

Sailing Alone Around the World Study Guide

Sailing Alone Around the World by Joshua Slocum

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Plot Summary

Sailing Alone Around the World by Captain Joshua Slocum is a work of non-fiction. The book details Slocum's solo trip around the world, which logged more than 46,000 miles and took three years. The reader should note that the trip was not undertaken all at once. Slocum often docked for weeks or months at a time to refit the boat, visit people and landmarks, and to enjoy the scenery and the customs of faraway lands.

Overall, the book is in chronological order, although Slocum has a tendency to refer to events out of sequence, which can be confusing. For example, Slocum tells stories about being in Australia and then leaving the country to head elsewhere. In the next chapter, Slocum returns the story to Australia and then jumps ahead. There are similar instances involving the sailor's time in South Africa and Brazil.

Slocum starts out by talking about his homeland, Nova Scotia, and its maritime history. Joshua Slocum was born in 1844 in Mount Hanley, Nova Scotia. Slocum describes Nova Scotia as a maritime province of Canada, rife with hardy spruce from which many fine vessels have been carved. According to Slocum, "The people of this coast, hardy, robust, and strong, are disposed of to compete in the world's commerce, and it is nothing against the master mariner if the birthplace mentioned on his certificate be Nova Scotia" (p. 1).

Slocum ran away several times as a boy and eventually ended up working as a cabin boy on a boat. Eventually, Slocum would shun his father's profession of leather working and became part owner of *Northern Light*, which the author claimed was the finest American vessel afloat.

Slocum fell into good fortune when a friend and whaling captain offered the author the chance to own and rebuild an oyster boat named the *Spray*. Slocum would spend a great deal of time working on the boat before setting off on a three year journey around the world, the first ever solo voyage.

The journey began in April 1895 and took about three years to complete, logging more than 46,000 miles. Slocum writes about many places that he saw and visited along the way, with enough detail that the reader could easily follow the route on a map, even with the series of changes in trade and maritime routes.

Slocum showed a great deal of determination and courage in undertaking the trip, particularly since he was alone for the majority of it. There were times when friends and other sailors were aboard, but rarely for long.

The story is fascinating from a nautical point of view but also from a social point of view, as Slocum took the opportunity to interact with many different cultures and their customs.

Even at the end of the long journey, it is clear that Slocum still loved sailing as much as the day he left.



Chapters 1-5

Chapters 1-5 Summary and Analysis

Chapter one begins with Slocum discussing his homeland of Nova Scotia. Nova Scotia is a heavily populated Canadian province on the southeastern tip of the country. The province's capital, Halifax, is well known for its economic structure, which may be the reason Slocum journeyed there at age sixteen. The province is surrounded by the Atlantic Ocean and features many inlets and bays.

Joshua Slocum was born in 1844 in Mount Hanley, Nova Scotia. Slocum describes Nova Scotia as a maritime province of Canada, rife with hardy spruce from which many fine vessels have been carved. According to Slocum, "The people of this coast, hardy, robust, and strong, are disposed of to compete in the world's commerce, and it is nothing against the master mariner if the birthplace mentioned on his certificate be Nova Scotia" (p. 1).

Slocum was a Canadian but also a naturalized Yankee, if someone from Nova Scotia could be referred to in that light. The Slocums lived on a cold mountain where the views included the Annapolis Valley and the Bay of Fundy. Slocum's grandfather was a keeper at a lighthouse at Southwest Pointe, another influence on the author's seafaring ways.

Slocum talks about his father, John Slocum. Joshua Slocum refers to his father as a man who was good with a boat and could make anything as long as he had a knife and a nearby tree. Slocum Senior was a stern man who was not afraid of the wind and refused to take a back seat to anyone. Although Slocum was a leather worker by trade, his love of the sea translated to his son.

Slocum also talks about his first partnership in owning a boat, the Northern Light, which was considered to be the "finest American sailing vessel afloat" (p. 2). The Northern Light was also Slocum's first command.

All of Slocum's voyages were foreign. The author mentions trips to Australia, Japan, China, and the Spice Islands. Slocum's trusty craft, Aquidneck, ended up being wrecked on the coast of Brazil, which led the author to seek a new pastime. The industry was not healthy at that time, and Slocum began to wonder what he could do for a livelihood. Slocum had always longed to be a master shipbuilder.

In 1892, Slocum was in Boston, trying to decide which direction to take. Would he return to the sea or take a job at the shipyard? Before Slocum was forced to make a decision, a whaling captain, Eben Pierce, made Slocum an offer he couldn't refuse. Pierce offered Slocum the opportunity to command his own boat after making necessary repairs. The boat had been sitting in Pierce's yard for seven years and was a joke with the townspeople. After hearing about the required repairs, Slocum accepted the gift. It was



a welcome relief to have the opportunity, which also saved Slocum from spending \$50 to join a society that would allow him to work at the shipyard.

Slocum details his first sighting of the thirty-seven foot gaff oyster boat known as the Spray. The Spray would prove to be the perfect vessel for the three year voyage around the world, crossing the Atlantic twice and following Magellan's route.

Slocum was offered helpers to refit the ship to make it seaworthy. Slocum learned that the thirty-seven foot sloop had been a joke of the area and its residents often referred to it as an antiquated ship that was first manufactured around the year one.

Slocum set about to cut new timbers for the boat and make all the necessary repairs to ensure that the Spray would be seaworthy. The efforts amounted to completely rebuilding the boat from the hull up. The author details his efforts, the time it took to rebuild the ship, and the specifications of the refurbished boat and its components.

