Treasure Island Study Guide

Treasure Island by Robert Louis Stevenson

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Introduction

Stevenson has stated that the story was inspired by a detailed map he drew from his imagination. This map, Stevenson wrote in an essay called "Treasure Island," "was elaborately and (I thought) beautifully coloured; the shape of it took my fancy beyond expression; it contained harbours that pleased me like sonnets; and with the unconsciousness of the predestined, I ticketed my performance 'Treasure Island.'"

The more Stevenson studied this map of his creation, the more his imagination expanded. First, he could see the vegetation of the island. Then the island became peopled in his mind's eye, and their stories began to appear. "It was to be a story for boys," Stevenson wrote; and with excitement and ease, he produced the first fifteen chapters in as many days. But then the inspiration disappeared—the author claims that he was at a very low point in his life at this time. He was thirty-one and had yet to make a salary on his own. He was supported by his father, and he wanted to write something that not only would make money but would please his father. Much of his writing up to this point Stevenson referred to as a failure; he was afraid that this current story he was working on would become one too.

Stevenson took a break from his work and went on a short vacation. Upon arriving at his destination, he sat down at a desk, determined to free himself from his despair. With great discipline, he started writing again. "And in a second tide of delighted industry," Stevenson wrote, "I finished 'Treasure Island.'" The book turned out to be a huge success for Stevenson, bringing both money and fame. It was published first as a magazine serial before being produced as a book in 1883. But that is not the end of the story. When Stevenson sent his manuscript to his publisher, the map, which had inspired the pirate story, was missing. It was never found. Stevenson had to create another map, "but somehow it was never 'Treasure Island' to me," Stevenson wrote.

Overview

Treasure Island is a classic adventure story, featuring an ordinary boy, Jim Hawkins, who is transported to a treacherous world of pirates and buried treasure. Jim's adventures begin when he and his mother discover a pirate map in the chest of Billy Bones, a guest at their lodging-house. Jim's experiences on the ship Hispaniola and on Treasure Island test his resourcefulness and teach him important lessons about loyalty and physical courage. Perhaps his most important lesson grows out of his relationship with the one-legged pirate, Long John Silver—a lesson about the moral ambiguity of good and evil.

Author Biography

Robert Louis Stevenson was born in 1850 in Edinburgh, Scotland, the only son of a famed engineer and inventor. Stevenson's grandfather was also an engineer, known around the world for the many beautiful lighthouses he designed. The family expected the young Stevenson to follow in his grandfather's and his father's footsteps. But in his earliest years, Stevenson suffered from a lung disease and spent much time in bed. To pass the time, he made up stories. Some of the earliest literary influences, authors he tried to mimic, included Daniel Defoe (*Robinson Crusoe*, 1719), Edgar Allan Poe ("The Raven," 1845), and Nathaniel Hawthorne (*Scarlet Letter*, 1850).

When it came time to go to university, Stevenson enrolled in engineering classes but later changed his mind. He was more interested in literature. Stevenson's father did not approve of his son's writing, however, and insisted that Stevenson gain a more respected and more practical degree. So Stevenson studied law and passed the bar in 1875, but he never practiced. Instead, he began to write in earnest, publishing several short stories, essays, and travel sketches, which were only modestly successful and did not provide him with enough money to pay all his bills. So his father continued to support him well through his twenties.

Stevenson's travel sketches were the byproduct of his hopes of finding a climate that would prove more beneficial for his health. While he was in Paris, where he found some relief in the warmer climate, he also found the woman who would later become his wife. Fanny Osbourne, an American, was older than Stevenson, was married and the mother of three children, and was apparently the inspiration of Stevenson's life and literary career. In 1879, three years after they met, Osbourne obtained a divorce, and she and Stevenson were married. He was twenty-nine; she was forty.

The couple traveled throughout Europe and the United States, still looking for a place that suited Stevenson's frail health. But it was during a visit to Scotland that Stevenson wrote *Treasure Island*, which first appeared in serialized form in a magazine between 1881 and 1882, before it was published as a book. *Treasure Island* finally made a name for Stevenson and provided him with a livable wage. The book also won the approval of Stevenson's father, who finally accepted his son's chosen vocation.

After living in Scotland for a short time, Stevenson and his wife moved to London. This move proved beneficial for Stevenson's career, as it was during this time that he made friends with the author Henry James and other literary figures. While in London, Stevenson wrote two more texts, which, together with *Treasure Island* became his most famous works. They were *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mister Hyde* (1886) and *Kidnapped* (1886).

Two years later, the Stevensons discovered the island of Samoa, which provided a tropical setting that suited Stevenson's health and the place in which he produced a very large collection of poems, short stories, essays, and novels before his early death. On December 3, 1894, while helping his wife fix dinner, Stevenson died of a brain

hemorrhage. When his neighbors in Samoa heard the tragic news, they grabbed axes and machetes and cut a trail up the mountainside behind his house so as to honor Stevenson's final wish to be buried at the top of Mount Vaea.

About the Author

Robert Louis Stevenson was born on November 13, 1850, in Edinburgh, Scotland, the only child of a prosperous, middle-class family. His father and grandfather were lighthouse engineers.

Because his mother was of delicate health, Stevenson was raised primarily by his devoted nurse, Alison Cunningham, or "Cummy," to whom he later dedicated A Child's Garden of Verses (1885). His schooling was frequently interrupted by illness, but Stevenson traveled widely in Europe and was taught privately by tutors. At seventeen he enrolled as an engineering student at Edinburgh University, but changed to law after a year. Although he completed his degree, Stevenson never practiced law, and devoted himself to writing instead.

On a summer holiday to France in 1875, Stevenson met Fanny Osbourne, a married American ten years his senior who was traveling abroad with her two children. Osbourne was estranged from her husband, and when she traveled back to California in the fall of 1878 to obtain a divorce, Stevenson followed.

They married in San Francisco in May of 1880 and sailed back to Liverpool.

Meanwhile, Stevenson was forced to ask his parents for money to supplement the meager income derived from his writing efforts. During a cold, wet summer in Scotland in 1881, Stevenson drew a treasure map for his stepson, Lloyd Osbourne—thus originating the world of Treasure Island. Stevenson set to work creating a story to accompany the map, and published the novel in 1883. The family later settled in the British health resort of Bournemouth, where Stevenson wrote Kidnapped and Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, both of which were published in 1886.

After the death of his father in 1887, Stevenson took his family back to America. They hired a yacht in 1888 for a cruise to the South Sea Islands, stopping in the Marquesas and Hawaii, where Stevenson wrote The Master of Ballantrae. In 1889, they continued their cruise to Samoa, where Stevenson built an estate and settled. The tropical climate improved his health, but the stress of mounting debts and enforced writing brought on a cerebral hemorrhage from which he died on December 3, 1894.

Although Stevenson's reputation has declined since his death, he is still recognized as a master storyteller, and Treasure Island and Kidnapped remain among the most popular adventure stories of all time for young readers.

Plot Summary

Part 1□The Old Buccaneer

Treasure Island is narrated by Jim Hawkins, the son of the owners of the inn, the Admiral Benbow. In the first pages, Billy Bones, a mysterious and ragged old seaman, appears at the doorstep of the inn, dragging a large sea chest. Bones decides to stay at the inn and asks Hawkins to warn him if he ever sees a one-legged man.

One day, while visiting Hawkins' father whose health has deteriorated, Dr. Livesey, local doctor and magistrate, inadvertently disregards Bones' demand for silence in the inn. Despite Bones' physical threats, Dr. Livesey calmly stands up to the old seafarer and even threatens to put him out of town if he hears of any more disturbances.

Bones dies by the end of this section; Hawkins discovers the map of buried treasure in Bones' sea chest and shares it with Livesey; and the two men, along with Squire Trelawney, begin their search for the buried treasure.

