



The Seafaring Dictionary: Terms, Idioms and Legends of the Past and Present

David S. T. Blackmore

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Navigable waters cover almost three-quarters of the surface of our planet, and they have been home to centuries of seafarers who, being isolated from land for extensive periods, developed a specialized language all their own. Their language is a complex mixture of the strange and the familiar, including words taken from many English dialects, coined words, slang words, words used by mariners speaking other tongues, and words developed to identify occupations, titles, equipment, or activities. With its many intricate nuances, 'navalese' can be as esoteric and incomprehensible to the layperson as ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs - but such a specialized language is vitally important to a profession in which complex technical concepts need to be communicated briefly and accurately from seaman to seaman. This book is an alphabetical compendium of more than 9000 nautical terms taken from numerous dictionaries, glossaries and other sources of nautical terminology, including volumes on nautical customs and traditions, ghost ships, paranormal maritime events, sea serpents, and marine monsters. Many of the entries are brief and factual, but when appropriate the author has inserted anecdotal material of colorful or intrinsic interest. The volume should be a helpful reference for researchers and laymen who want to understand nautical speech and customs, but it should also be of use for professional seafarers who cannot always be familiar with the complex vocabularies of today's specialized maritime occupations, let alone those of bygone ages. There is an appendix that discusses real and speculative sea monsters, while 17 tables cover wind and wave measurement, date and time notation, phonetic alphabets, maritime signals, navigation rules, military and naval ranks and ratings, and the process of boxing the compass.

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