



Two Years Before the Mast

Richard Dana

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This legendary account of a voyage around Cape Horn captures the majesty and misadventure of life at sea in the early nineteenth century

In 1834, nineteen-year-old Richard Henry Dana left Harvard University to enlist as a deckhand on a brig sailing from Boston to the California coast. For the next two years, he recorded the terrifying storms, awe-inspiring beauty, and dreadful hardships of the journey in a diary he would later expand into this riveting memoir of “the life of a common sailor at sea as it really is.”

Dana spares no detail in portraying the wretched conditions he endured and the cruelty of the ship’s captain, but he also paints vivid, unforgettable pictures of natural wonders such as icebergs and schools of migrating whales. His descriptions of the missions and presidios of pre-Gold Rush California captured the imagination of the country when the book was first published in 1840, and they serve as valuable historical documentation to this day.

An instant classic and inspiration for contemporaries such as Herman Melville, *Two Years Before the Mast* is one of the most remarkable and influential adventure stories in American literature.

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