

Background

Britain and France are at war in 1805. The emperor Napoleon leads the French. The British Navy, under the leadership of Admiral Nelson, is fighting Napoleon's forces at sea.

Captain Aubrey commands the HMS *Surprise*, a British ship. He has been ordered to stop a French privateer, called the *Acheron*, from sailing around South America to the Pacific Ocean. A French privateer acts like a pirate ship that has the support of the French government. The *Acheron* is attacking British ships, especially whaling ships, so the British want to stop it.

Main Characters

Captain Jack Aubrey, the captain of the *Surprise*.

Dr. Stephen Maturin, the ship's surgeon and Aubrey's best friend.

Higgins, the surgeon's mate.

Pullings and **Mowett**: lieutenant officers on the ship.

Hollom, **Calamy**, and **Lord Blakeney**: midshipmen, the bottom ranking officers on the ship. Hollom is not well-liked by the crew. Calamy is 16 years old. Blakeney is only 13.

Killick, the Captain's unfriendly steward. He serves the officers.