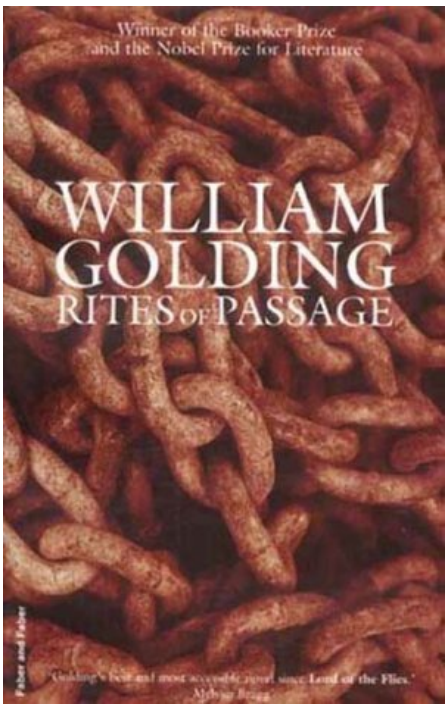

Rites of Passage

William Golding

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Rites of Passage William Golding
In the cabin of an ancient, stinking warship bound for Australia, a man writes a journal to entertain his godfather back in England. With wit and disdain he records mounting tensions on board, as an obsequious clergyman attracts the animosity of the tyrannical captain and surly crew.

Rites of Passage Details

Date	:	Published 2001 by Faber and Faber (first published 1980)
ISBN	:	9780571209439
Author	:	William Golding
Format	:	Paperback 278 pages
Genre	:	Fiction, Historical, Historical Fiction

From Reader Review Rites of Passage for online ebook

Anne says

If you rate a novel on Goodreads, you indicate how much you liked it and not how good you thought it was. Rites of Passage is one of those novels that I think is good, but I can't exactly say I liked it very much. The story simply didn't grip me, and I couldn't even keep some characters apart because so little was said about them. I felt there was much more in it than I got out of it; so two stars because it was "ok" in terms of my enjoyment, but in a more general way, it would deserve three, I think.

Nick says

I found Lord of the flies a bit better and easier to read - perhaps because the language employed in Rites of Passage is hardly the usage of modern English (or is it because I am no sailor myself?)

In any case, another remarkable book by Golding ..... I'll retain the last reflections:

"Men can die of shame .... Like all men at sea, who live too close to each other and too close thereby to all that is monstruous under the sun and moon".

Hugh says

Original review 13 Oct 2015:
A tragicomic tale that takes place entirely on a sea voyage in the early 19th century, this is an entertaining book, more about the class system than about the sea. This was a Booker winner, which raised my expectations, and I'm not entirely sure it met them, and it didn't leave me feeling I should read the rest of the trilogy.

Postscript added 1 Feb 2017:
The Mookse and the Gripes group is revisiting the Booker shortlist for 1980, the year this one won, and all of the other three shortlisted books that I have read so far (i.e. Earthly Powers, A Month in the Country and The Beggar Maid) impressed me more than this one did. I wonder whether this was a compromise choice agreed to honour an established writer whose other books may have merited the prize more than this one

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Dave Belleville says

I should have known, since this is William Golding, that it would be about bullying. If I had realized what this book was going in, I might have given it a higher review. However, I was led to believe that I had bought a rousing, swashbuckling sea novel and so, of course, was pretty disappointed. That being said, for what it is, it's very well done, and is an especially good read in light of how much press bullying is getting. Just wasn't what I was looking for.

Jonathan Pool says

I read Rites of Passage as the final book from the 1980 Booker shortlist as part of The Mookse and Gripes revisit of that year.
Saving the best (it was the winner) till last?? Not a bit of it.
The author of the enduring classic **Lord of the Flies** is possibly allowed an indulgence or two... but to my mind Golding used up all of his accumulated literary goodwill with this one.
How on earth did this win the Booker Prize? One can only imagine the politics (and the bitching with Anthony Powell was well publicised) that went on in the background.
Rites of Passage is so ponderous, and the two primary characters, Talbot and Colley, are so wooden and one dimensional.

