



The Bloody Black Flag: A Spider John Mystery

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1722--aboard a pirate ship off the American Colonial Coast.

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On a ship where every man is a killer many times over, how can Spider find the man who killed his friend? There is no law here, so if justice is to be done, he must do it. He will have to solve the crime and exact revenge himself.

One wrong step will lead to certain death, but Spider is determined to look into the dying eyes of the man who killed his friend, even if it means his own death.

The Bloody Black Flag: A Spider John Mystery Details

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Author : Steve Goble

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From Reader Review The Bloody Black Flag: A Spider John Mystery for online ebook

Viva says

It's been a long time since I read a pirate book and actually this one is not bad. It's simply written, easy to read and follow. At 235 pages I finished it in a couple of days. I thought this book had a lot of potential. I liked the characters, the setting and the swashbuckling. I thought the author did a good job of putting the reader in a pirate ship and the time and technical details were accurately written.

But I didn't really like the story that much. The story really only revolved around one thing, which became clear about 40% into the book and which I thought limited the story. But I liked everything else. I would give this book 3.5 stars which would round up to 4 stars. The way this book is written, there will be a sequel and I would definitely give that sequel a try.

I got this book as a free ARC.

Spoilers: That one thing is this one mysterious object that the Captain possesses. It's supposed to be worth a lot of gold. It's stolen by someone aboard the ship. The course of the story changes when this thing is stolen and it becomes the backdrop of the rest of the book. The story ends after Spider discovers who the thief is but the reveal is done without any suspense. This is much more a pirate book than a "mystery" book.

Lesa says

"Spider John Rush resigned himself to the hard truth - he was returning to a world of cut and thrust, hide and pounce, blood and smoke, pitch and tar." No one who reads Steve Goble's debut mystery, *The Bloody Black Flag*, will want to sing "Yo Ho A Pirate's Life for Me." Goble's book is intense, action-packed, and gritty and bloody. It's also rich in historical detail about a pirate's life. And, it's a terrific mystery with nothing similar. Maybe Patrick O'Brian's seafaring novels. Maybe "Pirates of the Caribbean" movies. But, I can't think of another pirate novel in mystery fiction.

After a fight and knifing in a Boston tavern, Spider John Rush and his friend Ezra escape by joining the crew of a pirate ship, *Plymouth Dream*. For Ezra, though, it's one bad turn after another. Someone on the ship recognizes him, and whispers start that Ezra's mother and grandmother were hanged as witches during the Salem madness. And, when Spider John wakes to find Ezra dead one night, everyone shrugs and says he was drunk and it was an accident. But, Spider John suspects murder, and he's determined to find justice for his dead friend.

Now, Spider John just has to stay alive long enough to find a killer amongst a crew of seventy. And, every man onboard, including John himself, has killed before. As ship's carpenter, Spider John has the chance to move around the ship and listen to whispers. Those whispers only grow louder when the ship goes to battle against another ship. But, with each death on the ship, Rush fears the killer will not live to face Spider John.

Goble's debut novel introduces a fascinating character in a historically interesting setting. Spider John Rush's backstory leads from Nantucket and a whaling ship to a pirate ship in 1722. There are stories of other pirates and other ships in this brutal, atmospheric novel. If you like a compelling page turner, bloody, but filled with

historical detail, try Goble's mystery, *The Bloody Black Flag*.

Viviane Crystal says

What child has read a book about pirates or seen pirate movies and imagined living such an adventurous, constantly thrilling life. Well, that hunger can be sated again with Steve Goble's novel about Spider John, a man who feels safer as a pirate at sea than a landlubber always having to watch his back for fear of the hangman or jailkeeper because of past deeds. The time is 1722 and the place is the Colonial Coast of America. Spider John and his good friend, Ezra, have escaped capture ashore and are now part of the crew of the Plymouth Dream, with a captain who would not think twice about killing any crew member if his rules are broken.

Early on, a young, bitter looking "bloke" keeps eying Ezra and it turns out he believes Ezra is the descendant of witches and therefore to be burned at the stake or hanged. This is an area of Massachusetts still carrying shadows of the earlier "witches" frenzy that wound up with rash charges made and confirmed, followed by death. Imagine Spider John's devastation when Ezra is found dead in his room.

Spider John is determined to find the murderer, but in between his investigation steps are battles to be fought against attackers of their ship. These are the swashbuckling battles that are expected by the reader and do not fail to satisfy with their minute descriptions of hand-to-hand combat as well as sword-fighting duels that are life and death matters.

There is no law on a pirate ship and Spider John has no intention of capturing Ezra's killer but instead will kill him. Surprises aplenty will thrill the reader as this search continues! Nicely done and hopefully the first of many more Spider John stories to follow!

Col says

Synopsis/blurb.....

