



Sharpe's Tiger

Bernard Cornwell

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As the British army fights its way through India toward a diabolical trap, young private Richard Sharpe must battle both man and beast behind enemy lines.

It's 1799, and Richard Sharpe is just an illiterate young private in His Majesty's service, part of an expedition sent to push the ruthless Tippoo of Mysore from his throne and drive his French allies out of India.

Posing as a deserter, Sharpe must penetrate into the Tippoo's city and make contact with a Scottish spy being held prisoner there. Success will mean winning his sergeant stripes; failure, being turned over to the Tippoo's brutal executioners — or his man-eating tigers. Picking his way through an exotic and alien world, one slip will mean disaster as Sharpe learns that he must fight his old comrades in order to save his own neck. Along the way, he keeps an eye out for Mysore's beautiful prostitutes, any stray loot he can get his hands on and the chance to learn his ABC's. But when the furious British assault on the city begins, Sharpe must fight with the fierceness and agility of a tiger himself to foil the Tippoo's well-set trap — and to keep from being killed by his own side.

Sharpe's Tiger Details

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Author : Bernard Cornwell

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From Reader Review Sharpe's Tiger for online ebook

Arun Divakar says

Srirangapatna is a very small town in the city of Mysore which currently has a lot of religious significance. For such a small town, this place has a lot of historical significance as well starting from the time of the Vijayanagara empire. Vijayanagara fell and there was the rise of the Islamic Sultans in the south and the father-son duo of Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan made this their capital. At the closure of the 17th century there was a pitched battle fought for the control of this town between the British and the Sultan's armies which resulted in a British victory. Being an event with only two outcomes, the battle saw the rise of one man and the fall of another. The man who began his career following the battle as the governor of Mysore later went on to vanquish Napoleon and his name was Arthur Wellesley. The man whose star fell on this day and who also saw his grandiose dreams crumbling to dust was of course the Tippu Sultan. Set against the backdrop of the 1799 siege of Srirangapatna, Bernard Cornwell introduces his now popular character of Richard Sharpe.

There are two ingredients in this story : the tale of Sharpe and the history of the battle. Cornwell is really good at describing battles and also in recreating the mood of the time gone by. At a time when muskets were the only weapon, it would have been a bloody pain in the posterior to fight a war in a hostile land and that is exactly what the British seem to undergo. Sharpe creates good caricatures of the key British players : General Harris, Major General Baird and Colonel Wellesley. The plights of the common soldier in the behemoth of such an army is perhaps the best part of the story itself. Interestingly the allies of the British, namely the Nizam of Hyderabad and his army are only given a passing mention and nothing more. On the other side of the line, the Tiger of Mysore and his armies wait. One thing I must hand to Cornwell is that he does not paint Tippu as a foaming-at-the-mouth sort of antagonist. He is just another ruler who has his own plans of conquest after he drives the British out of town.

The kind of literature prevalent in India currently calls Tippu one of the first Indian freedom fighters but this is more of a wishful thinking. There were obviously rulers and individuals who rebelled against the yoke of the British suppression but they did it for their own reasons and not for patriotic fervor. Tippu wanted to be the ruler of the South and was willing to take the help from the French to overthrow the British. It was essentially inviting one monster to fight another. He did not seem to harbour the visions of a unified India or such lofty dreams while fighting off the British. Cornwell also calls Tippu a ruler who was willing to be accommodating enough to allow Hindus to practice their religion within his city. The history of South India is however tells a different story as Tippu's acts of religious aggression are rather brutal and does not even have the remotest touches of being tolerant of the Hindu faith. To see Tippu as a freedom fighter is after all giving history more colourful tones while viewing it from hindsight.

Compared to the rich battles and the history behind the whole incident, the story of Sharpe and the others are rather drab. An anti-hero who is good at what he does, a damsel in distress who breaks his heart, a villain who is as black as pitch at his heart are all things we can rather quickly forget. The mastery of Cornwell comes best to light when he is able to prevent his story from interfering with the flow of the historical narrative and allowing them both to go hand in glove. Mention must also be made of the fact that Cornwell is an excellent storyteller and the book moves at an excellent pace. He has also been able to exploit some historic black holes in history for the best effect in his story.

Best read for the history and the battle scenes.

Alicja says

rating: 4.5/5

Another home run for Cornwell.

