



Pirate Latitudes

Michael Crichton

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Jamaica in 1665 is a rough outpost of the English crown, a minor colony holding out against the vast supremacy of the Spanish empire. Port Royal, Jamaica's capital, a cut-throat town of taverns, grog shops, and bawdy houses, is devoid of London's luxuries; life here can end swiftly with dysentery or a dagger in your back. But for Captain Charles Hunter it is a life that can also lead to riches, if he abides by the island's code. In the name of His Majesty King Charles II of England, gold in Spanish hands is gold for the taking. And law in the New World is made by those who take it into their hands.

Word in port is that the Spanish treasure galleon El Trinidad, fresh from New Spain, is stalled in nearby Matanceros harbor awaiting repairs. Heavily fortified, the impregnable Spanish outpost is guarded by the blood-swiller Cazalla, a favorite commander of King Philip IV himself. With the governor's backing, Hunter assembles a roughneck crew to infiltrate the enemy island and commandeer the galleon, along with its fortune in Spanish gold. The raid is as perilous as the bloody legends of Matanceros suggest, and Hunter will lose more than one man before he finds himself on the island's shores, where dense jungle and the firepower of Spanish infantry are all that stand between him and the treasure.

With the help of his cunning crew, Hunter hijacks El Trinidad and escapes the deadly clutches of Cazalla, leaving plenty of carnage in his wake. But his troubles have just begun. . . .

Pirate Latitudes Details

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From Reader Review Pirate Latitudes for online ebook

Arah-Lynda says

Welcome to the good ship Cassandra! She will take you on exhilarating adventure on the high seas of the Carribean, looking for unknown treasures on a Spanish war ship. You will meet her Captain and come to know his ways and why he finds himself surrounded by a crew of unforgettable characters that you are going to love getting to know. And know them you will. This is great stuff that just keeps happening page after page.

I guess in the end, it is what is missing from this story that I just cannot stop thinking about. Port Royal and all it's people, not to mention Mantanceros and what surely must have transpired there. These stories, sadly remain untold and their characters are summarily dismissed. I do so wish I could have gotten to know them and the events that occurred while the Cassandra was at sea.

That folks would have been a truly great book! Such remains our loss.

Shannon says

First off, I have to say this is only my second Crichton novel. I read Jurassic Park back when the movie came out but haven't felt like reading anything else by him since. That being said, I enjoyed Pirate Latitudes. The novel does have its shortcomings but you have to wonder if this is because it wasn't truly finished. It's hard to say. This book was found on Crichton's computer after his death so it's possible that this wasn't the intended finished product. I liked it though and I'm curious to see how it's adapted for film, Spielberg grabbed up the rights before the book was even published!

I think the main problem I had was the lack of character development. It was hard for me to keep track of all the different pirates, sorry, *privateers*, and I completely forgot who the final villain was, vaguely remember him from the beginning. There's a lot of gruesome parts to the book that I think most people would have trouble with, but honestly didn't bother me, I think I'm just twisted. But there were some really creative ways that people were killed!

The story was pretty crazy and action-packed and it's one of those where you are on the edge of your seat wondering what's going to happen next or what else could possibly go wrong for Captain Hunter as his crew. It was a different type of novel than I normally read and it was a nice divergence for me. It also really makes me want to go back and try something else from Crichton.

All and all, a good final effort.

Bradley says

I had been looking forward to Pirate Latitudes ever since I'd learned of its existence. Michael Crichton knows (or knew, I suppose) how to craft an exciting novel. Crichton however peaked with Timeline, one of his best books, grounded in an historical setting. That's what I had been expeting to get with Pirate Latitudes.

Unfortunately I was mistaken.

Pirate Latitudes is the story of Charles Hunter, privateer, and his crew of misfits as they attempt to take the Spanish galleon El Trinidad. The premise is simple and lends itself to an exciting read. However, Hunter and his crew fall prey to one ridiculous plot point after another and by the novel's end all credulity has fled for safety. From a daring escape on an impregnable fortress to a hurricane to an attack from a kraken, Pirate Latitudes is an endless string of disasters.

