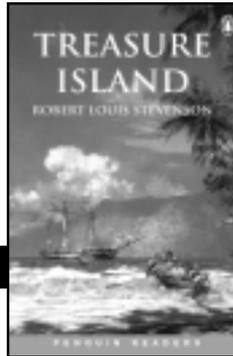


Teacher's notes

Treasure Island

by Robert Louis Stevenson



SUMMARY

Treasure Island is one of the most famous adventure stories in English literature. The lasting appeal of the story is proved by the fact that there are more film versions of *Treasure Island* than almost any other classic novel, with six different interpretations so far.

The story is set in the middle of the eighteenth century and is mainly narrated by a young boy, Jim Hawkins. An old sailor comes to stay at a seaside inn owned by Jim's parents. When the sailor dies, Jim finds in his belongings a map showing an island with buried treasure. Jim's friend Mr Trelawney decides to hire a ship and search for the treasure. During the voyage Jim discovers that there are many pirates among the crew, led by Long John Silver. When the ship reaches the island a battle begins between the pirates and Mr Trelawney's men. Jim befriends an old pirate who lives alone on the island and has already found the treasure. After many adventures Jim and his friends defeat the pirates and sail back to England with the treasure.

ABOUT ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

Robert Louis Stevenson was born in Edinburgh, Scotland, in 1850. His father was a successful lighthouse engineer and his mother was the daughter of a church minister. Hoping that he would follow in the family business, his father sent Robert to university to study engineering, but Robert soon changed to law and qualified as a lawyer in 1875. That same year he met W E Henley, the publisher of the *London Magazine*. Henley recognized Stevenson's literary potential and encouraged him to become a writer by offering to publish his short stories in the magazine. Rather than work as a lawyer, Stevenson set off on a series of journeys around Europe and began publishing accounts of his travels. In 1876 he met Fanny Osborne, an American woman ten years his senior. She was married with two children, but they fell in love and she obtained a divorce in 1879. Stevenson travelled to California to marry her in 1880 and they returned to live in England.

In 1881 Stevenson took his new wife and step-children on holiday to Braemar in Scotland. The weather was appalling and the family were forced to stay indoors. To

pass the time Stevenson and his twelve-year old stepson Lloyd began drawing maps of imaginary islands. To amuse the children Stevenson used the idea of a secret map as the basis of a story about hidden treasure. Taking inspiration from his travels to America, his childhood visiting lighthouses with his father, and basing the character of Long John Silver on his friend W E Henley (who had only one leg), he sat down and wrote the adventure which subsequently became *Treasure Island*.

In the years following the publication of *Treasure Island*, Stevenson wrote a series of bestselling novels. Two of these, *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* and *Kidnapped*, remain popular to this day. In 1888 Stevenson chartered a yacht to travel around the South Pacific. Suffering from tuberculosis, he decided to buy an estate on Samoa where he could retire in a warm climate. He never returned to Scotland but he continued to publish novels, poems and short stories until his death in 1894.

BACKGROUND AND THEMES

Stevenson first published *Treasure Island* as a serial in a children's magazine. At this time - the late nineteenth century - in Britain it was common practice for novels to be published in weekly magazines. The need to encourage readers to buy the next issue of the magazine led authors to develop dramatic plots with 'cliffhangers' (very exciting moments) at the end of each episode. *Treasure Island* follows this pattern with a plot that has many twists and turns, and this makes the novel very exciting to read. Most of the book is written in the first person, and is narrated by the young hero, Jim Hawkins. This encourages us to identify with the main character and we share his fear, excitement and tension as the story unfolds.

Treasure Island draws on a theme which can be traced back to the Middle Ages and beyond - the myth of hidden treasure. Stevenson gives this traditional plot a realistic basis by setting his story in the eighteenth century, which was a time when pirates were still active in the West Indies and their stolen treasure was often hidden away in remote places. Pirates were a source of fascination in late

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nineteenth-century England and feature in much of the music and literature of the time. They had the attraction of being both dangerous and romantic.

Stevenson's great creation, the one-legged Long John Silver, is one of the most memorable characters in English fiction. A few years after *Treasure Island* was published, J M Barrie created a similar figure in his play 'Peter Pan' - Captain Hook, who had only one hand instead of only one leg. In any adventure story it is essential to have the 'good guys' and the 'bad guys'; pirates were extremely suitable for the role of bad guys as they went against the rules of society and lived outside the law. Unlike ghosts and monsters, which were also popular in stories in the nineteenth century, pirates really existed and were therefore much more effective figures of fear and horror for older children.

