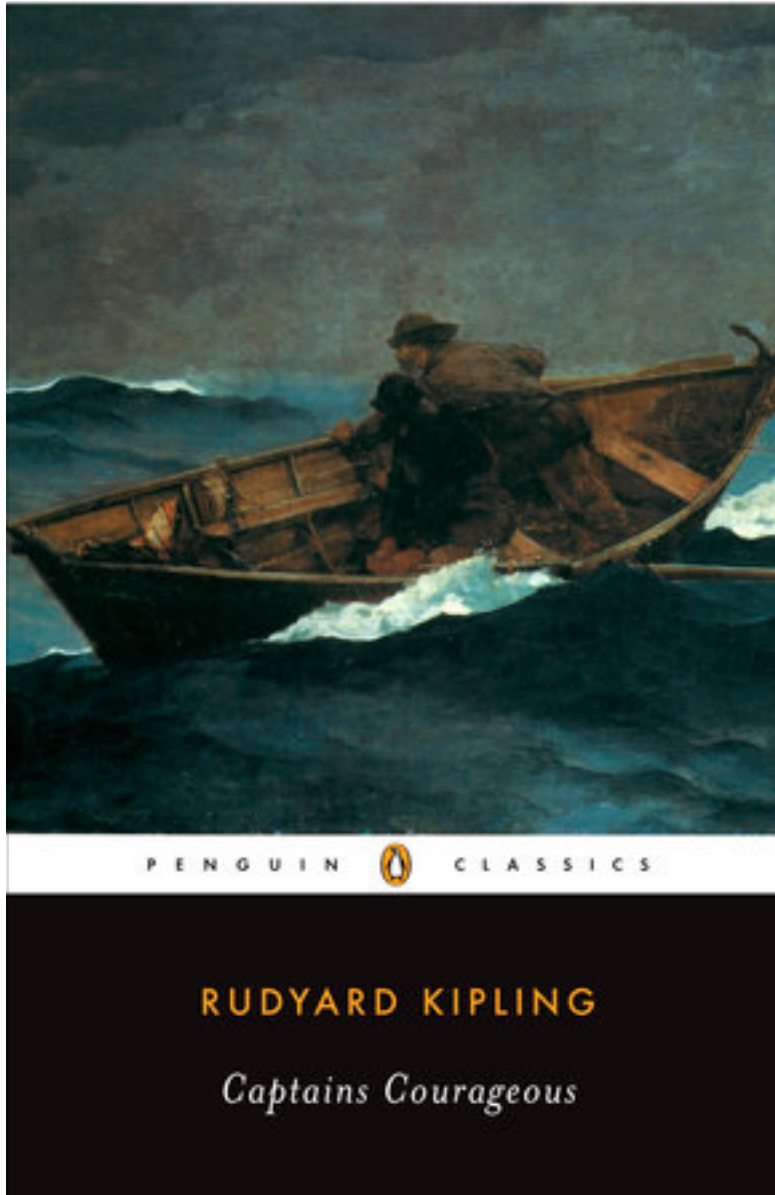


## #100: Captains Courageous

#books/date/2019/09

#books/type/non-fiction

#books/rating/★★★★



### Overview

Captains Courageous initially caught my eye at a used book-store, because it looked incredibly similar to another Jack London novel I read last year ( The Sea Wolf ). Both feature a well-to-do young man being rescued by a rough group of sea farers (fishermen, and seal hunters respectively), being forced to serve on the ship, and becoming a strong man as a result. Since London described copying Kipling passages to improve his own writing, and expressed his admiration for Kipling, it certainly looked like heavy

"inspiration".

I couldn't have been more wrong. While the rough plot is similar, the books are very different, in surprising ways. I've never read anything by Kipling before and he is an amazing writer. But the story was poorly structured and at times hardly believable. While it was entertaining, I think it shows how difficult storytelling can be, even to someone with arguably some of the best tools of the writing craft.

## Book Notes

"To the end of his days, Harvey will never forget that sight. The sun was just clear of the horizon they had not seen for nearly a week, and his low red light struck into the riding-sails of three fleets of anchored schooners—one to the north, one to the westward, and one to the south. There must have been nearly a hundred of them of every possible make and build, with, far away, a square-rigged Frenchman, all bowing and courtesying one to the other. From every boat dories were dropping away like bees from a crowded hive, and the glamour of voices, the rattling of ropes and blocks, and the splash of oars carried for miles across the heaving water. The sails turned all colors, black, pearly-gray, and white, as the sun mounted; and more boats swung up through the mists to the southward." (pg. 98)

"At night the bunched electrics lit up that distressful palace of all the luxuries, and they fared sumptuously, swimming on through the emptiness of abject desolation." (pg. 123)

"Men can 'most always tell when a man has handled things for himself, and then they treat him as one of themselves." (pg. 140)

- Afterword
  - "Kipling was preeminently a writer of short stories, and in the handling of this genre he displayed great technical skill...But he was well aware that his gift was apt to let him down when it came to full-size novels."