It's actually quite easy to write comedy novels about the English Class system and the weird foibles of yesteryear (judging from classic Wodehouse, Waugh, Powell and many others), but this is not Golding's forte.
On British TV there was a recent series called **Life on Mars** which took a tongue-in-cheek look at 1970s policing and attitudes. The thing is, the original dramas of the 1970's, available on repeat, such as **The Sweeney**, are broadly the same as the derivative spoofs, but better, because they are the original.
If I want to wince at the misogyny, the pomposity, of the times, I'm better off reading C.S. Forester's Hornblower, or George MacDonald Fraser's Flashman series, or just read read the diaries of Samuel Pepys.

Mo says

Golding is - as usual (I might even take a leap and say always)- astonishing, this time in a short piece of storytelling which somehow leaves us not knowing what to think while aware of exactly where the author wants us to be. And boy, are we there.

There is less of darkness and pessimism in the general feel of the book than in Lord of the Flies, which in a way gives it all the more punch, but although this book is similar in message, this is not just a new way of saying what has already been said.

I couldn't possibly recommend Rites of Passage less.

By the way, great title, Mr Golding.

Lisa says

Rites of Passage is Book One of a trilogy that was made into a BBC serial called To The Ends of The Earth, and it won the Booker in 1980. It's a comi-tragic sea journey and a coming-of-age tale about Mr William Talbot, a young aristocrat on his way to Australia to take up a government position procured for him by his wealthy godfather.

En route, this rather naive, pompous and yet good-hearted young man learns a lot about the world and

himself. As in Lord of the Flies, an isolated community tests the boudnaries of civilised behaviour, and is found wanting. Mr Colley, an irritating and fawning parson is victimised and humiliated, subjected to barbaric rituals in the crossing-the-line ceremony, and then worse. When he wills himself to die of shame, Talbot is called on to help by Lieutenant Summers, a man who has worked his way up from the ranks - but in this decisive moment risks his career by demanding of Talbot (his superior in British class-ridden society) that he take some responsibility for what has happened.

All efforts fail, and Talbot finds himself compromised by Captain Anderson's 'enquiry'. Having boasted about his journal of events, Talbor has made Anderson aware of the need to cover up his own aggressive behaviour towards Colley - because it was that which made others on board feel that they could bully him with impunity. The enquiry is a whitewash and Talbot is left with no recourse but to lie to Colley's family about the truth.

The TV series went on with other events including the near loss of the ship in the Antarctic, boarding by another ship, a romance for Talbot and the death of the athiest Pettigrew. I'd like to read the sequels on which these are based if they're as good as this one was, deftly written in a C19th seafaring style and showing Talbot's painful self-growth towards maturity.

I finished reading and journalled this book on 23.2.2008.

Lisa Hill, ANZ LitLovers (Cross-posted at The Complete Booker).

Ryan Ward says

2.5 stars. A lesser Golding novel (hard to believe it won the Booker prize). Gets much better in the second half with the change of perspective but is missing the abstract hallucinatory prose of his best work because of the chosen narrative device to tell the story first person through journal entries.

Fabian says

These here are the theatrics of people aboard a ship on way to the land Down Under. At page 100, after a bunch of introductions are made, the narrator's own mindset is finally set adrift like the ship herself. The plot opens, and then kinda, well, nothing unexpected happens i.e. absolute zero greatness. This was the dude who wrote "Lord of the Flies," perhaps the most horrific non-horror book of ALL time!! But this one's a dud. The vessel society is not compelling whatsoever... notable stand-out characters? None. Even the sick parson is unremarkable; for a better depiction of a "Man of the Cloth in Crisis", see the Whiskey Priest from "The Power & the Glory."

Irmak says

“Ki?i ba?kalar?n?n yapt?klar?yla de?il, kendi yapt?klar?yla kirlenir.”