Part 2□The Sea Cook

Hawkins meets Livesey and Trelawney in Bristol, where a ship, the *Hispaniola*, has been purchased. Here Hawkins meets Long John Silver, a seaman with just one leg. Although Hawkins remembers Billy Bones' warning, Hawkins finds himself unconcerned about Silver, who puts on a show of gentlemanly manners, poise, and confidence.

Silver is hired as the sea cook for the *Hispaniola*; and once the voyage gets under way the majority of the pirate sea hands look to Silver as their leader. There is little trouble on the ship as it makes its way toward Treasure Island. However, one night, while Hawkins climbs into a huge apple barrel to retrieve a fruit, he happens to overhear Silver talking to some of the men. It is upon this conversation that the story takes a major turn. Before this point, Silver has been painted as a reliable, intelligent, and fair-minded man. But after overhearing Silver, Hawkins has a new perception of this man, who is proving to be dishonest, cunning, and possibly murderous. Hawkins discovers that Silver is planning a mutiny. Hawkins tells Dr. Livesey, Squire Trelawney, and Captain Smollot about Silver's plans. The group makes counter plans as the ship heads toward the island.

Part 3□My Shore Adventure

A depressive mood descends upon the crew once the ship is anchored in the harbor of Treasure Island. In order to ease this mood, the captain tells the crew that they can go ashore. The captain hopes this will keep them preoccupied so they do not mutiny prematurely, catching the captain and his cohorts off guard. Hawkins, aware that he is

unneeded on board and overly excited about exploring the island, slips off the ship and heads toward land in a small dingy without waiting for his companions.

The first sign of trouble is the sound of a gun being shot. Upon hearing it, Hawkins, who hides in the bush, sees Silver kill one of his own men. Having witnessed the murder, Hawkins starts running. In his desperate need to put distance between himself and Silver, Hawkins runs into Ben Gunn, a sailor who has been marooned on the island for three years. He was left there by a Captain Flint, the pirate who hid the treasure on this island to begin with. Gunn had been a mate on Flint's ship, along with Billy Bones and Long John Silver. Gunn tells Hawkins about his experiences and about the treasure and a hidden boat that Gunn has made. He tries to tell Hawkins more but a volley of cannon balls is hurled at the island, and both men run for their lives.

Part 4□The Stockade

In the beginning of this section, the narration is taken over by Dr. Livesey. Livesey relates the events that were happening on his part of the island while young Hawkins was experiencing his own. As Livesey and the trusted members of the crew are about to leave the *Hispaniola*, Livesey learns that Hawkins has already left the ship. He fears for Hawkins' safety. Upon arriving on the island, Livesey finds an old stockade, a six-foot-high structure made of logs. Inside he discovers a fresh water spring. The doctor concludes that this is a good place to make the stand against the pirates.

The doctor and his men return to the *Hispaniola* and tell the captain the new plan. Then the men load supplies□food, medicine, and guns and ammunition□into several small boats and set their course for the island. Once they land on shore, they carry their crates to the stockade. After several trips, Dr. Livesey returns to the *Hispaniola* and announces that they have completed their plan, and all but a handful of men leave the ship. The small boats they are using for the last trip are overloaded, and the tide is working against them. In their hurry to prepare for a confrontation with the pirates, they have failed to realize until it is too late, that the only men left aboard are Silver's men. When they look back to the *Hispaniola*, the captain suggests that they kill Silver's men. Trelawney takes aim. He misses his intended target but wounds another. At this moment, the little boat in which Captain Smollot's men are rowing suddenly sinks. Since they are in only three feet of water, no one drowns, but some of the guns and half the supplies are lost. They have little time to reclaim anything as the pirates on the *Hispaniola* begin shooting cannon balls at them. The captain's crew barely makes it to the stockade before gunshots are fired and the battle on the ground begins. As the first battle comes to an end, Hawkins returns to the scene.

Hawkins takes over the narration and tells the men about Ben Gunn. They discuss their plans. This section ends with Long John Silver making a surprise visit to the stockade with a white flag in hand. Silver suggests that the captain turn over the treasure map. Then he suggests that the treasure be divided between the two sides. The captain scoffs at these suggestions and tells Silver to have his men come to the stockade and surrender. Silver spits into the fresh water spring in disgust. He leaves and shortly

afterward, the next battle begins. In the process, several are killed and the captain is wounded.

Part 5: My Sea Adventure

Once again, Hawkins decides to leave his group without telling anyone. He grabs some food and a gun and heads east toward the shoreline. He finds Ben Gunn's boat, rows it out to the *Hispaniola*, and frees the anchor, thus setting it adrift. He hears drunken noises from the pirates and climbs aboard to investigate. He finds the men quarreling and quickly returns to his small boat. He is tired, so he lies down and falls asleep. When he awakens, he sees that the waves have increased in size and when he sits up, his boat almost capsizes. In order to stay afloat, he must lie low at the bottom of the boat. He then notices the *Hispaniola* about one-half mile away from him and makes up his mind to board it again.

The only man conscious onboard the *Hispaniola* is Israel Hands. Hawkins acts boldly, taking down the pirates' flag and telling Hands to call him captain. Hands is wounded, so Hawkins brings him food and drink in exchange for Hands helping Hawkins navigate the ship to a safe harbor. Once the boat is all but safe, Hands lunges for Hawkins but is thrown overboard by a sudden twist of the ship. However, before falling off the ship, Hands thrusts his knife into Hawkins' shoulder, thus nailing him to the mast. Hawkins is at first mortified, but then he realizes that it is just a superficial wound and frees himself. He then leaves the ship and runs to find the doctor and the captain. He runs to the stockade but is startled to find Long John Silver and his men there.

Part 6: Captain Silver

Silver stands up for Hawkins, although some of his men want to kill him. Hawkins admits everything to Silver, telling him that he was the one who overheard their plan to rebel against the captain. Silver tells Hawkins that the doctor gave the treasure map to him, and he has deserted Hawkins. Of course, Hawkins is confused. Silver's men then turn against Silver because they no longer trust him.

Coincidently the doctor shows up to administer to the wounded pirates. He talks in private to Hawkins and reprimands him for running away. The doctor urges Hawkins to run away with him now, but Hawkins has given his word to Silver and tells the doctor he must remain a prisoner to the pirates. Before the doctor leaves, Hawkins tells him about rescuing the *Hispaniola*.

The pirates head out to look for the buried treasure. When they finally figure out the map and follow its directions, they come upon an empty pit. Someone has already dug up the treasure. The pirates believe they have been tricked and decide to kill Silver. But the doctor and Ben Gunn, who have been hiding in the bushes, shoot at the pirates. After the pirates run for their lives, the doctor, Hawkins, Silver, and the others retreat to Ben Gunn's storage cave, where the treasure has been hidden. It appears that Silver

has been working with the captain. But Hawkins has seen both sides of Silver and suspects that the old pirate chooses any side from which he will benefit.

A few days later, the *Hispaniola* is set to leave. Silver is in custody, but the captain has guaranteed him a fair trial. They leave food for the three remaining mutineers and sail for the nearest city to get fresh supplies and a new crew. When they anchor in a "Spanish American" city, Silver escapes, and most of the men are relieved. Only five men of the original crew make it back to Bristol, where they share the treasure.

Characters

Mr. Arrow

Mr. Arrow is the first mate on the *Hispaniola* but not a good one. His weakness is alcohol. He tries to befriend the pirates not so much because he likes them but because he does not know how to separate himself from them and therefore to regulate them. One day, while upon the open seas, he disappears. It is not known if he is thrown overboard or if he falls overboard in a drunken stupor.

