

Teacher's notes

Robinson Crusoe

by Daniel Defoe



SUMMARY

Robinson Crusoe's parents want him to stay in his home town of York but he has other ideas. He wants to become a sailor and travel the world.

He leaves without saying goodbye to his parents and is shipwrecked off the coast of England. This is a foretaste of what is to come but he ignores any omens and goes to sea again. At first, he is more successful this time, and becomes a prosperous land owner in Brazil. But he is not satisfied with his success and he sets sail again to pick up slaves from Africa. He is shipwrecked again and all his fellow sailors drown. He alone makes it to the beach of an uninhabited island.

He lives there for the next twenty-eight years. Taking as much as he can retrieve from the sunken ship, Crusoe builds a home with strong defences against attack, although for years he doesn't see another living soul. He cultivates the land and raises goats. He is, generally, happy on his island, although he dreams of going home at times.

One day he chances upon a footprint in the sand, but he never discovers the person who made the mark.

Years later, people do come to the island, but they are not the rescue party he has dreamed about. They are cannibals, and he avoids contact with them the first time. But when they return, he helps one of their prisoners to escape and befriends him. He names him Friday, in honour of the day they became friends. On the next visit of the cannibals, Friday and Crusoe rescue two of their prisoners, a Spaniard and a man from Friday's island, who is in fact Friday's father.

They all work to send an expedition to Friday's land to bring back sixteen white men who have been shipwrecked there. But before they can return, an English ship arrives. Once again, all is not plain sailing, as the ship is under the command of mutineers and a battle ensues in which Crusoe and Friday help the lawful captain to regain command. Crusoe sails from the island, forgetting the money he collected from two sunken ships, and finally reaches England.

Good and bad news awaits him. His plantation in Brazil has thrived and he is a wealthy man. But his parents are dead. He helps the remaining members of his family and

eventually returns to his old island, where he finds the original sixteen white men have become a complete colony. He gives the colony things from his ship and sends more from his home in Brazil. He even thinks about returning to live on the island again one day ...

ABOUT DANIEL DEFOE

It is perhaps strange that a man who rarely left his own country and certainly never visited the exotic places he writes about should have produced the all-time adventure classic, *Robinson Crusoe*. It is perhaps even more surprising when you consider that this was his first novel, published when he was 59, although he had been a writer for magazines and newspapers since his youth.

Daniel Defoe was born in 1660 in London. His father, James Foe, was a butcher and candle-maker and it seems that the young Daniel was disappointed that he was not more high born. This may be the reason why he added the *De* to his surname.

As a young man, Daniel toyed with the idea of becoming a minister but instead went into commerce. At the age of 24, he married Mary Tuffley. But Defoe's import-export business was not successful, nor was his marriage and by the early 1690s he was engaged in revolutionary activity against James II, King of England. For this he was imprisoned for a period of time. Later he wrote for whichever side would pay him.

Late in life he turned to fiction and wrote an enormous number of works, mostly adventure stories, many of them published anonymously. Some see Defoe as the Ernest Hemingway of his day. Although his books were a popular success, he was never wealthy and in fact died at the age of seventy, a poor man.

BACKGROUND AND THEMES

On the surface, *Robinson Crusoe* is an adventure story, pure and simple. The setting, however, immediately makes it a 'rite of passage' novel, one man's struggle for survival against the odds.

But it is more than that. It is a tale of sin and retribution. It could even be seen as a retelling of the story of the

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PRE-
INTERMEDIATE

ROBINSON CRUSOE



Teacher's notes

Prodigal Son. Robinson fails to heed his father's advice and runs away without even saying goodbye. He is immediately shipwrecked and punished. He tries again and makes a financial success of his life. But once again he sins, getting into the slave trade and, once again, he is punished, far more severely this time, being marooned for 28 years on an uninhabited island. But he comes through it all and, in the original version, embraces Christianity and converts a savage to Christianity, too. When he eventually returns home, it is too late to be reconciled with his parents, but he has become, in absentee, a wealthy man.

Another thread runs through the story. It is as if the uninhabited island is a microcosm of empire. Crusoe colonizes it single-handed, and then civilizes a cannibal. Finally, he wins several battles against invading forces.

Communicative activities

The following teacher-led activities cover the same sections of text as the exercises at the back of the Reader and supplement those exercises. For supplementary exercises covering shorter sections of the book, see the photocopiable Student's Activities pages of this Factsheet. These are primarily for use with class readers but, with the exception of the discussion and pair/groupwork activities, can also be used by students working alone in a self-access centre.

ACTIVITIES BEFORE READING THE BOOK

Put students into small groups. Ask them to imagine that they have been shipwrecked on a desert island and they have suddenly realised that the ship is stuck on rocks near the land. You can swim out and bring five things back to the island before the ship finally sinks below the waves. What are you going to salvage?

