

Foe Study Guide

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Plot Summary

As the story opens, a young woman admits she cannot row any farther, slips over the side of the boat and begins swimming. She makes it to the sands of an island where a black man appears. The woman, who is later identified as Susan Barton, tells the man that she is a "cast away," is alone, and needs water. The man is Friday and Susan has landed on the island of castaway Robinson Crusoe.

Susan's life on the island is, by her account, dull and monotonous. Crusoe spends most of his days with Friday working at building terraces though they have no seeds to plant once the ground is cleared and rock walls built. Susan soon falls into a deep depression and Crusoe notes that some who find themselves castaways simply aren't cut out to endure. While Susan doesn't understand his toiling at the job she sees as a waste of time, Crusoe is happy in his island paradise. Then Crusoe comes down with a recurring fever. The first time, Susan nurses him back to health. The second bout comes after Susan has been on the island for more than a year and a ship lands on the beach just as she is wishing for medical help for Crusoe. They head for civilization though Crusoe dies on the way, leaving Susan feeling responsible for Friday.

In England, Susan comes to believe that selling her story to an author would be the best way out of financial difficulties and enters into an agreement with Daniel Foe. She soon discovers that Mr. Foe is on the run for his own financial problems and moves into his house, living largely off the meager produce from his garden. Then one day a young girl shows up, claiming to be Susan's daughter. Susan admits that her daughter was abducted but denies knowing this young girl, believing instead that the girl is Mr. Foe's daughter.

Susan and Friday travel to Bristol with Susan hoping to put Friday aboard a ship bound for Africa, but she finds she doesn't trust any of the captains willing to take him and keeps Friday with her after all. They then encounter Mr. Foe again and he introduces Susan to the girl who continues to claim she is Susan's daughter. Faced with the girl again, Susan begins to doubt that she herself is real. When Mr. Foe encourages Susan to take some time for herself, leaving Friday in Mr. Foe's care, she does so. When she returns, she see a sign proclaiming that Daniel Defoe, Author, lives in the home.

Susan enters the house and finds a young girl wrapped in an endless grey scarf, then a couple that resemble skeletons on the bed together and Friday, barely alive, in an alcove. She also finds a manuscript that crumbles in her fingers and upon reading the words, "And then I could row no further," slips over the side of the boat and into the water. This time she doesn't strike out to shore but sinks down, eventually encountering Friday.



Part I

Part I Summary

As the story opens, a young woman admits that she cannot row any farther, slips over the side of the boat and begins swimming. She makes it to the sands of an island where a black man appears. The woman, who is later identified as Susan Barton, tells the man that she is a "cast away," is alone, and needs water. She makes a drinking motion but he doesn't immediately respond. Barton notes that she doesn't feel safe with the man but that she doesn't care if he kills her afterward, as long as she has a drink of water. The man, later identified as Friday, motions Susan to follow him and walks off. She steps on a thorn and her heel quickly swells so she can hardly walk. Friday helps her then, half-carrying her while she limps along.

Susan notes that there are likely those who have read books about castaways and that those readers may be imagining a beautiful island where fruit is readily available and the castaways have nothing to do but sit around and wait for a rescue party. She says that this island is very different from that ideal, that there is but a single sandy beach - the one she landed on. The food is scarce and very monotonous. In addition, she steps on a thorn almost as soon as she begins her walk with Friday, though his feet are so calloused that the thorns don't seem to penetrate his feet when he steps on them, though the fleas can penetrate even Friday's tough skin and his feet are often bleeding from the insects.

Friday helps Susan to a camp where she finds a man who is obviously European, has green eyes, "straw colored" hair, and seems about sixty. This man is Cruso and Susan, after having some water, tells him that the crew of the ship she'd been on had mutinied, killed the captain and set Susan adrift near the island. Cruse has a shelter built of poles and thatched reeds. He has a bed for himself and a mat for Friday. The floor is dirt and the entire camp is surrounded by a fence that Cruso calls "his castle." He survives by eating a type of bitter lettuce that grows wild but that he cultivates in a small patch near the hut, supplementing the greens with fish and bird eggs. Susan says that Cruso told a number of stories about himself but that many didn't match previous stories. She says for that reason, she's unable to give any reasonable account of Cruso or of how he came to be stranded.

At Susan's request, Cruso provides a needle that is really a fish bone with a hole punched in one end. This simple tool made by Cruso intrigues Susan though she doesn't learn how he made the hole. Susan then offers up her story. She tells Cruso that her father's name was "Berton," but that it "became corrupted in the mouths of strangers," and apparently evolved into Barton. She says that her daughter had been abducted two years earlier, taken to "the New World" and that Susan had followed her to Bahia. She says that she met with rudeness but didn't find the child and so had been traveling to Lisbon when the crew of the ship mutinied. She says she doesn't know why



she was cast out but that she was put on a rowboat with the captain's body and set adrift.

Susan then asks why Cruso hadn't ever attempted to build a boat and his answer is that he doesn't know to where he'd escape. Susan says she soon realizes that there is no need to urge him to try to save himself and that he apparently likes his place on the island. She attributes his desire to remain on the island forever to "stubbornness of old age." Susan sleeps on a bed of grass on the floor and wakes the following day to find Friday working at the "stove" built of stone. She notes that there's a monotonous rhythm to the wind and rain on the island and comes to hate the wind. Cruso gives her a knife and warns her to remain nearby, which she does.