Slocum often referred to the Spray as having risen from hallowed grounds as the ashes of revered Pilgrim John Cook were interred nearby.

Slocum enjoyed the curiosity of the townspeople. People came from far away to watch Slocum work.

In chapter two, Slocum spends the first season aboard the Spray fishing. Unfortunately, Slocum claims that he did not know how to properly bait a hook and struggled with the task.

On April 24, 1895, Slocum was ready to set sail on his round the world voyage. Slocum confesses to having a perceived sense of knowledge about the trip and took little advice from anyone about how things should be done. As Slocum left Massachusetts Bay, he saw the wrecked of another ship, the Venetian, which had been split in two. Slocum knew he could do better, saying, "I had taken little advice from any one, for I had a right to my own opinions in matters pertaining to the sea" (pp. 11-12).

Slocum's idealism comes through loud and clear as he set sail, as shown when he said, "Every particle of water thrown into the air became a gem, and the Spray, bounding ahead, snatched necklace after necklace from the sea, and as often threw them away" (p. 12).

Slocum had his first set of worries when he approached the bay at Gloucester. Despite Slocum's vast knowledge and experience, it would be the first time he had ever sailed into port alone. It was much more difficult than expected. The Spray very nearly hit the mooring pile and was nervous as the ship was guided by the water directly to the place it should have been. Bystanders were deeply impressed with the docking of the boat, and some said that Slocum could not do that again if he tried. Wanting to save face, Slocum pretended that he meant to execute the perfect mooring of the boat and was careful not to speak so as the bystanders would not hear the shaking in his voice.



The purpose of the trip to Gloucester was to pick up supplies not available at the home port; plus, Slocum wanted to make sure the *Spray* was going to hold up under the strain of the sea. The stay in Gloucester lasted two weeks.

The only item Slocum was without was a chronometer. The author's ancient instrument was at home and the cost of a new one was too dear.

Slocum describes leaving Gloucester and headed toward Cape Ann where the ship's first log entry was made. After Cape Ann, Slocum describes several other islands, their proper names and how he viewed them. Slocum was thrilled to reach Westport, where he recovered from a sound thrashing during a storm and could also reacquaint himself with old school friends.

The last item Slocum bought before he set sail in earnest was a tin clock, the only way to tell time during the next three years.

In chapter three, Slocum says goodbye to America on July 2 and heads off to Sable Island. The sailor is finally on the open sea for the duration of the trip. The only person to see Slocum's progress is the man in the moon. Slocum faces his first bout with loneliness, which doesn't subside until there is more work to be done. The work keeps Slocum occupied and does not allow him to dwell on the fact that he is alone.

Along the way, Slocum encounters various other ships and their crews. One boat, the *La Vaguisa*, passes the *Spray*, and its captain tosses a bottle of fine Spanish wine to Slocum. Slocum comments that the wine is good and the captain was nice, as far as Spaniards go. Other ships passing by are the *Java* and *Olympia*.

Slocum marvels at his mental state after being out on the sea for such a short time. Memories and thoughts come back with intense clarity. Slocum claims that he has gained the ability to notice and focus on things that would have previously escaped his attention.

The *Spray* arrived in the Azores on July 19.

In chapter four, Slocum set sail from Horta on July 24. The *Spray* was able to avoid the squalls until she was out to sea, a mile from shore. The *Spray* was set upon by thieves, as well as by law enforcement who thought Slocum might be a smuggler. All worked out well. Slocum continues to share details of islands passed as well as weather conditions.

Slocum becomes ill and must spend some time ashore. There is the opportunity for "high living" and the author feasts on plums and cheese. Slocum makes his way to Gibraltar and has a complimentary exchange with officials of the British Navy. The chapter ends with Slocum having a picnic on the shore of Morocco.

In chapter five, on August 25, Slocum set sail from Gibraltar. The *Spray* was towed out by a tug owned by her Majesty until there was enough wind to carry Slocum and the sloop onward. Slocum discusses the need to change routes from the Mediterranean Sea and the Suez Canal over a western route, which is what the captain eventually took



anyway. There were also signs and tales of longshore pirates being in the area, which could not wisely be ignored, and Slocum states, "Longshore pirates are on both coasts being numerous, I could not afford to make light of the advice" (p. 51). In the end, Slocum ended up being chased by a Moorish pirate.

Slocum is often compared to Christopher Columbus, although the comparisons are slight at best.

Slocum details his arrival at other ports including the Canary Islands and the Cape Verde Islands through to Pernambuco. The author spends more time discussing sea life, as well. After leaving Brazil, Slocum prepares to brave the upcoming stormy weather he is bound to face at the cape.



Chapters 6-10

Chapters 6-10 Summary and Analysis

In chapter six, Slocum prepared to depart from Brazil. On November 28, the Spray left Rio de Janeiro and immediately ran into a gale of wind so violent that it tore up the coast. Slocum discusses the sailing habits of other boats that travel quickly during the day, passing up the Spray and then slowing down measurably at night. The Spray kept a steady course, both day and night.

Slocum approached Uruguay and very nearly missed a shipwreck. The sloop ended up being somewhat damaged but managed to stay afloat.

The British continued to be cordial to Slocum and were quite courteous to the captain when the Spray arrived at Maldonado. Slocum also received a warm welcome at Montevideo.

