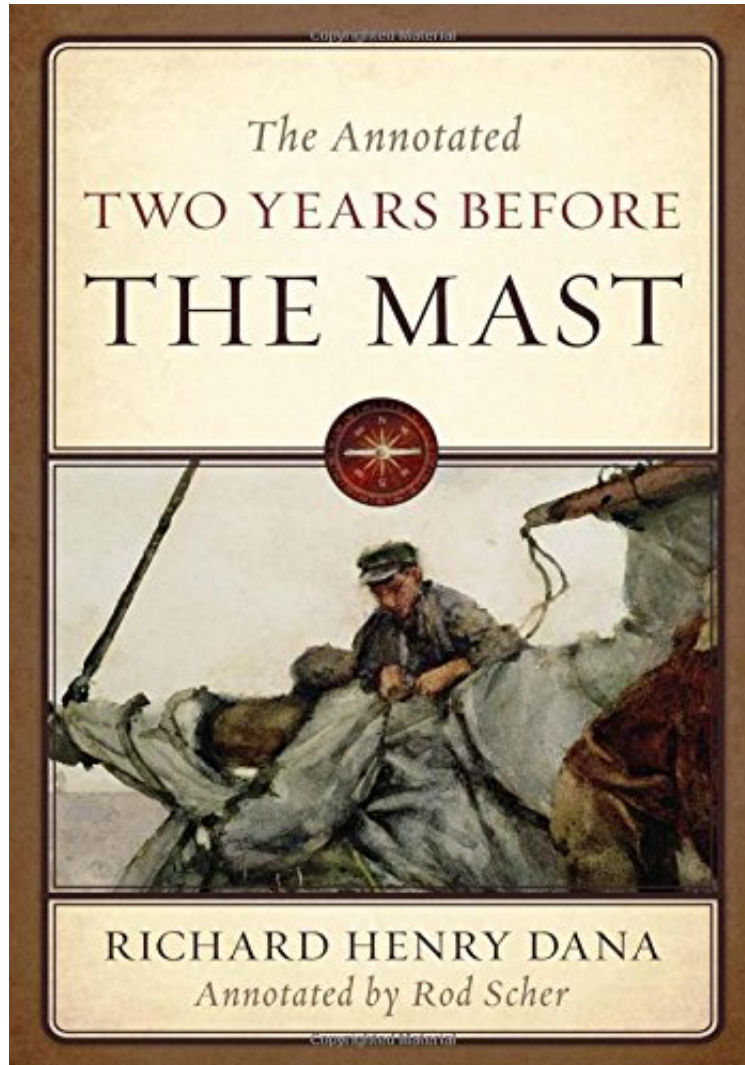


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The Annotated Two Years Before the Mast

Richard Henry Dana

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Richard Henry Dana : The Annotated Two Years Before the Mast before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Annotated Two Years Before the Mast:

12 of 13 people found the following review helpful. Excessive, distracting annotation.By EvanderRod Scher's annotations are excessive and distracting. About 1/3 of the outer margin of every single page of this book is dedicated to annotation. Rather than annotate when necessary, helpful, or worthwhile, Scher seems to have got it into his head that he ought to fill every margin to the brim, even if the information used to fill that space is redundant, tangential, or downright irrelevant. A tremendous portion of the annotations is literally just paraphrasing of what Dana has written perfectly clearly.For example, take the following sidenote on p. 310 as indicative, which -- I assure you -- has nothing

