

THE LIFE AND ADVENTURES OF ROBINSON CRUSOE (1719)

By Daniel Defoe (1660- 1731)

-Important Quotes from the novel

“Thus fear of danger is ten thousand times more terrifying than danger itself when apparent to the eyes; and we find the burden of anxiety greater, by much, than the evil which we are anxious about.”

“Those people cannot enjoy comfortably what God has given them because they see and covet what He has not given them. All of our discontents for what we want appear to me to spring from want of thankfulness for what we have.”

“Thus we never see the true state of our condition till it is illustrated to us by its contraries, nor know how to value what we enjoy, but by the want of it.”

“I have since often observed, how incongruous and irrational the common temper of mankind is, especially of youth ... that they are not ashamed to sin, and yet are ashamed to repent; not ashamed of the action for which they ought justly to be esteemed fools, but are ashamed of the returning, which only can make them be esteemed wise men.”

“I learned to look more upon the bright side of my condition, and less upon the dark side, and to consider what I enjoyed, rather than what I wanted: and this gave me sometimes such secret comforts, that I cannot express them”

-Who is the Writer?

Daniel Defoe was born in London, England. He was educated at a dissenting academy, travelled widely in Europe, and set up in the hosiery trade. In 1688 he joined the army and supported the Kings party. In 1702 his satire *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters* raised much anger with Dissenters and High-Churchmen alike, and he was imprisoned at Newgate for seditious libel, where he continued his pamphleteering. On his release in 1704, he started *The Review*, writing it single-handed, three times a week, until 1713. During this time, his political conduct became highly equivocal; he supported, rejected, then supported again the Tory minister, Harley. After the accession of George I (1714) he returned to the writing of fiction, and achieved lasting fame with *Robinson Crusoe* (1719-20). His other major works include *A Journal of the Plague Year*, *Moll Flanders* (both 1722) and *Roxana* (1724).

-Overview of the Novel

Robinson Crusoe is considered one of the earliest examples of the **realistic novel** and is often cited as the first English novel. It is an **adventure story** written by English author and pamphleteer Daniel Defoe, first published in 1719. The story is an inspiration from the real story of the Scottish castaway named Alexander Selkirk

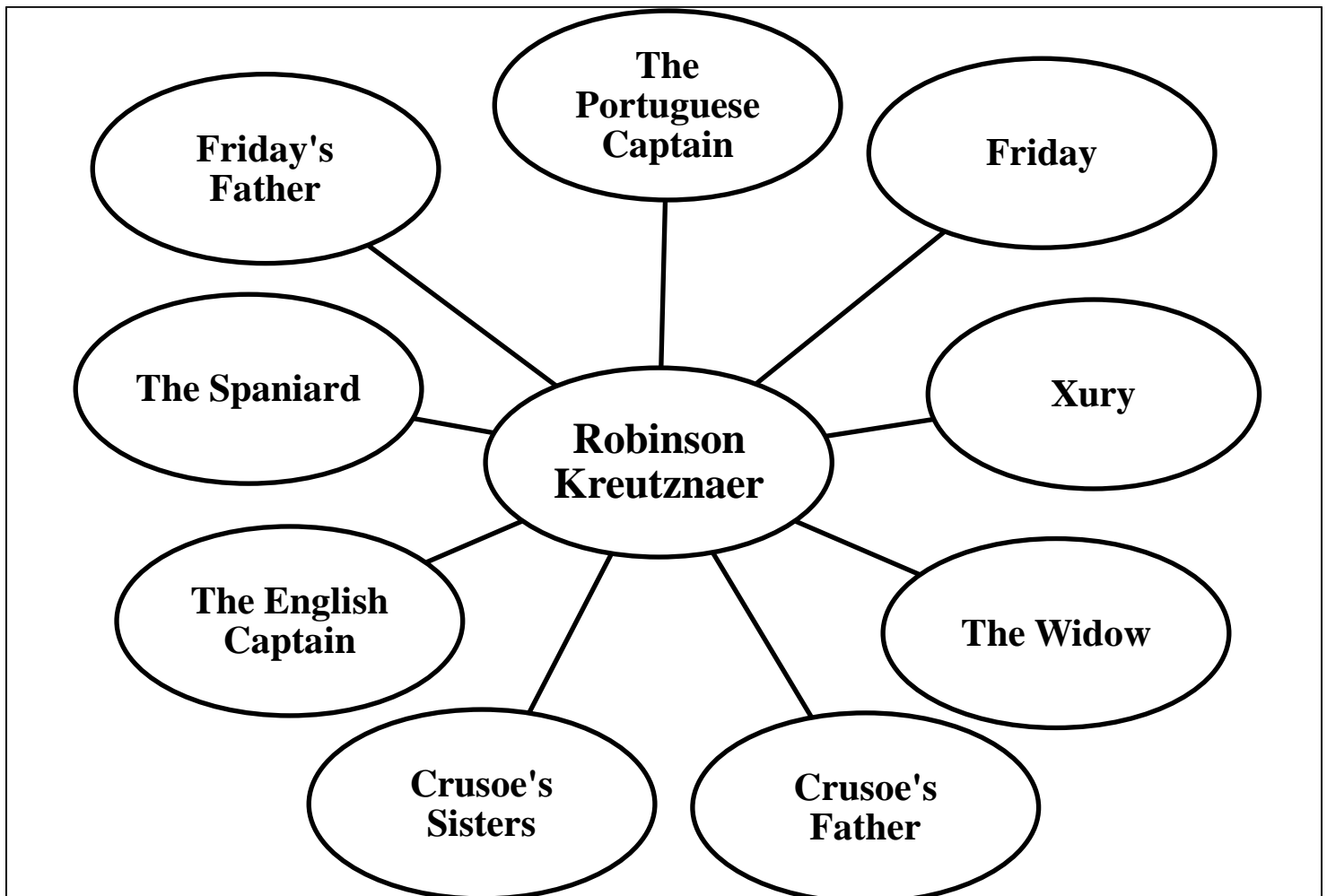
The narrative is presented as an account of Robinson Crusoe, a shipwreck survivor who spends 28 years on a deserted island. The novel chronicles Crusoe’s resourcefulness as he learns to adapt to his surroundings, cultivate crops, domesticate animals, and eventually encounter another survivor, whom he calls Friday, a native of the island. The story investigates themes of survival, isolation, and the consequences of colonialism. Set against the backdrop of the Age of Exploration and colonial expansion, Robinson Crusoe reflects the historical context of the 17th and 18th centuries.