Black Dog

Black Dog, whose distinguishing mark is two missing fingers on his left hand, is the first pirate to find Billy Bones. Black Dog fights with Bones and is injured but manages to run away. He is later seen with the blind man Pew who wants to find the treasure map. Later in the story, when Jim Hawkins first meets Long John Silver, Black Dog is sitting in the pub. When Hawkins points him out, Silver denies knowing him. This is Stevenson's first hint that Long John Silver might not be as honest as he pretends.

Billy Bones

Billy Bones appears in the beginning of this story and is the first pirate Jim Hawkins meets. Bones stays at the Hawkins' inn, the Admiral Benbow, scaring all the villagers with his sea stories and his dictatorial meanness. Bones pays Hawkins to watch for a man with one leg, someone who is obviously searching for Bones. Eventually Bones is discovered by a roving band of pirates, who give him the "black spot," a pirate sentence of death. Although the pirates do not kill him, Bones dies of some unknown cause, which the doctor assumes is related to Bones' alcoholism. After his death, young Hawkins finds a treasure map inside Bones' trunk, a map that sets up the premise of the story.

Captain Flint

Captain Flint, a notorious pirate, leaves Ben Gunn on Treasure Island. He never appears in the story but is mentioned by several pirates, who both praise and curse him. Long John Silver also names his parrot Captain Flint.

Ben Gunn

Ben Gunn is discovered on Treasure Island by Jim Hawkins. Gunn has been marooned there for three years and is a bit eccentric by the time Hawkins finds him. Despite his peculiarities, Gunn has figured out how to survive on the island and is instrumental in

saving Hawkins and the rest of the crew of the *Hispaniola*. Gunn has a store of food that he shares with them and has built a crude rowboat, which Hawkins uses to save the *Hispaniola*. Despite the fact that Gunn has found the buried treasure, what he desires most when rescued is a piece of cheese. In the end, Gunn is given part of the treasure once the ship returns to England, but readers are told that Gunn spends his fortune quickly.

Israel Hands

Israel Hands is one of Long John Silver's men. During the mutiny, Hands is left on the ship. When Jim Hawkins returns to the ship and releases the anchor and climbs aboard, it is with Hands that Hawkins must deal. Hands helps Hawkins navigate the *Hispaniola* to a safe harbor. Once the ship is anchored, Hands tries to kill Hawkins but is thrown from the ship and drowns when the current abruptly changes. Before that fatal accident, Hands impales Hawkins with his dagger. Hawkins' wound, however, turns out to be superficial.

Jim Hawkins

Jim Hawkins is the young boy who narrates most of this story. He is observant of events that occur around him and of the people with whom he becomes involved. His observations at times get him into trouble but more often than not also save his life and the lives of his companions. He fortunately happens to be in the right place at the right time. The knowledge he gains through his good fortune is put to good use. Hawkins is both lucky and clever.

Hawkins' youthful curiosity leads him into the adventure of his lifetime after he gains possession of a treasure map. With a crew of less than respectable sea hands and a group of professional men at the helm, Hawkins eventually sails off to search for the buried bounty. It is through this treasure-hunt adventure that Hawkins experiences a rite of passage from adolescent to adult, as he learns to distinguish right from wrong, good from evil, and all shades in between. The story is told mostly through his eyes.

Mr. Hawkins

Mr. Hawkins is Jim's father. He is sickly and dies early in the story, leaving Jim the only man available to help his mother run the pub.

Mrs. Hawkins

Mrs. Hawkins, mother of Jim Hawkins, is present only in the first chapters of the book, in which Jim helps her run the Admiral Benbow.

Dr. Livesey

Dr. Livesey enters the story when Jim Hawkins' father is dying. He appears again at the Admiral Benbow when Billy Bones falls ill. It is to Dr. Livesey that young Hawkins gives the treasure map once he has discovered it in Bones' trunk. Dr. Livesey understands the importance of the map and helps to organize the ocean trip to find the buried treasure.

Livesey is honest and honor-bound. He is the mirror image of Long John Silver in many ways. While Silver pretends to be honest, sincere, and honor bound, Livesey really is. Livesey is also a humanitarian while Silver cares little for anyone but himself. In contrast, Livesey, even in the midst of the mutiny, treats the wounded pirates with as much care as he treats his own friends. Livesey is cool headed and intelligent and plays out the role of a father figure or older brother for young Hawkins.

Old Man Pew

Old Man Pew is a blind pirate who comes looking for Billy Bones at the Admiral Benbow. Jim Hawkins must personally deal with Old Man Pew and is frightened by the experience. Pew is strong and threatens Hawkins physically so that Hawkins does what Pew tells him. Pew also frightens Billy Bones. Bones sees him as a bad omen. After Bones dies, Old Man Pew is trampled by horses while citizens try to keep order in their village by chasing the pirates away from the town.

Old Redruth

Old Redruth, a friend of the squire's, is loyal to the professional crew on the *Hispaniola* but is the first to be killed when the pirates mutiny.

Long John Silver

Long John Silver, hired as the cook for the ship *Hispaniola*, is a chameleon, changing his "colors" depending on the situation. He is working in a pub when first introduced, a place he and his wife own. When Jim Hawkins encounters him, Silver pretends to be a legitimate businessman. In fact, Silver has gained all of his wealth from piracy and, despite the loss of a leg, has a reputation of being a successful pirate. He is an intelligent man and well aware of the psychology of the people around him. Silver uses this knowledge to manipulate the circumstances in which he finds himself, with an intense loyalty to no one but himself.

It is through Silver that the crewmembers, most of whom have histories of piracy, organize a mutiny. They plan to either kill or maroon the legitimate leaders of this expedition and claim the treasure for themselves. Silver, compared to the other pirates, is easily the most conniving. He charms everyone from the lowliest pirate to the captain of the ship. He stresses that all men must display honor and makes a grand show to

prove that he is the most respectable of them all. His bright intelligence and quit wit help him turn every situation to his advantage. Given that Stevenson originally wanted the title of this book to be *The Sea Cook*, readers can be assured that Long John Silver, in many ways, was meant to be the main character.

Captain Smollet

Captain Smollet, the officer in charge of the *Hispaniola,* is hardworking and understands the power of rank, not for the power but rather for the discipline. He demonstrates his intelligence and understanding of human nature by recognizing Long John Silver's power over the pirates on his ship. He is wounded during a battle on Treasure Island, but Dr. Livesey saves him. Smollet is patriotic and often makes grand statements about his country.

Squire Trelawney

Squire Trelawney's strength is organization. He is the one who arranges the ship, the *Hispaniola* and its crew. Trelawney is loyal and hard working, but he does have a couple of faults. First, his judgment of people is in question, since he hires a bunch of ruffians to man the boat. Second, he has trouble keeping a secret. Perhaps Trelawney is the person who let it be known that the people who organized the crew of the *Hispaniola* were sailing in search of treasure.

Setting

The story begins sometime in the eighteenth century on a remote stretch of the English coast. A mysterious seaman named Billy Bones appears one day at the Admiral Benbow Inn in Black Hill Cove and asks for lodging. After the death of Billy Bones, the action shifts to Bristol, where Squire Trelawney is outfitting the brig Hispaniola and hiring a crew to journey to Treasure Island. The bulk of the adventure takes place on board the Hispaniola or on Treasure Island itself—presumably a tiny fictional Caribbean island somewhere in the West Indies. After the treasure is recovered and the Hispaniola recaptured by the loyal crew members, the party sails into a West Indies port to reprovision before returning to Bristol.

Techniques

The most notable strategy employed by Stevenson in this novel is the use of the "naive narrator" for most of the text. Jim Hawkins is young, impressionable, and human, but he is not stupid. Thus, he tells the story in a lively, relatively simple manner. This effect makes the perhaps excessively dramatic events in the plot more believable. Some of the plot is related by Dr. Livesy (those events which Jim could not witness), and it is to Stevenson's credit that these passages are written in a style befitting an older, more sophisticated speaker.