Even though it started off slow, it just kept getting better and better and better...

Yes, his characters are formulaic (do I even need to say this in every single review?). They are charming, brave, smart(ass) with a hilariously sharp (no pun intended) tongue and yet are flawed (love of bloodshed, idiotically running into danger, and greed but not too much). In many aspects Sharpe is similar to Uhtred, but different at the same time (like not killing of priests although Cornwell still manages in getting in a few religious jibes).

His characters are also be treated unfairly at some point by an authority they served, denied a promotion (or prize) despite brave, reckless, and sometimes genius behavior. Sometimes physically punished, captured, abused, and in general treated like crap. Yet they are keep their word once they make it, loyal in a twisted way.

At the same time it is the most fun way to visit another time period (other than in a TARDIS). Cornwell is a master of adventurous military fiction in a realistic historical setting. I've never been interested in this time period before, and yet Cornwell grabbed me and dragged through time. A journey I've come to love!

Adam says

This superbly exciting novel is set during the British siege and capture of the South Indian city of Seringapatam (Srirangapatnam) near Mysore. Based on sound historical research, the author adapted what actually happened to improve the thrilling nature of his narrative. A short section at the end of the book gives the reader an idea of what actually happened in Seringapatam, and indicates how the author deviated from history in his novel.

The story centres around the antics and bold adventures of the cheeky and poorly educated, yet highly canny, Private Richard ('Dick') Sharpe and his struggles with his unpleasant superior, Sergeant Hakeswill. Dick's story forms the nucleus of a somewhat fantastical account of the downfall of Tippu Sultan in his city of Seringapatam in April/May 1799.

In addition to the nail-biting entertainment that this book provides, it is barely, if at all, jingoistic, and provides a fair-minded assessment of both warring parties: the British as well as Tippu and his allies (both Indian and French).

This book falls into the category of 'un-put-down-able'. Cornwell's writing is as adrenaline-packed as that of Wilbur Smith, and both authors use their great knowledge of history to write compelling, if somewhat incredible, yarns. They both make use of detailed knowledge of the periods which they are describing in order to produce novels that are as colourful and as exciting as the most successful epic movies.

I look forward to reading more books by Bernard Cornwell.

Hadrian says

Even if this may be 'formulaic', Cornwell writes it very well. Dashing roguish anti-heroes, savage battles, a fun cast of stock characters, all here. The book reads very quickly, too. I read the whole thing in an hour this morning instead of sampling a chapter.

Cornwell has a talent, no doubt there. Even his historical notes and documentation of sources are still treats to read. Good brain candy.

David says

This excellent historical novel is the first in a series about Richard Sharpe, a soldier in the British army in 1799. The army is setting out to attack a city in southern India. Unfortunately, the leader of the city, the Tippoo, has set up a brilliant trap to surprise the attackers.

Although Sharpe was a thief before joining the army, he is a very clever, intelligent, likable rogue. Nevertheless, Sharpe is bedeviled by a hateful, cowardly British sergeant. In the middle of a brutal flogging, Sharpe is unwittingly saved by a general, and ordered to join an officer to spy on the Indian city.

Once in the city, Sharpe and the officer pretend to be British deserters, and join a battalion of European soldiers. He finds that the commander, a French officer, is actually quite a compassionate, intelligent human being who treats his subordinates with dignity. This is in stark contrast with British officers, who treat their soldiers with contempt as sub-human cannon fodder.

This is a fine adventure story, filled with action and a big dose of violence. Bernard Cornwell tells a great story, one that closely follows the historical record. The story is quite believable, but at times becomes melodramatic, as coincidental events occur "just in time".

I didn't read this book--I listened to it as an audiobook. The narrator, Frederick Davidson, does a fantastic job bringing all of the characters to life. There are many accents; English, Irish, Scottish, Indian, and French--and Davidson plays them well in the numerous dialogues.

Jason , etc. says

Bloody hell.

In order to confuse all future readers of these books, Bernard Cornwell wrote them out of order. This is actually the first of the Sharpe's series, but was actually written years after the first Sharpe's book was published. Whatever, dude. This was abso-goddamn-lutely amazing. I listened to this during a long drive (as I do) and at first, the reader's British accent was so incredibly Eton-esque, dripping with the posh sensibilities of the dandiest of British dandies, that I was worried about how he could possibly act out a member of the

lowest ranks of the 18th-century British army. Turns out I shouldn't have judged a voice by its cover.