·Karen· says

Well, William Golding, sir. You achieved something that not many men have done. You brought me very close to tears.
This novel really produced an amazingly strong emotional response in me. Odd, in that it keeps the reader at arm's length for much of William Talbot's narrative. Young William is a prig and a stuffed shirt and a snob and awfully skilled at self-deception and there was no greater desire in my ungenerous heart than for him to get his comeuppance. When it arrives though it is in the realisation that he has been unknowingly, and yet not entirely blamelessly instrumental in the kind of public humiliation that a sensitive man cannot survive. So Talbot's pained self-knowledge that I so wished upon him comes at the cost of a man's life. Does that make me complicit?

Issicratea says

I kept changing my mind about this novel as I was reading it. I liked it initially; then it began losing me, to the extent that I wasn't sure I was going to finish it; then it pulled me up short with a devastating narrative coup, and I was utterly gripped for a while. Then there was the disappointment of the explanatory-dénouement passage, which all felt a little clunky—but Golding still managed to pull off a last surprise, in the form of a memorable final line.

The unevenness of the book begins to seem explicable when one reads the circumstances in which it was written. Golding wrote the first draft of *Rites of Passage* extremely quickly, in about a month, while he was engaged in a titanic struggle with another novel, Darkness Visible. And he was an alcoholic, or as near as makes no difference. His publishers, Faber, were clearly not going to suggest Golding revise *Rites of Passage*, having waited ten years for *Darkness Visible*—and who knows, if he had, whether some of the book's eccentric brilliance would have been lost in the process of neatening it up.

One triumph of the book is the voice in which it is narrated, which is that of an aristocratic youth, Edmund Talbot, setting out for an appointment in the colonial administration of Australia towards the end of the Napoleonic Wars. The narrative is cast as a shipboard journal addressed to Talbot's godfather—clearly a major nob of some kind, to the extent that even the dyspeptic Captain Anderson reluctantly keeps his tyrannical instincts in check when Talbot is around. Talbot is given enough wit and human curiosity and self-consciousness to encourage us to identify with him, so that his occasional (or not-so-occasional) forays into obnoxiousness are disconcerting. The whole book is set up to make the reader complicit in the dark tale of bullying that lies at its heart (thematically, the book revisits Golding's breakthrough novel, Lord of the Flies, published a quarter of a century earlier, in 1954).

Golding makes splendid use in this novel of the intrinsic spatial compression of its seaboard setting. It's the claustrophobia of the ship that makes the human sacrifice enacted on board so inexorable, and gives it such a paradigmatic feel. Golding is very good on the practicalities and logistics of life at sea (he was a keen, though ill-fated, sailor himself, almost drowning with his entire family when his pleasure boat was mown down by a freighter in the English Channel in 1967). He is also in love with naval language, although he is more user-friendly in is deployment of it than someone like Patrick O'Brian, having helpfully chosen a landlubber as his main voice, so that all the sea talk is effectively subtitled.

I realize this review is a little cryptic in terms of plot, but this really is a novel you're better off reading in

complete ignorance of the plot, if you can possibly manage it. All I can say is that at one, dramatic point in the novel, we hear a different first-person account of the same events that Talbot has been narrating. This is a tricky move for a novelist to pull off, but it works magnificently here, for me at least.

Here’s the last line of the novel, which serves as an accurate thematic summary:

With lack of sleep and too much understanding I grow a little crazy, I think, like all men at sea who live too close to each other and too close thereby to all that is monstrous under the sun and the moon.

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da-wildchildz says

With lack of sleep and too much understanding I grow a little crazy, I think, like all men at sea who live too close to each other and too close thereby to all that is monstrous under the sun and moon.

Last line from Rites of Passage by William Golding. After the excellence of Lord of the Flies, I was expecting more of the same from Golding. Unfortunately, it was not to be. Don’t get me wrong, Golding writes with flair but the characters and plot just didn’t engage me in the same way as Lord of the Flies. It drifted into tedium and I couldn't wait to finish it. Perhaps the curse of the Booker Prize has struck again?

Syme says

Loved it. A very intriguing story about the social life on a voyage. Superbly written, as the story develops it becomes a real page turner. I finished the first half in a week, and the second half in a day. I can't wait to start Close Quarters, the second part in the trilogy.

