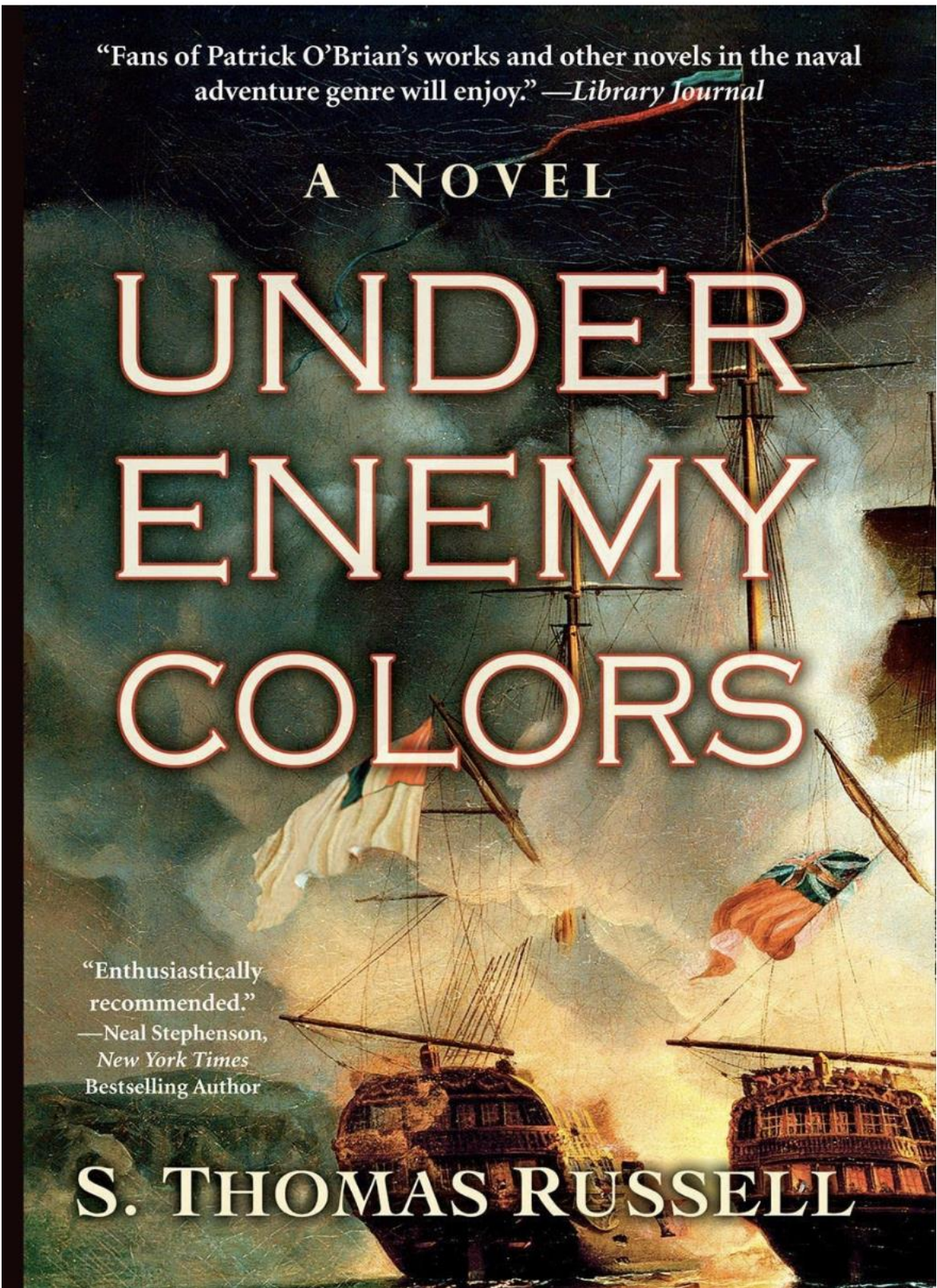




"Fans of Patrick O'Brian's works and other novels in the naval
adventure genre will enjoy." —*Library Journal*

A NOVEL

UNDER ENEMY COLORS

"Enthusiastically
recommended."
—Neal Stephenson,
New York Times
Bestselling Author

S. THOMAS RUSSELL

Book Review: *Under Enemy Colors*

By S. Thomas Russell

Adventure in the Age of Sail

Under Enemy Colors is an entertaining adventure novel written in the tradition of C. S. Forester's Horatio Hornblower series. Set in 1793, as Britain begins its struggle against Revolutionary France, the novel offers nearly 500 pages of superb writing and convincing detail about the Royal Navy's legendary era of "wooden ships and iron men."