Susan soon asks why Cruso doesn't try to make paper so he can save his memories, and he replies that he hasn't forgotten anything that's worth remembering. Susan argues that the things he has forgotten are the things that would make his story believable and desirable to others. Cruso and Friday work almost every day at building terraces that would be suitable for gardening and Cruso argues that leaving these terraces behind as a statement of his time on the island is enough.

On the third day, Susan disobeys Cruso's order to remain at the hut and ventures to the beach, collecting firewood on her return. He is angry and orders that she obey him, but she refuses with heated words. Later that day, she apologizes for her outburst and Cruso seems to accept her apology.

One day Susan tells Friday to "bring more wood," but he remains where he is. When Cruso says "firewood," Friday obediently gets up to go get it. Susan says that she first thought Friday was refusing to obey her but then learns Friday knows a very limited number of words, and that "firewood" is one of those. When Susan questions the reason Cruso hasn't taught Friday more than the few words so that the two of them could carry on conversations, Cruso orders Friday to sing. Friday begins to hum. Susan asks if Friday is incapable of speech and Cruso orders Friday to open his mouth, showing Susan that Friday has no tongue. Cruso says slavers cut out Friday's tongue, though Cruso doesn't know why. He says Friday is a former cannibal, and that it's possible slavers cut out the tongues of all cannibals, or it may have been punishment.

Then Cruso comes down sick with "an old fever" that apparently returns periodically. Friday refuses to help at all and Susan nurses Cruso for twelve days. A few days later, he has an apparent relapse and Susan gets into bed with him to warm his body with her own. She wakes to find Cruso's hand exploring her body and notes that she could have thrown him off but doesn't resist, citing the fact that he had been on the island for fifteen years without a woman. The situation is a one-time event.

One day Susan sees Friday straddle a log and paddle out into the bay, scattering flower petals on the water. Susan realizes this must be some sort of religious ritual he'd invented, and the realization makes her realize that there is a "spirit or soul" within the silent man.



Susan soon sinks into depression, apparently the result of her situation. She notes that her only goal is to escape the island and that she believes she wouldn't care if a cannibal were the source of her escape. She notes that there is not a repeat of her sexual encounter with Cruso, though she admits that she would have enticed him into her bed so she could become pregnant if she had thought that she would never escape the island, fearing that Cruso would someday die and Susan would be left alone on the island with Friday.

Susan emerges from this depression eventually. One day she asks Cruso about laws on the island. Cruso says there are no laws except that "we will work for our bread," which he cites as a commandment. Susan is dissatisfied with the answer. She points out that Cruso and Friday work at the terraces and she doesn't. If work is the only law, Cruso would be correct in throwing her over a cliff, but he doesn't. Cruso also says that there's no need to ever punish Friday. Susan uses all this to conjecture that there are "unknown laws" at work in their lives, keeping them all from doing harm to the others on the island. Susan also believes that being on the island is punishment, though she doesn't voice this to Cruso.

After Susan has been on the island more than a year, Friday comes to the hut with Cruso who is obviously again in the clutches of the fever. Susan begins nursing him again, though she fears for his life and wishes she knew more of medical procedures that might save him. Then a ship, the Hobart, arrives on the island. Cruso, though delirious, fights against being put below and Friday runs away. Susan sends some men to find him, warning that he is afraid and urging that they not hurt him. While they are gone, Susan has salt pork, biscuits and wine - a meal she says is a welcome change from the fish and eggs of the island. She tells the captain her story and he urges that she write it down, saying there's a demand for stories of castaways and that the fact that she is a woman castaway will increase that demand. When she objects, saying that she cannot write, the captain says that she could hire an author to put it down.

The captain urges Susan to claim that she and Cruso are married, saying that it will cause trouble to her reputation otherwise, and she becomes known as Mrs. Cruso to the ship's mates. One night the captain suggests that she come to his cabin, but she ignores the request and it doesn't come up again. All the while, Cruso's fever worsens and Susan admits that he might have gotten better on the island but he seems to have given up hope. He dies during the voyage, and she tries to convey the message to Friday as Cruso is buried at sea.

Part I Analysis

Susan gives some details about the island, including that the seaweed that washes ashore constantly stinks, that there are hoards of sand fleas and apes that are horrible nuisances. She also says that she once tried to tame one of the lizards that ranged wild on the island. She says that she tried to feed it flies, but it refused to eat and would not be tamed. The interesting part about this story is that she tells it as she is talking about her arrival on the island and does not later return to this story. There are several details



that are not presented in chronological order and these seem to be intended to pique the interest of the reader.

The fact that Susan Barton immediately offers up details of her situation to Cruso is interesting in that he apparently doesn't ask. This is, however, an indication of Susan's character. A person who is reluctant to talk about herself would not be able to carry on the letters she writes over the coming months after her rescue. She does say at a later point in the story that she would have told Cruso more, but he didn't ask any questions about her. Another interesting point here is the daughter. Susan says that she had a daughter who was "abducted" and taken to the New World by a trader. She is somewhat sketchy on the details and will continue to be so, never quite giving enough details to satisfy the reader's curiosity regarding this daughter. Susan doesn't mention a husband and apparently continues to use her maiden name; therefore, it could be assumed that if she has a daughter, the child was born out of wedlock. It's left to the reader to determine the significance of the story Susan tells about her search for this missing daughter and whether the girl even exists outside Susan's mind.

The knife is the only tool in use on the island that isn't made of stone or wood and Susan believes it "a pity" that Cruso didn't save anything except the knife from his own shipwreck, and that better tools would have made his life easier.