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stupidus says

It may be fancy pants, but it's still crap. Yes, sir.

Steve says

William Golding's *Rites of Passage* is one of those books you can't say much about, since it ruins the tale. On surface, it is about Edward Talbot's voyage to Australia in 1812. Talbot is a pompous young man, and aristocrat, who happens to keep a detailed journal. As the pages go by, you see glimmerings of maturity, and a sure eye for recording details.

The book starts out in a comic vein, one that had me thinking early on of the *Flashman* novels. (I never thought of Golding as being funny before.) But you know Golding is going places well beyond George MacDonald Fraser. In the end, the tale becomes a profound meditation on Good and Evil -- in every man. The focus in the story is a sad sack clergyman, who is humiliated before all. It's not a pretty story, but it does resonate beyond its brutalities. There is considerable hide-the-ball in the narrative, which often left me

wondering just what had happened. So much so, that getting toward the end I wondered if Golding was opting for a "Rashomon effect." Not that there's anything wrong with that powerful literary device, but Golding, in the last few pages, goes deeper. I don't know if Golding was a Christian or not, but he's heading (there are two more books to follow) into the kind of psychological and spiritual terrain only occupied by a few: Melville, Conrad, Dostoevsky. That's powerful company.

Billierosie Billierosie says

William Golding’s Rites of Passage makes for a strange, haunting read. A ship bound for the New World, sometime in the 19th century. Witty observations, as the narrator weaves his journal. A self conscious narrator -- he wants to impress his reader.

But then something happens. A violation so horrible that the narrator can scarcely put it into words. Shame, is perhaps the word to sum up this crime of violating the innocent.

It's about culpability too -- we are none of us innocent, it's a question of how guilty.

As with William Golding’s "Lord of the Flies" the action takes place in isolation -- far away from the bigger picture of society. The ship is a microcosm, a world within a world. The narrator and his fellow travellers try to keep to the rules that they know. The sensible rules, the ages old English rules, the rules that work -- but out on the creaking ship, on the vast ocean, something primal, something feral stirs.

Yes, it is possible to "die of shame."

We are at the beginning of the 19th century. The Napoleonic wars are coming to an end and young Edmund has joined a heterogeneous crowd of émigrés on board an old decommissioned warship, for a long voyage to Australia where he is to become an important man in the administration.

The early narrative takes the form of a journal that Edmund Talbot keeps on the way to Australia – ostensibly to amuse and inform his godfather back in England. He fills his description of life on an old warship at the end of the Napoleonic era with witty observations on the bad manners of his fellow passengers, salacious gossip and details of his own sexual encounters. It's light, frothy and – apparently – pleasantly superficial.

“The place: on board the ship at last. The year: you know it. The date ? Surely what matters is that it is the first day of my passage to the other side of the world…”

As the narrative unfolds, Edmund’s disdain for others, throws a light on the old class prejudices that still loiter today. The ship's community indulges it's boredom and thirst for a victim, and endorsed by the captain's own prejudices, finds its soft target in a Chaplin.

True to Edmund’s character, and the nature of his undertaking, the journal reads as if it has been written in haste. So it's no surprise to learn that Golding wrote the first draft of the book in just one month. It reflects Golding’s genius to be able to recreate such convincing early 19th-century prose so fast and with such elegance. A talent that takes on almost eerie transcendence; Golding's said that he simply transcribed conversations he was hearing in his head to create the novel's fluid dialogue.

Yet this easy reading should not be mistaken for levity. Golding insisted in interviews that this book was "funny" and proved that he wasn't the "dreary old monster" he was often made out to be. But he was being disingenuous. For all of its humour, “Rites of Passage” turns into a most disturbing book.

It would be easy to mistake the first 50 or so pages of Rites of Passage for a straightforward social comedy.

The comedy relates to one Reverend Colley, who gradually begins to dominate Edmund’s narrative. Initially, Edmund invites his reader to laugh at Colley – and it's hard not to. He is – as Edmund paints him – an absurd, obsequious man, ridiculous in his parson's clothing, his hacked-about haircut, his daft wig and his fawning over "gentlemen".