Slocum took the opportunity to make an excursion to Buenos Aires. The Spray arrived in Buenos Aires just after Christmas, and Slocum was delighted to make the trip with Captain Howard, an old friend and seasoned sailor. Slocum delights in talking about the people and places he had visited many years ago in Buenos Aires and reminiscences with Howard.

In chapter seven, the Spray sailed from Buenos Aires on January 26, 1896, fully restocked with provisions. The wind turned from a mere gust to a dangerous gale and the sea turned to mud. Slocum discusses how the Plate is a treacherous place during a storm. Slocum weighed anchor not far off the coast and waited out the storm until the next morning. Not long after, the Spray was submerged by a massive wave. Slocum encountered yet another captain around Cape Froward. This captain gave Slocum a welcome gift in a bag of carpet tacks.

Slocum and the Spray are chased by Fortesque Indians in the Bay and Slocum does his best to outwit them. Slocum also has his first real encounter with pirates, led by the notorious Black Pedro.

After surviving the would-be attack, Slocum docks at Three Island Cove to replenish his wood and water supply. While there, Slocum observes animal life.

In chapter eight, Slocum and the Spray left Port Tamar on March 3rd and ventured toward Cape Pillar in the Pacific. Slocum's hopes for fair weather were dashed, and soon the captain was in the middle of yet another storm. This time the waves were merciless with the Spray and the boat was given an introductory bath. Slocum realized that it was too late to turn back and hunkered down for the night. The tempest eventually drove the Spray toward Cape Horn, despite Slocum's will.



Eventually, Slocum was able to right the course and headed through Cockburn Channel into the Strait of Magellan. Slocum continues to detail various landmarks including Dismal Famine Reach.

Savages absconded with Slocum's prized carpet tacks. There was more danger ahead for Slocum in the form of firebrands. Slocum discusses the difference in behavior between savages and Christians. The captain also faced fierce williwaws that eventually turned into cat's-paws.

In chapter nine, Slocum set about to repair the sails of the Spray after the latest gale. There were some other damages as well, but Slocum wanted to repair them by himself if at all possible. The storm had forced the Spray toward the Horn, and slowly Slocum managed to right the course. Fortunately, the weather over the next few days was kind and Slocum was able to log twenty miles in a day, which was considered to be a good run.

On the morning, after weighing anchor at Snug Bay, Slocum was set upon once again by savages. The savages came in two canoes and were well armed. Slocum pulled up anchor and set sail once more with the hopes of outrunning the savages.

The boredom seemed to be setting in, which is apparent by Slocum's mention of a civilized little spider that was attacked by the Bostonian and died quickly.

Slocum mentions a visit with the crew of the Colombia. Suffering from loneliness, Slocum attracted the attention of the passing ship and was thrilled when it responded. Slocum was even happier when he realized that it was an American ship. The captain and crew were very courteous to Slocum and even gave the captain milk and cheese, refusing payment for any of it.

Slocum also has another encounter with Black Pedro. Black Pedro was baffled that Slocum was alone, having been tricked earlier by Slocum's fast thinking and change of clothes.

In chapter ten, twenty-six miles outside Port Angosto, Slocum hit another storm. The captain's plan was to stop in the port to replenish provisions. There was snow all around the boat, and it was to be expected that the Spray would see its fair share of the white stuff.

The Spray continued to be plagued with attempts at thievery by savages and even became the target of a Feugian arrow. In addition, Slocum had to worry about a defective sheet-rope which placed the boat in some danger.

On April 26th, Slocum headed toward the historic island of Juan Fernandez. About thirty miles out, Slocum could see the blue hills and became emotionally charged. It wasn't long before Slocum learned about the island's king. The king was given the post according to his age and he title was little more than honorary. The governor of the island was away during Slocum's visit.



Chapters 11-14

Chapters 11-14 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 11:

Slocum tells a wonderful story about introducing the islanders of Juan Fernandez to buns and doughnuts. Slocum points out that there is very little difference between the two.

"Both had been fried in tallow, which was the strong point in both, for there was nothing on the island fatter than a goat, and a goat is but a lean beast, to make the best of it." (Chapter 11, Page 138)

By the end of the day, Slocum had taught the islanders how to make both treats and sold them the necessary ingredients at little profit. Slocum was rewarded with antique and curious coins which he later sold for a reasonable profit.

Slocum was fascinated by being in the same realm that had been home to Robinson Crusoe. Slocum visited the Bay as well as Robinson's cave. Slocum also had the opportunity to walk with the children of the island.

The Spray hoisted anchor and continued westward with fair winds and fine weather, taking Slocum to the Southern Cross and toward the Marquesas.

Chapter 12:

By this time, Slocum had become accustomed to spending quite a lot of time in various ports. The captain's route took him 43 days to the next port of Nukahiva, which did not offer any company. Slocum remained there for 29 days, making his alone time stretch to 72 days. Although Slocum had been plagued by loneliness early on in the trip, the author claims that it was not so this time. Slocum says that the coral reefs kept him company and there was much work to do. Slocum also discusses the presence of whales, sharks, and various birds.

Slocum headed toward Apia and was greeted there with warmth. There was a rare treat for Slocum when he was visited by Mrs. Robert Louis Stevenson. There was also a trip to Vailima, the Stevenson home. This was particularly enjoyable after Slocum's sojourn into Robinson Crusoe's realm.

Slocum is pleased by Samoan hospitality but daunted by its strict adherence to customs and ritual. Slocum worked hard not to offend anyone during his stay. Still, Slocum attempted to return the hospitality aboard the Spray, which was difficult and not at all comparable to the reception given to Slocum by the King.