Agatha Christie meets Patrick O'Brian in the first book in a new series of swashbuckling historical mysteries featuring Spider John Rush, a most reluctant pirate.

1722--aboard a pirate ship off the American Colonial Coast.

Spider John Rush never wanted to be a pirate, but it had happened and he'd learned to survive in the world of cut and thrust, fight or die. He and his friend Ezra knew that death could come at any moment, from grapeshot or storm winds or the end of a noose. But when Ezra is murdered in cold blood by a shipmate, Spider vows revenge.

On a ship where every man is a killer many times over, how can Spider find the man who killed his friend? There is no law here, so if justice is to be done, he must do it. He will have to solve the crime and exact revenge himself.

One wrong step will lead to certain death, but Spider is determined to look into the dying eyes of the man who killed his friend, even if it means his own death.

"Steve Goble's debut novel is a rollicking tale of murder and mayhem. He tells a pirate tale like no one else has ever done before. It's unique, original, and all told with the deft hand of an emerging master storyteller. The best thing about this novel? There will be more Spider John books. I can't wait to go on another pirate adventure with this likeable, but dangerous, crew."

--Larry D. Sweazy, award-winning author of *Where I Can See You*

"Pirate noir? Captain Kidd meets Sam Spade? With *The Bloody Black Flag*, debut novelist Steve Goble boldly launches a seafaring sleuth subgenre sure to enthrall historical mystery lovers. The first Spider John Rush mystery is a strikingly original blend of pulp magazine-style nautical adventure tale and the traditional whodunit, rich in period atmosphere and dense with white-knuckle tension."

--Craig McDonald, Edgar(R), Anthony, and Macavity Award-nominated author of *Head Games*

My take....

Fair to say this is my first pirate mystery and if Steve Goble keeps churning them out like this one, probably not my last. Best book ever? No but a lot here to like.

Initially we start with a double act of Spider John and his friend Ezra, reluctantly enlisting on the Plymouth Dream under the command of Captain William Barlow. Ezra has history with some of their fellow crew members. Superstitious lot that they are, his witch's blood makes him a target. He's a hex and a jinx and before too long he's dead; murdered in the middle of the night.

Our young pirate, Spider John alone and friendless on a hostile ship heading for the Caribbean swears to avenge Ezra's death and so our adventure-cum-mystery begins in earnest.

John has his day job as a carpenter, tending to minor repairs around the ship. He tries to watch and scrutinise the rest of the crew, looking for hints and a slip which will reveal the identity of Ezra's killer, but for most of the journey it's a fruitless exercise. He forges some friendships and alliances, while keeping his wits about him in a suspicious environment. As well as the mundane, there's the usual pirate work of attacking and ransacking hapless vessels they encounter on their voyage.

Our ship's captain has an agenda and the dominant force of personality to keep order among our unruly crew. Other ambitions are at play here. What is the vessel that keeps shadowing and dropping them, shadowing and dropping them? As well as seeking John's killer and avoiding being captured and hung by the Crown there's a further puzzle to solve. What object has been stolen from the captain, which has provoked his rage?

It's a great setting and while I can't vouch for the authenticity of the boat and whether Goble nails all the details of the everyday routine on a sailing vessel in the early 18th century, it seemed real enough to me. The confines of the ship makes for a tense and claustrophobic read.

John is an interesting character, brave in battle, loyal to a fault and with a back story that is hinted at, but never fully explored – a wife and child on dry land that have somehow become separated from each other. (I think she was his wife?) A further book or two may fill in those gaps, hopefully.

I really enjoyed this one and it's quite unlike anything I've previously read. I think the last book I read that featured the high seas was a Carl Hiaasen book where a scheming husband flipped his wife overboard,

assuming he was rid of a great burden. We have a totally different nautical mystery here.

4 from 5

The Bloody Black Flag is Steve Goble's first book.

He has a website here. <https://stevegoblefiction.wordpress.com/>
Facebook page here <https://www.facebook.com/Steve.Goble....>
and is on Twitter - @Steve_Goble https://twitter.com/Steve_Goble

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OpenBookSociety.com says

<http://openbooksociety.com/article/th...>

The Bloody Black Flag

A Spider John Mystery

By Steve Goble

ISBN#9781633883598

<https://stevegoblefiction.wordpress.com/>

Brought to you by OBS Reviewer Daniele

Synopsis:

1722—aboard a pirate ship off the American Colonial Coast.

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Review:

The Bloody Black Flag, the first novel featuring Spider John Rush, is full of plundering, mutiny, theft, and murder. With heavy handed swashbuckling, and a little mystery thrown in, it is an action packed pirate ride.