The terraces require intensive labors and Susan sees them as a foolish and wasteful endeavor. She says there are no seeds to plant, therefore no reason to build the terraces. She goes so far as to say that it seems Cruso is waiting for a ship to arrive with a packet of corn kernels to plant on the terraces. Susan berates Cruso for this project because she sees it as worthless, refusing to understand Cruso's need for a job to keep himself occupied. In this way, she is very self-centered, and it's easy to see that she is likely to impose her will on others whenever she has the opportunity. Cruso tells her that some people who find themselves as castaways are "not castaways at heart." This statement isn't explained but seems to be Cruso's way of saying that he has found a way to endure the situation while some may spend all their energy on escaping the situation.

Susan is appalled to discover Friday has no tongue and comes to hate the sight of the man eating. She also comes to question the reason for Friday's deformity, going so far as to say that Cruso might have cut out Friday's tongue out of fear of the cannibal or for some punishment. This mystery intrigues Susan even while Friday horrifies her. Cruso tells Susan that Friday's fate could be worse than landing on this island with Cruso, who is a relatively kind master compared to those that might have owned Friday in other countries.

Susan herself admits that she might have landed in far more dangerous circumstances than to have found Cruso and Friday. Despite this, she and Cruso continue to clash regularly because both are strong-willed and desire to be in control of the situation. Susan does, however, come to admit that her presence is bound to be a problem for Cruso who probably hates having his life interrupted by Susan's presence. This comes to a head over shoes. Susan has none and Cruso promises to make some, but time



passes and he doesn't even start the project, so Susan takes a monkey skin and fashions herself a sandal-like shoe. Cruso is angry that she took the skin and Susan is angry at his lack of response to her needs.

Susan's idea that being on the island is a punishment is one that's only mentioned briefly, though it brings up an interesting question regarding Susan's state. She doesn't say what the situation is punishment for, but it seems possible that she has something in her own past that prompts this statement, though she doesn't elaborate. This is another question left to the reader's imagination.

Susan gives an interesting account of her time with Cruso on the voyage back to civilization. She says she sometimes whispers in his ear, stories of their time together on the island. While this seems reasonable, considering the relationship Susan has described, she says that she also sometimes lies with him, "stroking" herself against him and telling him that they are "coupling," though it doesn't seem to mean that they are literally having sex. Susan also tells Cruso that they could travel together to Brazil or return to the island with corn to plant on his terraces. It's as if Susan had been unwilling to fully share a life with Cruso on the island where he was in his element, but now that they are headed toward the civilization where she feels at home, she wants something more of him. Susan doesn't explain this and it's left to the reader to determine the full meaning.



Part II

Part II Summary

Part two consists of letters written by Susan to Mr. Foe, the man she has settled on to write the story of her adventures as a castaway. Susan writes that she has a second-story apartment on Clock Lane and that Friday sleeps in the cellar. She says she couldn't have left Friday on the island alone, but he isn't happy in the city. On April 20, Susan thanks Mr. Foe for money she uses to buy clothes for Friday and to pay the rent, then asks if he couldn't take them into his own home, she as his servant and Friday as a gardener. Susan says that she imagines his house and he as the helmsman, and that she imagines the chest where he will put the finished pages of her story as he writes. On April 21, Susan continues to imagine Mr. Foe as he is writing. She wishes for a way to help him write and conjures up an image of the island, hoping to make that more substantial to him.

On April 25, Susan attempts to answer some questions. She says Mr. Foe says it was too bad that Crusoe didn't save muskets and powder from the wreck or tools with which to make a boat. Susan counters, saying that it would have been impossible to keep powder dry and that the winds of the island would have made escape in a small boat impossible. She doesn't mention the fact that she posed almost the same thoughts to Crusoe. Susan says that Friday spends most of his time in the cellar but that she'd caught some boys sneaking around, looking for a peek at the "cannibal." She has begun trying to teach him to do laundry, simply as a way to help him stay more active.

On April 28, Susan writes only a single line, that her previous letter has been returned unopened and that she hopes there isn't a problem. On May 1, she writes that she has gone to Foe's home and found the "bailiffs" there. She writes that she hopes he has found shelter somewhere and that if he's in trouble, he is welcome to come to her. She says that the bailiffs appear to have moved in, are eating at "The King's Arms," and have taken great liberties with his home and possessions.

Susan says that there are times when she can stand the weight of everyone's troubles, including those of Mr. Foe, but urges him to remember that her life is in limbo until he completes his project. On May 19, Susan writes that she worries that she won't again hear from Mr. Foe and admits that she and Friday are in serious financial trouble. On May 29, she writes that she and Friday have moved into Foe's house. She says they keep the curtains drawn and there are no candles. She says that the carrots and beans are growing in the garden and she and Friday are living there like "poor relations."

As Susan begins writing her story, she notes she's putting the finished pages in the chest, just as Mr. Foe would have done. She then says she worries that the story of her life as a castaway isn't exciting enough and fears that she will be "driven to invent new and stranger circumstances" to make the story more interesting. She suggests that there might be a scene in which cannibals arrive and another marking the arrival of



someone with corn to plant in Cruso's terraces. Susan also laments the ability to tell the story of how Friday lost his tongue but notes that only Friday could have told that story.

One day, Susan notes the presence of a young girl who has been watching the house and supposes that the girl is in contact with Mr. Foe. Susan hands the girl a letter, says that it's "for your master" and turns to leave. Another day, Susan tries to give the girl a whole packet of letters but she refuses, then says that her name is "Susan Barton" and that she is the daughter of the older Susan. The girl then says she's followed Susan "everywhere," and that she knows about "the island." Susan reacts to this news and immediately comes to believe that Mr. Foe has sent the girl.