Defoe's work captures the spirit of adventure and discovery prevalent during this era, while also addressing the challenges and ethical questions associated with European colonization. The novel's enduring popularity lies in its universal themes of resilience and self-discovery. *Robinson Crusoe* has inspired a huge number of adaptations, imitations, and reinterpretations in literature and popular culture. Its impact manifests on the adventure genre and its exploration of the human spirit's capacity for survival in the face of adversity have secured its place as a classic work of literature.

Setting of the story: The story occurs during the second half of the 17th c (1651-1694) in different areas including: England (York, London), North Africa; Brazil; then the deserted Island beneath Trinidad; Spain, ...

-Characters and Character Map

The protagonist **Robinson Crusoe**: The novel's **protagonist and narrator**. Crusoe begins the novel as a young middle-class man in York in search of a career. His father recommends the law, but Crusoe yearns for a life at sea, and his subsequent rebellion and decision to become a merchant is the starting point for the whole adventure that follows. His vague but recurring feelings of guilt over his disobedience color the first part of the first half of the story and show us how deep Crusoe's religious fear is. Crusoe is steady and plodding in everything he does, and his perseverance ensures his survival through storms, enslavement, and a twenty-eight-year isolation on a desert island. The **antagonist** in the story is the **Island** itself because it is the source of all Crusoe's problems and obstacles; he calls it **the Island of Despair**.



Short Summary of the Work

Robinson Crusoe, as a young and impulsive wanderer, defied his parents and went to sea. He was involved in a series of violent storms at sea and was warned by the captain that he should not be a seafaring man. Ashamed to go home, Crusoe boarded another ship and returned from a successful trip to Africa. Taking off again, Crusoe met with bad luck and was taken prisoner in Sallee. His captors sent Crusoe out to fish, and he used this to his advantage and escaped, along with a slave.

He was rescued by a Portuguese ship and started a new adventure. He landed in Brazil, and, after some time, he became the owner of a sugar plantation. Hoping to increase his wealth by buying slaves, he aligned himself with other planters and undertook a trip to Africa in order to bring back a shipload of slaves. After surviving a storm, Crusoe and the others were shipwrecked. He was thrown upon shore only to discover that he was the sole survivor of the wreck.

Crusoe made immediate plans for food, and then shelter, to protect himself from wild animals. He brought as many things as possible from the wrecked ship, things that would be useful later to him. In addition, he began to develop talents that he had never used in order to provide himself with necessities. Cut off from the company of men, he began to communicate with God, thus beginning the first part of his religious conversion. To keep his sanity and to entertain himself, he began a journal. In the journal, he recorded every task that he performed each day since he had been marooned.