Other visitors to the Spray included 2 head teachers and 97 female students from Papauta College. Slocum found them to be delightful and well mannered.

Chapter 13:

While in Apia, Slocum had the opportunity to meet Mr. A. Young, father of the late Queen Margaret of Manua. Slocum details the family line and reveals that Mr. Young was the only survivor of that family. By now Slocum was becoming accustomed to hobnobbing with royalty and paid a visit to King Malietoa, who was well paid for his services. Slocum details the trip to the palace and his duty to pay remembrances to the king from the publishers of the Missionary Review. Malietoa was considered to be King of the Cannibals even though the islanders had not eaten a missionary in over 100 years. Slocum also spent time in the company of Malietoa's daughter, Faamu-Sami.

Slocum made his goodbyes to the people at Vailima and left Fuji to head south. Slocum's next port would be Newcastle, Australia. Slocum describes the yachts in Sydney as well as other sights.

The Spray was given a new suit of sails by Commodore Foy.

From Newcastle, Slocum headed toward Melbourne. Slocum delighted in the views and company of Mr. Young. Slocum ended up spending the time around Christmas in the river yarrow and on toward St. Kilda where the author spent a month.

Slocum talks about making money from a relationship with the sharks. By the time Slocum left Melbourne, he was flush with funds.

Slocum was pleased that he would be able to stop in Tasmania, an island that he had circumnavigated years before. Slocum talks about the "rain of blood" that took place while he was in Australia. The "blood" was not blood at all but brick dust from the deserts.

Chapter 14:

Slocum returned to the boat one day to find a note from a lady who wished to support the captain in his endeavor. The lady seemed sad and appreciative for Slocum's quest and included a 5 pound note. Slocum never learned the lady's identity. Although Slocum was flattered and pleased, the author vowed to pass along the note before leaving Australia, which he did.

Slocum began to tell people of his journey, somewhat surprised at their interest.

"Considering that I had seen something of the world, and finding people here interested in adventure, I talked the matter over before my first audience in a little hall by the country road." (Chapter 14, Page 182)

Slocum now had abundant provisions to move forward on his trip. There were a couple of stops along the way to inspect for safety - one at Devonport and one at Sydney.



The Spray headed north toward the Torres Strait. Along the way, Slocum came upon an amateur shipwreck, which was in fact a ship that had been stranded due to lack of ability. Slocum towed the boat. The author believes that part of the incident was caused by a violent storm, as winter had set in.

According to Slocum, one of the most notable events of any such trip is the approach and rounding of the Great Sandy Cape. After four hours of intense doubt, Slocum was greatly relieved to arrive in protected waters.

"The Pacific is perhaps, upon the whole, no more boisterous than other oceans, though I feel quite safe in saying that it is not more pacific except in name." (Chapter 14, Page 193)



Chapters 15-17

Chapters 15-17 Summary and Analysis

In chapter fifteen, on May 26, Slocum arrived at Port Denison, just outside Bowen, the future site of a health resort in Queensland, Australia. Slocum received a warm welcome and gave another lecture about the voyage to date. Slocum became embarrassed by the introduction given by Mr. Myles, who served as land commissioner, harbor master, gold warden and so forth. Myles waxed poetic about Slocum's credentials and journey. By then, Slocum felt he had met everyone in the area and felt foolish regarding the introduction, seeing it as being unnecessary.

Slocum also shares reminiscences of the legendary Captain Cook and shares another lecture he gave at a charity in Cooktown.

The *Spray* manages to escape from accruing more damage from a coral reef.

Slocum details more trips, sights and sounds to various islands including Sunday Island, Home Island, and Booby Island.

Slocum also discusses a short stay on Thursday Island, where he was the only American representative in port and therefore duty bound to stay for the Queen's twenty-second diamond jubilee.

Slocum was pleased to meet up with another American, a pearl diver. The *Spray* also got a new ensign for a time before she sailed across the Indian Ocean and toward Christmas Island.

Chapter sixteen begins with Slocum discussing the trip to the Keeling Cocos Islands, which were about 550 miles away. Although the distance was large, it was still vitally important for Slocum to be careful lest he miss the atoll. Slocum gives details on how he sailed the *Spray*, as well as the weather conditions. The first glimpse of the Keeling Cocos Islands came shortly after the appearance of the first white tern, a bird the islanders refer to as the "Pilot of Keeling Cocos." More birds began to appear, and Slocum enjoyed watching them as well as the fish. The trip had been delightful and Slocum was pleased to be at Keeling Cocos, which was a favorite place, saying, "If there is a paradise on this earth, it is Keeling" (p. 217).

Slocum was even more pleased when the island children came to welcome him at the beach. The islanders were intensely interested in everything about Slocum, from his lame hand to the blackberry jam he ate. The children believed it was coal tar and were pleasantly surprised when Slocum shared the sweet treat.

While on the islands, Slocum took the opportunity to clean and paint the *Spray* on the beach. Finally, Slocum said goodbye to the islands; "Long before dark Keeling Cocos,



with its thousand souls, as sinless in their lives as perhaps it is possible for frail mortals to be, was left out of sight, astern" (p. 221). The Spray headed toward Rodriguez.

A few days before Slocum arrived at the island, the Abbe had been telling his flock about the coming of the Antichrist. When the people saw the Spray, they immediately mistook Slocum for the Antichrist. The governor manages to calm most of the people, but there were some that refused to leave their homes until Slocum was gone, some eight days later.

