

A General History of the Robberies and Murders of the Most Notorious Pyrates (Annotated)

By Daniel Defoe

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A General History of the Robberies and Murders of the most notorious Pyrates is a 1724 book published in Britain containing biographies of contemporary pirates, which was influential in shaping popular conceptions of pirates. It is the prime source for the biographies of many well known pirates.

A General History introduced many features which later became common in pirate literature, such as pirates with missing legs or eyes, the notion of pirates burying treasure, and the name of the pirate flag the Jolly Roger. The author specifically cites two pirates as having named their flag Jolly Roger (named after the first Pirate and his crew): Welsh pirate Bartholomew Roberts in June 1721, and English pirate Francis Spriggs in December 1723. The book gives an almost mythical status to the more colourful characters, such as the infamous English pirates Blackbeard and Calico Jack. It provides the standard account of the lives of many people still famous in the 21st century, and has influenced pirate literature of Robert Louis Stevenson and J.M.Barrie.

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