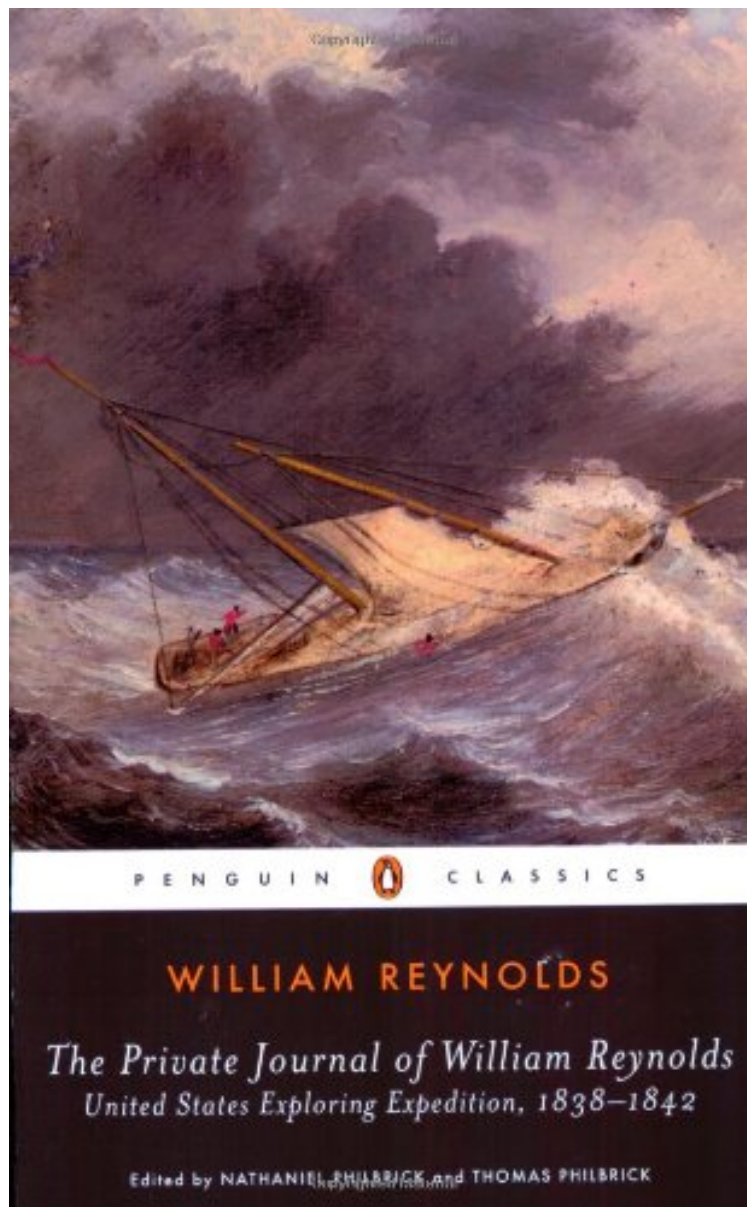


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The Private Journal of William Reynolds: United States Exploring Expedition, 1838-1842 (Penguin Classics)

William Reynolds

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William Reynolds : The Private Journal of William Reynolds: United States Exploring Expedition, 1838-1842 (Penguin Classics) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised

The Private Journal of William Reynolds: United States Exploring Expedition, 1838-1842 (Penguin Classics):