Slocum gives another lecture on the voyage around the world.

In chapter seventeen, on September 16, the Spray arrived at Mauritius. The standard rule was that all arrivals must go into quarantine until it was deemed that the crew was healthy enough to continue. The doctor examined Slocum and saw that the captain was in good health and able to continue.

The people of Mauritius were glad to see Slocum. As a tribute to the Spray and her journey, the people designed a replica of the sloop in their opera house and dubbed it the Ship Pantai. Aboard this setting, Slocum gave yet another lecture on the voyage.

While at Mauritius, a botanist named a new flower he had discovered that morning after the captain. Slocum was both honored and amazed. Someone he knew of in Boston had paid \$30,000 to have a flower named for his wife. Slocum had paid nothing and his flower was much larger!

Young ladies visited the Spray. The Spray seemed to want to make the young women seasick, but every time she tried, the women were delighted at being on the sea.

Eventually, the Spray arrived in Durban, South Africa where he was playfully cross-examined by Dr. Henry Stanley. Three wisemen sought information from Slocum, looking for proof that the earth is flat.



Chapters 18-21

Chapters 18-21 Summary and Analysis

In chapter eighteen, after leaving South Africa, the Cape of Good Hope was the next prominent point which would be seen on Slocum's route. Once past the Cape, Slocum knew he could count on brisk winds and then the trip home would seem short. Slocum recounts some of the history of the region, back to the Portuguese navigators who took almost seventy years to learn how to navigate around the cape and as far as Algoa Bay. It is also explained why the area is known as "Cape of Storms."

The crew of the Portuguese ship mutinied at Table Bay and threatened to cut the throat of the captain should he go on. The captain most likely would not have continued on anyway as just past Table Bay was supposedly the place where the world ended.

Slocum states that there were a lot of violent gales in the area, averaging one every thirty-six hours.

On Christmas Day 1897, Slocum arrived at the pitch of the Cape. The weather continued to toss the *Spray* in an unusual manner, and he says, "On this day, the *Spray* was trying to stand on her head, and she gave me every reason to believe that she would accomplish the feat before night" (p. 241). Slocum also talks about being ducked under water three times in as many minutes. The *Spray* managed to make up the distance lost during the succession of storms and caught up to a ship called the *Scotsman*. The *Spray* also encountered other ships along the way.

Once in South Africa, Slocum docked the *Spray* at the Alfred dry-docks for almost three months while he traveled the countryside. Of particular interest to Slocum were Johannesburg, Kimberely, and Pretoria.

Slocum had the opportunity to meet Transvaal Present Mr. Kruger when in the company of a friend, Judge Beyers. Beyers attempted to explain Slocum's travel and offended the president by saying the voyage was around the world. Kruger believed the world was flat. The incident ended up appearing as a political cartoon in Cape Town. While in South Africa, Slocum took every opportunity to see the sights, go to parties and visit vineyards in addition to giving more lectures on the trip.

In March of 1898, the *Tigre*, a steam-tug, towed the *Spray* out to sea. Slocum comments on the presence of seals, dolphins, and porpoises.

Slocum continued to hold off loneliness by diving into new books picked up in Cape Town. The author claims to have read day and night.

In chapter nineteen, on April 11, the *Spray* anchored at Jamestown. Slocum immediately pays respects to the island's governor, Sir R.A. Sterndale. Slocum is invited to stay at the governor's home, Plantation House, where the captain is treated like a



prince. Slocum had heard that the house was supposedly haunted, and Sterndale said he hoped the author would get to experience some ghosts.

Slocum talks about the tragedies in St. Helena, including hangings in the days of old and the presence of witches during Cotton Mather's time. Although hanging had gone out of style many years before, crime was rare on St. Helena. Another one of the places visited by Slocum was Longwood, the home of Napoleon.

Slocum is given a fond farewell and is sent off with baskets of fruit. An American gave Slocum a goat for company, which turned out to be a bad idea. Animals and insects did not fare well aboard the *Spray*. Even the crickets given to Slocum had died after he had forgotten to feed them and one turned into a cannibal. Still, both died.

Slocum arrived at Ascension Island, which is located in the heart of the southeast trade winds. Slocum met with Captain Blaxland, commander of the island. Slocum realized that the trip, the circumnavigation of the globe, was complete. Slocum left the goat behind when he departed from Ascension Island.

In chapter twenty, on May 10, Slocum noticed a drastic change in the sea, with the currents taking on different patterns. The change let Slocum know exactly where he was on the sea. The trade winds at this point are governed by the coastline of Venezuela, Brazil, and Guiana.

Along the way, Slocum had the opportunity to exchange signals and greetings with a variety of people and their crafts, including those involved in the Spanish-American War. Slocum also discusses passing by Devil's Island. One of the most notable things at this point in the trip was the reappearance of the North Star. Slocum also describes the lights on Trinidad and being introduced to Grenada.

In chapter twenty, on June 4, 1898, the *Spray* was cleared by the US consulate and Slocum was ready to return home. The first port on the return would be Cape Hatteras. Slocum discusses weather and some nautical terms, including the reaction of the *Spray* when it reached the horse latitudes.

Once more, the *Spray* encounters unpredictable weather in the form of a tornado off Fire Island. Slocum once again changed his plans. The *Spray* arrived at Newport. Slocum's total trip had logged over 46,000 miles. The *Spray* was then returned to Fairhaven.