Elicit ideas from each group and decide which set of five things is the best.

ACTIVITIES AFTER READING A SECTION

Chapters 1–5

Remind students that Crusoe rescues these things from the ship. Write them on the board:

- guns
- pens
- paper
- money
- clothes
- knives
- books

Ask students to work in groups and decide how each one could help them live on a desert island.

Chapters 6–10

Put students in pairs to role play a conversation between Crusoe and Friday. Crusoe wants to teach Friday how to use one of these things:

- gun
- matches
- bow and arrow (draw them on the board)
- money
- a musical instrument of some sort

Each pair has to choose one of the things and then write and act out the conversation:

Chapters 11–15

Ask students to work in groups. They must design a ship that can travel the nine miles to the next island in safety. What materials are they going to use? They must be available on the island. How are they going to join them together? Again they must use things they can find or make. What should they take with them for the journey?

ACTIVITIES AFTER READING THE BOOK

Ask students to work in groups and decide:

What was the biggest problem that Crusoe had on the island? How did he find the answer?

Glossary

It will be useful for your students to know the following new words. They are practised in the 'Before You Read' sections of exercises at the back of the book. (Definitions are based on those in the Longman Active Study Dictionary.)

Chapters 1–5

- cannibal** (n) someone who eats human flesh
cave (n) a large natural hole in the side of a hill or under the ground
coast (n) the land next to the sea
corn (n) the grain or seeds of crops such as wheat
farm (n) an area of land used for keeping animals or growing food
goat (n) a common farm animal with horns and with long hair under its chin
hill (n) an area of high land, like a small mountain
island (n) a piece of land completely surrounded by water
land (n) not the sea
mark (n) a sign or shape that is written or printed
parrot (n) a brightly coloured bird with a curved beak that can be taught to copy human speech
slave (n) someone who is owned by another person and must work for them without pay
storm (n) very bad weather in which there is a lot of wind, rain, etc.
tent (n) a temporary structure used for camping which is made of cloth or plastic and is supported by poles and ropes
tool (n) something such as a hammer or screwdriver which you use to make or repair things
umbrella (n) a thing that you hold above your head to protect yourself from rain

Chapters 6–10

- bone** (n) one of the hard parts in the frame of the body
master (n) the man who is in charge of a dog, a home or a servant
prisoner (n) someone who is kept in a prison



Student's activities

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Students can do these exercises alone or with one or more other students. Pair/group-only exercises are marked.

Activities before reading the book

Read the Introduction and answer the questions.

- 1 Who wrote the book?
- 2 When did he write it?
- 3 Were his books popular?
- 4 Was Robinson Crusoe a true story?

Activities while reading the book

CHAPTERS 1-5

Chapter 1

Work in pairs. Explain each sentence.

- (a) My father's last name was Kreutznaer but English people can't say this.
- (b) The sea called to me.
- (c) We will see the world.
- (d) I looked for a ship.
- (e) I came back with £300 in my hand.
- (f) But when I had no problems, I always found some!
- (g) The wind threw the ship this way and that way for nearly two weeks.
- (h) One of our men shouted, 'Land!'
- (i) The water played with me for a long time.
- (j) The ship was about half a mile from the land.

Chapter 2

Match items from the chapter. Explain your ideas to a partner.

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|-----------------|---------------|
| (a) great bird | (i) breakfast |
| (b) home | (ii) gun |
| (c) young trees | (iii) hill |
| (d) sleep | (iv) kitchen |
| (e) cave | (v) post |
| (f) marks | (vi) shelves |
| (g) table | (vii) story |
| (h) boxes | (viii) tent |
| (i) evening | (ix) wall |

Chapter 3

Complete each sentence from the chapter with one word from the box.

beach food fruit house island jobs people places
rain river ship vegetables

- (a) I wanted to see the
- (b) There were no
- (c) Perhaps there were other interesting
- (d) I went up the small ... near my house.
- (e) I put some ... very high in the trees.
- (f) The land was a garden with many fruits and
- (g) My first home was near the ...
- (h) I wanted to see a ... one day.
- (i) So I stayed in my first
- (j) There was .. every day from August to October.
- (k) I couldn't always get ... easily.

Robinson Crusoe



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ELEMENTARY

ROBINSON CRUSOE

- (l) But I had .. inside my house.

Chapter 4

- 1 Find 12 words from the chapter in the word search. You can read → ↗ ↘ ↙ ↚ ↛ ↜ ↝ ↞ ↠ ↡ ↢ ↣

c	h	i	c	k	e	n	p
t	a	a	o		d	e	a
z	b	n	r	m	a	d	r
d	r	i	n		e	r	r
q	r	m	r	i	r	a	o
j	l	a		d	b	g	t
m	i	l	k	g	o	a	t
r	c	o	a	s	t	f	l

- 2 Work with a partner. Why are the words in Exercise 1 important in the story?

