



Commodore Hornblower

C.S. Forester

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In this ninth volume in the Hornblower series, the incomparable Horatio Hornblower, recently knighted and settled in as squire of the village of Smallbridge, has been designated commodore of his own squadron of ships, led by the two-decker "Nonsuch" and bound for the Baltic. It is 1812, and Hornblower has been ordered to do anything and everything possible, diplomatically and militarily, to protect the Baltic trade and to stop the spread of Napoleon's empire into Sweden and Russia. Though he has set sail a hero, one misstep may ruin his chances of ever becoming an admiral. Hostile armies, seductive Russian royalty, nautical perils such as ice-bound bays, assassins in the imperial palace - Hornblower must conquer all before he can return home to his beloved new wife and son, as his instructions are to sacrifice every man and ship under his command rather than surrender ground to Napoleon.

Commodore Hornblower Details

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From Reader Review Commodore Hornblower for online ebook

Matti Karjalainen says

C.S. Foresterin "Kommodori Hornblower" (Otava, 1948) on neljäs - tai kronologisessa järjestyksessä yhdeksäs - osa historiallisten meriromaanien sarjassa, jotka kertovat brittiläisestä meriupseerista Horatio Hornblowerista Napoleonin sotien melskeessä.

Napoleon valmistelee hyökkäystä Venäjälle. Niinpä kommodoriksi ylennetty Hornblower komennetaan eskaadereineen Itämerelle, jossa hän ehtii muun muassa mitellä voimiaan ranskalaisen sotalaivan kanssa, estämään tsaari Aleksanteri I:n murhayrityksen sekä ottamaan osaa Riian piiritykseen. Suomalaiseksi mainitulla Braun-tulkilla ja herralla nimeltä Carl von Clausewitz on kirjassa myös oma roolinsa.

Foresterin tuotantoon entuudestaan tutustuneelle "Kommodori Hornblower" ei tarjoa sinänsä mitään uutta ja yllätyksellistä, onpahan nyt vaan oikein viihdyttävä vanhan ajan meriromaanini, jossa laivat ovat puuta ja miehet rautaa. Lukija joutuu välillä kamppailemaan meritermistöä ja ajoittain hieman kömpelöltä vaikuttavaa käännöstä vastaan.

Lisa (Harmonybites) says

Hornblower was the inspiration for Star Trek's Captain James Kirk, as well as Cornwell's Sharpe. Hornblower is more cerebral and socially awkward than Kirk, more educated and refined than Sharpe. In his own right, Hornblower is certainly an engaging and complex character and the series is an interesting study in leadership, and a fascinating portrait of life at sea in the age of sail.

This book catches Hornblower at an interesting time in his life and career--after, seemingly, he's gotten everything he could possibly want. And I admit, at times I was a little irritated with him--particularly when he so casually falls into bed with a Russian Countess. Because yes, here Hornblower is based in the Baltic, and his doings have more to do with navigating politics and diplomacy than weathering a storm at sea or maneuvering for the best position for battle. And I do think the series lost something after Hornblower gained so much in rank and position. I think the best books run from *Hornblower and the Hotspur* to *Flying Colours* when he captained ships of his own. Which is not to say this book didn't have its pleasures--I find all the Hornblower books worth a read--I've loved them since my teens.

K.M. Weiland says

I think this is my favorite Hornblower book. I don't know if that's just because it's been a while since I've read the others (they do all kind of run together in my memory), or because this one seemed much tighter and more cohesive than many of them. I also loved the setting: we don't generally read too much about the British Navy in the Baltic or in Russia during the Napoleonic wars, so it was a pleasure to learn about that.

My delight in this volume might also have resulted from sheer comparison with the BBC adaptations of the series, which I've been watching recently. The narrative—from the perspective Hornblower's tortured psyche—is an absolute wonder in comparison with the visual attempts. This is one of those instances where

the book simply has much more to offer than the movie ever could.

Jim says

Another excellent addition to the series. As Commodore, Hornblower has more ships under his command & bigger problems to deal with. Napoleon is marching on Moscow & Hornblower has to disrupt the French armies around the Baltic & protect England's allies - if he can figure out who they are. The politics are complicated since many of Napoleon's allies aren't really. They're just unable to oppose him while others are in uneasy states of neutrality. It was very interesting from a political standpoint, although there was still plenty of action.

Again, we end on a cliff hanger. Damn Forester & his editor!

I also read the short story, really just a few paragraph outline of "The Point and the Edge". Basically, Hornblower is on shore for a while, takes sword lessons, & stops a mugger with his cane. Rather than turning him over to the Watch, he foists him off on a captain to put the guy to work since he's just desperate & out of work.

On to Lord Hornblower! Can't stop now!!!