Right.

Anyhow, he did an amazing job of capturing all of the characters, including members of the East India Company and their muslim enemies. But the writing and the story and the pacing and the battle scenes and the hate and the anger and the blood and the spittle...OH GOD, THE SPITTLE...amazing. All of this in addition to the fact that the author's daughter is this person and what you end up with is something damn near perfect.

Rob says

There's no getting away from it, Bernard Cornwell knows how to mix fact and fiction together and successfully turn it into a highly entertaining adventure.

Richard Sharpe is to 1800's what Jack Reacher is the 2000's. A man not to be messed with, under any circumstances. The main difference between the two is, with Sharpe you also get a history lesson to help broaden your horizons.

Richard Sharpe is at heart a good guy but he is not above doing some skulduggery to improve his circumstances. For every hero there has to be a villain and the villain in Sharpe's life is sergeant Obadiah Hakeswill, who for whatever reason, just loves to make Sharpe's life as miserable as possible.

This particular tale take place during the siege and successful capture of Srirangapatna which ended the rule of The Tippoo Sultan of Mysore. Needless to say, none of this would have been possible without the help of Private Richard Sharpe.

This is a highly entertaining history lesson and comes with a 4 star recommendation.

Jason Koivu says

India, tigers and Richard Sharpe? Where are we? What happened to my Napoleonic War historical fiction series?

Once upon a time Bernard Cornwell's series following Rifleman Richard Sharpe's career in Wellington's army during the Napoleonic Wars began in media res. The embattled rifleman was stuck in with his brothers on the European continent fighting a losing war.

After the originals were finished, Cornwell restarted the series and although this prequel is decent, showcasing his improved writing, I would've liked to have seen more of a character de-transformation, sending him back in time. This retains too much of what the man would later become. Sharpe is too cool, too confident in *Tiger*.

Don't get me wrong, there's some good stuff here. The history is laid on nicely with Sharpe essentially doing battle with a sultan during England's colony period in India. Old friendemies return like the despicable Sgt Hakeswill. The action is occasionally fun and exciting, as per usual. However, it all feels inconsequential, perhaps because the ultimate evil isn't Napoleon in this instance.

When the original series ended in a natural fashion soon after Waterloo, Cornwell realized he had a good thing going, so he wrote quite a few prequels and additions to stick in between the existing timeline. They feel a tad rushed, a little forced. It's like he's pushing them into the timeline and pushing them out publishing-wise, because he's got a cash-cow on his hands. Who could blame him? But even without blame, one wishes more time and tenderness was implemented in rendering his rough-and-ready, tenderless soldier. It's still good, action-packed historical fiction, but Cornwell can do better. You know he can, because he's done it before.

Tim The Enchanter says

A rousing 4 Stars

Sharpe's Tiger , my first foray into the world of Bernard Cornwell, was a success! The story is filled with interesting characters, an exotic locale and exciting action and espionage all set against the background of a British Army Battalion in 1799.

Characters

In reading other reviews, some readers complained that the characters were flat and one-dimensional. I have to respectfully disagree. While the characters may not be developed to point you may find in a Tana French novel, there is sufficient development of the major players for the reader to be concerned about their well being and keep the cheering for their safety (or death).

The main character, Richard Sharpe, is more on an anti-hero. Unlike the majority of characters of HF novels focusing on British Army, Richard Sharpe is not paralysed by his sense of morality. Given that he does not automatically choose "the high road" this leads to more satisfying plot turns.

Setting

The setting is India in 1799. The British Army is at war with the Tippo, a Muslim Leader in a Hindu nation, for the purpose of securing their trade routes and keeping the French at bay. I have read many novels set in this period but this is first set in India. Personally, I found the setting to be both intriguing and exotic. The setting provided an interesting mix of Christian, Hindu and Muslim elements. This alone provided an interesting mix of plot points and characters.

Plot

In short, a former thief and would-be deserter, Richard Sharpe, finds himself given an opportunity to literally save his hide. In saving his hide, he is forced to put in right back into danger by accepting a mission from his commanding officers that if both important to the war at hand and, by all accounts, likely bound for failure. The story is in part Historical Fiction Espionage and Historical Fiction Action Adventure.