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Well-written eye-witness accounts of a forgotten 19th-century U.S. exploration of the Pacific under sail. By Josen Reynolds was a junior deck officer on the U.S. Exploring Expedition of 1838-1842. His stories of sailing an open boat on a surveying mission in the eastern approaches to the Straits of Magellan and later encounters with Antarctic ice and the Columbia River bar are stirring and clear. They ring very true. Reynold's descriptions of island life in Tahiti, Samoa and Fiji are lyrical, but his observations are clear-eyed. He points out the disruption to native island societies brought by western traders, whalers, explorers and missionaries. The upsetting of an ecological and moral equilibrium on the Pacific Islands saddens him. Like Amasa Delano before him, Reynolds specifically sets aside any notion of moral superiority for western culture. As a narrative, the book is somewhat marred by Reynold's increasing dislike of the Exploring Expedition's commander, Lt. Charles Wilkes. Two years into the expedition, Reynolds lets his hatred of the man he once idolized surface too often. Historians seem to agree that Wilkes was a difficult, possibly paranoid, tyrant; and Wilkes described himself proudly as a "martinet" in letters home. The increasing dislike from his officers is a matter of record; several brought charges against him on the expedition's return but he was acquitted of all but one minor charge by a Court Martial. Hatred happens on a small sailing vessel on short voyages and the Exploring Expedition was gone for three years. All that said, the increasing drumbeat of complaints about Wilkes is distracting, but the journals are one of the best first-hand accounts of the sailing Navy I have read. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Superb adventure story. By Earnest Sludge I've read quite a few first-person narratives from the 18th and 19th century in the past 5 years and this ranks right up there as one of the very best. This journal was written as the experiences were being lived and it has a wonderful immediacy. Reynolds was quite young at the time and he can be a little gushy but it pays off overall as successfully conveying the true feelings of the experience. The last few chapters were actually a little too real since the experiences were so harrowing it was nerve-wracking and exhausting to read them. Reynolds complains quite a few times about the commodore, Wilkes. From reading this and from Charlie Erskine's (another crewman on the expedition) recollections of Wilkes, it's clear Wilkes was an arrogant and brutal autocrat. Apparently this is the kind of character that it takes to get this kind of job done. I had no great respect for the goals of the expedition so I didn't have any problem with sharing Reynold's (and Erskine's) anger and contempt for Wilkes. Reynolds did value the expedition, was patriotic and tried to be a good naval officer and he still despised Wilkes. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Good Read. By Gunny It should be noted that this is a private journal and as such gives one man's perspective. It also leaves the reader short on the whole as to the eventual outcome of everything that takes place. Passed Midshipman Reynolds was articulate and gives the reader some very good observations of the U.S. Exploring Expedition (YS Ex Ex or simply Ex Ex). The suggested companion book *Sea of Glory* by Nathaniel Philbrick details events that extend beyond the time frame of the expedition (1838-1842). While this is a good read and a must for any serious researcher, it falls short for an overall overview of the expedition and related outcomes.

One of the finest nineteenth-century first-person narratives of a sea voyage in existence, and a principle source for *Sea of Glory*, *The Private Journal of William Reynolds* brings to life the boisterous world traversed by the six vessels that comprised America's first ocean-going voyage of discovery, the U.S. Exploring Expedition of 1838-1842. With great eloquence and verve Midshipman William Reynolds describes the harrowing 87,000-mile, four-year circuit of the globe, and relates the story of how the abusive commander of the Ex. Ex., Lieutenant Charles Wilkes, gradually lost the support of his crew. With a seaman's understanding and an artist's appreciation for the wild beauty that surrounds him, the Journal is a tour de force combining meticulous observations with a young man's sense of wonder and, on occasion, terror as he is tossed about by the tremendous seas.

About the Author William Reynolds (1815-1879) was a junior officer on the Ex. Ex. with Captain Wilkes. Nathaniel Philbrick, is a leading authority on the history of Nantucket Island. His *In the Heart of the Sea* won the National Book Award. His latest book is *Sea of Glory*, about the epic U.S. Exploring Expedition of 1838-1842. His other books include *Away off Shore: Nantucket Island and Its People, 1602-1890* (which Russell Baker called "indispensable") and *Abram's Eyes: The Native American Legend of Nantucket Island* ("a classic of historical truth-telling," according to Stuart Frank, director of the Kendall Whaling Museum). He has written an introduction to a new edition of Joseph Hart's *Miriam Coffin, or The Whale Fisherman*, a Nantucket novel (first published in 1834) that Melville relied upon for information about the island when writing *Moby Dick*. Philbrick, a champion sailboat racer, has also written extensively about sailing, including *The Passionate Sailor* (1987) and the forthcoming *Second Wind: A Sunfish Sailor's Odyssey*. He was editor in chief of the classic *Yaahting: A Parody* (1984). In his role as director of the Egan Institute of Maritime Studies, Philbrick, who is also a research fellow at the Nantucket Historical Association, gives frequent talks about Nantucket and sailing. He has appeared on "NBC Today Weekend", AE's "Biography" series, and National Public Radio and has served as a consultant for the movie "Moby Dick", shown on the USA Network. He received a bachelor of Arts from Brown University and a Master of Arts in American Literature from Duke. He lives

on Nantucket with his wife and two children. Thomas Philbrick is professor emeritus of English at the University of Pittsburgh.