The central character is Lieutenant—"lef-tenant," in British parlance—Charles Hayden. The son of an English father and a French mother, Hayden has divided loyalties and seemingly little prospect of advancement in a navy where pedigree and personal connections account for much of an officer's success.

We follow Hayden's adventures and misadventures through a gripping tale of warfare, mutiny, divided loyalties, and a campaign along the northern coast of France. The result is a fast-moving and thoroughly satisfying read.

No Spoilers Ahead

This review contains no significant spoilers. Readers must wait until nearly the end of the book to discover whether Lieutenant Hayden ultimately prospers—and I have no intention of spoiling that pleasure.

From the outset, however, Hayden finds himself in desperate straits. Passed over for command of his own ship, he is assigned as first lieutenant aboard the British frigate HMS *Themis*, serving under the oppressive and cowardly Captain Hart.

The relationship between Hayden and Hart creates the novel's immediate and agonizing conflict. Hayden is trapped between a dissatisfied, increasingly mutinous crew and his own natural sense of duty to his commanding officer.

A Man of Divided Loyalties

Having been raised in France, Hayden feels torn between England, where his duty lies, and his mother's country, France, where much of his heart remains.

This conflict surfaces repeatedly during the novel's gripping battle scenes and Hayden's adventures ashore in France, where he is forced to fight—and kill—Frenchmen. Revolutionary ideas inspired by French republicanism and the writings of the radical Englishman Thomas Paine also contribute to Hayden's inner turmoil and the growing dissatisfaction among the crew of HMS *Themis*.

Hayden must contend not only with an enemy fleet but also with competing ideas about loyalty, justice, authority, and freedom.

Mutiny and Court-Martial

Much of the story revolves around the mutiny aboard *Themis* and Hayden's role in the court-martial that follows the ship's return to England. One crewman is wrongfully accused of being a leader of the rebellion, while Hayden's struggle against the craven and deceitful Captain Hart reaches its climax during the proceedings.

The court-martial gives the novel a different sort of suspense. Hayden must navigate testimony, influence, reputation, and institutional loyalty with the same care he brings to a sea battle. In this arena, the truth alone may not be enough to save him.

A Memorable Supporting Cast

Under Enemy Colors features a particularly colorful supporting cast. Among them are the ship's lieutenant of Marines, a warrior without equal; Lord Arthur, an engaging and honorable midshipman; Dr. Griffiths, the ship's wry and cynical surgeon; and Mr. Landry, Captain Hart's sycophantic accomplice.

Each character plays an important part in the developing conflict, the sea battles, the mutiny, and the court-martial. Together, they give HMS *Themis* the feeling of a living community—one fractured by fear, resentment, courage, and divided loyalties.

Courage Below and Above Decks

Hayden's situation is not entirely hopeless. He has supporters who recognize his ability and bravery, particularly after he distinguishes himself in several dangerous encounters while his captain cowers below decks.

We eventually meet Captain Bourne, Hayden's former commanding officer, who is everything Hart is not. Bourne understands Hayden's abilities and recognizes his qualities as both an officer and a leader.

During the court-martial, we discover just how important such support and influence can be to Hayden's future. Merit matters in the Royal Navy—but connections may matter even more.

An Uncertain Romance

Hayden's romantic prospects are every bit as troubled as his naval career. He is smitten with Henrietta Carthew, the wealthy cousin of his best friend, but his natural shyness prevents him from expressing himself easily.

His increasingly bleak professional prospects provide another obstacle. As Captain Hart works to destroy Hayden's reputation following the mutiny, Hayden appears to have little future to offer Henrietta.

Readers must continue to the final pages to discover the fate of this seemingly ill-starred romance.

A First-Rate Naval Adventure

If you enjoy gripping sea stories written by an author with an extraordinary command of sailing ships, naval battles, and life in the Royal Navy, *Under Enemy Colors* is well worth your time.

Russell vividly depicts how ships were handled, how battles were fought, and how cronyism and social connections could override talent in determining an officer's advancement. His historical knowledge provides the foundation, but his memorable characters and suspenseful storytelling make the novel come alive.

S. Thomas Russell is an outstanding novelist, and *Under Enemy Colors* is a first-rate beginning to the Charles Hayden series—a keeper for anyone who enjoys historical fiction and adventure on the high seas.

Buy *Under Enemy Colors* [on Amazon](#).