The reason my rating was only 4 stars is the story takes a while to get off the ground. At the 1/3 point, the book was about 3 stars. One Sharpe makes his deal that will seal his fate, the excitement level increased substantially.

There are elements of the story that are not for the faint of heart. The descriptions of violence are more graphic than many other such HF novels. There are scenes of floggings, gun battles and public executions that have liberal descriptions of blood and various crunching sounds.

Overall, an exciting book and great start to the series. I am looking forward to reading on.

Lani says

Ah, the delicious historical crack that is the Sharpe series. If ever there were a series of books that needed a drinking game, this is it, and I mean that in the best, most entertaining way possible. Sharpe hits something: drink! Sharpe is unjustly punished: drink! Sharpe saves the life of a superior officer: drink! Sharpe drinks: drink! Sharpe does something noble even though he hates doing it: drink! Sharpe pretends to be dumber than he is as a plot point: drink!

And that's just in the first twenty pages!

Shane says

A friend of mine has been trying to get me into the Sharpe series by Bernard Cornwell for about a year now. A few months back I went ahead and purchased the first 3 books in the long running series and finally got around to reading book one, Sharpe's Tiger. My friend described it as a great series for when you need something light or a break from your traditional genre. I'd say he summed it up perfectly. It's my first book by BC and only my second foray into Historical Fiction. I'm excited to continue the series and am looking forward to Sharpe's next adventure. The writing was good but lulled at times and I felt a few characters never got wrapped up in the end. Sergeant Green and General Baird to name a couple. Those are really my only complaints with an otherwise entertaining novel.

I really liked the historical notes section at the end and was surprised to learn just how much of the book was actually based on facts. I was also impressed with the amount of research that went into getting the details right.

I'm giving it 4/5 based on category. That category being Light Adventure or Historical Fiction.

Jim says

An excellent beginning to a great series, if you like historical fiction. Cornwell does an excellent job depicting the people & the times. He captures the essence of the battle & the issues surrounding it, but through the eyes of a common infantry man, Richard Sharpe.

Sharpe is not a nice guy, but he's not a bad man, either. He is the product of his times & that often leads him to actions most would be hesitant to take. As he says in one place - he's not a rapist, but he's lied, murdered & stolen when he had to. Above all, he's a tough man in a tough situation who manages to survive.

I've read another of this series & seen some of the 1 hour shows which were aired on PBS. There were also VHS tapes available from the library for a while. Both my wife & I enjoyed them, although Sharpe on screen is a much cleaner man than the books portray him to be. Still, we liked both & I look forward to reading more of the series.

Hayat says

My brother introduced me to the **Sharpe series** such a long time ago and I read about half of the books in this series (sadly not in chronological order) with such enthusiasm and a burning desire to see what happens next that I even surprised myself. Richard Sharpe's adventures in the British army from 1799 onwards, the struggles, discrimination and the disappointments he faces as well as the enemies and friends he makes in his long career in the army was a compelling read. **I even became a fan of the TV series with Sean Bean who played Sharp!**

I can't wait to reread them this year, especially since I've forgotten most of the characters and many of the details in the plot (except the main ones) so it'll feel brand new. There are a whopping 21 books in this series so it'll take me a while to get through them all but I'm up for the challenge this year.

Christopher Bunn says

I've read and re-read the Sharpe series countless times. For me, they're arguably one of the finest collections of historical fiction written. Cornwell knows what he's doing and does it well. There are some easy potshots to take at the books. The biggest one is that each book is essentially the same plot: Sharpe is thrown into an underdog fight, he saves the girl, and emerges victorious against all odds. However, that's fairly irrelevant due to everything else the books have to offer. Cornwell packs in the historical detail, weaving it seamlessly into the fiction of Sharpe's character. Reading through the entire series, we're given a superb look at the military career of Wellington, as well as the Napoleonic war, from the political maneuvering of the London politicians, to the allied tensions of Spain and Portugal, the conditions on the ground for the foot soldiers, and the heart-breaking triumphs and tragedies of the various campaigns of the British Army.

Cornwell draws Sharpe with a careful hand, creating an affable protagonist with just enough of the anti-hero in him to provide logical motivation for his frequent and ruthless savagery. He also spends the time to create fascinating three-dimensional supporting characters, from the loathsome villain Obadiah Hakeswill, to Sharpe's comrade-in-arms Harper. In addition, the obligatory female love-interest in each book is also given careful attention, resulting in complex characters with equally complex roles and motivations.

