

R. L. STEVENSON

TREASURE ISLAND
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CONTENTS

	About the Author	6
	About the Book	7
	FACT FILE Pirates	8
	Characters	10
	Before Reading	12
1	Call Me 'Captain'	17
2	Black Dog	19
3	The Sea Chest	24
4	The Captain's Papers	28
5	Preparations	31
6	The Voyage	34
7	Friend or Foe?	37
8	Treasure Island	39
9	The Fort	44
10	Agreement or Attack?	48
11	My Sea Adventure	52
12	Captain Jim	56
13	The Enemy's Camp	59
14	The Doctor's Visit	64
15	The Treasure Hunt	66
16	The End of the Pirates	70
17	The Way Home	74
	After Reading with NEW ACTIVITIES	77



PIRATES

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WHAT IS A PIRATE?

Treasure Island is set in the golden age of piracy and has strongly contributed to create the popular image that we have of pirates.

When we think of pirates, we immediately think of dangerous robbers of the high seas who wear eye patches and have hooks for hands, most likely with a parrot on a shoulder and sometimes missing a leg, and therefore either use a crutch or have a peg leg.

This image, however, does not come directly from the novel, but from one of its movie adaptations, namely the 1950 version by Byron Haskin, which was also **Disney's**

first live-action film. The film does not fully correspond to reality and Hollywood certainly added features in the way it shows pirates in movies. So we can say that the image of pirates we have is largely influenced by Stevenson's novel, but was enriched to come up to the expectations of the western audience's imagination.

FREEDOM

Many pirates worked for the colonial powers of the time attacking rival ships and stealing their gold, silver and tobacco.



Pirates on film

What other films about pirates have you seen? What are they about? Share ideas in groups.



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However, besides criminality and a strong dislike for social institutions, piracy is also a symbol of **freedom** and individualism. A real pirate is alone in the world, he lives outside any established social code. His only code is **every man for himself**. Stevenson captures this spirit in his tale and in doing so creates our fascination with pirates. The reason for this, experts say, is because this idea of pirates is closely connected to the western spirit of individualism and adventure. This image captures our imagination so strongly because it addresses our inner desires and innate sense of adventure.

GLOSSARY

- **crutch:** stick to help one walk
- **enriched:** improved; added to
- **expectations:** things you hope for and think will happen
- **fascination:** great interest
- **features:** interesting and important details and idea
- **innate:** that we are born with; inner
- **most likely:** probably
- **peg leg:** wooden leg (usually from the knee down)
- **thrill:** excite; entertain

OVER TO YOU!

Although Stevenson's intention was purely to thrill readers, piracy in his novel can easily be taken as a metaphor for some delicate issues in our daily lives, for example social injustice, exploitation or new forms of colonialism. What do you think?



Share ideas with a partner.

BEFORE READING

1 Look at the map and match the words to the numbers.

a forest

d cliffs

g beach

b river

e lake


h fort

c hill

f island


i bay/natural
harbour for boats



2  Listen and write the following words or instructions on the map.

*Most of treasure here
North Harbour
Skeleton Island
South Harbour
Spy-glass Hill*



3  Listen and match the characters to the descriptions.



Jim Hawkins

Long John Silver

Captain Smollett

Captain


4 Read about some of the characters. Choose the correct adjective to complete each description.

sick burnt rich quiet

- a** Squire Trelawney is a aristocrat. He organises the search for the treasure.
- b** Ben Gunn is a pirate who was abandoned on Treasure Island. His skin is by the sun and he wears old clothes. He helps Jim and the others to find the treasure.
- c** Doctor Livesey always tries to help people who are, even the pirates. He is honest and noble but also loves adventure.
- d** Mr and Mrs Hawkins are Jim's parents and they are honest, hard-working people. They own a tavern which is usually very until some pirates come to visit.

I CALL ME 'CAPTAIN'



 I am Jim Hawkins and my story begins many years ago, when my father worked at the Admiral Benbow inn.

One day a tall man with a scar on his face arrived. He opened the door of the inn, singing the song I now know so well:



*"Fifteen men on the dead man's chest -
Yo-ho-ho, and a bottle of rum!"*



'A glass of rum,' he said when he came inside.

'This is a pleasant inn,' he said. 'Do you have many customers?'

'Not many,' my father answered.