This novel can be summed up as The Italian Job circa 1665. It's heist novel meets Pirates of the Caribbean. In fact, this book could easily become the next 'Pirates' movie. While reading this novel I couldn't help but wonder if Crichton had any intention of publishing it had he lived, or at the very least if it wouldn't have undergone major revision first.

An interesting premise with unfortunate execution. It's still worth a look if for nothing more than to see just how ridiculous things can get.

murph says

"If only I'd have encrypted my hard drive...."

You have to think Michael Crichton's ghost is mouthing those words.

Written in 2006 and published only after being digitally pried from the late author's cold, dead computer - Pirate Latitudes comes across as a vanity project never intended to see the light of day.

I'm sure it was great fun to write, but Crichton's attempt to inject research into worn out pirate clichés falls far short of a good story. Several parts of the story read as if they were first drafts - the prefatory description of the sword battle between the hero and his nemesis - or the bland recitation of Cpt. Hunter collecting on his debts near the finale.

A lot is thrown into the mix: Privateers! Galleons! Cannibals! Saucy wenches! Even a pointless encounter with a sea monster! But forcing your readers to eat everything on the pirate buffet doesn't make for a good meal. I suspect Mr. Crichton knew this book was due for a major rewrite - but his publishers knew the Crichton name would only sell for a short time longer.

Pity. I was hungry for a good pirate yarn. This wasn't it.

Jason Koivu says

Pirates! Huzzah! What could possibly ruin a rollicking, randy, riotous pirate adventure?...Plenty.

Crichton died before this was published and in all likelihood he wasn't finished with it. I would like to think that if he'd lived he would have worked on this more, rounded out the characters, twisted up the plot a bit, and run it through the edit mill a few times before handing it off to the publisher. I mean there are some

passages towards the end that are on the very edge of not making any sense.

I picked this book up on a lark, having never read Crichton before, but having a love of pirate adventures. The adventure part was alright. It's how the two star rating was obtained. However, this probably shouldn't have seen the light of day.

P. Lundburg says

Scanning the reviews of this fantastic pirate novel, I'm a bit stunned at how many low ratings there are. Two important things for those reviewers to bear in mind: 1) this is way outside Crichton's normal 'genre,' and so readers will look askance at this venture into uncharted waters (couldn't resist the pun!), and 2) the book was found on Crichton's computer after he died, so it may well be that he wasn't finished with it.

On that last point, I agree with some reviewers that the book lapses into being slow in places. Again, perhaps these were sections Crichton intended to revise (and let's not forget that the book would never have made it to print without the publisher's editors getting a go-round at it... yes, they have now that it was found and published, but not with the benefit of the back-and-forth that happens between authors and editors), but even so, I think even the slow sections contribute to the story. Characterization is very difficult to do in the midst of action, so most writers do most of that in what could be called "slow sections" of a book. Nonetheless, it is fair to level criticism at these slow parts.

In terms of the story itself, it's a fantastic story about a Spanish, gold-bearing ship in the 1660s that is holed up in a garrisoned Spanish island port. The protagonist commandeers the vessel and a new set of fast-moving adventure segments begins. Not that the bulk of the book was void of adventure prior to that--it wasn't. I love the characterization Crichton builds, and that is the one part of this story that I would say DOES fit with standard Crichton: the way he builds his characters with attention to their history as well as (without being too overt about it) their psyche.

On the whole, this is a great book. For pirate story lovers, this is a must-read. For Crichton fans, it is a must-read. For the average reader . . . well, you can do a lot worse, I can assure you of that.