Edmund describes the parson;

“turning to ascend the ladder to the afterdeck, but seeing me between my young friends, and perceiving me to be of some consequence I suppose, he paused and favoured me with a reverence. Observe I do not call it a bow or greeting. It was a sinuous deflection of the whole body, topped by a smile which was tempered by pallor and servility as his reverence was tempered by an uncertainty as to the movements of our vessel.”

Edmund’s comedic description of the parson discomforts us with Edmund’s only too very English snobbery. It is tinted with a sneer. And much as we join in the laughter at the ridiculous Colley, we view Edmund with suspicion. We “know” his sort; Edmund is very much like ourselves.

For Edmund, everything is an inconvenience; everything that is, which disturbs his comfort. For the Reverend Colley, everything is a wonder. The mighty ship, the sudden clemency of the weather -- he sees the beauty of creation. We learn this, when Edmund reads Reverend Colley’s own journal. How two men, can view the same vista so differently.

The sailors and émigrés get Colley horribly drunk -- it is unlikely that he has ever been drunk before, and Edmund’s description of him, attempting to bless the passengers, while singing “joy, joy, joy” is very funny. It is the last time in the book, that Golding permits us to smile.

Colley dies of shame – starving himself after he remembers another, as yet mysterious, act he performed in his cups. The horrible feeling arises that we as readers have been complicit in his bullying and degradation.

Golding turns the screw tighter, when he introduces Colley's letter to his sister, which is, in a way, Colley’s own journal. Edmund’s coxcomb gone wrong, is transformed into a sympathetic, sweet-natured man who is terrified at smearing the dignity of his office by wearing the wrong outfit and whose wild haircut is explained by the fact that his sister tried to cut it one last time before he boarded ship and they parted, but was crying so much that she could hardly see what she was doing.

Every laugh we've had at Colley's expense turns to ashes in our mouths, every indignity he suffered seems barbarous.

The narrative turnaround is a wonderful display of writing skill, as Golding shows that Colley suffered many other cruelties that Edmund failed to observe – or ignored. The revelation of the details of the mysterious act that so mortified Colley are vague to the reader – but by this late stage Golding has done enough to overwhelm us completely.

The reader recalls Edmund's observations of Captain Anderson. The Captain has a pathological hatred of the clergy believing himself to have been robbed out of his inheritance by one.

Because he enrages the Captain, who likes passengers never to come near him, the naval warrior decides to exert his power over the crew by picking on the parson.

With the Captain's blessing, the parson becomes an open target for abuse, and things come to a head when he appears ramshackled and drunk on the deck and is led away to his cabin in disgrace, after urinating in front of the shocked ladies. No one can tempt him out to talk. Slowly he withers away refusing food and drink and dies on an evening when the captain has ironically invited some guests, including Edmund into his cabin for dinner.

The Captain is forced to thaw because of the announcement by Edmund of his journal, which will be sent to his godfather, with the implied threat that the bullying will be revealed to a wider audience. The Captain calls for agreement that Colley died from a low fever and Edmund is forced to go along with that conclusion.

The only one who could have saved the parson is Captain Anderson. But his hatred of the robe in general and Colley in particular, sets an example to officers and crew alike and the reverend becomes a target for abuse. The Captain has the social status to reverse the flow of things but does not assume the responsibility which goes with it.

The letter/journal is replicated by Edmund in his journal; it is offered by way of an explanation. It is also offered as an act of contrition.

"And I? I might have saved him had I thought less of my own consequence and less of the danger of being bored!"

The reader quickly understands the reason that Colley's fellow passengers keep a distance from him. His profession as a clergyman marks him out as different; so does his sensitivity. Colley writes about the sailors manning the mighty ship. He writes in beautiful, homoerotic language. He sees the sailors as beautiful.