It's a superb series, a bit on the violent side, but I can't recommend them highly enough. Sharpe's Tiger is a wonderful beginning, set in India during some of the rajah wars of the British East India Company. Sharpe begins there as a lowly private, of course, and while it's a long journey from the Indian subcontinent to the

conclusion of the Napoleonic wars, rest assured that it's a delightful one, with excellent companions.

Either the BBC or ITV (I can't recall which) shot the books as a mini-series with Sean Bean in the lead. I don't have much of an opinion on that, as I've only seen part of one episode.

Nate says

I had a ton of fun with this book. This was my first Sharpe novel but not my first Cornwell (I started with *The Last Kingdom*.) I have to insist (I'm pretty sure I brought this up in another Cornwell review but whatever) that this might be a better way to get into history than being forced to look at dusty textbooks when you're six, if someone had handed me a copy of this book when I was like 10 it would have sparked my interest in history way earlier, and I think it would do the same for most people. I mean, obviously this idea has its drawbacks and reasons to prevent it from happening, but seriously, it's just (for me) probably the most *fun* way to learn about this stuff. But I digress.

As far as the guy the books are named after, he's obviously very charismatic and likable but is flawed enough to be interesting and not too much of a Mary Sue. He's brave, smart, loyal and relatively compassionate, but at the same time he enjoys killing people a bit too much, isn't above looting dead dudes and was a criminal before his career in the army. This kind of juxtaposition keeps it interesting for me. I mean, you're not gonna get any stunningly insightful characterization from Cornwell but no one should be reading these books for that.

There were so many entertaining parts of this book that I want to talk about but it would spoil the good stuff for anyone who might read this. As always, Cornwell has a ton of action in his story and the climactic assault on Seringapatam is pretty thrilling. Lots of dudes firing rockets in every possible direction, musket volleys galore, stuff blowing up real nice, people getting eaten by tigers...the wholesome and gentle Cornwell we all know and love. A minor complaint I do have is that Cornwell gives little to no impression of the geography and landscape of India itself, which is something I liked a lot about the Saxon stuff. Obviously he's more familiar with England but I still noticed and missed it.

Before I wrap this up, I just have to mention who I consider to be Cornwell's greatest success in villain creation; Sergeant Obadiah Hakeswill. What a fucking evil creep. I'm sure he'll eventually get murdered by Sharpe but I hope I see a lot more of him before that happens. It's awesome that Cornwell wrote so many of these books, I look forward to reading them. People mention that Cornwell's formulaic but I mean, that's what most of his readers (including myself) want from him; reliably entertaining and relatively educational books where the good guys always go through crazy shit and beat the bad guys. If Cornwell embarked on some weird free-association Faulkner trip and published a bunch of books in that style I'd be pissed (or maybe it'd be awesome.)

Vagner Stefanello says

Review in Portuguese from Desbravando Livros:

Como fã do Bernard Cornwell, não poderia deixar de ler Sharpe, uma das séries mais recomendadas do autor e que sai um pouco daquele período medieval que o Cornwell costuma abordar nas suas outras obras. As

Aventuras de Sharpe passam-se durante o período das Guerras Napoleônicas, quando Inglaterra e França travavam batalhas ferrenhas para decidir quem era o país mais forte.

O Tigre de Sharpe introduz ao leitor o **personagem principal Richard Sharpe**, um recruta da Companhia Ligeira do 33º Regimento do rei que encontra-se atualmente na Índia, mais precisamente indo em direção à imponente fortaleza de Seringapatam, uma importante rota de comércio da região, que agora está sob o domínio do famoso sultão Tipu, que recentemente aliou-se aos franceses e agora precisará defender o local com unhas e dentes contra a invasão inglesa.

Pensando em desertar e levar sua amada Mary consigo, Sharpe acaba se envolvendo (infantilmente) em uma briga com o sargento Hakeswill, seu superior, e é condenado a levar 2.000 chicotadas (morte certa), punição essa que acaba não sendo totalmente feita, pois Sharpe é convocado pelo alto escalão e recebe uma missão urgente: infiltrar-se na fortaleza de Seringapatam e encontrar um espião escocês que tem informações extremamente úteis ao exército inglês, que precisa derrubar logo a fortaleza, pois as monções estão chegando e podem atrapalhar muito o seu avanço.

