by one man.

Woodard starts at the beginning, giving a brief history lesson from the seventeenth century, setting the scene and explaining the rise of piracy in this area of the world consisting of colonies controlled by countries on the other side of the world. It was a time when a captain with a faithful crew and a good ship could do whatever he wanted. Woodard explains in the prologue the distinction between three key terms that often are applied to those conducting themselves in piratical ways. Privateers: these were people who in wartime plundered enemy ships under instruction and allowance from their respective governments, and would then share the plunder between themselves and their governments. Pirates: naturally these people are similar to privateers, except they operated under no governmental control or order, and always kept the plunder for themselves. Buccaneers: these were pirates and privateers mostly from the seventeenth century operating out of the West Indies, were mostly French, and hunted cattle on the island of Hispaniola; the meat was dried on a boucan.

Woodard then goes on to create the setting of the Caribbean at the beginning of this ten year period, explaining the democratic nature of pirates in dividing plunder, giving captured slaves the option to remain slaves or become pirates. He dedicates a chapter to each of the important pirate captains, including Captain Bellamy, Captain Bonnet, and Captain Blackbeard, whose actual name was Edward Thatch, but because of his decision to never shave or trim his beard, letting it grow freely and wild, was given this epithet. At the same time Woodard discusses the history of Woodes Rogers who, after gaining acceptance from King George, put together his own flotilla of ships and mounted a campaign to stop these pirates and chase them down one by one. In the waning days of this golden age, we learn of the pirate women Mary Read and Anne Bonny, who would disguise herself in men's clothing. When they were to be executed, they pleaded that they were with child and under law could not be executed and so were able to live out their lives.

The Republic of Pirates is a sobering piece of nonfiction after the successful *Pirates of the Caribbean* trilogy as the reader learns it was rarely as fun and swashbuckling as Johnny Depp depicts it. Ultimately these people were breaking the law and many lost their lives; it was a harsh reality that is revealing and informative. It ultimately leaves one in contemplation over what life must have truly been like during this time in the deadly Caribbean.

For more book reviews, and author interviews, go to BookBanter.

Matt Smith says

The Golden Age of Piracy; we've all heard the legends of dreaded rogues at the helm of ships, swords drawn, canons ablaze, skull and crossbones flying high above. Legends are fun but the truth about the real pirates of the Caribbean is even better.

The Republic of Pirates is a well-detailed account of the stirrings of colonial piracy during the late 17th and early 18th centuries. The focus is on the more nefarious of pirates: "Black Sam" Bellamy, Charles Vane, Benjamin Hornigold and his apprentice Edward "Blackbeard" Thatch — The Flying Gang. The group's exploits may be reviled but it's difficult not to give a nod of credit to these men who's forward-thinking ideas about equality were decades before America's Founding Fathers took up arms against England.

Colin Woodard's research is thorough, acknowledging the difficult task of separating fact from fiction. There's no romanticism involved in retelling the history of the real pirates of the Caribbean. While the book

is a bit slow to start and definitely not for the casual reader, *The Republic of Pirates* has enough rich and colorful stories to keep your attention.

Robert says

This book has such an interesting premise: actually figuring out the history behind all of the images of pirates that are swirling around in our imaginations. The set up was particularly intriguing in its description of how terrible things were for most sailors in the early 18th Century, and how much more equitable and democratic life on board pirate ships was. But for me the book got a little too bogged down in its treatments of the main characters, which were hard to keep straight and didn't end up interweaving as much as the early parts suggested. I would have liked more description of the Caribbean world and life in the Bahamas and a bit less play by play on the main characters. Still a fascinating read though, and a very worthwhile project.

Adam says

I ended up picking up this book because I realized I didn't really know much about the historical pirates. Despite my rating, I really do appreciate what this book attempts to do. It really attempts to correct a lot of the mythology concerning the pirates in caribbean, which is probably exacerbated due to the movies and Disney Ride that was eventually decommissioned. I had fond memories of this ride from when I was a child and I quite enjoyed the first few movies.

That being said "The Republic of Pirates" is a very thorough account of the history of piracy in the early American colonies. I really tore through the first 150 pages or so of this book. The information was exhilarating and interesting. Woodard appeared to be a great writer for conveying all this information and I really thought this whole book would be a quick read for me. I was worried about reading other reviews who said this book was boring, because, for me, it was anything but. Unfortunately, as I made it into the heart of piracy the book really slowed down for me. The mythology concerning lots of dangerous naval engagements is very exaggerated. Here the book turns into a sort of catalog of what certain pirates took from merchant vessels. There's no real hunt for treasure or taking Spanish gold that was cursed by the natives. I'm glad I walked away with the new knowledge that piracy wasn't all canon fire and sword fights... but I feel like the book could have left out a lot of the immense details. I'm sure a proper historian would want to know all about these different things, but as a lay reader on this topic, it made the book slow going on my end.