"They go about their tasks, their bronzed and manly forms unclothed to the waist, their abundant locks gathered in a queue, their nether garments closely fitted but flared about the ankles like the nostrils of a stallion. They disport themselves casually a hundred feet up in the air…"

Colley is a voyeur. He takes pleasure in gazing at the male form.

In a later passage in the journal, Colley tells the reader of how he entered Edmund's room, while Edmund is ill and sleeping. He sees Edmund as a Christ like image.

"The young man lay asleep, a week's beard on his lips and chin and cheeks - I scarce put down here the impression his slumbering countenance made on me - it was as the face of the ONE who suffered for us all - and as I bent over him in some irresistible compulsion I do not deceive myself but there was the sweet aroma of holiness itself on his breath! I did not think myself worthy of his lips but pressed my own reverently on the one hand that lay outside the coverlet. Such is the power of goodness that I withdrew as from an alter!"

The letter which ends at the Parson's death is followed by an interrogation, a cursory inquest, with which the reader tries, unsuccessfully, to fill in the blanks in the understanding of what has happened. They prevaricate when questioning Billy Rogers, one of the suspected perpetrators. They use innuendo.

"Come Rogers. You were the one man we saw with him. In default of any other evidence your name must head the list of suspects. What did you sailors do?"

Rogers response is: "What did WE do, my lord?"

Finally Captain Anderson says it like it is.

"Buggery, Rogers, that's what he means. Buggery."

At last, now we know. But is this enough for a man to will himself to die?

The interrogation is promptly closed, when the enquiry unexpectedly risks implicating some officers.

So now we know the whole story?

Not quite. Mr Prettiman relates a conversation that he had with Billy Rogers.
"…he'd knowed most things in his time but he had never thought to get a chew off a parson!"

So that's why Reverend Colley "died of shame," for an act of fellatio. Not for something that was done to him, but for what he did.

"…Colley committed the fellatio that the poor fool was to die of when he remembered it.
Poor, poor Colley! Forced back towards his own kind, made an equatorial fool of -deserted, abandoned by me who could have saved him-overcome by kindness and a gill or two of the intoxicant-
I cannot even feel a pharisaic complacency in being the only gentleman not to witness his ducking. Far better I had seen it so as to protest at that childish savagery! Then my offer of friendship might have been sincere rather than--"

"Rites of Passage" was first published in 1980. It is a moral parable, and is the first of a trilogy. It's about atonement and sins that can never be forgiven; only lived with.
William Golding won the Booker prize in 1980. In 1983 he was awarded the Nobel prize for Literature.

Roger Brunyate says

Jonah

The original cover

Spurred by reading *Lord of the Flies* (1954) as a teenager, I bought Golding's next two novels on impulse, found them much heavier going, so abandoned the author until I read the first book again a few years ago. What a pleasant surprise, then, to find his *Rites of Passage* (1980) once more easy to read, indeed almost comic in tone. Although later extended into a trilogy, *To the Ends of the Earth*, this first volume was originally intended as a stand-alone novel, and works perfectly well on its own.

The novel, which takes place in the first quarter of the nineteenth century on board a vessel of the Royal Navy bound for Sydney, is in the form of a journal. The writer, Edmund Talbot, writes for his noble patron, who has secured him a post as aide to the Governor of New South Wales. Very conscious of his station, he is surprised that the Captain did not greet him personally, and is aggrieved at the size of his cabin, which he calls a hutch) but he soon resolves to make the best of it:

> I have resigned myself therefore, used Wheeler for some of this unpacking, set out my books myself, and seen my chests taken away. I should be angry if the situation were not so farcical. However, I had a certain delight in some of the talk between the fellows who took them off, the words were so perfectly nautical. I have laid Falconer's *Marine Dictionary* by my pillow; for I am determined to speak the tarry language as perfectly as any of these rolling fellows!