One of the most important themes in the book is the idea of escaping - escaping from poverty by finding treasure, and escaping from one's own country by travelling to exotic foreign locations. Many popular novels feed on this need for escapism and *Treasure Island* combines both aspects. Travel was much more difficult in the nineteenth century and Jim's experience of sailing to the Caribbean is in itself an exciting adventure. By combining this theme with violent pirates and the search for hidden gold, Stevenson successfully sends the reader on an exciting and satisfying journey of the imagination.

Communicative activities

The following teacher-led activities cover the same sections of text as the exercises at the back of the reader, and supplement those exercises. For supplementary exercises covering shorter sections of the book, see the photocopiable Student's Activities pages of this Factsheet. These are primarily for use with class readers but, with the exception of discussion and pair/groupwork questions, can also be used by students working alone in a self-access centre.

ACTIVITIES BEFORE READING THE BOOK

- 1 Ask students if they have seen a film of *Treasure Island*. Did they like it? Do they remember any of the people in the story? List any they give you on the board then ask them to find pictures of these people in the book.
- 2 Put students into pairs and ask them to look at the pictures in the book. Each pair chooses one picture and writes about it on a piece of paper. Pairs swap papers and try to find which pictures were described.

ACTIVITIES AFTER READING A SECTION

Chapter 1

Ask students to look at this sentence on page 16: 'I'm Ben Gunn,' he said. 'I live here. The pirates left me on the

island three years ago.'

Divide the class into groups. Each group has to make up one of the following stories:

How and why Ben Gunn was left on the island.

How Ben Gunn lived on the island for three years without other people.

Chapter 2

Put students into pairs. They are Dr Livesey and Captain Smollett. Dr Livesey is back on the *Hispaniola*. He tells Captain Smollett about the house on the island and says that he thinks it is a good place to stay. The captain doesn't think it's a good idea. He asks about other places they can stay on the island. They talk about this.

Chapter 3

- 1 At the end of the book Jim says he never wants to go back to the island. Ask the class if they believe this and take a vote from the class. Ask them to say why they think 'yes' or 'no'.
- 2 Jim takes the treasure back to England. What does he do with it? Put students into small groups and give them five minutes to think of interesting ideas. Make it a competition and ask each group to report back with its ideas. The most unusual or interesting idea wins the competition.

ACTIVITIES AFTER READING THE BOOK

Ask students to think about the life of a pirate. Brainstorm a list of good things and bad things. Write the students' ideas on the board. Then ask students to think about pirates today. Where do they live and what do they do? As a final activity students can write about 'the life of a pirate today'.

Glossary

It will be useful for your students to know the following new words. They are practised in the 'Before You Read' sections of exercises at the back of the book. (Definitions are based on those in the Longman Active Study Dictionary.)

Chapter 1

barrel (n) this is of wood and people keep food and drink in it

captain (n) the boss of a ship

flag (n) every country has its flag; the flag of the UK is the Union Jack

hill (n) a small mountain

inn (n) a place that sells food and drink and where people can stay

island (n) ground that has the sea round it

pirate (n) this person sails in ships on the sea and takes things from other people's ships; pirates are dangerous and can kill you

sail (v) to move across the water in a ship, with the wind pushing you

sailor (n) this person works on a sailing ship

treasure (n) a lot of money and expensive things

Chapter 2

shoot (v) to fire a gun and kill somebody

drop (v) to make something fall down



Student's activities

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Students can do these exercises alone or with one or more other students. Pair/group-only activities are marked.

Activities before reading the book

- Read the introduction in your book and answer these questions:
 - Where does Jim's father have an inn?
 - What does the old man have?
 - Where does Jim sail to on the *Hispaniola*?
 - What happened when Robert Louis Stevenson was sixteen?
 - Why did Stevenson want to live in a warm country?
 - What does 'Tusitala' mean in English?
- The introduction says 'A lot of people are interested in that map'. Why do you think the map is interesting?

Activities while reading the book

CHAPTER 1

Page 1 to bottom of page 8

- What happens first, second, third, fourth,? Write 1 - 10 next to these questions.
 - A man who can't see comes to the inn.
 - Pirates come to the inn and break down the door.
 - Dr Livesey comes and looks at the old captain.
 - An old man comes to stay at the inn.
 - Jim's father dies.
 - Black Dog comes to the inn.
 - The man who can't see gives a black paper to the old captain.
 - There is a fight and Black Dog runs out of the house.
 - Jim finds an envelope in the old captain's box.
 - The old captain dies.
- Talk to another student.
Who is the old man who comes to the inn and dies? Do you think he is Billy Bones, the famous pirate? Why do you think this?
- The pirates are looking for Captain Flint's map. Who is Captain Flint? What do you know about him? Who has his map? Write sentences.
- What are Mr Trelawney, Dr Livesey and Jim going to do?