As time passed, Crusoe became a skilled craftsman, able to construct many useful things, and thus furnished himself with diverse comforts. He also learned about farming, as a result of some seeds which he brought with him. An illness prompted some prophetic dreams, and Crusoe began to reappraise his duty to God. Crusoe explored his island and discovered another part of the island much richer and more fertile, and he built a summer home there.

One of the first tasks he undertook was to build himself a canoe in case an escape became possible, but the canoe was too heavy to get to the water. He then constructed a small boat and journeyed around the island. Crusoe reflected on his earlier, wicked life, disobeying his parents, and wondered if it might be related to his isolation on this island. After spending about fifteen years on the island, Crusoe found a man's naked footprint, and he was sorely beset by apprehensions, which kept him awake many nights. He considered many possibilities to account for the footprint and he began to take extra precautions against a possible intruder. Sometime later, Crusoe was horrified to find human bones scattered about the shore, evidently the remains of a savage feast. He was plagued again with new fears. He explored the nature of cannibalism and debated his right to interfere with the customs of another race.

Crusoe was cautious for several years, but encountered nothing more to alarm him. He found a cave, which he used as a storage room, and in December of the same year, he spied cannibals sitting around a campfire. He did not see them again for quite some time.

Later, Crusoe saw a ship in distress, but everyone was already drowned on the ship and Crusoe remained companionless. However, he was able to take many provisions from this newly wrecked ship. Sometime later, cannibals landed on the island and a victim escaped. Crusoe saved his life, named him Friday, and taught him English. Friday soon became Crusoe's humble and devoted slave.

Crusoe and Friday made plans to leave the island and, accordingly, they built another boat. Crusoe also undertook Friday's religious education, converting the savage into a Protestant. Their voyage was postponed due to the return of the savages. This time it was necessary to attack the cannibals in order to save two prisoners since one was a white man. The white man was a Spaniard and the other was Friday's father. Later the four of them planned a voyage to the mainland to rescue sixteen compatriots of the Spaniard. First, however, they built up their food supply to assure enough food for the extra people. Crusoe and Friday agreed to wait on the island while the Spaniard and Friday's father brought back the other men.

A week later, they spied a ship but they quickly learned that there had been a mutiny on board. By devious means, Crusoe and Friday rescued the captain and two other men, and after much scheming, regained control of the ship. The grateful captain gave Crusoe many gifts and took him and Friday back to England. Some of the rebel crewmen were left marooned on the island.

Crusoe returned to England and found that in his absence he had become a wealthy man. After going to Lisbon to handle some of his affairs, Crusoe began an overland journey back to England. Crusoe and his company encountered many hardships in crossing the mountains, but they finally arrived safely in England. Crusoe sold his plantation in Brazil for a good price, married, and had three children. Finally, however, he was persuaded to go on yet another voyage, and he visited his old island, where there were promises of new adventures to be found in a later account.

-Themes treated in the story, it is mainly about:

The Struggle to survive, Desire of mastery and domination, Wisdom, Necessity of repentance, Despair, Individuality, Loneliness, Spirituality, Imperialism, Greed, punishment, Self-Confidence, Hope (Various interpretations), Optimism, Isolation, Sin, Cannibalism, and many other themes

-Why is the Novel called an Allegory?

The allegory is a literary device where characters, settings, or events symbolize larger to convey deeper meanings. It is a storytelling technique that presents an abstract idea or moral principle in a concrete or physical form, often teaching a lesson through symbolic figures, actions, or symbolic representation.

It is an **Imperialist allegory**: The book shows the clear exploitation of native land by a European. Crusoe is the symbol of the colonizers who want to establish their rule, culture, and language on the remote island. Crusoe's eagerness to discover other territories represents his colonizer ideology.

It is a **religious allegory** too because Crusoe commits the sin of disobedience to his father and God. He also succumbs to the sin of pride, greediness, and of running away from the island where destiny imprisoned him. The story symbolizes the man's spiritual quest for salvation and redemption from sin.

Besides, the work is also an **economic allegory** as it manifests the exploitation of Capitalism and the power of domination and ownership (Crusoe turns Xury and Friday into his own servants; he sells the boy Xury and considers the Island his own property playing the role of its king)

-Plot of the story: The following is the diagram of the plot in most fictional narratives. After reading the novel, provide some events in each phase.