Matthew says

I have seen many reviews critical of this book, but I thought it was a great adventure with interesting characters and twists. Perhaps people are critical of the fact that this is unlike Crichton's other titles, but much like *Eaters of the Dead* and *The Great Train Robbery*; it is great, well researched historical fiction. (Note: between *Latitudes*, *Eaters*, and *Train Robbery*, I liked this one the best)

Rusty says

This is not the way for a talented writer to go out. If Crichton had lived and had the time to revise, edit, etc., I'm sure this would have been much better.

Kandice says

I was so happy to hear they were publishing this book. Crichton's death was so sudden and unexpected I literally mourned the untold stories we lost with his passing.

Told as something of a more "realistic", less "Disney" Pirates of the Carribean, Crichton weaves the tale of Captain Charles Hunter's greatest raid of a Spanish treasure ship. From the first chapter, we are placed in the adventure and it ends up being a quick, fun ride.

The story was pure Crichton, well told, detailed, obviously well researched, but the beginning left something to be desired. Usually with his books I can quickly choose a character to root for as well as one to hate. The plot of this book didn't suffer, but the little character quirks and ticks I've come to love him for were missing. I hope this was because he wasn't quite finished.

I've never written a novel, so don't know if this is possible, but the "Crichton character magic" showed up from page 187, chapter 27, Monkey Bay. The entire flavor became richer, more detailed, exciting. Is it possible he had already fine tuned the second half of the book and was planning on doing the same to the first half? It seemed that way.

Had he lived, I bet this could have been a five star book. The story itself was worthy of it now, but the lack in the first half was worth a star less for me. I will miss him.

Jay says

First, did you know that Michael Crichton is dead?!? This is the first of two books published posthumously, the second being Micro.

I've read a little Michael Crichton in the past - Sphere was wonderful, Prey was OK, Timeline was intriguing but ultimately corny. I have no idea what lead me to pick up Pirate Latitudes, but it was fun. It is a strong entry in the Pirates versus Ninjas debate, and lends a much needed blow for the Pirates.

Set in the Carribean (primarily Jamaica) in the mid 1600's, the protagonist is swashbuckling (I've used that word twice in two book reviews now) privateer Captain Hunter. At this point you may be asking yourself what the difference is between a pirate and a privateer. Turns out pirates are honest about their plundering, privateers do it under the guise of official cover.

You know why I loved this book? Because I didn't have to think. There's no theme. There's no moral. There's nothing but a good old fashioned adventure story. Cannons. Swordfights. Explosions. Escapes. Hurricanes. Hell, there's even a damsel in distress. In deference to his avowed profession as a novelist, Crichton obliges the reader with a nod towards a plot twist, though if it were a snowboard trick it would barely be a 180. Fast forward to the end: impossible mission completed, loot secured, damsel liberated (if you know what I mean), and bad guys dead.

It's fun. Read it.

Steven says

Not good, not bad, just meh.

? Sh3lly - Grumpy Name-Changing Wanderer ? says

Huh, this kind of has low ratings (3.36 avg????) for a Crichton book. But it's on sale at Amazon for \$0.99 (20 October 2015). I already have a copy of it but wanted to share in case anyone is interested?

Calypso says

"Em Território Pirata" levou-me novamente para um mundo de aventuras no mar. Desde pequena que sempre adorei livros deste género e já li alguns, mas confesso que já algum tempo que não me chegava nenhum às mãos.

É um livro sem pontos mortos e, no qual, acompanhamos o capitão Charles Hunter numa aventura perigosa, repleta de perigos e reviravoltas, algumas que me apanharam totalmente desprevenida.

O único ponto que não gostei no livro foi a introdução do Kraken, que acabou por dar um toque demasiado fantasioso para um livro deste género.

Werner says

Since I greatly enjoyed Crichton's *Timeline* and *Jurassic Park* (though I have yet to review the latter), I hoped to find a work of similar quality in this posthumous novel, though I knew that its ratings here on Goodreads varied widely. As usual, my reaction is my own; and as is sometimes the case, it falls somewhere between the extremes.