Spider John and his friend Ezra find themselves running from trouble to the open arms of the pirate ship Plymouth Dream. Neither man wants anything to do with pirate life and just desire to make it back home to their families, but one must do what one must to survive. Ezra quickly becomes suspected of being bad luck for the crew, so when he is found dead on deck everyone assumes he had too much to drink and fatally hit his head. Everyone, that is, except Spider John. He is convinced that Ezra met with foul play and makes it his mission to pinpoint the killer and avenge his friend. As the carpenter for the ship, he has the unique opportunity to move about the ship at will and investigate.

These are not the pirates of Disney movies and romance novels. Goble gives readers a gritty picture of the brutality of life on a pirate ship. Spider John is exceedingly likable and shows great intelligence in his investigating. However, there is not a lot of investigating going on. Spider John spends much of his time ruminating over his friend's fate and hoping that the killer does not die in battle before he has a chance to kill him. In fact, it is easy to forget that The Bloody Black Flag is a murder mystery since there is much more emphasis placed on life on the ship. I guessed whodunit rather early in the story, and the secondary plot concerning Captain Barlow's treasure takes over the second half of the book. Everything does tie together nicely at the end, but the climactic revelation of the murderer is anything but.

Spider John is an interesting character, and I would like to know more of his back story. I do think the premise of a Pirate Detective is a good one. I just hope that it is a sustainable, perhaps if Goble moves the action off of the ship for the next book. Some of the other characters are also intriguing, specifically fourteen year old Hob. Other characters, including Dr. Boddings, are much harder to determine their trustworthiness. Captain Barlow and fellow pirate Peter Tellam are truly nasty and easy to dislike.

I enjoyed The Bloody Black Flag as long as I treated it like a bigger-than-life historical escapade and not a straight up murder mystery. I will definitely give the next book in the series a try when it publishes.

Paul Bennett says

The life of a pirate is a hazardous one, fraught with many dangers. How much more so when you are sailing with a captain who is a bit maniacal. Spider John Rush and his best mate Ezra join the crew of Plymouth Dream and find themselves at odds with many of their shipmates, a situation that thrusts Spider John into a mystery to be solved and revenge to be meted out. The tale is engaging and certainly exciting. Life aboard a pirate vessel is presented in fine detail; the characters are believable; the plot lines are nicely filled with surprises. All in all it is a page turning read that keeps the reader on the edge of their seats as mysteries are unraveled as Spider John seeks answers and revenge. 4.2 stars

Jessica says

Thanks to Prometheus and Seventh Street Books for the advanced copy in exchange for my honest review!

Historical fiction and it's about pirates? Count me in! **THE BLOODY BLACK FLAG** by Steve Goble is set in the 1700's aboard a pirate ship trying to solve a murder. Spider John Rush and his friend Ezra both knew living the lives of pirates was a risk and that they could be facing death at any moment. However, when Ezra is found dead. The crew shrugs it off as a drinking accident, but Spider John thinks he was murdered. Rush is on the case and he vows to seek revenge for his friend's death.

This had a good history of pirates within its pages. I've always enjoyed pirates, whether it's in stories, movies, or in history. Goble does a great job setting the scene and painting a picture for the readers. The life of a pirate is a dangerous one! I loved how it was a unique setting and that the murder mystery was being solved on the ship. For it being a shorter novel (around 250 pages) there was enough packed into the story without getting too chaotic and it didn't leave things unanswered. With shorter novels that can be difficult at times.

Overall, if you like pirates and historical fiction, with a dash of murder thrown in, then you'll want to pick this one up!

I give this one 3.5/5 stars!

Roger Royer says

I started this book thinking that it would be an unexpected place to have a murder but after reading the book you realize that murder was second nature to pirates even on the same ship. Spider, our hero, is likable enough that you want him to solve the crime he is so focused on even though it gets him into more than enough trouble.

The Brazen Bull says

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Author: Steve Goble

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“On land, he could always feel the looming noose. The crowds, the doorways, the alleys all could hide crouching dangers- an agent of the law, an eyewitness to past misdeeds, or just a man with a knife and a need for bread. On the sea, Spider could see most hazards from a distance, and could meet them with sword and gun in hand if he could not outrun them.”

Setting off from the coast of New England in October 1722, Steven Goble's newly published historical mystery, *The Bloody Black Flag*, takes the reader on an adventurous ride filled with superstition and suspense, danger and death.

Goble's debut, the first in a hopefully long series, opens in media res, with Spider John Rush and his friend Ezra forced back to pirating aboard the Plymouth Dream. But when Ezra is murdered in the black of night, Spider takes a silent vow of revenge and is driven to uncover his killer. On the ship, Spider is faced with investigating a cast of eccentric and dangerous suspects, including the diabolical Captain Barlow, while at

the same time fighting for his life on the sea.

Not just “another pirate on the account,” Spider is a complicated but likable hero. Although he prefers peace over piracy and prays before going into battle, Spider’s dark side resurfaces when it is necessary in order to survive. With Ezra gone and no one he can trust until the killer is exposed, Spider is ready to do what he must.