While the principal appeal of the book has always been its story line, Stevenson's evocation of setting, whether at the Admiral Benbow Inn and its environs, the good ship Hispaniola, or the island itself, is remarkable.

Many readers may be familiar with the fact that the origin of the story was a map that Stevenson had drawn (and colored) for his stepson, Lloyd Osbourne. This may be one reason for the impressive accuracy Stevenson displays when explaining locations and narrating action in them. His grasp of nautical phenomena, founded on his early familiarity with lighthouse locations, is also admirable. The author understood tides, currents, weather, and other such factors related to seafaring activities.

All in all, the impression left with the careful is of a brisk tale told by someone who knows whereof he speaks.

Thematic Overview

Stevenson was quite unaware of the importance of his novel until some time after it was published. He regarded it as a "rattling" good tale that would attract young readers for its entertainment value. He had, however, created a morally complex (at least, for an adventure story) work. The fascinating figure of Long John Silver, certainly a villain as to intentions, dominates most of the novel, and his escape (with a bag of coins) at the end still brings some criticism down on Stevenson because the "bad" person (but one who, earlier in the story, saved Jim's life) is not punished.

For someone who admired courage and daring as much as Stevenson did, though, it is understandable that he would create a character who, while wicked in most of his actions, yet is charming, courageous, and clever. This certainly does not signify that Stevenson endorsed such behavior, but only that he recognized that people are often composed of varied traits. Moreover, for the rest of the characters, the moral is that honesty, bravery, and truthfulness will be rewarded and the lack of these traits punished — as is noted at the close, in regard to most of the mutineers: "Drink and the devil had done for the rest."

Themes

Honor

There is much made of the concept of honor in Robert Louis Stevenson's novel *Treasure Island*. Whether it is the honor of gentlemen or the honor of thieves and pirates, this concept is interwoven throughout the story. Even though the pirates in this story steal other people's fortunes, killing many sailors and villagers in the process, they have a code of conduct and are expected to obey that code or lose honor among their peers. For example, when Long John Silver protects young Hawkins, Silver's mates grow suspicious of him. They believe Silver might be in cahoots with Dr. Livesey or Captain Smollet. If this is true, then Silver is a traitor and has committed an act that is contrary to the pirates' code. Likewise, there is a bond of honor between Hawkins and Silver. Hawkins gives his word to the old pirate that he will not run away once Silver holds Hawkins hostage. Silver later praises Hawkins for keeping his word. Dr. Livesey is also an honorable man. He is particularly honorable in reference to his vocation. He cares for the wounds of the pirates despite the fact that the pirates have tried to kill him.

Adventure

This story was written for one of Stevenson's stepsons. So its targeted audience is young. Stevenson wanted to give the young boy something exciting to read; thus this tale filled with high adventure and thrilling challenges in each chapter was born. Throughout the story, the young narrator bears the threats of seafarers like Billy Bones and Long John Silver. At other times he is sneaking around Billy Bones' bedroom to retrieve the treasure map or going against the orders of the ship's captain and devising daring plans of his own. Hawkins has led a simple life before this story begins. But suddenly he finds himself sailing across an ocean in search of treasure and having to defend himself. He faces mutiny, several gun battles, uncouth pirates who try to kill him, and the constant threat of being marooned on an island—all the right ingredients for keeping young readers reading to find out what happens next.

Coming of Age

As the story begins, young Hawkins lives in a small village and works each day in his parents' inn. He is devoted to his parents and at first afraid of the pirate Billy Bones. Hawkins trembles when Bones touches him. Hawkins is also somewhat naïve, trusting other people's interpretations rather than trusting his own. For example, when Hawkins recognizes a pirate in Long John Silver's inn, he believes Silver when he says he has no idea who the man is.

Hawkins' gullibility slowly fades as the adventure progresses and his experiences widen. For instance, when Hawkins climbs into the apple barrel and overhears Silver planning a mutiny, he begins to understand that there is real evil in the world. As the

story continues, there are more rites of passage as Hawkins passes through adolescence to adulthood. He sneaks off the ship once it is anchored and takes off on a journey all by himself. He fights in a battle against the pirates and sees many men die. He conjures up a plan to rescue the ship from the pirates. At this point he feels the full strength of his power. He tells the only conscious pirate onboard that he, Hawkins, should be referred to as the captain of the ship. It is as if Hawkins is stating he is a man. He orders the pirate to help him steer the ship through dangerous currents and anchor the boat in a safe harbor. At the end of this scene, Hawkins receives his first wound. It is a superficial cut, but with it Hawkins faces his own mortality.

Conflict

The themes of man against man, man against nature, and man against himself help to structure this novel. For example, Hawkins must overcome his fear of the pirates, beginning with Billy Bones and later with Long John Silver. Hawkins must also face nature, especially when he pulls the anchor on the *Hispaniola* and is first thrust about in the ocean waves in the small boat of Ben Gunn's and then later in the great ship itself as he tries to navigate the strong currents in the island's narrow harbors. Moreover, Hawkins faces conflict when he must make very difficult choices, such as when he decides to desert his crew. Through conflict and its consequences Hawkins matures. Furthermore, conflict draws in readers, as they attempt to second-guess the outcome of conflicts and read on to discover them.

Style

Serialized Novel

Stevenson's novel *Treasure Island* was first published in a serialized form. This means that it was published chapter by chapter in separate small units. Serialization imposed its own form on plot design, dictating chapters that practically stand on their own with inconclusive endings. In other words, each chapter is a mini-adventure but designed to leave the reader wondering what will happen next. In Stevenson's book, the stories are collected in parts, and within each part are separate sections. This arrangement intensifies the tension. The first part of the book, for example, is divided into six sections. At the end of the first section, it is hinted that Dr. Livesey and Billy Bones will meet again, and readers are left to wonder how the next confrontation between them will take place. The second section is called "Black Dog Appears and Disappears," which sums up the action. But again, the reader senses at the end of this section that Black Dog will reappear, and when he does, something catastrophic will probably occur. By the end of the first part of the book, the reader has been introduced to most of the major characters. Readers are primed, much like Hawkins himself, and ready for the next part of the journey. The serialized form helps readers experience the excitement in sequence as Hawkins experiences it.

Point of View

The majority of this story is told by young Hawkins, who tells readers in the first few sentences that he has been asked by Dr. Livesey, the squire, and the rest of the professional crew of the *Hispaniola* to write this story with all its details. Readers watch the boy's growth as he develops from a naïve teenager to an experienced man. It is clear what Hawkins is thinking, whether he is making bold decisions or stupid mistakes. Stevenson only changes point of view when Dr. Livesey recounts events that young Hawkins does not participate in. Stevenson uses the doctor, for instance, to tell about what happens on the ship when Hawkins is on shore. This shift gives readers a little advantage because they know more than Hawkins, but this gap is quickly closed. Once the doctor and Hawkins are reunited, Hawkins continues the narration of the story.

Historical Context

Piracy

Piracy, which can be loosely defined as lawlessness and usually at sea, has a long history, dating as far back as the Phoenicians (1200 to 800 b.c.) Piracy occurred on almost every body of water from the China Sea to the Mediterranean and eventually along New World's Atlantic shores and in the Caribbean. Pirates were both feared and romanticized as heroes. They thrived on the booty (or stolen wealth) they stole from merchant ships and shoreline villages. Their practice lasted well into the nineteenth century when British and U.S. naval forces eventually overwhelmed them. Nonetheless, some piracy continued throughout the twentieth century and into the early 2000s. Beyond crimes committed on the high sea, the term has been applied to many different types of theft, including the illegal downloading of material from the Internet.

One famous pirate is Blackbeard, whose real name was Edward Teach, a British man who scoured the Caribbean and the Atlantic coast of the United States during the eighteenth century. His outpost was on the North Carolina shoreline, where he was eventually hunted down and shot to death in 1718.

