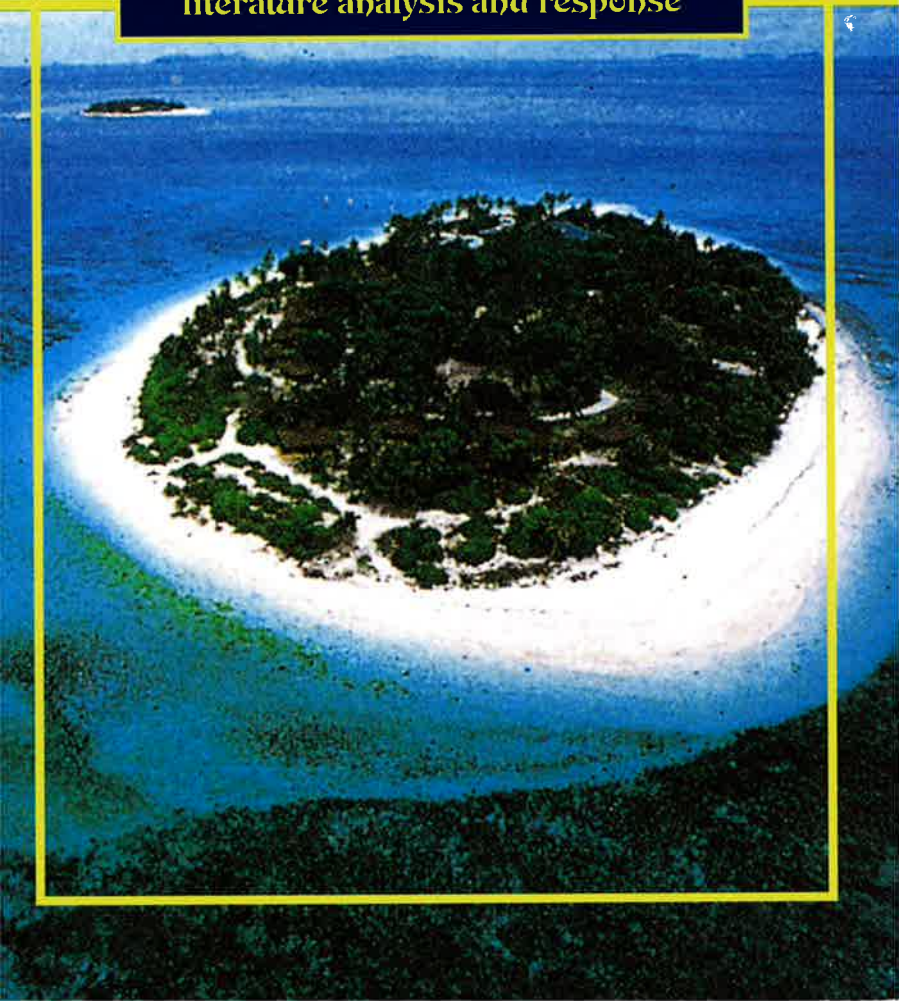


Stanford House Classics - Elementary

ROBINSON CRUSOE

Daniel Defoe

literature analysis and response



Robinson Crusoe

Daniel Defoe

Daniel Defoe was born in London in 1660. Son of a shop-keeper, he travelled in Europe doing a variety of jobs before settling in London as a journalist. He is considered one of the founders of modern journalism. He was also involved in politics and was imprisoned more than once for political reasons. In 1719, at the age of 59, he retired from public life and began writing stories. «*Robinson Crusoe*», his most well-known, is based on a real event. It can be considered almost a novel; one of the first in English. In 1722, he wrote another novel, «*Moll Flanders*», and «*A Journal of the Plague Year*», which described the great plague that broke out in London in 1665. Defoe died in 1731, at the age of 71.



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MY AMBITION

I was born in the year 1632, in the city of York, where I was educated. My father wanted me to become a lawyer¹ but my only desire was to go to sea. My father was a serious, wise² man and he advised me strongly against it.

When I was eighteen, I talked to my mother about it, hoping that she would convince my father to let me go. I soon realized I would never have their consent.

I resisted another year, until, one day, a friend of mine invited me to sail with him on his father's ship. So it was that I left home without asking permission and began my life at sea.

THE VOYAGE

After various adventures which I will not recount here, I found myself on a ship sailing for the African coast. One day a violent tornado took us by surprise and for twelve days our ship was driven ³ here and there by the fearful winds. We could do nothing except hope, although our chances of survival ⁴ were very few.

One morning, one of the men shouted, “Land!” and at the same moment the ship ran on to some sand and stopped. The waves broke over her and we all thought we were going to die. We had no idea where we were or whether ⁵ this was mainland or just an island. We were in a terrible situation. We did not know what to do.

