

Elementary



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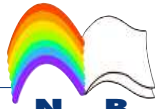
R A I N B O W S

Robinson Crusoe

Daniel Defoe



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Daniel Defoe

Robinson Crusoe

Adaptation, dossiers and activities
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Robinson Crusoe

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The author

Daniel Defoe



Life. Daniel Defoe was born in London in 1660. He was a child when the Plague¹ (1665) killed an enormous number of people and the Great Fire of London (1666) burnt² a large part of the city in four days, destroying St Paul's Cathedral and other important buildings.

His father was a merchant and a Dissenter³ and sent his son to a dissenting school where he received an excellent education. Daniel went into business, too, became a merchant⁴ of wine and tobacco and travelled on business for two or three years in Europe. When he came back, he married Mary Tulfley in 1684 and had eight children.

In 1685 he took part in the Duke of Monmouth's unsuccessful⁵ Puritan rebellion against the Roman Catholic King James II. He escaped and in 1688 he was with the army of William of Orange, who became King of England. In 1689 *The Toleration Act* gave freedom of worship⁶ to all dissenters. His business was successful but he made bad investments⁷. In 1692 he went bankrupt⁸ and started new activities in journalism and literature.

When the crown passed to Queen Anne, his situation changed. In 1702 he was imprisoned in Newgate⁹ for six months for publishing a satirical writing in defence of the Dissenters.

In 1704 he started his famous political newspaper *The Review* and the following year became a secret agent and government spy¹⁰.

It was only in 1719, at the age of sixty, that Defoe started writing the novels which gave him fame and success. In 1722 he published

1. *Plague*: a very infectious disease.
2. *burnt (burn-burnt-burnt)*: when there is fire and something is on fire.
3. *dissenter*: person who does not agree with official opinion.
4. *merchant*: a person who buys and sells, imports and exports products in large quantities.
5. *unsuccessful*: not having success.
6. *worship*: the practice of showing respect for God or a god, saying prayers or singing with others.
7. *investments*: the acts of using money to buy things which will give you more money.
8. *bankrupt*: you go bankrupt when you are not able to pay your debts.
9. *Newgate*: a famous prison in London.
10. *spy*: a person who tries to learn secret information about another country.

A Journal of the Plague Year, which is about the terrible illness which attacked London in 1665 when Daniel was a child. He based his book on the memories¹¹ of the few old people who were still living in London.

The last days of his life were not happy and he died in 1731 in London alone and without friends.

Works. Daniel Defoe wrote more than five hundred works (pamphlets¹², poems, novels etc.) but he is famous for his novels. Defoe had a very adventurous life and he put his numerous experiences into his writings. He usually wrote his stories in the form of a diary or an autobiography so that they were more real. They have a chronological order of events and the principal character, a hero or a heroine, has energy and a strong will¹³, is able to fight against misfortune¹⁴, to survive¹⁵ and become rich.



His novels are:

- *Robinson Crusoe*, published in 1719, is the story of Robinson's life on a desert island. The book is based on a real event: the experiences of Alexander Selkirk, a Scottish seaman who stayed on a desert island in the Pacific Ocean. It's considered as the first novel in English.
- *Captain Singleton* (1720) is about the adventures of a captain who becomes a pirate.
- *Moll Flanders* (1722) is the autobiography of a woman who becomes a thief and a prostitute but eventually repents¹⁶ and becomes rich.
- *Colonel Jack* (1722) is the story of a thief who repents and becomes rich.
- *Lady Roxana* (1724) is the autobiography of a courtesan¹⁷ who is imprisoned for debts and dies filled with remorse.

11. *memories*: things of the past that you remember.

12. *pamphlets*: very thin books.

13. *will*: determination.

14. *misfortune*: bad luck.

15. *survive*: continue to live.

16. *repents*: feels and shows that he is sorry for something bad or wrong that he has done.

17. *courtesan*: a high-class prostitute.



BEFORE READING

1 What do you already know?

a. Who is Robinson Crusoe?

- A writer A sailor A merchant

b. What is *Robinson Crusoe* about?

- A love story A tragedy A shipwreck

2 Look at the picture on page 8 and answer the questions.

a. What's the weather like?

.....

b. What can you see in the middle of the sea?

c. Do you think the story is set in modern or ancient times?

3 Match some of the key words from this chapter to their definitions.

- | | | |
|-------------|--------------------------|--|
| a. lawyer | <input type="checkbox"/> | 1. A person who is not free and is forced to work for his owner. |
| b. storm | <input type="checkbox"/> | 2. To travel on water using sails. |
| c. shore | <input type="checkbox"/> | 3. A person on a ship who attacks and steals things from other ships at sea. |
| d. pirate | <input type="checkbox"/> | 4. A person whose job is to give legal advice. |
| e. prisoner | <input type="checkbox"/> | 5. Very bad weather with strong winds and rain. |
| f. slave | <input type="checkbox"/> | 6. The land along the coast of a sea, ocean or lake. |
| g. sail | <input type="checkbox"/> | 7. A person who is not free and has to stay in prison. |



Robinson Crusoe

Robinson at sea

Chapter 1

People call me Robinson Crusoe, but my real name is Robinson Kreutznaer because my father was a German merchant who first settled¹ in Hull and then went to live in York. Here I was born in 1632. I had two brothers: one was a soldier and was killed near Dunkirk in a battle against the Spaniards and the other one disappeared.

