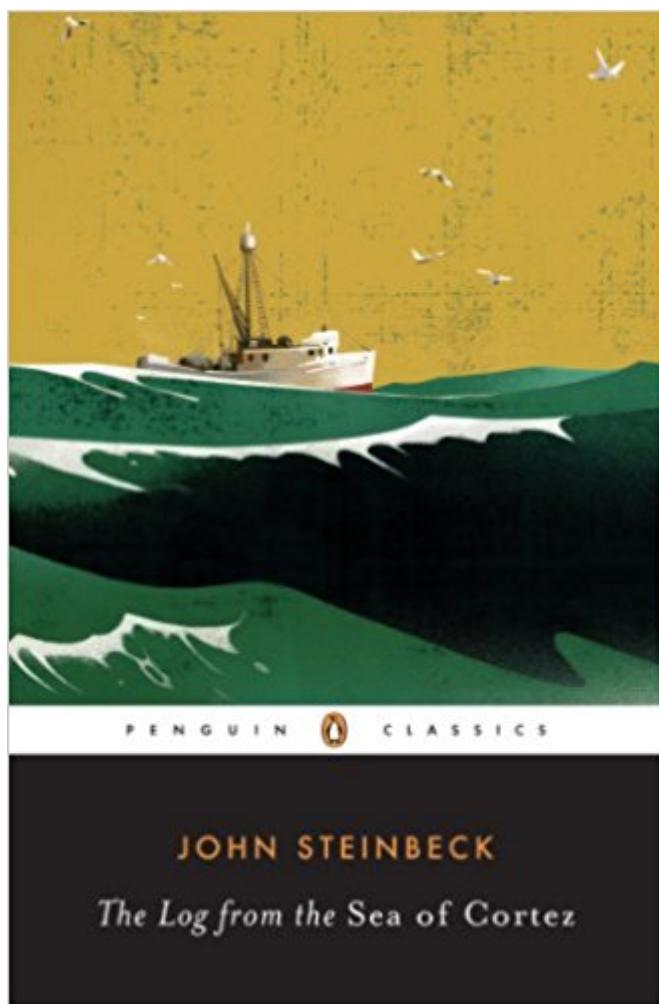


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The Log From The Sea Of Cortez (Penguin Classics)



Synopsis

In the two years after the 1939 publication of Steinbeck's masterful *The Grapes of Wrath*, Steinbeck and his novel increasingly became the center of intense controversy and censorship. In search of a respite from the national stage, Steinbeck and his close friend, biologist Ed Ricketts, embarked on a month long marine specimen-collecting expedition in the Gulf of California, which resulted in their collaboration on the *Sea of Cortez*. In 1951, after Ricketts' death, Steinbeck reissued his narrative portion of the work in memory of his friend and the inspiration for *Cannery Row*'s *Doc*. This exciting day-by-day account of their journey together is a rare blend of science, philosophy, and high-spirited adventure. This edition features an introduction by Richard Astro. For more than seventy years, Penguin has been the leading publisher of classic literature in the English-speaking world. With more than 1,700 titles, Penguin Classics represents a global bookshelf of the best works throughout history and across genres and disciplines. Readers trust the series to provide authoritative texts enhanced by introductions and notes by distinguished scholars and contemporary authors, as well as up-to-date translations by award-winning translators. From the Trade Paperback edition.

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Customer Reviews

The following is a letter I received from a friend, away on a research cruise. Before her expedition embarked, I gave to her my treasured copy of this book, and this is what she had to say: "Day 14 at Sea." After spending a good week of troubleshooting, rebuilding arrays, breaking them, re-fixing them, dealing with conflicting egos (including my own), switching wires, and dealing with the unfamiliarity of sea-sickness (due in two parts to my cold and the magnificent roll of this ship), I have finally finished *Sea of Cortez*. While it's fresh in my mind, I thought I'd jot down my thoughts to send your way. This is going to be more of a letter than a note, as the mood has struck me. Sans cigarette, however. I do not favor the idea of clinging to my laptop on deck, protecting it from the elements. "Also, holy crap, has it really only been two weeks?" SUCH a romantic story, from start to appendix. This idea that even post Depression Era people could scrap together enough savings to afford such a lavish, albeit business, adventure. I think of the modern day scramble to get grants, itemized so precisely, spent only on what you thought you may need six months prior. I far prefer the notion of pooling together funds until one can afford to hire or buy the required equipment, sketching out the necessities and desired goods as you go. I took to reading this book during my breaks up on the flying bridge, wind and sea around me. Reading this book at sea was a good idea, though I was frequently interrupted by visual observers passing by and asking me what part I was up to. Many of them harbored a great fondness for the book. "The passage about the futility of hope and how it weakens us as a species set the whole tone of the book for me. We have hope, and therefore we are disillusioned. I imaged the different outlook on life high school graduates may have if that paragraph was recited to them at graduation, instead of the usual spiel about how special they all are. It shouldn't be read in a negative way, as that's not how it's written. But in a matter-of-fact way, that this is an obstacle in life which one must acknowledge if they are going to be satisfied with whatever they end up setting their minds to." The descriptions of the towns along the peninsula made me sore for travel. Though I am certainly on a current adventure, I love traveling to new places and walking around, getting a feel for the people (as well as their beer and coffee). This book, however, also sets you back in time to villages that likely do not exist in the same manner anymore. They mention how either La Paz or Loreto was in the middle of constructing a hotel-like building that would bring floods of weekenders from LA and elsewhere, and how sick that makes them. How sick would they be now with the modern "Floridaization" of sea side Mexico. I'd love to take a road trip down, compare and contrast their experience (albeit through the lens of stylized storytelling) with the current reality (of course through my own lens, as that's the only reality I can know). "The bit about the Japanese shrimping fleet broke my heart a bit, because the authors were spot on. The Gulf of