Although most stories and movies about pirates feature men, some pirates were female. One of the most notorious female pirates was Anne Bonny, the daughter of a well-to-do lawyer who amassed a fortune in North Carolina. Bonny was disowned by her father when she married a pirate. Bonny grew tired of her husband and eventually slipped away with a more notorious man nicknamed Calico Jack. In 1720, Bonny was caught and imprisoned and after being sentenced to hang, pleaded for her life based on the fact that she was pregnant. She disappeared before her hanging date, and some people believe that her father forgave her and paid handsomely for her release.

Living in Victorian London

Stevenson wrote *Treasure Island* while living in London. Queen Victoria (1819—1901), for which the age is named, deeply affected the people and culture of this world city with her sense of duty, her belief in moral righteousness, and her patriotism□traits that are mirrored in some of Stevenson's characters. Because Victorian England was involved in the internal affairs of many other countries with its vast empire and the largest navy in the world, the population of London was made up of people from all over the world, and, in the 1880s, London had one of the largest international shipping ports in the world, receiving million of tons of goods each year.

The Houses of Parliament were built between 1840 and 1860, and Big Ben first rang in 1859. Compulsory universal education became law with the passage of the Education Act in 1870 (a secondary school education act passed in 1902). The first underground railway system in London began operation in 1863. However, illness and poverty were

rampant. A significant proportion of the population died of tuberculosis each year. (Many people believe that this was the lung disease that Stevenson suffered from.) Child labor was prevalent□a condition that inspired Charles Dickens to write his novel *Oliver Twist* (1837).

Critical Overview

The publication of *Treasure Island* marked the beginning of Stevenson's reputation as a writer worth reading. By the end of the nineteenth century, Stevenson enjoyed what William B. Jones Jr. refers to in the preface to *Robert Louis Stevenson Reconsidered* as the "heights of near idolatry." However, the public fervor and appreciation of Stevenson's life's work would both rise and fall. His contemporaries and fellow British authors, such as Virginia Woolf, often belittled his work, accusing Stevenson of not challenging himself with serious topics. Despite this, Jones writes, "Stevenson actually never lost his popularity with readers, as the countless editions and numerous film versions of *Treasure Island* and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* attest."

Despite many critical statements about the lack of depth of Stevenson's material, Ian Bell, writing in the preface to his book *Dreams of Exile: Robert Louis Stevenson*, states that nonetheless, Stevenson was able to connect with "public taste" at a "deep level" and marvels at the continued popularity of Stevenson's work. "What was it," Bell asks, "he [Stevenson] did in his 'children's stories,' his 'adventure tales,' his 'romances,' that others failed□fail□to do?" Bell continues, "We can admit that there have been better writers than Stevenson, writers more subtle and ambitious, more tenacious, certainly more profound. Then it is necessary to remind ourselves that many of the names offered have long since faded from the public's memory. Whatever Stevenson had they lacked. The durability and ubiquity of his tales suggest a man touching something basic." As if to bolster Bell's commentary, in a review of a recent edition of Stevenson's novel, Laura Moore, writing in *Urbana*, concludes that *Treasure Island* "is perhaps the best adventure story ever written."

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2

Critical Essay #1

Hart has degrees in English and creative writing and is the author of several books. In this essay, Hart studies the concept of money, how it applies to the story, and how it affects the characters.

When Robert Louis Stevenson wrote *Treasure Island*, he was still financially dependent on his father. So the pressure of writing a good story, one that had public appeal, was not the only concern on his mind as he progressed through this romantic tale of high adventure. Stevenson was out to prove that he could write well that he could support himself through his own publications. He was thirty-one years old, married, and the stepfather of two children. It was time that he earned his title as head of household. Therefore, whether it was a conscious or subconscious act, it is no wonder that the subject of money is woven through this work. This might be a story of adventure and a tale of a young boy coming of age, but neither of those two elements pushes the story forward. If readers looked closely, they will come to see that the real power that drives this novel is not adventure but money.

No more than five lines into the story, young Jim Hawkins makes reference to money. He has been asked by Squire Trelawney and Dr. Livesey to write from memory the things that occurred on their treasure-hunt adventure. Hawkins is to give all the particular details of their trip except for the "bearings of the island," because "there is still treasure not yet lifted." With this comment, Stevenson sets up his readers to focus on the money. Readers immediately become alert to the idea that there is still treasure to be found. Like the pirates who have buried their loot on some deserted island, Stevenson has buried the idea of money in his readers' minds. And like the characters themselves who push their way across the ocean, readers plod their way through the story, hoping they too discover in the pages of this story some clue regarding the island's location. If they can uncover that secret, maybe they too can set out on their own adventure and claim the remaining treasure. Having set this tone, Stevenson next introduces his characters, each with his own claims and desires for money.

The first to arrive on the scene is the pirate Billy Bones. One of the interesting and mysterious features of this old seaman is the large chest he drags behind him. Since the title of this novel is *Treasure Island* and since, according to old myths, it is said that treasures are often buried in old chests, readers, as well as the characters in this story cannot help but wonder what Bones is hiding in that chest. Bones throws a few coins around, promising to pay Hawkins to keep a lookout for a one-legged man and prepaying Hawkins' father for his keep. Readers as well as the affected characters wonder where those coins come from and if there are more to be found at their source. But Bones' payments soon become a point of contention when he often forgets to give young Hawkins his wages. Bones also forgets, or refuses, to pay Hawkins' father for his extended keep. And these omissions come into play later, after Bones has died. That is when young Hawkins and his mother rationalize their rifling through Bones' mysterious chest in search of what they consider is rightfully owed to them. They find what they want or rather what they have justified is theirs. And they discover even more. Hawkins

comes upon the map that will take the story into its further development□the search for more money. It is interesting to note, before moving on with the rest of the story, that Hawkins' relationships with Bones and with their fellow villagers, as far as Stevenson portrays it, are all based on money. There is little mention of any emotional involvement either when Bones dies or when Hawkins father dies. The emphasis of the story is on the survival of those left behind, and that survival is based on money. Debts must be paid. The Admiral Benbow Inn must reopen as soon as possible so the flow of money is not interrupted.

The story progresses with Dr. Livesey comprehending the significance of the map that Hawkins shows him. When he concludes that it is a treasure map, plans are immediately made to find the island. Here a medical doctor, upon whom a whole countryside depends, leaves his patients, as does young Hawkins leave his widowed mother, all in the name of gold. It is also in the name of money that the doctor warns his comrades they must be silent. No one must know that the true motivation of their sea journey (like the motivation for writing this story) is money. However, Stevenson knows that the thought of money inspires every man, so he cannot keep it a secret. Money is the driving force; therefore, every character in this story must be energized by it. Thus he must have a character who cannot keep a secret. That character is Squire Trelawney, who spreads the word so far that every man involved in the trip, even before the *Hispaniola* leaves the dock, knows that the purpose behind the journey is the search for gold. It is the thought of riches in the crew's minds, more than the wind that fills the ship's sails, that drives the *Hispaniola* across the ocean.