to do with Dana's plot whatsoever:"In the newsJuly, 1836The exact date is unknown, but the unfortunately named plumber and inventor Thomas Crapper was probably born this month. (He as baptized in September of 1836.) Crapper was a sanitary engineer operating in London. Contrary to myth, he did no invent the flush toilet, although he did popularize and improve on it. In a perhaps odd coincidence, the word "crap" (meaning "excrement") did not derive from Crapper's name; rather, it is [sic] comes form Middle English, having originally been combined form two even older Dutch and Old French words. Thus, the word predates Mr. Crapper by a long while."The only page where Scher does not do his utmost to fill every bit of the margin with whatever randomness he can think of is on p.285 where -- somehow -- Scher didn't feel a need to add some bit of tangential or redundant information. I have no idea why he left this margin blank, given his consistency and dedication to fill every other page of this book. Reaching this page came like a merciful breath of fresh air where; at long last, Scher allowed his reader a little space to include his/her own annotation!It is as if Scher, in his indiscriminate effort to fill every margin of his book, added every single bit of information he could regardless of its relevance. My guess is this is the result of an over-excited Scher becoming so Dana-brained that he couldn't stop himself from gushing on and on and on in his enthusiasm. Not only are many of his sidenotes patently redundant, many more of them are complete guesses and opinions -- several of them directly spoil the coming story. The number of times Scher points out Dana's class commentary is mindnumbingly frequent.If Scher had ever once asked himself "is this necessary?" he would have reduced his footnotes by half and left us with a brilliantly annotated edition. As it stands, many of his annotations are incredibly helpful -- but only if you have the patience to find them amid all the drivel. With so many annotations, one gets the feeling one is reading every page twice: once for Dana, and then once for Scher's prolix musings -- one reads this edition of Dana with the feeling that one is trying to complete a regatta while sailing with the anchor still down.In short, if you want an excessively annotated edition of Richard Henry Dana's classic, this edition effectively doubles the length of the original with annotation that is absolutely superfluous at least half of the time.I would like to, at this point, take a moment to say that Scher's intentions were good (I give him a star for his intentions, and a star for his effort) -- he obviously loves Dana and this book is a labor of love. But he has effectively smothered Dana with his affection. Our editor Scher was in sore need of editing.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Excellent book, even if you've already read Two Years Before the Mast!By BobbzzA very nice book. Well researched and written, it adds the very interesting information and context to what was happening in the world at that time, like Darwin being in the Galapagos at the same time or what was happening in Europe. It also is a different edition than some of the later editions that have left out some of the nautical terms.3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Nice Annotations - but absolutely no illustrations or maps!By GeographerIf any book called for illustrations and maps, it is this one. This is a nice production otherwise.

A true story of the battered life of a foremast crewman, *Two Years Before the Mast* is Richard Henry Danas classic travel narrative, which inspired canonical works such as *Moby Dick* and *Sailing Alone Around the World*. As Rod Scher follows Dana (the Harvard dropout-turned-sailor) on his voyages around North America, he annotates Danas tale with critiques, compliments, tie-ins to today, and little-known facts about both the book and the milieu of Danas time.

Rod Scher is an ideally informative and amiable companion as he follows Dana on his exciting and exhausting voyagehe places Dana fully in his time and place, offering historical and cultural contexts for the writer's experiences, observations, and expressions. Scher knows how to inspire a sense of historical imagination in his readers, without forgetting who we are now. Scher can be proud of his own achievement in bringing such factual detail and humane judgment to this edition. (Stephen M. Buhler, Aaron Douglas Professor of English, University of NebraskaLincoln)An enjoyable and fascinating look at a [classic]. The modern reader navigating Danas story is given a global view in retrospect, which adds much to Danas narrative and offers a glimpse of the views and opinions of that time and place. Schers *The AnnotatedTwo Years Before the Mast* takes a classic tome and repackages it with seafaring terms defined and historical references in place, thereby transforming it into a gripping tale for any avid sailor, history buff, or literary aficionado to enjoy. (Patricia Wood, author of *Lottery*)Rod Scher has done it again, this time with his brilliant annotation . . . Schers annotation reopened this classic for me. This is a careful and thoughtful work, never dry and often with a subtle twist of humor, yet always sensitive to Danas themes. Reading this annotation brings young Danas chronicle into sharp, poignant relief in an almost new and very exciting way. (E. Michael Jackson, USCG Master Mariner and boating instructor)About the AuthorRod Scher received his M.Ed from the University of Oregon. A longtime boating enthusiast, writer, and former English teacher, he is an editor for *Smart Computing Magazine*. He lives in Lincoln, Nebraska.