Slocum ends the adventure simply by saying: "And now, without having wearied my friends, I hope, with detailed scientific accounts, theories, or deductions, I will only say that I have endeavored to tell just the story of the adventure itself" (p. 279).



Characters

Captain Joshua Slocum

Captain Joshua Slocum (1844 - 1909?) was the first man to sail around the world alone and eventually recorded his journey in the book, *Sailing Alone Around the World*. Slocum was a revered sailor, seaman, and writer of some note.

Slocum was born in Mount Hanley, Nova Scotia, within view of the Annapolis Valley and the Bay of Fundy. Slocum was Canadian-American, the fifth child of John and Sarah Slocum. Slocum refers to his father as a man who was good with a boat, and could make anything as long as he had a knife and a nearby tree. Slocum Senior was a stern man who was not afraid of the wind and refused to take a back seat to anyone. Although Slocum was a leather worker by trade, his love of the sea translated to his son.

By age fourteen, Slocum was ready to head out to sea. He ran away and got work as a cabin boy on a schooner. Throughout the balance of his life, Slocum would work for a variety of seafaring industries. Eventually, Slocum would purchase and rebuild a vessel that became the *Spray*, the sailor's pride and joy. The voyage around the world was Slocum's first journey as an individual, a vast undertaking even though the man was an accomplished sailor.

Slocum's death is reported as November of 1909, when he disappeared at sea on his boat, the *Spray*.

Pirates

Pirates were one of the issues that needed to be faced by Slocum when contemplating his solo trip across the Atlantic. There were various types of pirates, some after money and goods, and others were after the vessels themselves. Some were bloodthirsty while others were simply greedy.

Although the existence of pirates may have seemed farfetched and even mythological, Slocum knew from experience and advice of fellow seafarers that the groups of ruthless people were not to be scoffed at, saying, "Longshore pirates are on both coasts being numerous, I could not afford to make light of the advice" (p. 51).

During Slocum's time, the majority of the thievery involving pirates took place around South Africa as well as in the Orient. Although pirate activity all but disappeared for many years, the existence of pirates has not waned. In recent years, sailors and tradesmen must be as careful of pirates as Slocum was in his day.



Captain Eben Pierce

Captain Eben Pierce - An acquaintance of Slocum's; an American whaling captain that offered Slocum the thirty-seven-foot gaff sloop known as the Spray.

Islanders

Slocum finds the islanders in different regions to be amusing, usually helpful, and most definitely colorful.

John Slocum

John Slocum was father to Joshua Slocum. Joshua Slocum refers to his father as a man who was good with a boat and who could make anything as long as he had a knife and a nearby tree. Slocum Senior was a stern man who was not afraid of the wind and refused to take a back seat to anyone. Although Slocum was a leather worker by trade, his love of the sea translated to his son.

Mr. Black Pedro

Mr. Black Pedro - The leader of the savages that attempted to attack the Spray in Tierra del Fuego.

Professor Dusen

Professor Dusen - The leader of a Swedish scientific expedition to the Pacific Islands and South America.

Captain Howard

Captain Howard - A friend of Slocum's and expert sailor. Howard was aboard the Spray in Buenos Aires.

John Cook

John Cook - The revered Pilgrim father whose ashes were interred near the building site for the Spray.

Sea Creatures

Sea creatures - While on his solo voyage, Slocum details interaction with many sea creatures, including sharks.



Objects/Places

Nova Scotia

Nova Scotia is a heavily populated Canadian province on the southeastern tip of the country. The province's capital, Halifax, is well known for its economic structure, which may be the reason Slocum journeyed there at age sixteen. The province is surrounded by the Atlantic Ocean and features many inlets and bays.

Joshua Slocum was born in Mount Hanley, Nova Scotia, within view of the Annapolis Valley and the Bay of Fundy. Slocum describes Nova Scotia as a maritime province of Canada, which is rife with hardy spruce from which many fine vessels have been carved. According to Slocum, "The people of this coast, hardy, robust, and strong, are disposed of to compete in the world's commerce, and it is nothing against the master mariner if the birthplace mentioned on his certificate be Nova Scotia" (p. 1).

Slocum was a Canadian but also a naturalized Yankee, if someone from Nova Scotia could be referred to in that light. The Slocums lived on a cold mountain where the views included the Annapolis Valley and the Bay of Fundy. Slocum's grandfather was a keeper at a lighthouse at Southwest Pointe, another influence on the author's seafaring ways.

The Spray

The Spray was Joshua Slocum's sloop that he rebuilt from a shell of a boat. The Spray was a thirty-seven-foot gaff oyster boat that would prove to be the perfect vessel for the three-year voyage around the world, crossing the Atlantic twice and following Magellan's route.

Slocum was offered the opportunity to obtain the Spray at a pivotal point in his life. A friend who was a whaling captain offered Slocum the boat with the knowledge that she needed some repairs. Slocum was offered helpers to refit the ship to make it seaworthy. Slocum learned that the thirty-seven-foot sloop had been a joke of the area and its residents often referred to it as an antiquated ship that was first manufactured around the year one.

Slocum set about to cut new timbers for the boat and make all the necessary repairs to ensure that the Spray would be seaworthy. The efforts amounted to completely rebuilding the boat from the hull up. The author details his efforts, the time it took to rebuild the ship, and the specifications of the refurbished boat and its components.