THE ONLY SURVIVOR ⁶

In the end, as the storm calmed down, we decided to abandon the ship and try to reach the shore in the small boat we had on board. It was not easy as, although the wind had dropped, the sea was still terribly rough. In fact, as we were rowing towards the shore, a huge wave came up behind us and smashed down on to the boat. I cannot describe the next few minutes. I am a good swimmer but the wave completely took my breath away. In some way I managed to reach the shore but I was half-dead having swallowed ⁷ so much water. When I came to my senses

1. Complete the following:

Robinson's birthplace:

Robinson's year of birth:

Robinson's ambition:

the age he went to sea:

the ship's destination:

the duration of the storm:

the number of survivors:

2. Write a brief autobiography of yourself, from when you were born until now.



A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing, spanning the width of the page.

1. **lawyer:** *man who studies law.*
2. **wise:** *full of wisdom.*
3. **driven:** *pushed (to drive; drove; driven).*
4. **survival:** *the state of being alive after a terrible event.*
5. **whether:** *if or not.*
6. **survivor:** *person who survives.*
7. **swallowed:** *drank, involuntarily.*

I realized that I had to get higher up the beach before another wave came and pulled me back into the sea. At last, exhausted, I was safe. I looked around and soon understood that none of the other men had survived.

Now I did not know whether to be happy that I was still alive or not; certainly my situation was not easy. I had no clothes, nothing to eat or drink, no weapon to hunt and kill with or to defend myself with. The only things I had were my knife, a pipe and a little tobacco in a box.

I wanted only to sleep and wait until the next day to decide what to do. I walked a short distance until I found some fresh water to drink, then I climbed up a tree and found a comfortable position. There I fell asleep.

I VISIT THE SHIP

When I woke up the next morning, the sea was calm. The first thing I saw was the ship: she had rolled off the sand and was lying against the rocks only about a mile from the beach. I realized sadly that if we had remained on board we would all have lived. I felt very lonely¹ at that moment.

The first thing I decided to do was to swim out to the ship and get as many things as I could. The weather was extremely hot so I took off all my clothes and went into the sea. Inside the ship I was happy to find that most things were dry. I collected together lots of food, tools², ammunition and arms, and other things that I thought might be of use to me.

Now my problem was how to get all these things to the shore. I decided to build a kind of raft³ with four large pieces of wood that I found on board⁴.

Having tied them together with some rope, I put all my things on and set off⁵. Fortunately, I had two oars⁶ with which to guide my raft and it was easy to reach the land.

MY NEW HOME

My next job was to look at the country and decide where to make my home. I saw a hill about two kilometres away

3. Make a list of the things Robinson did not have. Then make a list of the things he had. List the things he got from the ship. Say which objects you think he needed most. Give reasons.

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4. Answer the questions:

- a) What made Robinson sad?
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- b) How far away was the ship?
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- c) How did he get all the things to shore?
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- d) Where did he find the pieces of wood?
.....
- e) How did he guide his raft?
.....
- f) How did he discover he was on an island?
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1. **lonely:** *in need of company.*
2. **tools:** *instruments.*
3. **raft:** *a flat structure for transport on water.*
4. **on board:** *on the ship.*
5. **set off:** *departed (to set; set; set).*
6. **oars:** *long, flat pieces of wood used for moving a boat through the water.*

and walked in that direction. When I reached the top of the hill and realized that I was on an island. It seemed uninhabited¹, except for wild animals; I saw lots of birds but could not recognize the different species. I fired my gun at one very large bird and, at the sound, thousands of different kinds flew up out of the trees. I believe they had never heard a similar sound before. That made me feel a little happier.

I considered four conditions that were necessary in the choice² of the place for my habitation: 1) fresh water; 2) shelter³ from the sun; 3) protection from wild beasts or savages⁴; 4) a view of the sea, just in case a ship came near.

In the end I chose a position on the side of the hill, facing north-west. There was a cave⁵ in the side of the hill and, in front of it, I constructed a kind of tent with the sails⁶ I had brought from the ship. Outside the tent I drew a half circle and, during the following days, I erected a fence⁷ made from young trees. This fence was almost two metres high and to enter I made a short ladder over it. Now I felt quite safe: I was completely fenced in and could sleep peacefully. I put all my stores in the cave which, over the weeks, I gradually enlarged by digging out the earth.

All this took a great amount of time and hard work and it was some time before I felt satisfied and safe in my new home.

Meanwhile, I considered my situation and my mood⁸ was at times sad and depressed and at other times thankful and grateful for being alive. I considered the good side and the bad side, like this:

EVIL

I am on a horrible, desolate island with no hope of being rescued.
I am separated from the rest of the world and destined to be miserable.

GOOD

I am alive, not drowned⁹ like the rest of my company.
I was chosen to be saved from death and may therefore be rescued too.
I have food and water.

5. Make a sentence for each of the conditions Robinson considered necessary in the choice for a place for his home. (Use 'had to be')
Give a reason for each.

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6. Make a drawing (or plan, if you prefer) of Robinson's home, as you imagine it reading the description.

- 1. uninhabited: without inhabitants, deserted.
- 2. choice: selection.
- 3. shelter: refuge.
- 4. savages: uncivilized people.
- 5. cave: natural opening in rock.
- 6. sails: large pieces of material used in the wind to move ships.
- 7. fence: enclosure made of wood.
- 8. mood: humour, state of mind.
- 9. drowned: dead in the water.