The last couple chapters were fairly interesting though. As the pirates began to be hunted and tried across the Americas the interest perked up again. The catalog of takes became less and less and the story focused on those who tried to get away or those who didn't. The political intrigue between all the nations involved in the Caribbean is very interesting to read about as well and creates a pretty fascinating backdrop on how quickly a lot of the nations were trying to just get some kind of territory in the "New World".

The name of the book sort of feels mistitled, because this really doesn't discuss any kind of "republic" set up by pirates. The closest you get is some discussion on places like Nassau, but for the most part this really serves as a general history of piracy in the Caribbean, not of any specific republic founded. Perhaps it's a nod toward the Pirates like Vane, who really wanted to wrest control of the region, but never really succeeded in doing so.

In the end, if you're looking for a deep account of the actual history behind the legendary Pirates like Calico Jack, Black Beard and so on, this is a great book. If you are really into that history I think you would even find the boring sections fascinating. Even though I gave this a mediocre rating, I am still rather glad I read the book... it just took me forever to complete it.

Mike Wigal says

Argh! It's the pirate life for me!

Andres Palomo says

When most people today think of pirates, they are quick to assume similarities with the ones in current media, such as Jack Sparrow or Captain Hook. However, “The Republic of Pirates” covers much more than what many expect.

The premise is on the rise of the “Pirate Republic,” a Pirate-controlled state centered in the Bahamas that centered on the idea of the “pirate code,” a unique code of conduct used by pirates to govern their ships and crews democratically. The Republic of Pirates also centers on the rise of the Flying Gang: led by Edward “Blackbeard” Teach, Benjamin Hornigold, and Charles Vane, with all of them becoming the most infamous pirates of the Caribbean. Also, we are given the viewpoint of the opposition to the pirates: Privateer-turned-Governor Woodes Rogers, who made it his duty to eliminate pirate influence in the colonies.

In light of reading this, I must admit that I was surprised by the captivating nature of Woodard’s work, and it had kept me turning pages in anticipation. This may partially be due to Woodard researching on the pirates, including the infamous “A General History of the Robberies and Murders of the Most Notorious Pyrates,” as well as the more accurate tomes of Robert Ritchie and Bryan Little. Also, the discussion of the Flying Gang’s origins, as well as Rogers’, as privateers, along with the conditions many privateers and sailors faced in England: social stigmatism, terrible conditions, brutal mistreatment, and even forced impressment into the Royal Navy, are in stark contrast to what we see in pirate media today. Even with the treatment, however, I found myself most entranced by the discussion of less-known pirates, such as the Gentleman Pirate Stede Bonnet, and “Calico” Jack Rackham, both of whom would meet their demise by the Crown.

Yet despite my admiration for Woodard’s work, I did find it to slow down near the climax of the novel, along with the bloated mentioning of what the pirates obtained during their time in the seas and the ultimate influence Nassau had on the colonies were barely mentioned. Ultimately, “The Republic of Pirates” is more of a catalog of the exploits of the Caribbean pirates and Woodes Rogers, but it develops as the pirates are hunted down and betrayed, turning into a historical witch hunt.

Overall, the occasional neglect on some areas prevent me from giving a 5 star rating, but it’s enthralling nature and clear showing of research has impressed me enough to give The Republic of Pirates a 4 rating as it still kept me interested on how both the Flying Gang and Woodes Rogers met their end in different ways, as well as their ascension to power in the Caribbean. If you are a history buff, then this is a must-read, and if you’re just interested in the Golden Age of Piracy, this is also a must read.

Nathan Johnson says

Truth, not speculation.

I found this book incredibly informative. Much of what I thought I knew about pirates was entirely false.

Woodard builds this book around solid facts. Facts backed up by relevant journals and ledgers. In many cases he directly refutes previous stories with honest facts and dates.

The downside to this is that the book CAN become very dry in parts. The most detailed documents relating to pirates would be the claims lists for lost cargo. This means that you do get plenty of detailed lists of what each pirate stole, sank or otherwise ruined.

The only other downside I saw to this book was how it was organized. Woodard makes an attempt at going in a chronological fashion. Unfortunately many of the pirates in the book are active at the same time. This means you can expect to follow one from 1715-1719, then backtrack to 1716 to follow another pirate to 1720. It tends to get a tad confusing with all the different events taking place.

At some points this book DOES touch on other historic events that took place, but at some point Woodard has to draw the line and cannot cover all the events as much as they deserve. This IS a book about pirates, and not the history of English royalty.