"Era por causa disso que pensava tanto em abutres. Estava pensando que queria fugir, mas que não queria servir de comida para os abutres. Não queria ser capturado. Essa era a regra número um do exército, e a única que importava. Porque se você fosse apanhado os bastardos ou açoitavam-no até a morte ou reorganizavam suas costelas com balas de mosquete. E, de um jeito ou de outro, os abutres esbaldavam-se."

Hakeswill acaba sendo o grande vilão desse livro, fazendo de tudo para que Sharpe se ferre e seja expulso do exército/morto. O sargento acaba sendo um homem de humor extremo, mas de uma vontade maior ainda de acabar com a alegria dos homens. Dei algumas risadas com ele durante a leitura, mas na maior parte do tempo senti um ódio extremo e vontade de espancá-lo. hauhuahua

Narrado em 3ª pessoa por vários pontos de visto, mas principalmente o de Sharpe, essa obra começa com um ritmo bem cadenciado, apresentando ao leitor os vários personagens que integram o lado inglês e o lado do sultão Tipu, enquanto vamos nos acostumando com o vocabulário particular da época, principalmente no que se relaciona ao arsenal, como baionetas, alabardas, mosquetes e assim por diante. Tudo muito bem feito, afinal, Cornwell é um autor mestre em ficção histórica, mesmo que alguns acontecimentos narrados não sejam verídicos, onde Cornwell tomou uma certa liberdade para criá-los e tornar *O Tigre de Sharpe* uma ótima leitura sobre o período desbravado.

Quando eu pensava que o ritmo iria manter-se até o final, eis que novas perspectivas aparecem, começamos a entender as motivações dos personagens, principalmente Tipu, um homem a ser admirado até mesmo por seus inimigos, além das relações meio conturbadas que os muçulmanos e os hindus têm um com o outro, ameaçando o destino dos milhares de habitantes de Seringapatam.

E é dentro da fortaleza que Sharpe mostra o seu **grande potencial** como soldado, tomando decisões arriscadas e muitas vezes contradizendo um de seus próprios superiores, o que pode ser entendido inicialmente como um sinal de rebeldia, mas revela aos outros a sua excelente visão estratégica.

"Seus homens uivavam com ele. Estavam contagiados pela loucura de Baird. Nesse momento, enraivecidos pelo calor inclemente e embriagados pela araca e pelo rum bebido durante a longa espera nas trincheiras, os casacas vermelhas eram deuses da guerra. Ofertavam morte com impunidade, enquanto desciam uma muralha ensanguentada seguindo um escocês enlouquecido. Baird conquistaria esta cidade ou morreria em sua poeira."

Inicialmente focando mais nas estratégias nas estratégicas militares do que no desenvolvimento dos personagens, temos aqui uma boa opção para quem gosta do tema e quer algo agradável de se ler.

As partes finais de O Tigre de Sharpe são excelentes, com uma tensão crescendo envolvendo o destino de Richard Sharpe e seus companheiros mais próximos, todos ao alcance de Tipu, um líder militar que é reconhecido até hoje quando se fala sobre o período das Guerras Napoleônicas, sem contar que os seus famosos tigres estão presentes na narrativa, com um papel de grande destaque.

As Aventuras de Sharpe é uma série composta por mais de 20 livros, sendo que, lá fora, eles foram lançados em ordem não-cronológica, diferentemente daqui do Brasil, onde a editora Record resolveu publicá-los na ordem cronológica, o que eu imagino ser uma decisão que faz mais sentido.

Certamente lerei os volumes seguintes, pois Sharpe é um personagem característico de Cornwell, com muitas qualidades e vários defeitos, mas impossível de não gostar. E que venha o próximo!