'Well, this is the place for me. You can call me "Captain",' he said. Then he asked a man to carry his large sailor's chest to his room. 'I'm a simple man,' he told my father, 'Rum and bacon and eggs is all I want. Here are four gold coins to start. Tell me when I have to pay more.'

During the day he went to the cliffs with his telescope and in the evening he sat by the fire drinking rum and water. He asked about sailors every day. We soon understood that he wanted to avoid them. When a sailor visited the inn, the captain was always very quiet. One day he asked me:

'If you see a sailor with one leg, tell me as soon as he arrives.'

GLOSSARY

- **avoid:** keep away from (a place or person)
- **chest:** wooden box
- **cliffs:** vertical rock on mountains or by the sea

- **inn:** type of hotel
- **rum:** alcoholic drink
- **scar:** mark on the skin
- **telescope:**
- **while:** short time



When the captain drank too much rum, he sang sea-songs and told the other customers terrible stories about his violent life at sea.

He stayed month after month, but he didn't give my father any more money. My poor father was too frightened to ask. Everyone was frightened of the captain and his stories. The only person who was not afraid of him was the local doctor and magistrate, Dr Livesey.

'If you keep drinking rum like that, you will very soon be dead,' he warned the captain.

FEAR

What do you think the captain is afraid of?

Why are people afraid of the captain?

What are you afraid of?

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GLOSSARY

• **magistrate:** person who makes a legal decision

• **Dr:** short for doctor

2 BLACK DOG



2 That winter my father became very ill, and my mother and I looked after the inn. One January morning the captain went out for his walk. My mother was with my father, and I was laying the table for the captain's breakfast. A tall, pale man with only three fingers on his left hand came in.

'Come here, boy,' he said. 'Is this table here for my friend Bill?'

'Bill?' I asked. 'This table is for the captain.'

'Has this captain got a scar on his right cheek?' he asked.

'Yes,' I answered. 'He went for a walk.'

When the stranger saw the captain returning, he hid behind the door. I knew that something was wrong and I was worried, because both men had swords.

The captain was walking to his breakfast table, when the stranger said loudly, 'Bill!'

The captain turned round and the colour left his face.

'Black Dog!' he gasped.

'Black Dog it is,' said the stranger.

'Come to see his old shipmate Billy.'

'Here I am,' said the captain.

'What do you want?'

'Let's get some rum,' said Black Dog, 'and talk like old shipmates.'



- **gasp(ed):** said quickly in shock
- **laying (a table):** getting it ready
- **shipmate:** sailor working on a ship with another

- **swords:**



I gave them some rum and went back to work. The men's voices soon grew louder, and I heard the captain shouting:

'No, no, no!'

Both men jumped up, and there was a clash• of swords and a cry of pain. Black Dog ran out of the inn with blood running down his shoulder. The captain stood and watched as he disappeared over the hill. Then he came back into the inn.

'Jim,' he said. 'Rum!'

'Are you hurt?' I cried.

'Rum,' he repeated. 'I must get away from here. Rum! Rum!'

When I came back with the rum I found the captain lying on the floor. His eyes were closed and his face was a horrible colour. But he was still alive. Just at that moment Dr Livesey arrived to see my father.

'Dr Livesey,' I said, 'what can we do? Where is he wounded•?'

'He isn't wounded,' replied the doctor examining him. 'It's the rum, it will kill him. Now Jim, get me a basin•.'

The doctor treated the captain. Then, with great effort, we carried him upstairs and put him into his bed.

'He is very ill, he must rest here for a week. And he must stop drinking rum,' the doctor said to me when we left the room.



GLOSSARY

- **basin:** bowl
- **clash:** when two things hit together
- **wounded:** hurt; cut



Later I took some water and medicine to the captain.

‘Jim,’ he said, ‘bring me a glass of rum.’

‘But the doctor said...’ I started.

‘Doctors are fools•,’ he interrupted. ‘I’m a sailor. Sailors need rum.’

‘I’ll get you one glass but you have to stay in bed, for at least a week.’

‘I can’t do that,’ he cried. ‘They’re coming with the black spot•. They want my chest. But I’ll escape again. I’m not afraid of them.’

The captain carried on talking.

‘That was Black Dog. He’s bad, but the others are worse. We all sailed with Captain Flint. I was first mate•. But I’m the only one who knows the place. Flint gave it to me when he was dying.’

‘What’s the black spot, Captain?’ I asked.