In the midst of the trip, Stevenson does a curious thing. He has Long John Silver, the most respected of pirates, hold a discussion with his men on economics. As Hawkins sits hidden in the depths of an apple barrel, the young boy listens as Silver discusses not only the act of mutiny with the other pirates but also the best ways to make one's money work for oneself. It is not wise to take money one finds (or steals) and squander it on rum or on women, but rather, Silver tells the men, one should invest it. That is just what Silver has done, he explains. He has bought the Spyglass Inn, which he runs (when he is not off on an ocean voyage) with his woman. What Silver has not invested in real estate and small business, he has stashed in several banks. "I laid by nine hundred safe, from England, and two thousand after Flint. That ain't bad for a man before the mast□all safe in the bank." Then he adds: "It's saving does it, you may lay to that." He continues his lecture by warning the men that most pirates throw their money away and then end up begging for food. His men, misunderstanding Silver's lessons, state that money then "ain't such use, after all." But Silver is already one step ahead of his men, as usual. "T ain't much use for fools," he tells them. Then Silver begins a long monologue on what makes the typical "gentlemen of fortune," pirates who win big but lose it completely. "But that's not the course I lay. I puts it all away, some here, some there, and none too much anywheres, by reason of suspicion." He is not only, Silver assures them, a gentleman of fortune. He is also a "gentleman in earnest." So in the midst of mutiny and adventure, Stevenson sneaks in a lesson on how to find money and how to keep it and invest it so it will grow. As proof that this lesson has been learned, at least in the mind of one of the pirates, Stevenson has a young pirate tell Silver, "Well, I tell you now . . . I didn't half a quarter like the job till I had this talk with you, John; but

there's my hand on it now." This youngster has been set straight. One has only to work hard and think of riches to alleviate the pain of the hard labor, and all is set well with the world.

But there is one foolish fellow in this adventure, and that is Ben Gunn. Gunn has been on Treasure Island for three years with more gold than he ever imagined. And yet the one thing he craves even more than money is some English food. Only on Treasure Island is money not worth anything. Gunn could not eat the gold, nor would the treasure help him sail off the island. The true worth of money is as currency, the passing of the gold from one hand to another in exchange for some material that either satisfies one's hunger and thirst or promotes an easier style of living. The cave filled with gold provides none of these for Gunn. His survival depends solely on his own hands and his wit. This man, although his loneliness has made him a bit eccentric, is the only character in the story who is truly independent. For three years, he figures out a way to stay alive without money□the same thing that drives all the other characters nearly crazy. The other men in the story are willing to leave their families, their homes, their patients, their colleagues and risk their lives for the buried treasure. They are willing to maim and kill for it□but not Gunn. For this difference, Stevenson makes Gunn look like a fool.

As the novel comes to a close, Stevenson paints the portrait of Gunn in ridiculous colors. First Gunn helps Silver escape from the *Hispaniola*, then he allows Silver to take one of the sacks of gold. Thus Silver, the old economics professor, once again finishes in the black□in profit. Then Stevenson writes about how Captain Smollet, because of the found treasure, is able to retire. Another man uses his money to further his education and invest in a ship and then lives happily ever after with a wife and family. But not poor Ben Gunn. The money he is given ("a thousand pounds"), readers find out, Gunn, foolish man that he is, "spent or lost in three weeks." Gunn is reduced to a beggar. Although Stevenson does not dwell on it or praise it, he does write that once again Gunn manages to do fairly well for himself without money. He is given a place to live and becomes "a great favourite, though something of a butt" with the local country people.

In the very last paragraph of the book, young Hawkins reminds the reader that although they brought much treasure back with them, there still lay, somewhere on that Treasure Island, bars of silver, thus enticing the dreams, once again, of all those who believe money will solve their problems and make their lives better. And then, with the final words of the story, Hawkins imagines Captain Flint singing out: "Pieces of eight! pieces of eight!" Or in other words: Money, money, money!

Source: Joyce Hart, Critical Essay on *Treasure Island*, in *Novels for Students*, Thomson Gale, 2005.

Critical Essay #2

Holm is a freelance writer as well as a genre novel and short story author. In this essay, Holm discusses tools of the writing craft that Stevenson uses to make this story engaging and suspenseful.

Stevenson's *Treasure Island* has the characteristics of a successful suspense novel and an entertaining story. There is a lot in this book that serves as a good example of the craft of fine storytelling. Stevenson's adept use of the tools of good storytelling make this story a good read for adults as well as younger audiences.

Immediately apparent in *Treasure Island* is Stevenson's economical use of language. The economy, however, does not sacrifice description, observation, or suspense. Sentences are generally short and peppered with sensory description and keen observations about the human psyche and the characters' motivations. Close to the beginning of the book, Stevenson's protagonist describes the mysterious, somewhat frightening pirate who has become a fixture at Jim's family inn.

He was a very silent man by custom. All day he hung round the cove, or upon the cliffs, with a brass telescope; all evening he sat in a corner of the parlor next to the fire, and drank rum and water very strong. Mostly he would not speak when spoken to; only look up sudden and fierce, and blow through his nose like a foghorn; and we . . . learned to let him be.

In a few short sentences, the reader has learned quite a bit about Billy Bones, including that everyone else is at least slightly leery of the drunken pirate. Blowing a nose "like a foghorn" is a wonderful sensory detail that the reader can easily imagine and will not soon forget. Stevenson's prose is richly loaded with detail□the warmth of a fire, strong rum and water, a brass telescope, cliffs. None of it bogs the reader down, nor interferes with the tight and rapid pace of the story because the details are worked so economically into the narrative.

Throughout the book, there are countless examples of description that do double or triple duty. These descriptions also move the story forward and emphasize a particular clue for the reader, which prepares him for future story twists and turns. Jim describes his dreams of the "seafaring man with one leg," and the reader hears the surf roaring, feels the house shaking, and sees the one-legged man leaping over hedges to pursue the protagonist. The reader hears the drunken pirate singing "yo-ho-ho, and a bottle of rum" and feels the unease of the boy and the inn patrons. The doctor on the *Hispaniola* discovers Jim missing and captures the moment with a number of sensory details that also hint at danger on Treasure Island and prepare the reader for foreboding.

We ran on deck. The pitch was bubbling in the seams; the nasty stench of the place turned me sick; if ever a man smelled fever and dysentery, it was in that abominable anchorage.

Not only does this give the reader a clear moment of description and foreboding, it also allows the doctor to share knowledge of possible risk for disease□knowledge that another character would not have.

Stevenson uses foreshadowing throughout Treasure Island as hints to readers to look for certain key characters or situations. Flint's fear of a "seafaring man with one leg" is emphasized by his effort to bribe the boy to watch for such a person. Long John Silver does become quite important in the story later on, and the reader has been prepared. In another example of foreshadowing, Captain Smollett seems to have a superstitious reservation about the voyage for treasure ("all I say is we're not home again, and I don't like this cruise") even though he has taken a "downright fancy" to the ship. Of course, the reader knows that something is going to happen and that it will probably involve struggle or danger otherwise there would not be much of a story. Deft (and not overdone) foreshadowing prepares the observant reader for complications and gives the added mystery of a superstitious hunch. More foreshadowing is used when the characters on the ship first view Treasure Island. Jim says

Perhaps it was this□perhaps it was the look of the island, with its gray, melancholy woods, and wild stone spires, and the surf that we could both see and hear foaming and thundering on the steep beach□at least, although the sun shone bring and hot, and the shore birds were fishing and crying all around us . . . my heart sank . . . into my boots; and from that first look onward, I hated the very thought of Treasure Island.

In a paragraph, the reader feels the danger on Treasure Island and again is given rich sensory detail to experience the first view of the island through the eyes of Jim.

Another method of sustaining suspense in an adventure story is to end a chapter at a crucial moment, which is generally known as a cliffhanger. Stevenson uses a number of these in *Treasure Island*. The point of such endings is to make the reader want to read further, at any cost. When Jim climbs into the ship's apple barrel and inadvertently hears Long John Silver's first dozen words, he understands "that the lives of all the honest men aboard depended upon me alone." Suddenly the stakes have been raised tremendously. Jim is hiding, is in possible danger of discovery, and most of all, is just becoming aware of a huge personal responsibility for the "honest men" on the ship.