Read the full review here: <http://thebrazenbull.com/books/book-r...>

Vincent says

Never really read many pirate books but this one definitely kept me engaged. Fast moving story without much lag time. A little more detailed descriptions in some areas and it gets 5 stars !

Alyssa Maxwell says

When Spider John's good friend and partner in crime turns up dead on the deck of the pirate ship Plymouth Dream, he suspects immediately it was no accident and vows to find the killer. But this is no easy feat when one is dealing with all manner of ruthless men, living, as they say, on the account. It's typically each man for himself, and few are willing to see Ezra's death avenged, especially since many of them believe they're better off without the man. This is no run of the mill mystery, to be sure! And it's not a cozy, so reader beware that the historical details of life on a pirate ship are authentic and at times brutal. Still, the pirate code of honor, and Spider John's personal code of honor bring heart and soul to the story and assures the reader justice will be done. The writer has done amazing research and readers will feel the ship rocking beneath their feet and the deck shuddering with the explosions of the cannonballs. Great fun in the tradition of swashbuckling, seafaring adventures!

Chandra Claypool (wherethereadergrows) says

I'm not one for historical type books, but add some pirates and you've got my interest! This book is about Spider John's quest to find his best mate's, Ezra's, murderer. It looks like a drunken accident but Spider knows better and is on a quest for vengeance.

Historical detail of a pirate's life is interweaved with the murder mystery and a search of a stole piece of treasure. I found this not to be your every day fun pirate read but more of a realistic gritty, gruesome and fight for survival at all times kind of read instead. I think I prefer to watch movies about pirates rather than read about them - mostly because of the speech - it's more fluid to hear than to try and voice in my head.

Overall a fun, easy book filled with action, murder, pirate, treasure and battles. At less than 250 pages, if you're looking for historical pirate information along with a couple story lines, you'll be pleased for this quick read.

Cindy Vallar says

All Spider John Rush wants is to see his wife and child in Nantucket, but fate always draws him back to the sea and piracy. Such is the case when he and his friend Ezra reach Boston. To evade the law, they must accept an offer to join Captain William Barlow's Plymouth Dream. These pirates need of able mariners like Ezra, but they especially prize John's carpentry skills. Although old hands with the sweet trade, joining a band already formed means he and Ezra are outsiders. Further alienating them from the others is a tattooed man, who knows the blood of a witch runs through Ezra's veins. Having survived the sinking of a ship on her maiden voyage makes him an even greater pariah.

Unlike other pirate ships, Captain Barlow runs Plymouth Dream with an iron fist. He's not opposed to listening to others, but he and only he makes the decisions. He puts no store in superstitious drivel, so as long as Spider and Ezra do what is expected, they are welcome aboard his ship.

Soon after they depart New England waters, Spider John finds Ezra dead. The consensus is that his death is the result of over-imbibing and melancholy. John knows there is nothing accidental or suicidal about his friend's demise, but aboard a ship of cutthroats, only a fool starts slinging accusations of murder around. Spider vows to find the killer and make him pay. Solving the crime with only two clues – knowing the killing device was made from the wood of an apple tree and the silver flask left to disguise the death – further complicates his task, especially since he must find the killer before they reach their destination. To help him in his search, he enlists the help of Hob, the young cabin boy who goes everywhere on the ship without raising undue attention. The more they hunt, the more names are added to the suspect list. As if the fates are amused by Spider's fruitless investigation, they spice it up with a phantom frigate that doggedly pursues the Plymouth Dream and the theft of a priceless object that Barlow intended to sell to a mysterious Frenchman.

The Bloody Black Flag is the first tale in the Spider John Mystery series. Spider is more a thinker, than a man of brawn and action, although readers who prefer ship chases, boarding prey, and mutinies will find those woven into the warp and weft of this tapestry. The wide variety of characters makes for an interesting cast, all of whom are running away or hiding from something. Figuring out which is the murderer will keep readers guessing until the end, and it may be as surprising to them as it is to Spider. Goble expertly weaves pirate lore into this historical mystery and his gift of words easily transports us back to October 1722 and the deck of the Plymouth Dream.

Amelia says

A mystery series set in the world of 18th century piracy...yes, please! I liked the world building and descriptions of life on the outlaw seas. The rich, historical detail of a pirate ship and crew made this a unique and engaging read. Hopefully, Spider is reunited with Hob and the surviving Red Viper's crew in the next book. I'm certainly looking forward to it!

If anyone has suggested read alikes (I've read Patrick O'Brian) for this book, I'd love to hear about them.

Liz says

I've done a lot of reading but I've never come across a who-done-it set aboard a pirate ship in the early 1700's. I found it an exciting and fun read that I finished in one evening. This book is full of action, brutality and lots of interesting characters. I can't wait to see what Spider and his band of men are up to in their next adventure.