‘The black spot means trouble, Jim. If you get the black spot the other pirates want to kill you. But you can help me: look out for Black Dog, or the man with one leg.’

THE PLACE

What do you think ‘the place’ is?

Who wants to know where it is?

Who are ‘they’?

How do you think Jim feels now?

GLOSSARY

• **black spot:**



• **first mate:** junior officer on a ship

• **fools:** stupid people

A few days later my poor father died and I didn't think much about the captain. The day after the funeral, I was standing at the door of the inn when I heard the 'tap-tap' of a stick moving closer. I looked up and saw a blind man walking towards the inn, tapping with his stick as he moved. He was wearing an old sea cloak with a hood that covered his eyes and nose. He stopped and said, 'Take me to the captain.'

Without thinking I took him into the parlour where the captain was sitting. When the captain saw the blind man, he was unable to move.

'Now, Bill, sit where you are,' said the man. 'I can't see, but I can hear a finger moving. Take his left hand by the wrist, boy, and bring it near to my right.'

He put something into the captain's hand and then he got up and left.

The captain looked at his hand: there was a small piece of paper with a black spot in the middle.

He turned it over to read the writing on the other side.

'Ten o'clock!' he cried. 'I can still escape!'

He jumped to his feet, but suddenly he swayed for a moment and fell dead on the floor.



-
- **cloak:** coat without sleeves
 - **funeral:** church service when someone dies
 - **hood:** covering for head and neck
 - **parlour:** room where people sit and talk
 - **swayed:** moved from side to side
 - **tap-tap:** sound of a stick on the ground
 - **tapping:** hitting the ground softly

AFTER READING VOCABULARY

1 Use five of the words in the box to complete the sentences.

bandage hostage compass shrill
 torch villain skull accurate

- a** A very bad person in novels is sometimes called a
- b** A is an instrument for finding directions.
- c** A is a piece of cloth on a wound or injury.
- d** A is a burning piece of wood, used to see in the dark.
- e** In the past, copies of documents were not always

2 Complete the word formation table below. Make sentences with a partner.

ADJECTIVE	NOUN
<i>KIND</i>	<i>KINDNESS</i>
INJURED
.....	RELIEF
EXCITED
.....	CARE
SAFE
.....	TERROR
AFRAID
.....	WOOD
DISAPPOINTED
.....	PUZZLE



3 Imagine the following situations are real. Complete the sentences with the correct future form of the verbs in brackets:

- a** Black Dog (*come*) to see us tonight. Will you come, too?
- b** We (*leave*) tomorrow at dawn and I (*feel*) very excited.
- c** Ok, I (*wait*) for you outside the fort!
- d** Captain Smollet and Silver now (*make*) an agreement. I don't think Silver (*accept*) the captain's conditions.
- e** Unfortunately I can't accept Silver's invitation for next week, because I (*have*) some guests myself.
- f** What foreign language Jim (*study*) now? Portuguese, and he (*study*) it for another two years.

4  **Discuss your answers with a partner.**

5 Complete the following sentences following the examples below.

Ex. The Captain was a pirate. (*Black Dog*)

So was Black Dog.

Jim was not a pirate. (*Dr Livesey*)

Neither was Dr Livesey.

- a** Jim's mother took some money from the chest. (*I*)
- b** Long John Silver could not sail a ship. (*Dick, the sailor boy*)
- c** I was afraid of mutiny. (*Captain Smollet*)
- d** At first, Silver didn't have the treasure map. (*the other pirates*)
- e** Israel Hands didn't survive. (*Captain Bill*)
- f** Jim Hawkins got back home safely. (*Ben Gunn*).
- g** Long John Silver wanted the treasure. (*the other pirates*)
- h** 'Yes, I have heard of Flint.' (*'I'*)
- i** Jim didn't know where the treasure was. (*Dr Livesay*)
- j** Hands and Silver were pirates. (*most of the ship's crew*)

R. L. STEVENSON

TREASURE ISLAND

Adapted by Elspeth Rawstron

“I am Jim Hawkins and my story begins many years ago.”

When the terrible pirate Bill Bones dies, young Jim Hawkins is left with the key to a fortune: the long-lost map of Treasure Island. Jim sets off on an incredible adventure with his trusted friends to find the hidden treasure.

They do not realize that their crew is made up of pirates and their head is the most infamous and cruel pirate of them all... Long John Silver. Will Jim and his friends outwit the pirates and get the treasure?



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