The girl claims that her father was George Lewes, that she was born in Deptford in May of 1702, and that her father was prone to gambling. He died leaving Susan destitute with a young daughter. The girl refuses to be sent away and Susan eventually allows her to remain, though she is very agitated about the situation. Susan says there are many parents seeking children, but children never seek lost parents.

Susan continues to wrestle with the problem of trying to write their story. She tells Friday that he alone knows that their lives on the island were, in fact, very dull. Susan says that with the passage of time, the terraces seem more like "tombs," and that Cruso, had he been a true adventurer, would have been pressing to plant his own seed in the only fertile womb available. Susan says that her own labors with the writing are no less taxing than that of moving the stones on the island. She says she has come to realize the reader will have many questions - including why she and Cruso did not come together as man and woman more than the single time - and that she has few truthful answers for these questions. Days pass and Susan says had she known it would be her job to tell the story of the island, she would have questioned Cruso more fully.

One day Susan finds a case containing several recorders. Friday immediately begins playing a few notes he'd played on a reed flute on the island, and Susan says that music could be a way to communicate with Friday. She plays with him and he seems content with the situation. Then she begins altering the tune slightly, expecting Friday to follow, but he pays her no attention and continues with his tune. When she blasts a note loudly, he doesn't even open his eyes and she realizes he had not paid her any mind at all.

Susan and Friday set out for Bristol where Susan plans to find passage for Friday back to his native people. One night, wet and hungry in a barn, she begins to dance as she has seen Friday do. Though she's always annoyed that Friday does this, she is soon in a trance, and though she remembers little of the trance, she ends the dance feeling refreshed. In this way she learns there is something more to Friday's wild spinning than she had known.

Susan and Friday arrive in Bristol where Susan attempts to find someone willing to take Friday as a deckhand in return for passage to Africa. Susan comes to realize that only those who are without scruples are willing and fears their true motive is to sell Friday again into slavery. She notes that a mother may give birth to a child and raise it without



loving it, but the mother will fight if that child is threatened, simply because the child is her own. Susan is now in that position and says that Friday is hers.

Part II Analysis

Early in the letters, Susan thanks Mr. Foe for giving her back her "substance." She seems to have come to a point where she feels Cruso is a more important person in her story than she herself. It's not fully explained as to whether she wants to be more important and just can't find the words to make that so, or whether she simply can't think of herself as that important. She does pose a number of questions, including what happened to her daughter, how she survived in Bahia, and the identity of the captain who was killed, but she doesn't answer any of the questions. This seems an effort to pique the reader's interest.

Susan says she "chatters away" at Friday, hoping that he'll remember conversation and words that he'd forgotten through all his years with Cruso. She doesn't say what she hopes to accomplish with this but seems never to give up trying to help Friday communicate.

The mystery of how Friday lost his tongue seems to weigh on Susan. She says she once drew two pictures, one of slavers cutting out the tongue of a young man and one of Cruso cutting out the tongue. She seems to have hoped that Friday would simply manage to give her an answer as to which was the correct story but he doesn't. Susan admits that, upon looking more closely and objectively at her drawings, the picture could just as easily have been ones of a benevolent master placing a piece of bread on the tongue of a beloved slave.

Susan continues to ponder what might have become of Mr. Foe. She says that she sometimes wonders if he might be in London, waiting for the news that she and Friday have left his house so he might come home. This seems an unusual insecurity for Susan. Susan also suggests that Mr. Foe might some day be reading over her letters and come to the conclusion that the story would have been much better if not for Susan's presence. She counters by saying that if it hadn't been for her presence, Cruso's story would never have been told.

Susan addresses Mr. Foe with questions about the girl who claims to be Susan's daughter. Susan says mothers don't forget their children, and that the girl therefore cannot be her child. She seems to wonder if the girl is a ruse to get Susan and Friday out of the house. Susan then says that the girl is "more your daughter than she ever was mine," but doesn't explain that statement at all. Susan has stated that the garden seems very familiar to her, as if she played there as a child. She also describes the house before she arrived the first time. All these clues hint that she knew Mr. Foe prior to their coming together for the book, though these are only hints, and it's left to the reader to decide the meaning of the situation.



One day Susan takes the young girl into the forest toward Cheshunt. Susan tells her that her father is actually a writer named Daniel Foe, and that she is "father-born" with no mother. Susan then says that she "wakes" and looks out the window but doesn't see the girl and wonders if she might remain in the forest until she's covered with leaves. Susan uses the word "expelled," which could be associated with the birthing of a child. There is no additional information regarding the girl's identity. It's left to the reader to decide who the girl is and if she even existed outside Susan's imagination.

Susan at times expresses a great interest in Friday's past and the fact that he was reportedly a cannibal. She now says that eating human flesh is bound to be like any human sin - that once a person has tasted of that particular sin, he is more than ready for another taste. Susan says that she can imagine cannibal children enjoying "the tasty fat of their neighbors."

Susan describes finding a dead child on the side of the road, wrapped in a bloody cloth. The baby is obviously newborn, and the sight of the child haunts Susan later that night. She describes in great detail the baby's hands and talks of the eyes that will never see. While it's never at all mentioned as a possibility, it seems feasible that this could be Susan's recollection of her own child.



Chapters III and IV

Chapters III and IV Summary

Susan arrives at the new home of Mr. Foe who answers the door only after she identifies herself. She says that she found him after a chance meeting with Mrs. Thrush. The meeting immediately becomes an argument as Mr. Foe tells Susan that the story is of her lost daughter and that the time on the island is but one part of that story. Susan objects, saying that the story is the island. Mr. Foe goes on to say that the story is that Susan loses a daughter, either to an abduction or an elopement, searches for the daughter and is shipwrecked, returns to civilization without taking up the search, then is sought out and found by the missing daughter.

