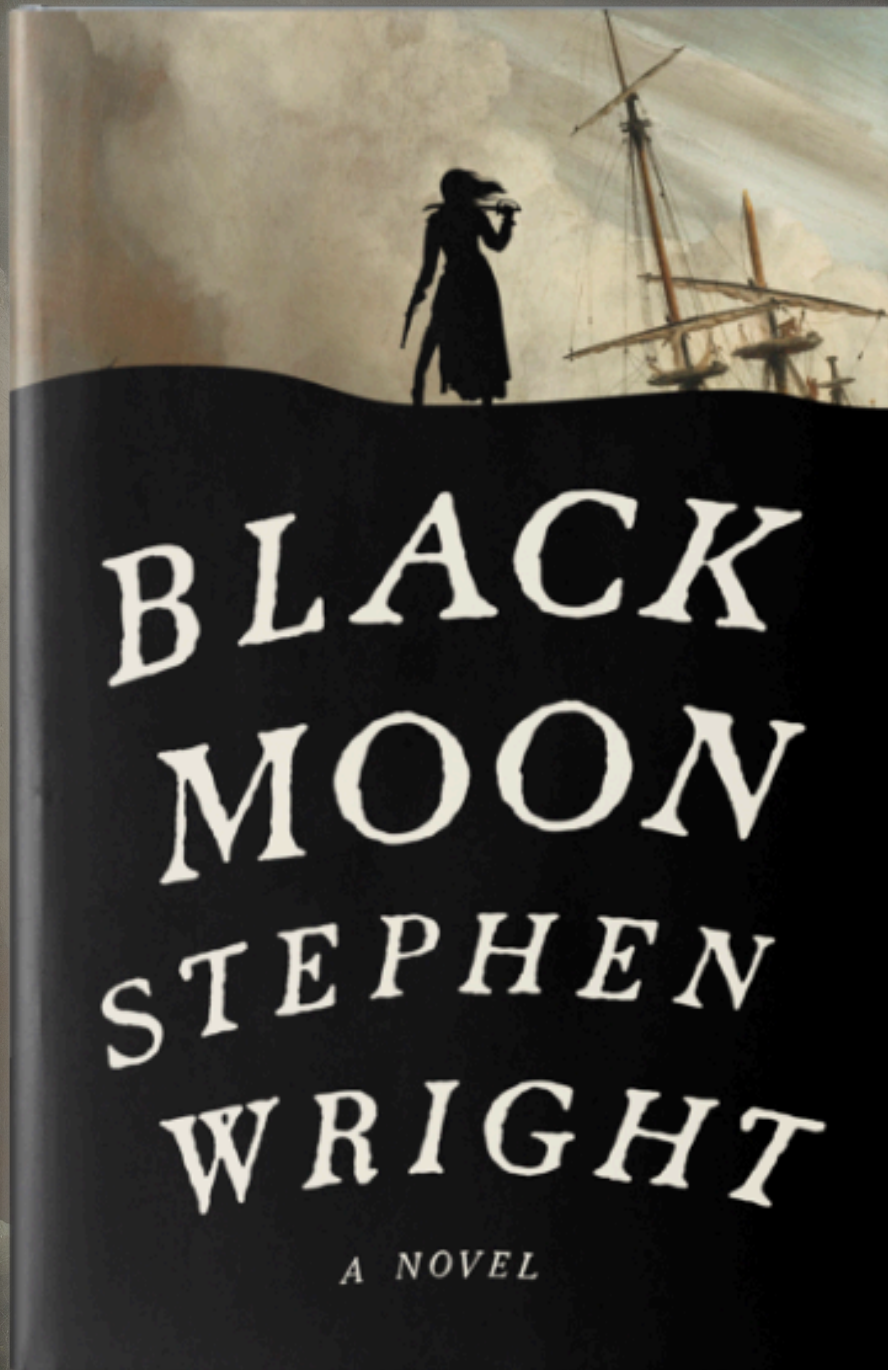


BOOK CLUB KIT



LITTLE BROWN AND CO.

Dear Reader,

Like everyone who develops a fascination with the world of piracy and its colorful practitioners, mine began in childhood and exposure to filmic depictions of the free and easy life of lawless freebooting. The stories told in such memorable movies as *Treasure Island*, *Captain Blood*, *The Sea Hawk*, *The Crimson Pirate*, and *The Black Swan* were all exciting, adventurous, and romantic. There were no parents and any rules were blatantly scoffed at. In many ways it was a boy's dream vision of existence. Days were spent drinking, partying, and fighting, none of it ever quite real. The girls weren't real, either. They were there as mannikins of some sort, to be talked and fantasized about, abducted, and sometimes even daringly kissed. So, as entertaining as these stories often were, there was always something curiously missing from the narrative. The complexity of actual living, breathing women.