Chapter 5

- 1 Work in threes.
Student A: Read *I want a boat*
Student B: Read *New clothes*
Student C: Read *I build a boat*.
Tell the story of your part of the chapter to the other students.
- 2 Read *Pol speaks to me* then work in threes again. Test each other on the information in this part of the chapter.

CHAPTERS 6-10

Chapter 6

- 1 Complete each sentence from the chapter with a suitable preposition or adverb.
 - (a) I was ... the beach one day.
 - (b) I found the mark ... a man's foot.
 - (c) I looked ... this strange thing.
 - (d) I listened and looked ... me.
 - (e) I walked up and ... the beach.
 - (f) Where did the mark come ...?
 - (g) I ran ... my house.
 - (h) Every minute or two I stopped and looked ... me.
 - (i) Was there a man ... the trees?
 - (j) Strange ideas ran .. my head.
 - (k) Who was ... my island?
 - (l) I stayed ... my house for three days.
 - (m) Perhaps the mark was ... my foot.
 - (n) I put my foot the mark but my foot was smaller.
- 2 What did Crusoe do after he saw the mark? (Four things)

Chapter 7

Are these statements about events in the chapter true or false?



Student's activities

- Crusoe saw a boat.
- He found the bones of a goat on the beach.
- He killed some cannibals.
- He used a bigger cave when he made fires for bread or to cook meat.
- He forgot about the mark on the beach and the bones.
- He saw some cannibals on the beach, dancing round a small fire.
- A man arrived on his island and spoke to him.
- He found some bodies on the beach.
- He found some new shoes.
- He built a boat with a friend and found a way to England.

Chapter 8

Put these events from the chapter in order.

- Crusoe hit the first cannibal.
- Crusoe saw five boats on the beach.
- Crusoe used his gun and the second cannibal was dead.
- Crusoe went back to his house and cleaned his guns.
- Crusoe went to the top of the hill again.
- The cannibals jumped into the river and swam across it.
- The cannibals killed one man.
- The cannibals pulled two men from a boat.
- The other man ran as fast as possible across the beach.
- The prisoner jumped into the river and swam across it.

Chapter 9

- Match these questions (a–j) and answers (i–x).
 - Why did the man put Crusoe's foot on his head?
 - Why was Crusoe happy with the sound that the man made?
 - What did the man do with Crusoe's knife?
 - Why couldn't the other cannibals find the two men?
 - What did Crusoe give the man to eat?
 - Why did Crusoe give the man the name Friday?
 - What name did Crusoe give himself?
 - What did Friday want to do with the two dead cannibals?
 - How did Crusoe know there were other prisoners in the boats?
 - Why did Friday learn his lesson well?
 - Because he wanted to be Crusoe's slave.
 - Because he was afraid of Crusoe's gun.
 - Because that day was Friday.
 - Because there were bones from many people's heads.
 - Because, after twenty-five years, somebody spoke to him.
 - Bread and dry fruit.
 - Friday put them under the ground.
 - He cut off the cannibal's head.
 - He wanted to eat them?
 - Master.

Chapter 10

Discuss these questions in pairs.

- Why did Friday move strangely in the clothes?
- Why did Crusoe make a door to the cave at the back?
- Why did Crusoe take his guns and knives into the cave with him?

- Why did Crusoe call him 'my child'?
- Why was Friday afraid of the guns?
- Why were these the best days for Crusoe on the island?

CHAPTERS 11–15

Chapter 11

Discuss these questions in pairs.

- Twenty cannibals came to the island. What happened to them?
- There were three prisoners with the cannibals. What do you know about them?
- How could the four people on the island talk to each other?
- What was Crusoe's plan?

Chapter 12

Are these statements about the information in the chapter true or false?

- After eight days, Friday's father and Christianus came back to the island.
- The ship brought Englishmen to the island.
- The men from the ship were all good men.
- Some of the men were prisoners.
- The oldest prisoner was the captain of the ship.
- Crusoe killed the two worst men on the beach.

Chapter 13

Match each number to a description

- | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------|
| (a) six men | (i) died two hours later |
| (b) twenty-six men | (ii) left the ship |
| (c) ten men | (iii) put their guns on the ground |
| (d) three or four men | (iv) ran to the sound |
| (e) eight men | (v) was killed by the captain |
| (f) two men | (vi) were good men |
| (g) the worst man | (vii) were on the ship |
| (h) another man | (viii) were prisoners |

Chapters 14 & 15

What did Crusoe:

- get from the captain?
- take with him to the ship?
- forget to take?
- get from the bosses of the ship's captain?
- find out in York?
- have in the bank in Lisbon?
- do to help his family?
- find when he went back to his island?

Activities after reading the book

Work in pairs. Look back at the Introduction. How many of the questions in the first paragraph can you answer now?