Ashley says

My rating here is really more for the entire series than just this book alone. There are something like 20 books in the series, so you need to go to www.bernardcornwell.net to read the books in order, even though they weren't written in order. This series is one of my favorites and falls in that magical category of truly educational fiction. The series follows the journeys of the fictional Richard Sharpe through the British army around the world in the early 1800's. It is amazingly well researched, from the language (which is pretty coarse, although accurately!) to the uniforms to the actual historical events. I am always surprised to get to the end of the book and read the historical notes and discover how accurate the facts are (I thought he made that up!). Cornwell writes the best battle scenes I have ever read, without being in the slightest bit tedious. Over the course of the series I learned all the tactics of Napoleonic warfare entirely without effort, and this is a subject in which I truly never expected to develop an interest! It has been turned into a fairly corny, although highly praised, BBC series. Please read the books before watching the tv shows though - they are pretty low budget, although the star is none other than the fantastic Sean Bean. My ONLY criticism is the villain in the first few books is annoying (just KILL him already!). Highly, highly recommend the entire series - but be aware the language is strong (although totally in character).

Metodi Markov says

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Jess ✶Harbinger of Blood-Soaked Rainbows✶ says

Picture Jason Statham. As an illiterate private in the British Army. 1799. Napoleonic Wars. India. Kicking ass and taking names. Do you have a picture in your mind? That picture probably bears a resemblance to Bernard Cornwell's swashbuckling protagonist Private Richard Sharpe in this series of novels.

I found quite a few of these novels a few years back at a used book sale and as I share a last name with the protagonist, I thought, what the hey? I'll read these. And finally I did. And I am glad.

You see, I loooove Jason Statham movies. And I couldn't help but put my favorite action hero in the place of Richard Sharpe as I'm reading. Bernard Cornwell is an incredible character writer in my opinion. For a novel that is heavily plot based, I really felt I could picture each character, know their background, see what they looked like, and even heard them speaking in their cockney british accents throughout. He captured each character's quirks and idiosyncrasies in a way I have not found with a lot of other writers. Because of this, the novel really read quickly. Especially for someone who really doesn't know much about the war strategies of 18th and 19th century British soldiers. I could see the entire plot play out before me and could see the scenery and could see Jason Statham in the middle. Making his own rules. Ignoring authority. Kicking ass and taking names.

The action is set in 1799 in India during the historical battle of Seringpatam in which the British forces were trying to oust the Muslim Tipoo Sultan from the throne of Mysore. The sultan is obsessed (I mean Obsessed) with tigers. His men wear tiger-striped uniforms. They carry swords and muskets with tiger heads carved into them. He has about 12 dozen sculptures and statues and jewels carved into tigers. He has 6 or 7 man-eating tigers as pets! (Like I said, Cornwell captures well the idiosyncrasies of his characters) Sharpe and a British Lieutenant must pose as deserters and fight against their own men in the Tipoo's army in order to gain intelligence from a captured Scottish spy. What ensues is a fun (albeit cheesy at times) plot where the illiterate private must find ways to conquer the Tippoo and save his own men. All on his own. With god-like strength. Defeating the sultan's jettis--some of the strongest men in the world. Single-handedly. With his bare

hands. And a single-shot musket. Oh yeah and he slays some mad tigers too. See the Statham similarities yet?

On that note, this book is definitely a historical adventure novel. I know Mr. Cornwell has a reputation for heavily researching and being as historically accurate as he can be, but if you are looking for a rich detailed historical account of the battle of Seringpatam in 1799, this is not your book. It is exactly like what a Jason Statham movie is for me. Badass main character with some pretty cool and corny action scenes that entertain the hell out of you, but don't make me go looking for some deeper meaning to life within these pages. If you do, you will be disappointed. So take this novel for what it is, just as one would take badass action movies for what they are, and have fun with it. This is why the novel only got four stars from me. I probably wouldn't give Statham movies five stars either. I definitely plan on reading others in this series and am looking forward to seeing where the characters and the story will go.

Until then, I will just have to watch The Transporter.

StoryTellerShannon says

This is the first in the James Bond style Sharpe series, focusing on Sharpe's earlier times in the British regiment as a private.

It's close to the turn of the century . . . late 18th century . . . and focuses on Sharpe's time in India as different groups struggle for power of the realm. Through luck and desperation, Sharpe goes undercover with a lieutenant to rescue a colonel from a fortified enemy city. This colonel is vital because he has crucial information for the British to take the town successfully.

A fun enough read but I find myself enjoying Cornwell's non-Sharpe novels the most.

**STORY/PLOTTING/EDITING: B minus to B; CHARACTERS/DIALOGUE: B;
ACTION/ADVENTURE: B; OVERALL GRADE: B; WHEN READ: 2010 (revised review mid November 2012).**

(view spoiler)