There are many cliffhangers in *Treasure Island* and they all incorporate good storytelling techniques. At the end of Chapter 32, Silver (with Jim in tow as prisoner) and his band of pirates finally locate the site of the treasure, only to discover that the cache is already missing and all that is left is a hole that has been empty for some time. Up until that point, the reader had no clue about the outcome; no foreshadowing had been provided about the location of the treasure. But that is almost secondary; the reader assumes that the treasure will eventually be found. What is more important is that the missing treasure will create an explosive situation among the band of pirates. The reader has been prepared for this possibility through the protagonist's keen observations of Long John Silver's mercurial and untrustworthy nature. Stevenson does not let the reader down. The face-off between the men gets going right away in the next chapter.

Not every chapter in *Treasure Island* ends with a cliffhanger, but the ending of chapters can also serve as a powerful place to emphasize a particular character nuance, or important story information. Such is the case when Jim reboards the *Hispaniola* and takes command. At the end of this chapter, Jim notices the "odd smile" on Hands's face, a "haggard, old man's smile; but there was, besides that, a grain of derision, a shadow of treachery in his expression as he craftily watched, and watched, and watched me at my work." Again, the reader is being prepared for possible danger from Hands, and the point is given particular emphasis because the author places it at the end of a chapter.

Stevenson also times the revelation of information to the reader, and to the characters, to help create suspense in *Treasure Island*. This is similar to foreshadowing, but foreshadowing may rely more on implied symbolism or the ambiguous, seemingly illogical statement of a character (a gray island, or the unease of a superstitious captain). The timing of how information is revealed in storytelling is an important consideration in a suspense story. A good example of this in *Treasure Island* takes place when Hands and Jim are alone on the ship, and Hands asks Jim to go fetch a bottle of wine. There is something strange about the way Hands words his request that clues the reader into feeling that something is not quite right.

I'll take it kind if you'd step down into that there cabin and get me a□well, a□shiver my timbers! I can't hit the name on't; well, you get me a bottle of wine, Jim□this here brandy's too strong for my head.

An astute reader might immediately notice that something seems slightly unnatural about Hands's manner of speaking. Suddenly, he seems to be hesitating too much, or trying a little too hard. This is confirmed in the next paragraph when Jim has the same suspicions. However, the reader figured this out first and is then free to enjoy watching Jim come to the same realization. It is a well-timed revelation because the reader is prepared for what's coming.

Although *Treasure Island* is a suspenseful adventure story, it contains wonderful observations about various aspects of the human psyche. These are presented economically and enhance the story rather than bogging it down. Often, these observations give the reader insight into the protagonist. A reader might, for example, be impressed with Jim's ability to notice that Black Dog tries to sound "bold and big." Jim has a number of observations about the lack of help he and his mother get when they seek assistance in defending their inn. "Cowardice is infectious," remarks Jim, noting that none of the neighbors would return to the inn and would only promise ready horses or loaded pistols. This is realistic, which adds to the believability of the story, but it also advances the plot because it raises the stakes for the main characters. If neighbors had gladly come to defend the inn, a real opportunity for excitement and danger would have been lost, and Jim may never have ended up on the voyage to Treasure Island.

Jim gets more chances to comment on human nature when he describes the band of pirates that return to ransack the inn. They have "half an eye to their own danger all the time, while the rest stood irresolute on the road." It is a good observation by the

protagonist, and it also sets the reader's expectation about the pirates' actions later in the story.

By the time the pirates discover that the treasure is missing, Jim already has a good understanding of Silver's unethical, changeable character. Still, this does not diminish the power of Jim's observation of Silver at that moment. Stevenson also uses the moment as an opportunity to slip in a little dialogue: "His looks were now quite friendly; and I was so revolted at these constant changes that I could not forbear whispering, 'So you've changed sides again.'"

There are other techniques that Stevenson uses to make this story enjoyable, suspenseful, and tightly plotted. The author makes extensive use of lively dialogue, which brings the reader close to the characters and gives the reader the experience of "hearing" pirates and other characters. Stevenson also disposes of characters when they are no longer needed. Billy Bones is killed because he has served his purpose□he has brought his trunk and treasure map to the inn where it will fall into Jim's hands. Pew is killed off after Jim has heard enough to learn what type of danger he may be heading into. Long John Silver lives through the entire book because he is a critical character and is crucial to the plot until the treasure is located. Stevenson uses a number of methods, including rich description, foreshadowing and timing, tight plotting, and economical prose to make *Treasure Island* an enjoyable adventure story for all ages.

Source: Catherine Dybiec Holm, Critical Essay on *Treasure Island*, in *Novels for Students*, Thomson Gale, 2005.

Adaptations

Treasure Island has been produced as a movie several times. There is Paramount Studios' 1920 version; MGM's 1934 production; Disney's 1950 presentation; and the 1972 UK project that starred Orson Wells as Long John Silver. In the 1990s, several animated versions of this story appeared on DVDs. Frank Oz and his muppets even made their version of this classic in 1996.

Treasure Island was produced by Books on Tape, Inc. in 2002, read by Richard Matthews.

Topics for Further Study

Investigate modern forms of piracy. What do they have in common with the piracy of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries? How do they differ? Where does piracy occur other than at sea? Is it committed through the Internet? In the fashion trade? In the stock market?

Stevenson wrote much poetry. Read some of his more famous works, such as *A Child's Garden of Verses* (1885). Compare his work to that of modern-day children's poet Shel Silverstein. How do their works differ? What is the tone of their writing? How is the subject matter the same?

Read *Treasure Island* and Louis Sachar's *Holes* (2000), a modern adventure and coming-of-age story. Then write a short story about the main characters, Jim Hawkins and Stanley Yelnats, as if they were friends who were sharing a common adventure. Set the story in any time you choose. Demonstrate through your story how the two young boys are alike and how they differ. Make sure you understand each character's strengths and weaknesses.

Write a travel piece on Samoa. Include descriptions of the island, the history of its people, and interesting aspects of the culture. Include as much information as you can find on what Stevenson experienced there. Assume your readers want to visit the island because they are fans of Stevenson's. Include a description of Stevenson's house and the reaction of the native people to his being there.

Stevenson's grandfather was a famous designer of lighthouses. Find out where his lighthouses are located and provide pictures of them and their history.

Compare and Contrast

1800s: Captain Kidd, a privateer, hired by the British to protect their ships, is accused of piracy and is hanged. He is said to have captured a ship with a British captain and a boatload of jewels. No treasure is ever uncovered.

1900s: The International Maritime Bureau praises Indian government officials and several ships' crews for helping to recover a hijacked ship (an act of piracy) loaded with aluminum ingot.

2000s: The term *piracy* is often used when software, music, or movies are copied illegally.

1800s: Rumor has it that $300 million worth of treasure, stolen from mines in Lima, Peru, is buried on the island of Cocos off the Pacific coast of Costa Rica. August Gissler buys half of the island and spends nineteen years searching for the missing goods but never finds any of it.

1900s: In 1988, the treasure of the *S.S. Central America*, a U.S. mail ship that sank in 1857, is recovered. Its huge shipment of freshly minted gold coins and gold bars, approximately one-third of the accumulated wealth of the gold rush years, is found intact.

2000s: Civil War era *S.S. Republic* a paddlewheel steam ship that sunk off the coast of Georgia in 1865 with a cargo of approximately $180 million of gold coins is located. Plans are underway to salvage the sunken treasure.

1800s: Doctors gain a better understanding of tuberculosis and begin to recommend the importance of fresh air and wholesome climates as treatment. Robert Koch discovers the microorganism that causes this disease.

1900s: Scientists determine that tuberculosis is not hereditary, and the disease can now be detected in its earliest stages through x-rays. By mid-century, antibiotics to combat the disease are in use.

2000s: Two million people worldwide still die of tuberculosis each year.

What Do I Read Next?

Stevenson's 1886 novel, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* studies conflicting emotions associated with what society considers good and evil. Stevenson's other 1886 novel, *Kidnapped*, follows the ordeals of protagonist David Balfour who is left with no money to live on after the death of his father. Like *Treasure Island*, *Kidnapped* is a coming-of-age novel.