Bill says

Commodore Hornblower is the 8th book in the Horatio Hornblower series by C.S. Forester that I've read, not in any particular order. They have all been good value for entertainment. I've also enjoyed the TV series featuring Ioan Gruffudd as Hornblower. The series is like the Sharpe war / adventure series, except, of course, Hornblower has his adventures on the open sea for the most part.

In The Commodore, Hornblower, newly married as Squire of Smallbridge, is called back to London, made a Commodore in charge of a small fleet and sent to the Baltic to try and assist and encourage neutral Sweden and Russia to join the war against Napoleon. Most of the story is set in Latvia, a state of Russia and there are plenty of adventures and action and the story was all-in-all very satisfying, one of the better Hornblowers, I think.

One thing I did particularly like about this particular story is that Hornblower spent much less time internalizing everything; it is a bad habit of his. The story is more political, with Hornblower working intelligently to get in the good graces of the Czar of Russia and using his wit to help them keep Riga, the capital of Latvia, safe from an invading Napoleonic army.

His ideas are intriguing and successful and his crew are a group of energetic, talented men. For the most part, the story does revolve around Hornblower, but of course, it is his adventure. A great deal happens in a short time, as the harsh Baltic winter is on the way (NO, not like Game of Thrones) and he must try to succeed at his orders before he must leave the area or risk being ice bound. Totally entertaining and satisfying, another great Hornblower adventure. (4 stars)

Nancy Ellis says

Hornblower is a hero, but he does not see things that way. It's interesting that he is exceptionally brave, an

excellent seaman and commander, and is admired, even loved, by all who serve under his command. Yet in his own mind, he is a fraud. He thinks of himself truly as a coward who merely puts on a show of bravery and tries to hide his insecurity and low self-esteem with a mask of coldness and/or indifference. By this book, though, he is finally beginning to loosen up a bit and realizes that his men do love him and it's all right for him to receive that love and return it. He is happily married now to his love, Lady Barbara, who adores his son as well, and he is very well off materially so he no longer has to scrimp for uniforms and provisions. He carries off his mission to the Baltic and Russia in a spectacularly successful fashion, but ends the book struck down by typhus. Never fear! There's a book to follow, so we know he survives! :)

Jim Puskas says

Arguably the best of the series, presenting the mature Hornblower in what becomes his most far-reaching adventure, culminating in his key role in the defense of Riga against Napoleon's armies, stalling their attempt to march on St. Petersburg. This book has all the attributes that make Hornblower such an intriguing figure -- resourcefulness, determination, ability to act decisively in a crisis. Above all, he's depicted as the complete man, beset by self-doubts about his own character, especially his deep-set fear of being killed (or worse, maimed or disgraced) and yet boldly risking everything on seemingly hare-brained schemes to gain his ends. Despite having achieved fame, wealth, high rank and social standing as Knight of the Bath, squire of his own estate and village, linked by marriage to one of the most powerful families in England, he still retains much of the social awkwardness left over from his disadvantaged youth. He discovers to his astonishment that his subordinates not only admire but love him, a fondness that he feels for them in return; and that love for his devoted men causes him great agony when inevitably some of those closest to him die in carrying out his orders.

Mike (the Paladin) says

Having finally advanced beyond the finical problems that have dogged him from his days as a midshipman. Now he's married Lady Barbra and moved on now as a well known hero of the British nation.

I like these books and recommend you start this journey from it's beginning with Hornblower as a young midshipman.

russell barnes says

Compared to the earlier novels, The Commodore is a much easier read, possibly because Hornblower himself unbends much more as a character, so he's more reminiscent of the youthful Midshipman and a lot more likable. He even gets smashed at a party and makes away with a Countess!

Also there's a touch of Sharpe about this one (well obviously the other way around) because this feels much more like HH changing history, rather than the action being confined to whatever ship he's in, and whatever one he's going to sink. In fact this theme is pretty explicitly expanded on throughout as Hornblower meditates on the outcomes of his actions decisively changing the war as he first attacks the French invasion force, indulges in nefarious propaganda ruses, delays the siege of Riga, and leads a counter-attack that turns back a French column. Forester does *slightly* overplay his hand when he has his hero single-handedly

convincing the Prussians to switch sides. Still - hurrah!

Paul Brent says

One more in the Hornblower series . This one take us to the Baltic at the time Napoleon is invading Russia with a two prong attack, one to Moscow and one to St. Petersburg. Hornblower is the decisive element in confronting German troops on their march to St. Petersburg. Quite a bit of history here that i was unaware of though I know something of the French campaign against Moscow. Very enjoyable getting more to know about the Baltic and how the Scandinavians dealt with the French, Germans and Russians. Hornblower is as creative in his strategy as ever with a little romantic interest thrown in. A great read and a must for all Hornblower fans.