Susan and Mr. Foe debate several issues soon after her arrival, including whether he should allow a young pickpocket named Jack to continue picking pockets or take him in as an apprentice. Mr. Foe says he can't take in every young orphan he encounters and that Jack's life on the streets is better than his life would be in the workhouse. When Jack returns with food for the three, he whispers something to Mr. Foe, and a short time later, there's a knock at the door. The young girl who claims to be Susan's daughter enters with a woman she introduces as Amy, her nurse when she was a child.

Susan comes to believe that the girl who identifies herself as Susan's daughter is a ghost, as is Amy. She says she isn't certain about the young boy, Jack, but believes Mr. Foe has "conjured" the ghosts for some purpose. She proposes that it could be that he's found another girl by the correct name but not her daughter. She insists that if Foe had been aiming to convince her that this girl is her daughter, he erred in that there is no resemblance.

After a while, Jack leaves, followed by Amy and then the girl. As Susan prepares to leave with Friday, Mr. Foe asks that she stay with him. She agrees and Friday sleeps in the alcove while Susan sleeps with Mr. Foe. They have sex and she likens herself to a muse visiting Mr. Foe. They talk some while lying in bed together, and Mr. Foe says he sometimes wonders whether people would be better or worse if they never had to sleep. Susan spends a little time looking out the window before falling asleep.

Susan wakes the following morning and prepares to leave for the day. Mr. Foe gives her money for breakfast and she and Friday have milk and bread. Mr. Foe encourages Susan to begin teaching Friday to write. She agrees, taking a slate and pencil though she has no faith in the endeavor. In the afternoon, Mr. Foe urges Susan to leave Friday behind and go out on her own, which she does. She returns to find that Friday has the finished pages of writing and rushes to stop him, but Mr. Foe says that there's nothing Friday can do to harm the pages and asks Susan to sit with him on the bed. She says that in the light of day she notices the grubby sheets, Mr. Foe's dirty fingernails and the bags under his eyes. Susan says that she believes in Mr. Foe's ability to produce stories for people, that he gave her a home when she had nowhere to stay, and that she looks



upon him as "a wife." Mr. Foe then asks that she tell him the true fate of her daughter. She counters by asking about the girl claiming to be her daughter but never answers the question. Mr. Foe abruptly asks if Friday is learning to write and Susan says he appears to be writing an "o." Mr. Foe suggests that she teach him "a" the following day.

In Part IV, Susan stumbles over the body of a girl. The girl doesn't move and Susan tries to unwind the gray scarf from the girl's face but cannot find the end. Susan then passes into a room and sees two people, lying side-by-side on a bed, their lips receded so that they seem to be smiling. She then goes to the alcove where the curtain tears under her hands. She finds Friday there, barely breathing. She works to try to open his mouth, but his teeth are clenched. She finally pries the mouth open and listens for the sound of the island as one would listen at the opening of a shell for the sound of an ocean.

She opens a chest and sees the crumbling pages of a manuscript and reads the first words, "Dear Mr. Foe, At last I could row no further." Then, making "barely a splash," she slips overboard and strikes out for the island. But this time she is dragged down by something and finds herself in the wreck of a ship where she finds Friday. She pulls at his teeth and his mouth opens, emitting a stream that flows through the wreckage, over the shores and cliffs of the island and across her face.

Chapters III and IV Analysis

As Susan faces the young girl and the insistence that the girl is her daughter, she begins to waver and notes that a person with doubt has a life of no substance. Susan seems to be wavering on her stand that the girl is not her daughter but not because she believes that the girl is her daughter. Instead, she seems to be coming to believe that she herself isn't real or that some portion - or all - of her life is imagined. She goes so far as to ask who is speaking for her and whether she herself is a ghost. Mr. Foe tells her that he can't answer her question as to which of them is real and which is a ghost and that they must simply hope that the answer "will not swallow us." He seems to be indicating that the answer is something to be frightened of, and this is the first look at the fact that the story, the people and even Susan may not be real.

Mr. Foe tells Susan that it's possible for a person to become "lost," and that sometimes a person leaves a sign for themselves. This sign becomes a constant in the person's life and no matter how many times a person is lost, he or she can return to this point to begin again in the search for the correct path. It seems likely that Susan's "sign post" is that point at which she slips over the side of a boat and into the ocean. She continually returns to this image, saying it repeatedly and it will be a major point in the closing of the story.

The final chapters are filled with imagery but are also largely left to interpretation. For example, Susan notes that there are only two plates when Jack brings food for Susan, Mr. Foe and Friday, and that Susan and Mr. Foe eat first and she then fills her plate for Friday. Later, Susan describes the room where she finds the two bodies in bed together and says that there are two dusty plates on the table. At another point, Susan catches



Friday drawing pictures of eyes on his slate, but he refuses to give it to her and erases the drawings before giving up the slate.

In the fourth chapter, Susan is led to Mr. Foe's home by a young boy and it's noted that Mr. Foe is in hiding. In the fifth chapter, Susan sees a plaque at the door that reads "Daniel Defoe, Author." It should be noted that Daniel Defoe is the author of Robinson Crusoe.

Another piece of imagery is Friday's tendency to spin around. Susan notes that Friday doesn't seem to notice her at all when he is in these fits of dancing, and she understands on the occasion that she gives herself up to it. Later, she tells Mr. Foe that Friday tended to dance naked except for a robe that was open when he spun. While she doesn't put the image into detailed words, she says that she'd always feared that the same people who had punished Friday by cutting out his tongue had punished him in other, similar ways, and she seems to indicate that her fears are borne out when she sees Friday dancing.



