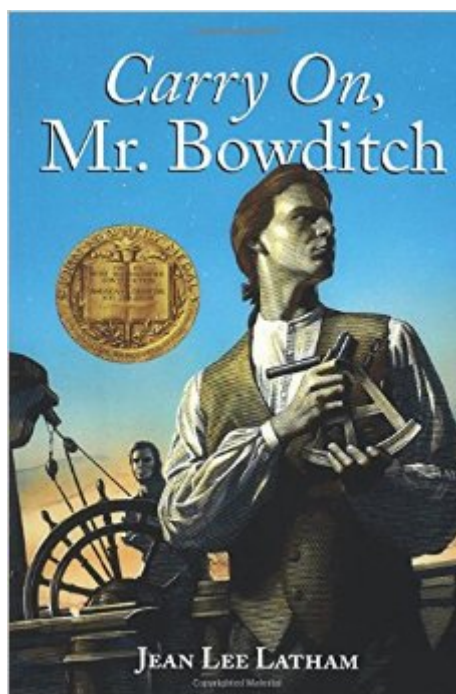


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# Carry On, Mr. Bowditch



## Synopsis

Readers today are still fascinated by *Nat*; an eighteenth-century nautical wonder and mathematical wizard. Nathaniel Bowditch grew up in a sailor's world; Salem in the early days, when tall-masted ships from foreign ports crowded the wharves. But Nat didn't promise to have the makings of a sailor; he was too physically small. Nat may have been slight of build, but no one guessed that he had the persistence and determination to master sea navigation in the days when men sailed only by log, lead, and lookout; Nat's long hours of study and observation, collected in his famous work, *The American Practical Navigator* (also known as the *Sailor's Bible*), stunned the sailing community and made him a New England hero.

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 570 (What's this?)

Paperback: 256 pages

Publisher: HMH Books for Young Readers; English Language edition (May 19, 2003)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0618250743

ISBN-13: 978-0618250745

Product Dimensions: 5.4 x 0.6 x 8.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 8.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (138 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #7,093 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) [#1 in Books > Teens > Historical Fiction > Biographical > United States](#) [#3 in Books > Teens > Historical Fiction > United States > Colonial & Revolutionary Periods](#) [#4 in Books > Children's Books > Biographies > United States](#)

Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

## Customer Reviews

*Carry On, Mr. Bowditch* contains absolutely fascinating background information about Salem and navigation in the 1700s, providing a valuable context for Nathaniel Bowditch's contributions to maritime navigation and allowing the reader to more fully understand just how remarkable and important they were. It is quite inspiring to read how Nathaniel Bowditch, who experienced many traumatic events in his youth and childhood, made such a meaningful - albeit a bit obscure today - contribution to mankind by rewriting the book on Maritime navigation. While he had excellent

intelligence, he did not have much luck in his early years, and his accomplishments are largely due to his dogmatic perseverance to educate himself against all odds. My favorite parts of the book described his ocean voyages - how he solved various problems of navigation and how he won the allegiance of the motley crew of every ship he sailed on. My children are not old enough yet for this story, but I look forward to the day they are.

This story is an incredible true tale of a simple young boy who is forced into an apprenticeship by his father. Rather than letting his new life depress him, he began the process of educating himself. He found he had a talent for math and navigation, and became a famous navigator at sea. I could not put this story down, even though it was written a long time ago and is a historical novel.

Jean Latham's 1955 Newbery award winner is an easy-to-read fictionalized biography of the early life and career of Nathaniel Bowditch of Salem. Set in a proud Massachusetts sailing village and on the high seas, the story rolls along like a Yankee trader: now billowing ahead, now becalmed, now swamped yet often riding triumphant swells with exotic cargo. How a youth denied a Harvard education literally rewrote the book on 18th century navigation, thus making the ocean safer for all sailors. Since the storyline must obey the facts, the author operates under some literary constraint. The stout-hearted protagonist suffers repeated family losses, yet he clings to his ideal of an accurate book, which captains can trust and will save lives the world over. While indentured in a ship's chandlery, Nat cherishes his dreams of higher education, teaching himself mathematics, astronomy, navigation and three languages. Nat's genius for detail and swift mental calculations of figures make him a wonder in an age when most sailors relied on gut instincts (Lead, Log and Lookout,) for the common man clung to his inbred superstitions, rejecting fancy book learning from mere lubbers. It took a Yankee youth to identify the fatal errors in Moore's sacred charts. Young readers will appreciate Latham's extensive dialogue and the excellent b/w sketches by John Cosgrave. Read as Biography or Maritime History, this book breezes along like a trim Yankee clipper.

I first read this beautifully and simply written book when I was about ten and it immediately became my favorite. I identified with Nathaniel Bowditch in many respects - my name is also Nathaniel and I also love math - but still he amazed me with his intense desire to learn and persevere through struggles. I learned a lot from this story. I was fascinated by Nathaniel Bowditch's amazing brilliance (writing an almanac as a teenager and doing insanely complex math problems in his head), his hard

work (studying multiple languages from books), and his humility (teaching sailors math and navigation, giving them confidence in themselves). Amazingly, he did all this though his life was full of struggles. For me, someone who already liked to learn, this story powerfully reinforced just how exciting and valuable it is to gain more knowledge and then pass it on. Today, about 10 years since I first read this book, I still love to read it. The title of "favorite book" has since passed on, but something still excites me about the impact one man can have because he dedicated himself to learning and to helping others through what he learned. That's a message young people, especially those already excited about learning, need to hear. And that's why those kids need to read this book.

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