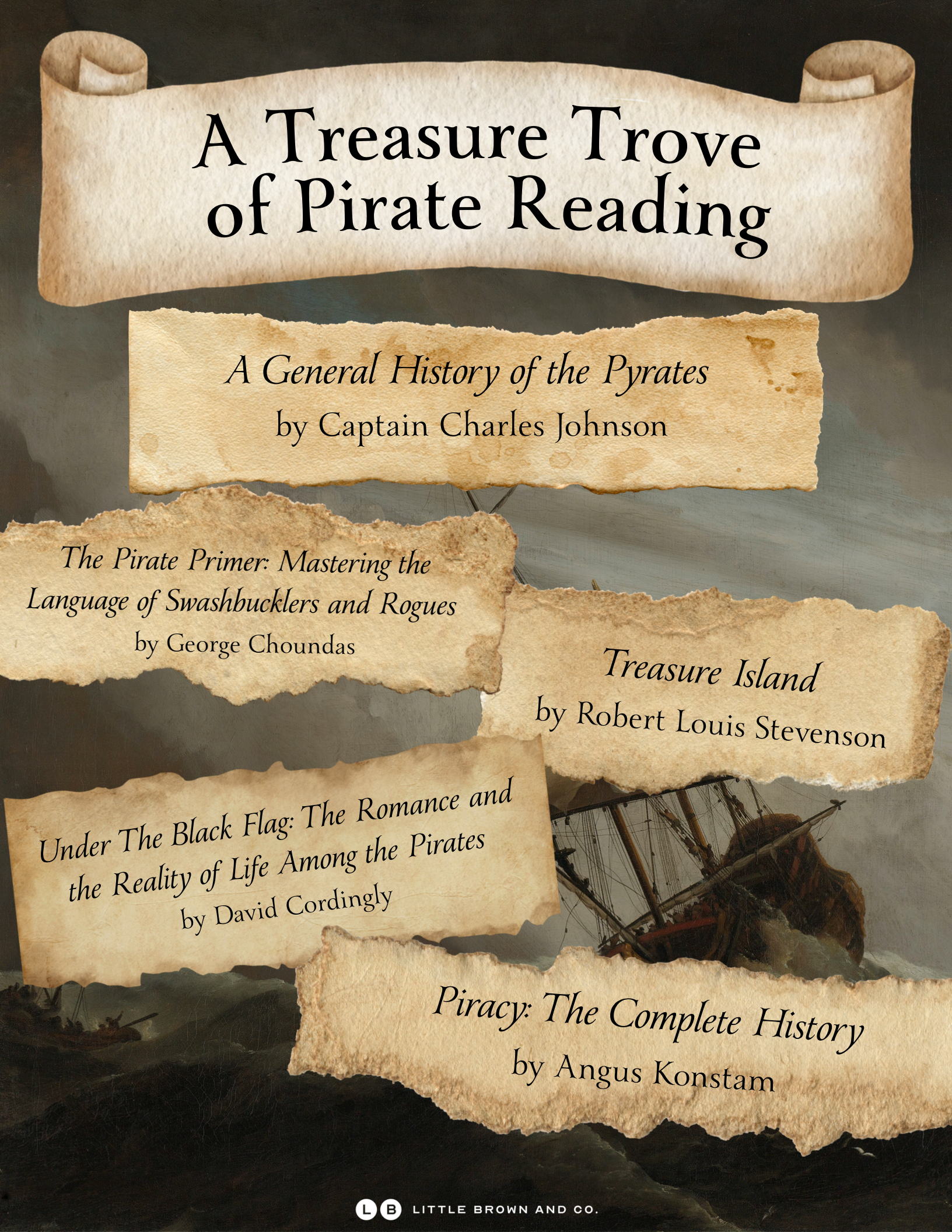
So, once I became a writer myself, I knew, at some compelling level, that eventually I would have to produce my own pirate book, to fill in the gaps other earlier tales had omitted. Problem was, I didn't know enough to write convincingly about life at sea 300 years ago. Then suddenly COVID arrived and gave me the time to enter imaginatively into an era I knew so little about.

The pirate library is quite vast and growing larger by the day, but the prime source material for all subsequent pirate stories can be found in one encyclopedia-sized volume, *A General History Of The Pyrates* by Captain Charles Johnson, published in 1724. It is there that can be found the names Anne Bonny and Mary Read and early accounts of their impressive exploits. Here were two real women who had, in their own time, practiced the piratical trade throughout the early eighteenth century Caribbean with the same dexterity and zest as the men. The facts about their lives were somewhat sketchy, allowing the fiction writer to convincingly fill in the blanks. So what you have here in *Black Moon* is not an autobiographical reconstruction of a pair of extraordinary histories but an imaginative rendering of two fictional characters inspired by those histories. These people lived in an unrestrained age of risk, peril, intoxicating drama, and, sometimes, even love.