Characters

Susan Barton

The young woman who is cast away on the desert isle and there discovers Cruso and his man, Friday. Susan says she was bound from Bahia to Lisbon when the sailors on the ship mutiny, kill the captain and set Susan adrift in a rowboat with the captain's body. Susan soon falls into a deep depression brought on by her situation. She seems bereft when faced with the fact that she could be stranded on the island for the long term. This is an integral part of her nature and Cruso sums it up with the notion that some people can't be satisfied with being castaways. Susan doesn't understand why someone in Cruso's situation would be willing to spend his time creating terraces for planting when she believes the time would be better spent in trying to find a means of escaping the island.

Upon her return to civilization, Susan is initially determined she won't tell the story of her adventure but then decides to do so, mainly for the money. When the author who is supposed to be writing the story disappears, Susan goes to great lengths to honor her part of the contract with this writer, though the details of this deal are never discussed. Another interesting point of Susan's nature is her story of an abducted daughter and the young girl who puts in an appearance claiming to be Susan's daughter.

Friday

Friday is a slave who is reportedly a former member of a cannibalistic tribe. The story of Friday's missing tongue is never revealed, though Cruso believes it to be the result of some sort of punishment by slavers. Cruso says it's possible that all slaves of cannibal tribes have their tongues cut out upon capture. Susan comes to wonder whether Cruso cut out Friday's tongue but doesn't say so to Cruso. Friday seems to Susan to be somewhat "dull" and she notes that the day she sees him spreading blossoms on the water is the first time she sees a sign of a soul or spirit.

The very fact of Friday's existence comes into question as Susan begins the task of teaching him to read, urged to this by Mr. Foe. After spending some time with Friday in what Susan calls an unproductive lesson in writing, she finds that Friday is sitting alone with a slate and drawing eyes - a skill that seemed to be above his level of intelligence based on Susan's observations. Susan's final observations are of Friday, below the surface of the water in the bay of the island. It's through Friday that Susan apparently comes to realize her desire to return to the island.

Robinson Cruso

A man who has been stranded on an island for some fifteen years prior to the arrival of Susan Barton. The two clash almost from the beginning and seem to have different



ideas, dreams and goals. Crusoe dies on the way back to civilization aboard a rescue ship and Susan admits that Crusoe would likely have recovered, had he remained on the island.

Mr. Foe

The man Susan finds to write her story. In this story, Mr. Foe is in dire straits financially and finds himself put out of his home by bailiffs. Susan later catches up to him living in hiding, and it's there that Mr. Foe tells her that her real story is not of a time on the island but of a her quest for her daughter with the time as a castaway really only a small part of the greater story. As the story comes to a close, Susan notes the name "Daniel Defoe, Author," on the door. Defoe is the author of the original story of Robinson Crusoe.

The Young Susan Barton

A girl who shows up at Mr. Foe's house where Susan Barton - former castaway - is staying. The girl claims to be the older Susan's lost daughter, though Susan comes to believe that the girl is actually a phantom, conjured by Mr. Foe.

Mrs. Thrush

A woman who is apparently Mr. Foe's housekeeper, she is at Mr. Foe's house when Susan Barton goes there. At one point, the bailiffs accuse Susan of being a messenger between Mrs. Thrush and Mr. Foe. Susan leaves letters with Mrs. Thrush hoping that they will reach Mr. Foe.

Amy

The girl who it is said serves as nurse to the girl who claims to be Susan's daughter. When Amy is described to Susan, Susan denies knowing of her existence. When she is introduced to Amy, Susan outright says that she's never seen this woman before.

George Lewes

The man the young girl claims is her father. The girl says that he is a brewer who had been prone to gambling and lost all his money. Fleeing debtors, he was killed, leaving Susan and a young daughter destitute. Susan notes that she doesn't know George Lewes and that this young girl is not her daughter.

The Captain Bound For Africa

One of several ship's captains Susan talks with regarding passage for Friday to Africa. The first she addresses agrees to take Friday but then asks to retain Friday's papers of freedom. Susan senses that the man's plan is to sell Friday into slavery again and refuses to allow it, keeping Friday with her after all.

Jack

A young orphan who is a "notable" pick pocket though he is only about ten years old. He runs errands for Mr. Foe and on the day Susan arrives, brings food for Susan, Mr. Foe and Friday.



Objects/Places

Bahia

Where Susan Barton was prior to her arrival on the island.

Lisbon

Where Susan Barton is headed when she is cast away onto Crusoe's island.

The Atlantic Ocean

Where Crusoe's island is located.

The North Bluff

The name given to an area of cliffs where the majority of the apes have gone to escape Crusoe and Friday.

The Hobart

The name of the ship that rescues Susan Barton, Friday and Crusoe.

Clock Lane

The location of the apartment where Susan and Friday live upon their return to civilization.

Stoke Newington

Where Mr. Foe lives.

The King's Arms

Where the bailiffs are eating while inhabiting Mr. Foe's home.

Deptford

Where the young girl claiming to be Susan's daughter says she was born.

Bristol

Where Susan attempts to find passage for Friday to Africa.