California fishing industry is a shell of what it could have been mostly thanks to gillnetting and those huge bottom trawlers that destroyed everything in their path. The fact that this was evident 60 years ago to people of an academic mind and no protective actions were taken gives me little faith in our ability to save anything now. The Vaquita, the smallest porpoise in the world, which lives exclusively in the northern region of the Gulf, is quickly being exterminated by a barely profitable gillnetting industry. The extinction of a species can be avoided if people just fished a different way. There is such a wall against doing things the right way rather than the first way we happened to stumble upon. I have heard a fisherman say "God will always make sure there is enough fish in the sea." *facepalm* Because the bible never says anything about an angry and vengeful god testing his people to live within their means. "Speaking of God, I enjoy the idea of such an entity being expressed as a mathematical symbol for an expanding universe. As a non-believer, that notion suits me." What also broke my heart is the amount of animals they killed. Not just the ones they took (and as they often repeated 'a great many of them'), some they just mortally wounded. Then they head out on a hunting trip and repeat frequently how they don't like killing things, they only do it when necessary. People used to have such a causal attitude towards killing things, like the cats which may or may not have been pets. I don't have a strong objection to killing for the sake of the animal. As we have previously discussed, once it's dead it doesn't know the difference. Life is only as precious as the pedestal we place it on. But that poor shark they left to suffocate on their deck, that's a horrible death. I also understand that most for most people, to properly study biology you have to sacrifice the animal you work with. That isn't a reality for me. Not because I don't have the stomach for it, but because that isn't the nature of my work. But when I was killing fish on a regular basis, you at least try to only kill the ones you need, rather than killing as many samples as possible to the point of not having enough collection jars to hold them. It's superfluous. If something can live, let it live. If the purpose of their expedition was to go tide pooling, why did they need to harpoon a great manta ray? Mantas don't make a regular practice of checking out tide pools, as far as I am aware. "It's an older way of thinking. An older methodology. One of the reasons the Ivory-billed Woodpecker went extinct was because naturalists found out they were disappearing, and then promptly went out and killed as many as possible to preserve specimens. I don't think we, the biological community, are that out of touch now. Or at least, I hope not." There were some other notes about the old-fashioned-ness of this story, but I fear this letter is too long, and I don't want to bore you. All of these thoughts are just at the front of my mind, and the more I type the more I remember. I'll end with Steinbeck's attempt to "lay the ghost" of Ed Ricketts, which is just as sweet as you had promised. His snapshot of the man he knew, as beautiful as it was, does not rid him from the loss of his late friend. This was a

bittersweet moment for me, as it rang true for my own losses. Memories of them still tingle with every day occurrences, mostly unexpected. Reading that Steinbeck still carried the ghost of Ed Ricketts brought both comfort and sadness. "I suppose it'll always be confusing. So I will leave it for now." I hope all is well with you. :)"x x"

In the nineties I was in a remote area West of Puerto Penasco and the tide was in. Right off the beach the water was alive and solid with color. There were uncountable fish, small crabs and plants. So Steinbeck's descriptions were very correct and I was totally excited to find that the book I had read was so accurate. I have been to the Sea of Cortez many many times and always have a copy of the book with me. That visit to the tidal flat caused me to go back to Penasco that same day and I bought a complete snorkeling outfit. I also ended up booking a trip on a boat the next day and on my first dive found that the force of the tide and my swimming skills were "divergent". Despite having read it many times it's still a good read, but what can make it more interesting is to read the book from the crew, in which they describe the difficulties with Steinbeck's wife and give a humorous angle on the whole trip as well. For those who like the book, take a trip to Mexico and go to more remote areas with a truck, a tent, cold beer and drinking water (this is a real desert). You will be stunned at the life in this Sea. You will also be surprised at how many smaller settlements will have a federal official-The Captain of the Port. Don't mess with him. He can take your boat away.

This book gives you a very good insight to the type of man John Steinbeck was as a youth and if you have read his works you can see the seeds for many of his books in this enjoyable read. Keep in mind this book is a quasi-log with a mixture of contributors (both human and scientific) who are investigating the marine life along the margins of the Sea of Cortez or the Gulf of Baja. John Steinbeck, favorite son of California and an earthy writer of the life and environs of California and Texas and with great emphasis on the San Joaquin Valley, will always be a favorite of mine. The one book that I think should be required reading for political science majors is his work "The Moon is Down". He wrote this book while he was a war correspondent in Europe. He shows how surviving and living in constant tolerance in the face of an oppressive conquer becomes manifested in a small village. And, he does it in a emotional moving and simple set of predictable milestones and events.

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