Crichton, of course, was best known for his science fiction. Here, he branches out into historical fiction, in a tale that doesn't really have any SF elements at all. (Some readers might assume that the references to a "kraken" are an exception to this; but the description makes it clear that the creature envisioned is actually a giant squid, a marine animal that really does exist, and is thought to be the source of a good deal of pre-modern "sea monster" lore.) But his time-travel novel *Timeline* also has a mostly historical setting, and (though I haven't read it myself) his *Eaters of the Dead*, despite having an SF element, is also set in a historical milieu. So this isn't a total departure from the rest of his work; and it exhibits the same obvious concern for meticulously detailed factual research, and the same zest for gripping, high-intensity action that's evident in the other Crichton works I've read. In those respects, it doesn't disappoint. Some reviewers complain that protagonist Capt. Hunter faces too many varied and successive dangerous challenges for the plot to be "realistic." But we're dealing here with an action novel; jeopardy and derring-do is what it's about, and from that perspective, it isn't a defect that it has a lot of it. The characterizations are vivid, and the 17th-century Caribbean setting is very well realized.

Obviously, this is pirate fiction (a sub-genre of historical fiction I haven't read much else of, except for *Treasure Island*, though I have a few other pirate novels on my to-read shelf). So by definition, this is focused on characters who attack and forcibly plunder other people's ships. To be sure, Charles Hunter and others of his ilk are particular about drawing a distinction between themselves and "pirates" --if you call them that, you may get challenged to a duel! They stress the fact that they're "privateers;" they don't prey on the ships of their fellow Englishmen, only on those of the national enemy, the Spanish. (To be sure, in 1665, England and Spain are nominally at "peace," which creates interesting legal difficulties for privateers; but in practice, in the Caribbean the agents of both countries prey on each other's shipping with as much abandon as they would in a declared war.) To be fair, privateer captains and crews might think of themselves as fighting the enemy in a war, not as seagoing outlaws. And even novels dealing directly with pirates as such aren't necessarily morally nihilistic; light shines most clearly against darkness, so dark moral environments often serve to bring out the goodness of decent characters who inhabit them.

For me, though, the main problem here is that light is largely nonexistent in the darkness that Crichton creates. Like Stevenson, he definitely does NOT romanticize piracy; on the contrary, he depicts both the physical and moral grunginess of the "Pirate Latitudes" with a remorseless realism that isn't necessarily a bad thing. But unlike Stevenson's cast of characters, *none* of those introduced here are really very likeable; self-interest, greed, and lust are pretty much everybody's main motivations for behavior, from the governor of Jamaica on down to his lowly serving maid, and much respect for human life would be as uncommon an attitude as genuine belief in Santa Claus. We're very much in the same uniformly dark and morally pessimistic landscape of classical noir; Port Royal has more in common with Sam Spade's San Francisco than the passing of nearly three centuries would make you think. Yes, Hunter thinks he has a certain "honor," some characters are far more evil than others (the psychopath Cazalla being the worst), and some have legitimate grievances and tragic formative circumstances that we can sympathize with. We can root for Hunter and his crew, given their opponents' villainy, and even give some of them a degree of respect. But in general, this isn't a novel that has a very positive "moral tendency," or an optimistic or positive message. That differs from the other Crichton novels I've read, which have a real moral vision. An added criticism would be that all females here, from professional prostitutes to married upper-class socialites, are pictured as sexually promiscuous and insatiable. This isn't "realism," any more than an imaginary universe where nobody's genuinely good is realistic; rather, it's pretty much a fantasy concocted by males (of whatever age) who are mature enough physically to have sexual desire, but not mature enough psychologically to control it responsibly. Finally, there are also several places where sloppy editing is evident, or cases where characters know or do something that Crichton wants them to for plot purposes, but realistically wouldn't, IMO. (And while a person can hide underwater for a long time by breathing through a hollow reed placed in the mouth, he/she would first have to be in a place where there would actually be access to a reed.)