Themes

The Quest for Truth

The quest for truth is seen in three specific areas of this story. The first and most obvious is Susan's insistence that her story be the truth. She says she doesn't want Mr. Foe to embellish her story at all as he's writing, though her attitude changes to some degree when she tries her own hand at writing and discovers that sticking strictly to the truth makes for a boring story. At that point she admits that making up some stories about cannibals or other adventures seems a good idea but seems to resist the temptation. The second area in which the quest for truth arises is in Susan's quest for what is real in her own life. When presented with the existence of a daughter that she believes is not her own, Susan comes to doubt her own existence and seems to wonder what is real in her own life.

The final area of this theme is in the reader's quest to determine what is real, and perhaps equally importantly, why. The image of Susan slipping over the side of the boat may or may not be real, but seems to be what Mr. Foe describes as an anchor point from which she can return to try again to find her way.

The Need for Companionship

Though the needs for companionship vary from one person to another, each of the three who are castaways on Cruso's island seem to have some need for companionship. The most obvious need is seen in Susan. Susan desires companions willing to see things her way and to share her goals and dreams. Susan's needs extend to conversation rather than mere presence. Cruso is also in need of companions who are willing to see things his way, and Susan comes to realize that Cruso likely feels she is placing demands on his time and energy.

While Susan desires companions who will talk with her, Cruso seems to care little for conversation. Susan can't understand why Cruso has been on the island with Friday for some fifteen years and has never attempted to teach Friday to communicate in some other way. Cruso seems satisfied that Friday understands a few simple words and believes there to be no need for anything more. Mr. Foe points out that, because Friday doesn't talk, it's easy to dismiss him. Friday is a more complex character simply because he cannot put his desires and wishes into words. However, it should not be assumed that he has no wishes or desires.

Unanswered Questions

While unanswered questions are typically not a theme, there are several in this book that are repeatedly asked and never answered. The sheer number and repetition make these unanswered questions of great importance in this book. One of those is what



happened to Friday's tongue. While Crusoe says that slavers cut out his tongue, probably as punishment but possibly for the simple reason that Friday had belonged to a tribe of cannibals, Susan comes to wonder if Crusoe had been the one to perform the deed. Susan is then left to wonder whether Crusoe might have done so as a punishment for some crime committed by Friday or because Friday had been from a cannibal tribe. It's noted that the answer to these questions lie within Friday himself and without the ability to communicate, the question will remain unanswered.

Another mystery is what happened to Susan's daughter, and she herself poses the question on multiple occasions but never gives nor receives an answer. It should also be noted that Mr. Foe says he isn't quite certain whether the daughter was abducted or if she might have eloped. Finally, there's the mystery of Mr. Foe's identity and that of Crusoe. While they are presented as two separate characters, Susan sees a plaque over Mr. Foe's door that reads "Daniel Defoe," who is the author of the book, ROBINSON CRUSOE. As Susan is making love with Mr. Foe, she notes that his body is very much like Crusoe's.



Style

Point of View

The story is written in first person from the limited perspective of Susan Barton. In this story, the limited perspective is very strictly adhered to in that the reader gets only the information Susan wishes to impart rather than knowing everything Susan knows. For example, Susan says she has a daughter who was taken to the New World. It's never explained whether the daughter was truly taken against her will or if she perhaps willingly left with a husband, lover or even her father. The father of this daughter is never mentioned. This lack of detail and later the question posed as to whether the daughter is "substantial" at all, leads the reader to question whether the daughter is even real. This question, along with many others, is left to the imagination of the reader because Susan never offers up the answer. Another point exemplifying this limited perspective is seen soon after Susan arrives on the island. When she and Crusoe argue, she later goes back to Crusoe and offers up an apology for her angry words. She says that it seems Crusoe forgives her but doesn't go into any detail as to why she believes this to be true. The reader's only choice is to believe her words on the matter as there is no supporting evidence outside the limited perspective provided.

Setting

The story is set in two distinct physical settings - England and an island in the Atlantic Ocean. The time is arguably as important as is the place. The time is likely in the early-1700s, based on the fact that the girl who claims to be Susan's daughter says that she was born in 1702. It seems the girl is somewhat older than a young teen, though there is no real indication of her age. The setting seems reasonable both in physical appearance and in time. There are, for example, few modes of travel other than by ship and horse. Susan and Friday travel to Bristol on foot, and their main concern is finding safety from would-be attackers. The island is described in some detail as Susan recounts her time there. She notes that the island isn't what a person would expect because castaways are generally found on beautiful islands with sandy beaches and plenty of fruit, while their particular island had a single bay and the diet consisted of a wild, bitter lettuce and whatever fish and bird eggs can be gathered. Susan also offers up descriptions of other places, such as the room where Mr. Foe does his writing. These are typically in great detail with Susan adding her own thoughts; for example, she thought a particular room would be dustier. The geographical areas remain sufficiently vague to be believable, and the details offered of the specific places where Susan stays are sufficient to be believable.



Language and Meaning

The story seems to be presented basically in chronological order, though there are some pieces of information offered out of order, generally through letters written by Susan to Mr. Foe. There are sharp images presented, typically through Susan's attention to detail. While the story is written in a fairly easy language, the story line is convoluted and difficult to follow. There are many things that are presented simply as fact but that are, in truth, unexplained and left to interpretation.

The story opens with Susan explaining that she rowed her little boat, until "At last I could row no further," then slips into the water and swims for shore. That island turns out to be Cruso's island and Susan spends more than a year there with Cruso and Friday. They are then apparently rescued and taken to England, though Cruso dies on the way. Susan then apparently agrees to allow a writer to tell her story and spends a great deal of time writing letters to that author. She loses touch with Mr. Foe then regains it and finds that he's worked on her manuscript. When she reads the words, "At last I could row no further," the aspect of the story changes so that she is no longer in the stairway of Mr. Foe's rooms but is slipping over the side of her boat and again into the ocean, just as she did upon her arrival at Cruso's island. There are many aspects of the story that could be interpreted to mean that the entire story was a figment of someone's (most likely, Susan's) imagination and arguments can be made that none of the characters even exist or that all are ghosts. It's left to the reader's interpretation and imagination to decide what is fact and what is imagery.