There is much to smile at in Talbot's genial superiority, his attempts to "speak Tarpaulin" as he calls it, and his inevitable petty comeuppances, as when he blithely asserts that he is a good sailor only to get sicker than all the rest. But we are more than willing to see the ship and other passengers through his eyes. There is a painter named Brocklebank and his supposed wife and daughter (the one too young and the other too old). There is a noted Rationalist named Pettiman, who patrols the decks with a blunderbuss determine to shoot the first albatross he sees, in order to prove the Tale of the Ancient Mariner mere superstition. And there is a newly-fledged parson named Colley, an obsequious creature who "not only favours me with his *révérence* but tops it off with a smile of such understanding and sanctity [that] he is a kind of walking invitation to *mal de mer.*

Yet it is with Colley that Golding first begins to show the darker side for which he is famous. For ever since Jonah, seamen have been superstitious about having priests aboard, and the terrifying Captain Anderson seems to make this superstition personal. Rev. Colley falls foul of the captain, is banished from the quarterdeck, and soon begins to feel like a pariah on board. Despite his dislike, Edmund makes some attempt to help him, but he gets distracted by the over-telegraphed charms of Zenobia Brocklebank (the so-called daughter). So Colley's fall, when it comes, is both terrible and alone.

I go back in my mind to reading *Lord of the Flies.* There is the same repurposing of a traditional genre (there *Treasure Island* or a school story, here a nautical yarn), there is the same deceptive lightness of touch, and most importantly the same attention to those special conditions in which normal social conventions break down and human beings reveal the savagery never far beneath the skin; it is easy to see Colley as another Piggy. But this is a more personal book; the darkness is less atavistic, less a matter of what others do, more a question of what lurks in one's own soul.

Edmund Talbot is not the only journal writer on board. It appears that Colley has also been keeping a log, in the form of a long letter to his sister, and this takes up most of the last third of the book. What is interesting is how these two separate accounts complement each other, giving us insight into the tormented mind of the young parson, telling us more about the less-than-gentlemanly officers, and—despite the fact that Colley virtually worships him—making us reevaluate our protagonist, Edmund Talbot. You could imagine Melville writing this short novel, in terms of its moral issues and naval setting. But Golding seems that much smaller, less absolute. This one is a sordid affair, from which nobody emerges entirely clean. Not quite another *Lord of the Flies,* still less a *Billy Budd* or *Heart of Darkness.* But those set a high standard indeed, and this is still

a very fine achievement.

4.5 stars.

Courtney H. says

Ugh. This will be my shortest review yet, because saying too much just ruins it. This book was absolutely brilliant, and utterly awful, and I really hated it. Which was, I'm assuming, Golding's purpose. And the plot movements that made it brilliant and awful work best when they unfold naturally, so this is where I'll stop. Other than to say that Golding's narration is fantastic: he is excellent at writing the journal of a pompous man-child (the book is about a young, wealthy man on his way to a bought position in the colonies, traveling via ship and writing a journal for his wealthy godfather and benefactor). His narration is perfect. I do not usually like the journal-entry voice, but it is well suited for Golding's story.
There is so much more that I want to say, but like I said, it would ruin it. So I'll just very begrudgingly recommend it highly, and then go into my cave and hate on humanity's suckiness a little bit.

Lobstergirl says

An epistolary novel that becomes comedic and then tragic, after beginning as neither. Edmund Talbot, a pompous young aristocrat, writes journal entries to his godfather narrating the events aboard a ship headed to Australia in the early 19th century. Golding's language is flowery, and the pretentiousness is compounded by the italicizing of certain words in the text, mostly marine terms. We are introduced to a variety of passengers and crew: the obsequious Reverend Colley, whom nearly everyone despises (he brought to mind another parson, Mr. Collins from *Pride and Prejudice*), the overly made-up actress Zenobia Brocklebank, whom Talbot ~~forcefully seduces~~ basically rapes in his cabin (Reverend Colley, walking by, assumes the noises he hears are Talbot wrestling with his faith, and praying), a tyrannical captain who hates all clergy and treats Colley like dirt, and several rude seamen. It ends up being a story about bullying; (view spoiler) I spent most of the book thoroughly not enjoying it, but the last quarter of the novel tied everything together and gave the story a meaningful structure. Still, I'm not yearning to read the next two books in the sea trilogy, which apparently all take place on the same ship.