Bad language here isn't any worse or more abundant than you'd expect, given the type of milieu these people inhabit; and while there's a fair amount of sex, it isn't explicit. Violence here is pervasive, though, and frequently pretty graphic; if this were a movie (and it's reportedly been optioned for one), it would definitely be rated R on that account.

A final note: despite the realistic-sounding details of the short Epilogue, that explains what eventually happened to the various surviving characters, none of the Epilogue is factual. Hunter and all of the other characters are fictional creations, and the plot isn't directly based on any real events.

Sr3yas says

Welcome to a brand new episode of '*Late night show with Books*'. Our guest for today is..... **Pirate Latitudes!!!!**

PL: Hrrrrrrrr

S: PL, how do you feel about being out here in the world? Most of the people believe you were not supposed to see light at all.

PL: Gods blood! Who are these rats? but...Well, Sreyas, there is some truth in it. I have been working with Mr.Crichton for more than three decades on this story. Alas, We were nowhere near a serviceable tale. And with Crichton's death, all hopes were lost for me.

S: But then, you were 'found'.

PL: Yes, someone poked around and found me. They released me to the world to bring back sizable booty for them.

S: Haha, because you are a pirate.

PL: [Takes the sword out] The politically correct term is Privateer.

S: Uh, my sincere apologies, PL. [Awkward pause] So the total amount of pages is just over 300?

PL: Aye, and it is divided into six parts.

S: Oh, can you tell us more about these parts and what it contains?

PL: The first part introduces the characters and direction of the story. The story opens in English settlement of Jamaica in the year of 1665. The Governor of that settlement finds out about Spanish Galleon containing valuable treasures staying in island fortress of Matanceros. The Governor summons Capt. Charles Hunter, a privateer, and hires him to raid the impenetrable fortress. He agrees for a price and sets out to recruit a team.

S: Oh, Like The Great Train Robbery. You get an impossible task, a great planner, and a dedicated team.

PL: Aye, and what a team it was. We got a French assassin, Gunpowder specialist with three fingers missing, a woman pirate who cross dresses as a man, a helmsman who is also a barber-surgeon and a huge black man who..

S: Let me guess, he acts as the muscle.

PL: Aye, and he is mute.

S: What?

PL: and he is very superstitious.

S: That's a terrible team!

PL: Oh, shut your hole. Anyways, our heroes set sail on ship Cassandra at the end of part one.

S: Sounds like an intriguing story. Well, tha..

PL: In part two, the ship gets chased by a mysterious black ship.

S: Nice!

PL: In part three, our crew enters the Island of Matanceros.

S: This is really interesting. I love the fact that this was inspired by true events! Sounds very realistic and..

PL: At the end of part three, the crew glimpses a KRAKEN.

S: A what?

PL: In part four, the crew fights for their life, there are canons, plans, hurricanes, a hint of witchcraft.

S: Huh?

PL: IN PART FIVE WE HAVE HURRICANE, CANNIBALS, POISON DARTS, KRAKEN ATTACK.

S: Kinda overstuffed, isn't it?

PL: IN LAST PART, WE HAVE BETRAYAL, JUDGMENT, REVENGE, SHARKS,

S: WHY ARE YOU SHOUTING?

PL: BECAUSE THAT'S WHAT PIRATES DO!

S: I THOUGHT IT WAS ABOUT PRIVATEERS.

PL: IT SAYS PIRATES IN THE GODAMN TITLE, YOU DUMBASS.

S: THIS IS A STUPID BOOK.

PL: [Cocks the gun] WHAT DID YOU JUST SAY?

S: How the hell did you get that thing through security? You know what, let's just cool down. Deep breathes, deeeeee breaths. Now tell me what you felt at the end of your journey.

PL: It started out just fine, but after we crossed seas, it became a journey to hell itself. When it all ended, I was relieved. Needless to say, I won't be taking this ride again.

S: Hey, That's exactly how I felt about this dumb book.

PL: *[Cocks the gun and shoots Sreyas in his face]*

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Sreyas's Ghost: Totally worth it.