Pages 8-18

- Make sentences from these half sentences.
 - Long John Silver has ...

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- Captain Smollett doesn't know ...
 - On the journey to the island ...
 - Jim climbs inside the barrel ...
 - The pirates want ...
 - Captain Smollett shows Silver a map of the island but ...
 - There were a lot of pirates on ...
 - When they arrive on the beach Jim ...
 - Jim thinks the pirates ...
 - Ben Gunn has got ...
 - to get some fruit.
 - the island in the old days.
 - are going to kill him.
 - an inn in Bristol.
 - to kill Captain Smollett and the others.
 - a little boat.
 - it doesn't show the treasure.
 - the weather is good.
 - runs into the trees.
 - where the ship is going.
- Find these numbers in the story.
(a) 13, (b) 3, (c) 6
What do they mean?
 - Answer these questions.
 - Who is Ben Gunn?
 - 'a flag went up above the trees'. What do you think this means?
 - You are Jim. Write a letter to your mother. Tell her about Long John Silver and the pirates on the ship. Tell her how you feel.

CHAPTER 2

- Answer these questions. Write sentences.
 - Why do Dr Livesey and Hunter go to the island?
 - Why does the doctor think the house is a good place?
 - Why does the doctor think Jim is dead?
 - There are five men in the small boat. Who are they?
 - What happens to most of the food and guns on the small boat?
 - What happens to Redruth?
 - Is Jim Hawkins dead?

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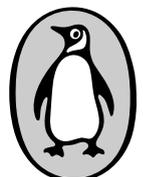
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- 2 Talk with another student.
Captain Smollett says 'We have food for ten days.
What are we going to do?'
What do you think they can do?

CHAPTER 3

Page 22 to page 28, line 9

- 1 Look at these sentences. Who is the person in *italics*?
- 'You know where to find *me*. Come tomorrow afternoon.'
 - 'Someone's coming! A *man* with a white flag.'
 - 'One of our men is dead. *You* killed him in the night.'
 - '*You* can't find the treasure and *you* can't sail the ship.'
 - '*He's* going to meet Ben Gunn,' I thought.
 - 'Help *me* to sail it to the North Inlet.'
 - '*He* moved slowly and took a knife from behind some rope.'
 - Then somebody spoke. '*Who's* there?' *he* said.

- 2 Put the words below in the right places in the sentences. Then look in the book and see if you were right.

across, in, inside, on, behind, through, up, round, to, under, out, away

- The pirates the beach made a big fire.
- Long John came slowly the hill to the house.
- You killed him the night.
- Suddenly some of the pirates ran of the trees up to the house.
- It was very hot the house.
- The boat moved slowly and quietly the water.
- The wind can push the ship from the beach.
- I moved slowly nearer and nearer the *Hispaniola*.
- I looked the ship. All the cupboards were open.
- The ship moved quietly the water.

- He moved slowly and took a knife from some rope.
- Then he put the knife his jacket.

- 3 Talk with another student.

Jim finds Long John Silver in the house on the island. Why is he there? What happened to Captain Smollett and Jim's friends? Where are they? Do you think they are dead? Did Silver kill them all?

Page 28, line 10 to end of story

- 1 What happens first, second, third, fourth,? Write 1 - 12 next to these sentences.
- Jim and his friends take one of the pirate's boats to the *Hispaniola*.
 - The pirates follow the dead man's arm to the hill.
 - The pirates find a box under a tree but there's nothing in it.
 - Long John Silver shows the pirates the map and they are happy.
 - The doctor comes to the house and talks to Jim.
 - The *Hispaniola* sails across the sea to the nearest town.
 - The pirates hear singing and they are afraid.
 - The other pirates are angry with Silver and say he isn't the captain now.
 - The doctor and Ben Gunn shoot at the pirates.
 - The pirates see a dead man near a tree.
 - Jim and his friends arrive home with the treasure.
 - Silver and the pirates look for the treasure.
- 2 Who says it? Write 'Silver', 'Jim', 'Captain Smollett' or 'Doctor Livesey'.
- 'I'm the captain. And I like this boy.'
 - 'Silver! Look after this boy.'
 - 'We must go this way and look for a tall tree.'
 - 'Ben found the treasure a long time ago.'
 - 'What are you doing here, John Silver?'
 - I never wanted to go back to that island again.

- 3 Talk with another student.

At the end of the story, Long John Silver gets away and takes some of the treasure. What do you think Silver does with the treasure?

Activities after reading the book

We know that Long John Silver is a bad man. He is a pirate and he wanted to kill Jim and his friends. Then, at the end of the book he changes and he becomes Jim's friend and helps him. Why does he change?

