



Pushing the Limits of Motion Suggested Reading and Discussion Questions

Maybe it's the action of a powerful physical force or maybe it's the way we move to *counteract* that force. Some motion is more figurative, like the experiences we pass through on life's journey and the changes they inspire. Humans enriching their existence are humans in motion.

Master and Commander

Patrk O'Brian, Fiction. Ardent, gregarious British naval officer Jack Aubrey is elated to be given his first appointment as commander: the fourteen-gun ship HMS *Sophie*. Meanwhile - after a heated first encounter that nearly comes to a duel - Aubrey and a brilliant but down-on-his-luck physician, Stephen Maturin, strike up an unlikely rapport. On a whim, Aubrey invites Maturin to join his crew as the *Sophie*'s surgeon. And so begins the legendary friendship that anchors this beloved saga set against the thrilling backdrop of the Napoleonic Wars.

Through every ensuing adventure on which Aubrey and Maturin embark, from the witty parley of their lovers and enemies to the roar of broadsides as great ships close in battle around them, O'Brian "provides endlessly varying shocks and surprises—comic, grim, farcical and tragic... [A] whole, solidly living world for the imagination to inhabit" (A. S. Byatt).

- Is Captain Jack Aubrey too full of ambition to be a good British officer? Is he blinded by his desire for promotion and for prize money?
- Jack's military judgment in the second half of the book seems to border on recklessness. What combination of motives explains his audacious attacks? Is risk taking something we are born with (i.e. "nature or nurture"?)
- Consider music references in *Master and Commander*. How do songs and instruments affect the feel and movement of the story? In what ways is music used the same or differently in today's culture at sea and at home?