Structure

The book is divided into four chapters of varying lengths. Chapter one ends on page 45, chapter two on page 111, chapter three on page 152 and the final chapter on page 158. The first chapter opens with a description of Susan's arrival on Cruso's island, including the fact that when she "could row no further," she "slipped overboard" and swam the rest of the way to the island where she encounters Friday. The final chapter includes the same wording, tying the story's beginning and ending together. Chapter two consists of letters from Susan to Mr. Foe, though she admits she doesn't mail all of them. In chapter three, Susan arrives at Mr. Foe's residence, having located him apparently by chance. In chapter four, Susan returns to the house after having been out alone for a short time to find a girl with a grey scarf that seems endless, a couple that she describes as resembling skeletons, and Friday's almost lifeless body in the alcove.



Quotes

"He gave no reply, but regarded me as he would a seal or porpoise thrown up by the waves, that would shortly expire and might then be cut up for food." Chapter I, Page 5

"I had rowed all morning, I had not drunk since the night before, I no longer cared if he killed me afterwards so long as I had water." Chapter I, Page 6

"For readers reared on travelers' tales, the words desert isle may conjure up a place of soft sands and shady trees where brooks run to quench the castaway's thirst and ripe fruit falls into his hand, where no more is asked of him than to drowse the days away till a ship calls to fetch him home. But the island on which I was cast away was quite another place: a great rocky hill with a flat top, rising sharply from the sea on all sides except one, dotted with drab bushes that never flowered and never shed their leaves." Chapter I, Page 7

"It seemed a great pity that from the wreck Cruso should have brought away no more than a knife. For had he rescued even the simplest of carpenter's tools, and some spikes and bars and suchlike, he might have fashioned better tools, and with better tools contrived a less laborious life, or even built a boat and escaped to civilization." Chapter I, Page 16

"And then, with great earnestness, he went on: 'I ask you to remember, not every man who bears the mark of the castaway is a castaway at heart.'" Chapter I, Page 33

"We are as yet only a castaway and a dumb slave and now a madwoman. There is place yet for lepers and acrobats and pirates and whores to join our menagerie." Chapter II, Page 77

"Who would wish to read that there were once two dull fellows on a rock in the sea who filled their time by digging up stones? As for me and my yearnings for salvation, one is as soon sated with yearning as one is with sugar." Chapter II, Page 82

"After the flurry of the mutiny and the death of the Portuguese captain, after I have met Cruso and come to know somewhat of the life he leads, what is there to say? There was too little desire in Cruso and Friday: too little desire to escape, too little desire for a new life. Without desire, how is it possible to make a story?" Chapter II, Page 88

"Truly, cannibals are terrible; but most terrible of all is to think of the little cannibal children, their eyes closing in pleasure as they chew the tasty fat of their neighbours." Chapter II, Page 94

"From which we may infer that there is after all design in our lives, and if we wait long enough we are bound to see that design unfolding; just as, observing a carpet-maker, we may see at first glance only a tangle of threads; yet, if we are patient, flowers begin to emerge under our gaze, and prancing unicorns, and turrets." Chapter II, Page 103



"A woman may bear a child she does not want and rear it without loving it, yet be ready to defend it with her life. Thus it has become, in a manner of speaking, between Friday and myself. I do not love him, but he is mine." Chapter II, Page 111

"To me the moral of the story is that there comes a time when we must give reckoning of ourselves to the world, and then forever after be content to hold our peace." - Mr. Foe, Chapter III, Page 124



Topics for Discussion

Provide details of how Susan Barton comes to land on Cruso's island. What is revealed about Cruso's own situation, including how he came to be on the island? Detail the differences between Susan's attitude and that of Cruso. What does Cruso mean when he says that not everyone is meant to be a castaway?

What is the true purpose of Cruso's daily work building terraces? What is Susan's attitude about the work? How does Susan spend her time? Compare the attitudes of Susan and Cruso. What might you do with your time if stranded on Cruso's island?

Why does Friday not speak? What does Cruso say about this deformity? What does Susan come to believe about the deformity? What does the possibility that Friday is a cannibal have to do with the deformity? Which do you believe is the more likely story? Support your claim.

Susan's ultimate quest is to find her daughter, but when the girl claims to be that daughter, Susan gives a reason that it can't be true. What is that reason? Is it a reasonable explanation? What is the girl's true identity? What makes you believe this to be true?

Who is Mr. Foe? Why is it appropriate that Daniel Foe be chosen for this role? Who is Cruso? Friday? Amy? Jack? Mrs. Thrush?

What is Susan's relationship to Friday? How does it change over the course of the story? Why does Susan attempt to send Friday back to Africa but then refuse to put him on any of the ships willing to take him as a deck hand? What is the significance of the spinning dance Friday performs? What prompts Susan to try to teach Friday to write? What is it that Susan later finds Friday drawing on the slate? What is the significance?

Susan returns to Foe's room to find two beings that seem to be skeletal remains. Who are these people? What makes you think so? What is the significance of the fact that the final scene begins very similarly to the opening scene but then changes dramatically? Why does Susan try to pry open Friday's mouth? Explain the final scene and its meaning.

Was any of the story real? Explain in detail why you believe this.