Mr. Matt says

Horatio Hornblower is recouping in the pastoral English countryside, enjoying - or trying to enjoy - his forced time on shore with his wife and child. He finds life away from the sea dull and grinding. He has to answer to his wife, convention and his neighbors. A poor comparison with life as lord and master on an English ship of the line. How fortunate it is then that Hornblower receives an urgent summons by the Admiralty. He is requested and commanded to sail for the Baltic to harass the French advance into Eastern Europe. Only this time Hornblower is not just a Captain. Thanks to his wife's connections he finds himself promoted to Commodore - only one step below a full Admiral!

In the ensuing pages Hornblower and his armada bedevil the French, sinking merchant ships and burning a privateer. He even has the opportunity to journey to Riga, on the Eastern Baltic coast where, thanks to his tact and diplomacy, he helps along Russian defiance to Napoleon's ever increasing demands. In short order the French invade and, thanks to his location, he provides invaluable assistance to the Russian defenders of Riga. He is present all the way to the inglorious French retreat westward, leaving dead and dying behind them. As a history buff I thoroughly enjoyed the book. Not only does Hornblower meet Alexander, but he also gets to meet the great military strategist Clausewitz.

The problem is not with the history. The problem is that Hornblower is just too darn good. He is giving advice to Clausewitz on how to run a land campaign. He is everywhere, and everything he touches turns to gold. Moreover, the book suffers, I think, from Hornblower being ranked too high. I find that I enjoy more the stories of this ilk where the main character is of significantly lower rank - where half of his battles come from fighting not just the bad guys, but their own beaurocracy.

Regardless, a fun read. Three broadsides out of five.

Forrest says

This story marks a major turning point for Captain Sir Horatio Hornblower, in more ways than one can count. He is no longer young, no longer poor, no longer trapped in a bad marriage. For the first time, he is based in the chill waters of the Baltic Sea. And for the first time, he is truly calling all the shots, in charge of his own flotilla and given a free hand by the Admiralty.

But there is a price to all this advancement. While the complex politics of a Baltic teetering on the brink are quite interesting, and there are some clever battle scenes, Hornblower never seems to be in any real danger here. He sees limited naval action, and always commands the superior force at sea. But more than that, as Commodore, he is one step removed from the teeth of the action, letting others manage the details. On land, he is largely relegated to the role of an observer, dodging random cannonballs while proving a more brilliant strategist than even the famed Carl von Clausewitz.

Which brings us to the other problem. While facing too little peril, Hornblower achieves too much in this book. As he racks up history-changing score after score, the story's plausibility becomes ever more stretched. Can Hornblower single-handedly decide the fates of wavering Russia and Sweden? Of course he can. And let's throw in Prussia while we're at it. And why not have the sea captain lead a decisive infantry charge from horseback too? And foil an assassination to boot! It's just too much, and Hornblower's new invincibility makes his usual episodes of self-doubt seem egotistical and phony.

There are two more volumes in C.S. Forester's epic series, and I'll read them. But I can't help but feel that something magical has been lost along with Hornblower's youth, and I'm not sure it can ever come back.

Michael Campbell says

Hornblower seems to do his best work when he's left to his own devices at sea. This is one of the better Hornblower books, might be the best one.

Hornblower is getting a bit older, and his sudden attacks of self doubt have all but passed. He commands a small squadron and is given free reign to do all he can in the Baltic Sea.

It's an interesting read with lots of insight into the politics of the eastern front of the war. That was very interesting for me, as the only other book I've read which discussed the eastern front was the obvious book by Tolstoy.

I enjoyed it and am sad at how little Hornblower remains for me, as I'll be left hungering for another historical fiction series for when I feel that specific urge.

Matt says

Another rousing tale of heroics in the fine nautical series by Forester. Hoo hoo HH single-handedly repulses a French siege leading the counter charge on horseback. Stops an assassination attempt on Czar Alexander of Russia, and gets the Prussian Army to join the side of the British. All this after swinging Sweden from neutrality to the British side against Nappie. Could you ask any more from one man? I think not!

Curtiss says

I recorded all of C.S. Forester's Hornblower books in 50-55 minute episodes for Golden Hours, my local radio service for blind and reading-impaired listeners. Too bad I didn't make CD copies for myself, since the radio station broadcast the tape versions and then erased them too reuse.

I guess I'll have to re-record them for Golden Hours and this time keep a copy.

I have read and re-read the entire Hornblower series over a dozens times each, three times aloud: once from the upper bunk to my brother in the lower bunk, once to my wife while on the road, and once for "Golden Hours." Looks like I'll have to do it again someday.