Slocum often referred to the Spray as having risen from hallowed grounds as the ashes of revered Pilgrim John Cook were interred nearby.



Bay of Fundy

Bay of Fundy - the Bay near Slocum's hometown of Mount Hanley, Nova Scotia.

Northern Light

Northern Light - Ship in which Slocum was co-owner.

Aquidneck

Aquidneck - Slocum's "little bark," a boat that served Slocum to near perfection for nearly twenty years.

Fairhaven, Connecticut

Fairhaven, Connecticut - The port from which Slocum began his voyage.

New Bedford

New Bedford - The home to Slocum's seafaring friend the whaling captain.

Atlantic Ocean

Atlantic Ocean - The ocean which Slocum crossed on his solo voyage.

Gibraltar

Gibraltar - The original destination of the Spray on its round the world voyage.

Briar's Island

Briar's Island - The first stop made by Slocum on his voyage. Slocum stayed on the island for two weeks to reinforce the Spray and to acquire necessary supplies.



Themes

Weather Conditions

Even though Slocum was a seasoned sailor, there were many things to consider along the way, such as unpredictable weather. Slocum details many instances in which the Spray had to weather through violent gales and turbulent waters. The weather often predicated a change of course although Slocum was able to maintain the majority of his route.

On November 28, the Spray left Rio de Janeiro and immediately ran into a gale of wind so violent that it tore up the coast.

The Spray sailed from Buenos Aires on January 26, 1896. The wind turned from a mere gust to a dangerous gale and the sea turned to mud. Slocum discusses how the Plate is a treacherous place during a storm. Slocum weighed anchor not far off the coast and waited out the storm until the next morning. Not long after, the Spray was submerged by a massive wave.

Another instance occurred after Slocum and the Spray left Port Tamar and ventured toward Cape Pillar in the Pacific. Slocum's hopes for fair weather were dashed and soon the captain was in the middle of yet another storm. This time the waves were merciless with the Spray and the boat was given an introductory bath. Slocum realized that it was too late to turn back and hunkered down for the night. The tempest eventually drove the Spray toward Cape Horn, despite Slocum's will.

The last set of weather conditions mentioned a tornado off Fire Island and then a lack of wind as the Spray entered into the horse latitudes.

Sailing

Joshua Slocum seemed to have been born with saltwater in his veins. There were many sailors on both sides of the Slocum family, and Joshua took to it at an early age. Since Slocum was a teenager he had worked on a boat and eventually became part owner of Northern Light.

Slocum mentions early on that all of his voyages were foreign. The author mentions trips to Australia, Japan, China, and the Spice Islands. Slocum's trusty craft, Aquidneck, ended up being wrecked on the coast of Brazil, which led the author to seek a new pastime. A windfall came to Slocum when Captain Eben Pierce offered him the opportunity to rebuild a thirty-seven-foot oyster boat named the Spray. Slocum's love of sailing led him through the tedious and extensive repairs to the sloop.

On April 24, 1895, Slocum was ready to set sail on his round the world voyage. Slocum confesses to having a perceived sense of knowledge about the trip and took little advice



from anyone about how things should be done. As Slocum left Massachusetts Bay, he saw the wrecked of another ship, the Venetian, which had been split in two. Slocum knew he could do better, saying, "I had taken little advice from any one, for I had a right to my own opinions in matters pertaining to the sea" (pp. 11-12)

It is easy to see why Slocum loved the open sea. Slocum's idealism comes through loud and clear as he set sail. "Every particle of water thrown into the air became a gem, and the Spray, bounding ahead, snatched necklace after necklace from the sea, and as often threw them away" (p. 12), he wrote.

Determination and Courage

Captain Joshua Slocum showed a great deal of determination and courage during his solo voyage around the world. The author does not discuss what made him undertake such a voyage nor the processes he had to go through to arrange it. Instead, Slocum focuses on the rebuilding of the Spray. Part of the deal with Pierce was that Slocum would be offered helpers to refit the ship to make it seaworthy. Slocum learned that the thirty-seven-foot sloop had been a joke of the area and its residents often referred to it as an antiquated ship that was first manufactured around the year one.

Slocum set about to cut new timbers for the boat and make all the necessary repairs to ensure that the Spray would be seaworthy. The efforts amounted to completely rebuilding the boat from the hull up. The author details his efforts, the time it took to rebuild the ship, and the specifications of the refurbished boat and its components.

Part of Slocum's determination involved a great deal of planning in order to keep the sloop well stocked with provisions as well as emergency repair gear. Slocum seemed to rely heavily on the weather and the gods as well as the kindness of fellow seamen, natives and various dignitaries.

Slocum also reveals that he had never before sailed into port alone, which makes the trip even more amazing. Likewise, facing "savages" and unpredictable weather could make even the most seasoned sailor turn back for home.



Style

Perspective

The book is written in the first-person perspective by Captain Joshua Slocum (1844 - 1909?), who was the first man to sail around the world alone and eventually recorded his journey in *Sailing Alone Around the World*. Slocum was a revered sailor, seaman, and writer of some note.

Slocum was born in Mount Hanley, Nova Scotia, within view of the Annapolis Valley and the Bay of Fundy. Slocum was Canadian-American, the fifth child of John and Sarah Slocum. Slocum refers to his father as a man who was good with a boat, and could make anything as long as he had a knife and a nearby tree. Slocum Senior was a stern man who was not afraid of the wind and refused to take a back seat to anyone. Although Slocum was a leatherworker by trade, his love of the sea translated to his son.