Louis Sachar's *Holes* (2000) is also a coming-of-age novel about a young boy who claims he has been cursed. He always seems to be in the wrong place at the wrong time and ends up in a juvenile detention hall somewhere in the middle of a desert. His task is to dig holes each day of his sentence. His journey, however, is to find out why he is digging these holes, and his discovery frees him from his curse.

Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) inspired Stevenson (especially the marooned Ben Gunn). Defoe's story centers on the life of Crusoe as he is marooned on an island off the coast of South America after suffering conflicts with pirates.

The Swiss Family Robinson (1812), by Johann David Wyss, tells the story of a Swiss family that is shipwrecked on a deserted island on their way to Australia. The family learns to live by their wits, far from the civilized world that they know.

Topics for Discussion

1. Long John Silver plots a mutiny aboard the Hispaniola, murders a man in cold blood, and betrays his comrades.

He is also cheerful, personable, and friendly to Jim. Why does Stevenson create such a likeable villain?

2. Why does Stevenson take so long to get the voyage of the Hispaniola underway? The brig does not leave Bristol until chapter 10. How does Stevenson use the early chapters to set the stage for Jim's adventures?

3. Jim leaves the Admiral Benbow Inn after his father's death and joins Doctor Livesey and Squire Trelawney. How do these two men function as surrogate father figures? Is Long John Silver a father figure, as well?

4. Squire Trelawney is depicted as overly talkative and a poor judge of character who prefers Long John Silver to Captain Smollett. What are the consequences of the squire's turning over the hiring of the crew to Silver?

5. Stevenson's original title for his novel was The Sea Cook. Is Treasure Island a better title? Why or why not?

6. Although most of the story is narrated by Jim, Doctor Livesey narrates three chapters. Why do you think Stevenson makes this narrative shift?

7. From the beginning of the story, when Jim and his mother ransack the dead pirate's chest, to Squire Trelawney's impulsive decision to sail in search of the buried treasure, greed and the quest for money serve as primary motivations in Stevenson's plot. What does Stevenson suggest about this motive? Why is it appropriate that the buried treasure contains coins from throughout the world?

8. Are skill, energy and heroic endeavor necessarily linked with moral goodness in Treasure Island? Do you empathize with Silver, the presumed villain, and feel impatient at times with the "good" characters? Does the ending of the story reestablish a conventional moral framework?

9. Are stories about pirates, adventure, and buried treasure still relevant today? Why does Stevenson's story retain its appeal for contemporary readers? Is it an adult's story or a children's story?

Ideas for Reports and Papers

1. The idea for Treasure Island apparently grew from a treasure map that Stevenson drew for his stepson, Lloyd Osbourne, during a damp, cool summer in Scotland. Check a biography of Stevenson to find out more about how the story was composed and where it was first published.

2. The theme of the "double" is an important one in Stevenson's fiction, with Long John Silver's dual nature obviously related to the strange double life of the protagonist of Dr. Jekyll and Mr.

Hyde. Compare these two books. Why do you think Stevenson was so attracted to the ambiguity of good and evil?

3. The plot of Treasure Island bears some resemblance to that of another Stevenson novel, Kidnapped, in which young David Balfour escapes his captors and travels across Scotland. Compare David Balfour and Jim Hawkins as youthful protagonists.

4. Why is it important to Stevenson's plot that most of the adventure take place on a remote island in the West Indies, far from England or Scotland?

What are the advantages of a remote, exotic setting for adventure or romance?

5. Jim learns of the mutiny while hidden in an apple barrel, meets Ben Gunn after sneaking ashore without permission, and recovers the brig after abandoning his friends in a time of great danger. How credible are Jim's exploits?

Is he too much fortune's favorite, as Captain Smollett observes?

Literary Precedents

Stevenson readily admitted that he depended on the works of other writers for much of the material in Treasure Island. Some of these writers were Washington Irving, Charles Kingsley, and "a parrot from Defoe, a skeleton from Poe, a stockade from Marryat."

That he rose above the literary form of the "boys' book" (a tale intended to teach boys how to be men, including such romantic adventures as H. Rider Haggard's King Solomon's Mines, 1885) is now evident, but at the time many readers believed that Stevenson had simply added to the canon of such works. However, when so distinguished a person as William Gladstone, the Prime Minister of England, stated that he had sat up all night reading the book, one might agree that Treasure Island reaches far beyond any of its precedents.

Further Study

Cordingly, David, *The Black Flag*, reprint, Harvest Books, 1997.

Cordingly looks pirates in the eye and discovers the truth of their lives, which is far from the romanticized versions in literature. The author also ponders the myths of pirates in an attempt to figure out where and how those myths were born.

Lapierre, Alexandra, *Fanny Stevenson: A Romance of Destiny*, Carroll & Graf, 1995.

Stevenson met Fanny, an American woman, in France and supposedly fell immediately in love with her, and she later became his wife. In the biography of Stevenson's wife, Lapierre exposes Fanny's emotions and her devotion to her husband, for whom she gave up her own creative endeavors as an artist.

McLynn, Frank, *Robert Louis Stevenson: A Biography*, Random House, 1994.

McLynn believes that Stevenson was much more than a writer of boys' adventure stories. He sets out to demonstrate through this biography that Stevenson was a superb writer and also a great influence on other writers, such as Joseph Conrad, Oscar Wilde, and William Butler Yeats.

Pool, Daniel, *What Jane Austin Ate and Charles Dickens Knew: From Fox Hunting to Whist The Facts of Daily Life in Nineteenth-Century England*, reprint, Touchstone Books, 1994.

Pool offers a glimpse into Victorian England, with interesting information on grave robbers, debtors' prison, and other curiosities. Other topics include religion, sex, dinner parties, and politics.

Bibliography

Bell, Ian, "Preface," in *Dreams of Exile: Robert Louis Stevenson: A Biography*, Mainstream Publishing, 1992.

Jones, William B., Jr., ed. "Preface," in *Robert Louis Stevenson Reconsidered*, McFarland, 2003.

Moore, Laura, "Voices from the Middle," in *Urbana*, Vol. 8, No. 2, December 2000, p. 75.

Stevenson, Robert Louis, "Essay: *Treasure Island*," in *Treasure Island*, Courage Books, 1995, pp. 202—07.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Novels for Students (NfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's□For Students□ Literature line, NfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on □classic□ novels

frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of NfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of NfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel;and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of □classic□ novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members□educational professionals□ helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in NfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- Introduction: a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- Author Biography: this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- Plot Summary: a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- Characters: an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed□for instance, the narrator in Invisible Man-the character is listed as □The Narrator□ and alphabetized as □Narrator.□ If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. □ Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name □Jean Louise Finch□ would head the listing for the narrator of To Kill a Mockingbird, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname □Scout Finch.□
- Themes: a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- Style: this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- Historical Context: This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- Critical Overview: this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- Criticism: an essay commissioned by NfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).

- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an □at-a-glance□ comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

NfS includes □The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,□ a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Novels for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.

Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

Citing Novels for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Novels for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from NfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

□Night.□ Novels for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from NfS (usually the first piece under the □Criticism□ subhead), the following format should be used:

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Novels for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335-39.

When quoting a journal or newspaper essay that is reprinted in a volume of NfS, the following form may be used:

Malak, Amin. □Margaret Atwood's □The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,□ Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9-16; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133-36.

When quoting material reprinted from a book that appears in a volume of NfS, the following form may be used:

Adams, Timothy Dow. □Richard Wright: □Wearing the Mask,□ in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69-83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59-61.

We Welcome Your Suggestions

The editor of Novels for Students welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest novels to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may contact the editor via email at: ForStudentsEditors@gale.com. Or write to the editor at:

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