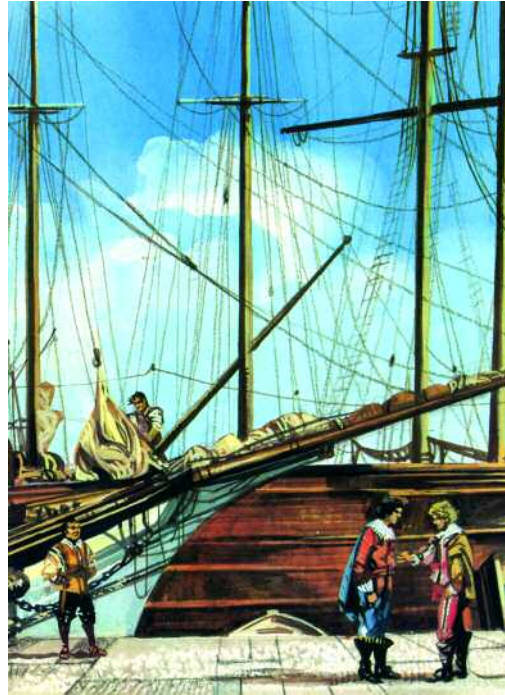
I wanted to go to sea but my father's advice² was to become a lawyer.

"Why, dear son, do you want to leave your father's house and your native country? Stay at home, your life here is easy", he said to me. "You can be happy here. You have a good education and enough money to have a good and satisfying life. You have the example of your brother: he didn't want to follow my advice and he died!"

After these words he started crying.

"My heart is sad, I can't say anything else."

I remained at home but after a year I realised that I was not happy: I strongly wanted to go to sea. One day I talked to my mother.



*"... I went on a ship with a friend.
I was nineteen years old."*

(illustration by G. Scarato, 1981)

1. *settled*: made his permanent home.

2. *advice*: an opinion about what to do in a particular situation.



Robinson at sea

“Dear mother, I really want to see the world. Please convince my dear father to give me his permission. Tell him to let me go for one voyage abroad³, and if I don’t like it, I will not go any more.”

“Robinson, you know what your father thinks about this and I don’t want to convince him if his opinion is different”, she answered.

But on 1st September, 1651, I went on a ship with a friend. I was nineteen years old. The ship was first going to London. As soon as the ship was out of the river Humber and at sea, there was a frightening⁴ storm. I felt really sorry and guilty⁵ for leaving my father’s house.

“God, if you save my life, I promise I’ll go straight home to my father and never again go on a ship.”

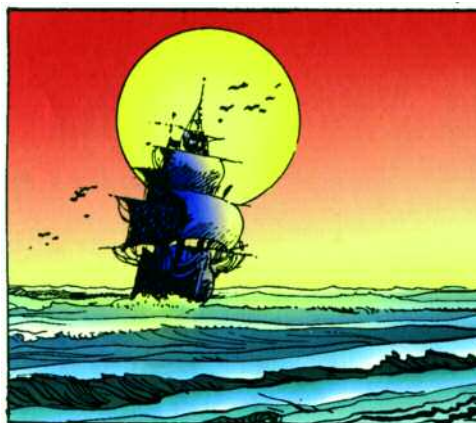
My sad thoughts disappeared⁶ the next day: the sun was shining and the sea was calm again. There was no wind and the evening was fine with a wonderful sunset⁷. My friend came to me and said,

“Let’s have something to drink and forget everything. Don’t you see how beautiful the weather is?”

We drank punch⁸ and I was soon drunk. Some days later the wind started to blow very hard and there was another storm. This time it was terrible: the waves were enormous and all the sailors⁹ were desperate.

“This is the right punishment for my disobedience!” I thought.

Even our Captain was frightened and repeated,



“... the sun was shining and the sea was calm again.”

(illustration by S. Toppi, 2006)

3. *abroad*: in or to another country.
4. *frightening*: which makes you feel afraid.
5. *guilty*: feeling ashamed because you have done something wrong or haven’t done something you had to.

6. *disappeared*: became impossible to see.

7. *sunset*:



8. *punch*: hot alcoholic drink.
9. *sailors*: people that work on a ship.

“Lord, have mercy¹⁰ on us!”

Fortunately a boat from another ship saved us and we reached the shore and went to Yarmouth on foot. Here people were very kind and helped us. They gave us food, a place to sleep and also some money to go either to London or back to Hull. The captain of the ship said to me,

“Young man, go back to your father and never go to sea any more. If you do not go back, you will meet only disaster, as your father said. Believe me!”

I did not answer him and went away. With the money I had in my pocket I travelled to London and sailed for Africa, to Guinea, to be precise. The weather was good but it was very hot and I was often sick¹¹. The captain was very kind and we became friends. He taught¹² me some Mathematics and a lot of practical things for a sailor, such as the rules of navigation but also some useful knowledge¹³ for a merchant. I liked the voyage¹⁴ and when I returned to England, I decided to go to Africa again.



“Unfortunately, some Turkish pirates attacked us...”

(illustration by S. Toppi, 2006)

10. *mercy*: pity, compassion.

11. *sick*: physically ill and/or wanting to vomit.

12. *taught* (*teach-taught-taught*): gave

lessons and helped to learn.

13. *knowledge*: the state of knowing particular things, facts or situations.

14. *voyage*: a long journey on a ship.