

Stanford House Classics - Elementary

KING KONG

Edgar Wallace

literature analysis and response



KING KONG

Edgar Wallace

EDGAR WALLACE was born in London in 1875. The illegitimate son of actors, he was adopted by a fishmonger. He left school at the age of 12 and, after doing a variety of jobs, he wrote his first novel, *The Four Just Men* in 1905. It was an immediate success and in just a few years Wallace became the king of detective stories. He made vast sums of money which he squandered. His last work, *King Kong* was never, in fact, a novel; it was the screenplay for a film which was made in Hollywood in 1933, one year after Wallace's death. Since then, there have been many different versions of this compelling story about the great ape Kong.



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KING KONG

DEPARTURE FROM NEW YORK

The summer of 1956 was very hot.

In New York harbour, the merchant ship "Petrol Company" was about to set sail¹ on a special mission.

For over an hour Captain Mitchell talked to John Spencer, an engineer from the oil company that owned the ship.

"I assure you, Captain," he insisted, "that I will find that island where there is enough oil to make myself and the Company a fortune."

"I hope so, for your sake² and mine," answered the Captain coldly. He disliked making useless voyages and did not trust Spencer, who had an obsession about the island of Punau, situated in the Pacific Ocean, off the coast of New Guinea.

"It's a real black Eldorado," he was always saying.

As darkness fell, a man secretly rowed up to the side of the ship and climbed on board. No-one saw him. The sailors were all busy preparing to pull up the anchor. Shortly afterwards, the sirens blew and the great ship began slowly to move out of the harbour.

AT SEA

John Spencer held a meeting with the ship's crew and some technicians from the oil company. He showed them some slides³ of Punau.

"As you can see," he began, "the island is hidden by a thick fog and, according to all the surveys⁴ made, it has been like that for thirty years."

"How can you be sure there really is an island

1. Match the names with the definitions

Mitchell	an engineer
Spencer	captain of the ship
Punau	place of departure
Petrol Company	organizer of the expedition
New York Harbour	place of destination
Oil company	merchant ship

Now write full sentences for each.

2. Choose the correct one:

- a) Spencer was convinced that there was a) oil b) petrol
c) gold on the island.
- b) The Captain didn't like making voyages a) for the company
b) without a good reason c) for Spencer.
- c) A man got on the ship without a) being seen b) be seen
c) be seeing.
- d) Punau is a) part of b) near c) far from New Guinea.
- e) The ship left New York at a) dawn b) dusk c) noon.

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1. to set sail: to depart (by ship).
2. sake: benefit.
3. slides: photographs on film, seen by projecting on to a screen.
4. surveys: examinations.

there?” asked Walter Lindsay, a geologist.

“By the very fact that the fog has stayed in the same position for thirty years,” replied Spencer.

“Mr Spencer,” came a voice from the back of the cabin, “you have no right to interfere with the natural balance¹ of Punau. On that island there lives the last of a species of ape² that used to be found in all parts of the Pacific Ocean. Your presence there would greatly endanger³ its survival⁴!”

“Who are you?” shouted Spencer.

“Jeremy Colby,” answered the newcomer.

“And who on earth is Jeremy Colby?” Spencer was furious.

“I’m a geologist,” came the calm answer. “From the University of Wisconsin.”

“You’re lying⁵!” shouted Spencer, his face red. “You’re a spy from a rival oil company! Take him away!”

But no one moved. “We only take orders from Captain Mitchell,” said one of the officers.

“Then tell him to come here!”

After showing the Captain his credentials⁶, Colby managed to convince him and Lindsay to let him join the expedition, despite Spencer’s protests.

JULIE

“Captain, Captain, a lifeboat⁷ – down there – and there’s someone in it – look!”

“A woman!” exclaimed Captain Mitchell.

Several sailors were sent down to pull up the boat in which a young woman was lying, apparently asleep. When at last she came to her senses, Colby was at her side.

“Julie,” he said softly. “Can you hear me? My

3. Answer the questions.

a) What was the name of the clandestine passenger?

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b) Why did he go on board?

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c) What was his profession?

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d) How did Spencer react to his appearance?

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e) Why does Spencer think he is a spy?

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f) What is so special about the ape living on Punau?

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4. Can you think of any other endangered species? Find out and make a list

ANIMAL

WHERE IT LIVES

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1. **balance:** *equilibrium.*

2. **ape:** *very large monkey*

3. **endanger:** *put in danger.*

4. **survival:** *continuing to live.*

5. **lying:** *not telling the truth (to lie).*

6. **credentials:** *documents showing qualifications.*

7. **lifeboat:** *small boat on ships used for rescuing people.*

name's Jeremy. I'm a friend."

The girl looked up at him. "Where am I?" she cried. "Where's Paul?"

"We found you alone in a lifeboat, Julie," Colby told her. "Who is Paul?"

"He's a photographer. We were going to South Africa." She began to cry.

The next day the girl felt better and was able to think more clearly.

"How did you know my name?" she asked.

"A sailor found this in the bottom of the boat," and he handed her a silver key-ring with the inscription "To Julie From Paul" on it.

"You know, Julie," continued Colby. "Our radar picked up¹ signs of a ship on the rocks. It's been completely wrecked². You are probably the only survivor."

The girl was silent and Colby quietly left the cabin.

PUNAU

As the days went by, Julie became calmer. She was interested in the expedition and her presence made the long voyage less monotonous, especially for Jeremy Colby who was often at her side. He liked the pretty girl with blue eyes and she was sympathetic towards the cause.

When at last they came near to the island, plans were made for going ashore³. Seven technicians from the oil company were going, with Walter Lindsay and Spencer, of course.

"I'm coming with you," declared Colby.

"No!" shouted Spencer.

"And why not?" asked the Captain.

"Because he is not part of the mission."

"But as we accepted him on board, he is part of this

5. Decide whether the following statements are true or false

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| a) Colby knew Julie's name because he had met her before. | T | F |
| b) Julie was going to South Africa. | T | F |
| c) She fell overboard. | T | F |
| d) Colby was attracted to Julie. | T | F |
| e) Julie didn't care about animals. | T | F |
| f) The Captain didn't want Colby to go with them to the island. | T | F |

Now correct the false ones.

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6. There are two comparative adjectives on page 8. Find them and write them here:

Now write four other comparative adjectives and put them in sentences.

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1. picked up: distinguished, recorded.

2. wrecked: smashed, broken.

3. ashore: on land.