By age fourteen, Slocum was ready to head out to sea. He ran away and got work as a cabin boy on a schooner. Throughout the balance of his life, Slocum would work for a variety of seafaring industries. Eventually, Slocum would purchase and rebuild a vessel that became the *Spray*, the sailor's pride and joy. The voyage around the world was Slocum's first journey as an individual, a vast undertaking even though the man was an accomplished sailor.

Slocum's official death is reported as November 1909 when he disappeared at sea on his boat, the *Spray*.

Tone

Sailing Alone Around the World by Joshua Slocum has a unique tone for a memoir. Slocum is well known for being an avid and competent sailor, one who is straightforward and conscientious. Despite Slocum's expertise, the book reflects that same tone without being overpowering or biased to the point of being viewed as the work of a zealot who has devoted his entire life to virtually every aspect of the sea.

Since this is a work of non-fiction and therefore relies on the perspective of the author, Slocum is able to present many facts objectively. The overall tone is one of a man who, after a long search, renewed his passion for sailing and for devoting himself to a lifelong goal of being the first man to sail around the world alone.

In the beginning of the book, Slocum often comes off as being somewhat lost. The author has difficulty choosing between careers until the opportunity to obtain the *Spray* is presented. As the book progresses, the reader can see how Slocum progresses as well and begins to develop the voice which has served to inspire several generations.



Part of the tone and effectiveness of Slocum's work comes from the first hand experiences on the open seas and the hard work and skill that it took to accomplish such as amazing feat.

Structure

Sailing Alone Around the World by Captain Joshua Slocum is a work of non-fiction. It is comprised of 294 pages broken down into twenty-one chapters. The shortest chapter is comprised of seven pages; the longest chapter is comprised of nineteen pages; the average number of pages per chapter is thirteen. In addition to the twenty-one chapters, there is also an appendix and a section featuring the details of the book's sixty-five illustrations, which are interspersed throughout. The illustrations include all manner of items from the specifications of rebuilding the Spray to people and sights seen along Slocum's three year long trip around the world. The Appendix is a detailed description complete with illustrations of the lines and sail plan of the Spray. In the Appendix, Slocum shows the immense amount of knowledge and ability that went into rebuilding the vessel.

Overall the book is written in chronological order. There is some mention of Slocum's childhood in chapter one, but the majority of the book is devoted to the rebuilding of the Spray and the actual voyage around the world. Slocum explains the trip, incidents, people, sights and sounds of the trip so that the reader could easily imagine being an integral part in the author's voyage.



Quotes

"On both sides my family were sailors; and if any Slocum should be found not so seafaring, he will show at least an inclination to whittle models of boats and contemplate voyages." Chap. 1, p. 2

"As for myself, the wonderful sea charmed me from the first." Chap. 1, p. 2

"I had taken little advice from any one, for I had a right to my own opinions in matters pertaining to the sea." Chap. 2, pp. 11-12

"The weather was mild on the day of my departure from Gloucester. On the point ahead, as the Spray stood out of the cove, was a lively picture, for the front of a tall factory was a flutter of handkerchiefs and caps." Chap. 2, p. 16

"The fellow was nearly the death of me, talking of ships and voyages, and of the boats he had steered, the last thing in the world I wished to hear." Chap. 3, p. 34

"Longshore pirates are on both coasts being numerous, I could not afford to make light of the advice." Chap. 5, p. 51

"While my state could have been worse, I was on the wild coast of a foreign country, and not entirely secure in my property, as I soon found out." Chap. 6, p. 68

"I was determined to rely on my own small resources to repair the damages of the great gale which drove me southward toward the Horn, after I had passed from the Strait of Magellan out into the Pacific." Chap. 9, p. 10

"I hope I am making it clear that I do not lay claim to cleverness or to slavish calculations in my reckonings." Chap. 11, p. 147

"Considering that I had seen something of the world, and finding people here interested in adventure, I talked the matter over before my first audience in a little hall by the country road." Chap. 14, p. 182

"The Pacific is perhaps, upon the whole, no more boisterous than other oceans, though I feel quite safe in saying that it is not more pacific except in name." Chap. 14, p. 193

"If there is a paradise on this earth, it is Keeling." Chap. 16, p. 217

"And now, without having wearied my friends, I hope, with detailed scientific accounts, theories, or deductions, I will only say that I have endeavored to tell just the story of the adventure itself." Chap. 21, p. 279



Topics for Discussion

Slocum says: "On both sides my family were sailors; and if any Slocum should be found not so seafaring, he will show at least an inclination to whittle models of boats and contemplate voyages" (p. 2). Do you believe that an occupation or a calling is the product of genetics, environment, both or neither?

How do you think Slocum's family reacted when he announced that he would spend several years rebuilding the *Spray*? How was Slocum able to survive during that time?

What preparations did Slocum have to take to set sail for the solo journey around the world? How would those preparations be different today? Would it be easier or more difficult today to make the same trip?

Discuss the pros and cons of making a solo voyage around the world. Do you feel that Slocum was hampered in any way by a lack of crew?

How might you have handled the situation with Mr. Black Pedro? Was Slocum brave or foolish in his attempts to hold off the savages?

Discuss what types of body language would be helpful when encountering natives of a foreign speaking land. What gestures might be seen as being hostile?

Discuss Slocum's impressions and experiences with the Australians and with Australia in general.

How do you think Slocum felt being back among his family and friends? How might the trip have changed Slocum?