What an unblemished thrill it was to wander freely for months, then years, through the exhilarating Golden Age of Piracy, a time so removed from our own it was like visiting a foreign country. There were no computers, no internet, no email, no Youtube, no TikTok, no Instagram, no iPhones, no smartwatches and, most importantly, no 21st century political corrosions.

So why not take a vacation in the tropical past? I did.

Bon voyage,
Stephen Wright



A Treasure Trove of Pirate Reading

A General History of the Pyrates
by Captain Charles Johnson

*The Pirate Primer: Mastering the
Language of Swashbucklers and Rogues*
by George Choundas

Treasure Island
by Robert Louis Stevenson

*Under The Black Flag: The Romance and
the Reality of Life Among the Pirates*
by David Cordingly

Piracy: The Complete History
by Angus Konstam

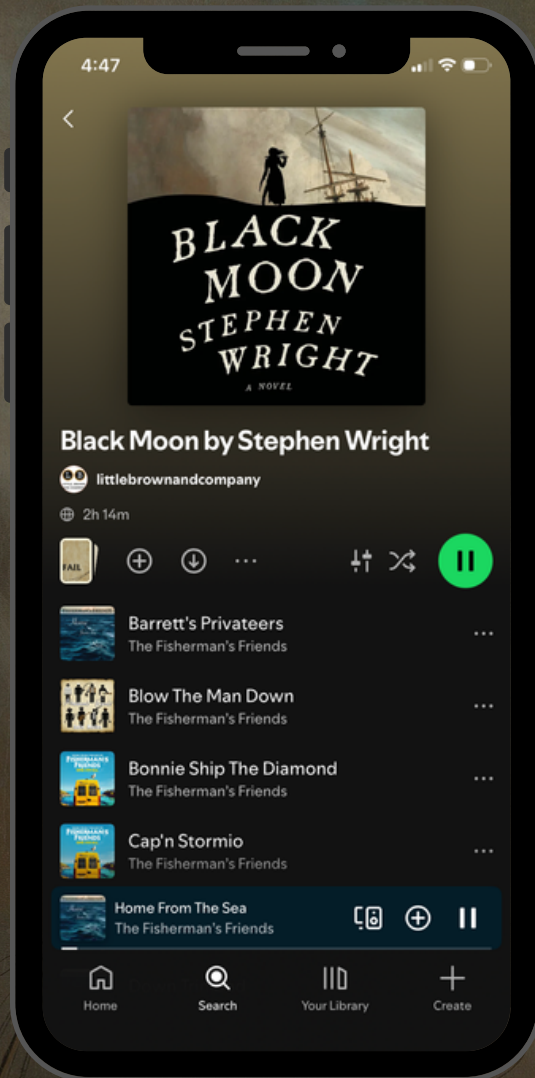
Discussion Questions

Warning: Will Contain Spoilers!

- 1 Meeks is born into poverty and spends her formative years escaping one dire circumstance after another. How does she adapt to each situation?
- 2 Like the best of all pirate tales, *Black Moon* is full of gory battles, sword fights, and blood. How did you react to the violence? Were there any moments that surprised you?
- 3 Meeks and her compatriots come to seafaring life for a myriad of reasons. How do their circumstances differ and what does the world of piracy mean to all of them?
- 4 Throughout the book, Meeks experiences immense loss and watches many friends, lovers, and acquaintances die. How does she express—or not express—her grief?
- 5 Becoming a soldier and even a pirate captain doesn't save Meeks from sexism and gender-based violence. What are some of the specific obstacles from the time period that Meeks must face? Do you see any of these challenges reflected in our current world?
- 6 What is the relationship between violence and power in the novel?
- 7 One of our "recommended reading" books is *The Pirate Primer* by George Choundas. Stephen Wright drew from it to write the novel with period-accurate pirate-isms like "tallywags", "gaol", and "blackjack". What effect did the language have on you?
- 8 Meeks' world is saturated not only with blood, but also sex. How is intimacy portrayed in the novel?
- 9 The pirates live outside of society by their own moral code. How would you describe that code? How does it compare with the rest of the world's values in the novel?
- 10 What scene in this book stood out to you the most?

Want More?

Listen to the *Black Moon* soundtrack, inspired by life on the high sea, and full of your favorite sea shanties.



“People who end up going off to sea do so because they’ve always felt themselves as being precariously afloat anyway in some manner or another...”Tis the sense of home we ever seek.”

—Captain Halley ‘Jack’ Chevers