

Robinson Crusoe



INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF DANIEL DEFOE

Daniel Foe was born into a lower-middle class Presbyterian family in London in 1660 (he later added the French-sounding "De" to his last name to sound higher-class). At this time, England was not a very tolerant place for non-Anglican Protestants—Defoe was unable to attend Cambridge or Oxford because of his religion, for example. After some time as a merchant, during which he traveled throughout Europe, he became known for writing political pamphlets in the 1680s and 1690s. In the early 1700s, he was imprisoned for some of his more controversial political writings. Defoe later turned his writing efforts toward fiction, publishing *Robinson Crusoe* in 1719, and following it with a number of other novels, including *Moll Flanders*. Defoe's realistic novels gained widespread popularity among the newly emerging middle-class readership of England and were foundational in the development of the novel as a literary form. The specific details of Defoe's death are unclear, but he passed away in London on April 24, 1731.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Robinson Crusoe's journey takes place in the context of 17th-century European imperialism and colonialism, as different countries explored the Americas, establishing colonies and exploiting natives. More specifically, Defoe was likely inspired or influenced by the real-life adventures of Alexander Selkirk. Selkirk was a Scottish man who survived for four years stranded on an island in the south Pacific. His amazing story of survival spread widely after he returned to Europe in 1711 (not long before Defoe published *Robinson Crusoe*).

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Defoe was likely influenced by a variety of travelers' accounts. His own novel was extremely popular and became one of the central examples of novelistic realism, exerting a powerful influence on the tradition of the novel. It spawned many imitators (including *The Swiss Family Robinson*) and Crusoe's journey is often alluded to in other works. The American poet Elizabeth Bishop has written a well-known poem called "Crusoe in England," in which she imagines the adventurer in old age, looking back on his life.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** *The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, of York, Mariner: Who lived Eight and Twenty Years, all alone in an un-inhabited Island on the Coast of*

America, near the Mouth of the Great River of Oroonoque; Having been cast on Shore by Shipwreck, wherein all the Men perished but himself. With An Account how he was at last as strangely deliver'd by Pyrates.

- **When Written:** Shortly before 1719
- **Where Written:** England
- **When Published:** 1719
- **Literary Period:** *Robinson Crusoe* is often regarded as one of the foundational novels of literary realism.
- **Genre:** Novel, adventure story.
- **Setting:** England, Morocco, Brazil, an uninhabited island in the Caribbean, Portugal, Spain, and France, in the mid-to-late 17th century.
- **Climax:** Robinson rescues the English captain, helps him recapture his ship, and finally leaves his island.
- **Antagonist:** Robinson mostly struggles against the forces of nature (from storms to earthquakes to wild wolves), which can themselves be regarded as instruments of fate and God's providence.

EXTRA CREDIT

The Sequel. Defoe's novel was so popular that he wrote a sequel, *The Farther Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*, living up to Robinson's promise at the end of the novel to relate his adventures after joining his nephew on a trading ship in a future account.

Art Imitates Life Imitates Art. Defoe's novel was inspired by the real-life survival of Alexander Selkirk on an abandoned island, Más a Tierra. In 1966, to honor Defoe's famous novel, the island was renamed Robinson Crusoe Island.



PLOT SUMMARY

An anonymous editor introduces the account of a man's incredible adventures, which he says is true, entertaining, and useful for the reader. The story begins with Robinson Crusoe describing his early life in York, England. Robinson eagerly wanted to venture out to **sea**, although both his parents urged him not to and tried to persuade him to stay home and lead a comfortable life. Despite his parents' warnings, Robinson left home and joined a ship to London without telling his parents.

On the way to London, the ship encountered a horrible storm and sank. Fortunately, Robinson and the other crewmembers were rescued by another boat. Once on shore, the shipmaster told Robinson to go back home, but he felt compelled to continue his journey and so went to London by land. There, he

joined a ship bound for the coast of Africa. Robinson says that this was his only successful voyage: he returned to London safely with a small fortune from trading. The captain of this vessel died, but Robinson joined the ship to go on the same voyage again with a new captain, leaving his **money** in the care of the old captain's widow.

On this trip, Robinson's ship was taken by pirates and he was taken as a slave to the Moorish port of Sallee. After two years, he finally was able to escape when he went out in a fishing boat with a Moor named Ismael and a young boy named Xury. Out at **sea**, Robinson pushed Ismael overboard and sailed away with Xury. The two of them went south along the coast of Africa, hoping to encounter a European trading vessel. Along the way, they meet some African natives on the shore, who give them food and water. At last, Robinson and Xury are found by a Portuguese ship, whose captain offers to take Robinson to Brazil for free. The generous captain bought Robinson's small boat from him and brought him safely to Brazil, where he ended up buying some land and starting a sugar plantation. Robinson sold Xury into the service of the captain. As his plantation began to do well, Robinson became overly ambitious and joined some other plantation owners on a voyage to Africa to bring back slaves. The ship encountered a hurricane and the captain wanted to turn back, but Robinson encouraged him to continue the voyage. After this, the ship encountered another strong storm and was wrecked. Robinson tried to escape on a small boat, but was thrown into the **sea** and washed up onto the shore of an unknown island, the sole survivor of the shipwreck.

The next day, Robinson saw that the wrecked ship was fortunately stranded not far from shore. He was able to swim over to it, climb aboard, and salvage food, drink, and supplies. He built a makeshift raft and brought these things back to shore. After a number of trips to the ship, a storm came and blew away the remains of the ship. Robinson set up a tent on a plateau near a rock cliff and built a fence around it. He continually expanded and improved this dwelling, and built a large wooden cross to mark days on in order to keep track of time. As he got better at making and using tools, Robinson continued to improve his dwelling, surrounding it with a huge turf wall. He began keeping a journal and listed all of the good and bad things about his life on the island. One day, Robinson dumped out some husks of grain and was surprised when, soon after, stalks of rice and barley started to grow from them. He believed this to be a miracle from God, though Robinson's cave dwelling was also severely damaged one day when an earthquake struck the island.

Soon after this, Robinson became seriously ill. He had a fever-dream in which a man came down from the sky and told him, "Seeing all these things have not brought thee to repentance, now thou shalt die." Robinson suddenly realized how unreligious he had been. He prayed to God and started to read the Bible, some copies of which he had saved from his ship.

Robinson recovered from his illness with a newfound sense of the importance of Christianity. Thinking that he was stuck on the island for good, he explored around the island more, discovering a forested area with various fruit trees, where he built a smaller dwelling in addition to his main one. On the one-year anniversary of his arrival on the island, Robinson fasted and prayed to God. He later sowed some barley and rice and gathered grapes in the forest, which he dried into raisins.

One day, Robinson walked to the opposite side of the island and could see land far off in the distance, across the **sea**. After much hard work, Robinson figured out how to harvest his grains and make bread and also taught himself to make pottery. With these improvements, Robinson's life on the island became more comfortable. He began to appreciate that his life on the island was free from the wickedness of society, as he had no cause for lust, pride, greed, or covetousness in his new life. He even thought that this new life was better than life in society, and thanked God for how his life had turned out.

Robinson built a canoe in order to sail around the perimeter of his island. However, he was almost pushed dangerously far out to **sea** by a strong current. After returning to shore, he decided not to venture out onto the water again. In order not to have to waste ammunition on hunting goats, Robinson captured some goats and tamed them, building a fenced-in pen for them.

Robinson was shocked and terrified one day when he saw a man's **footprint** in the sand on his island's shore. He immediately ran and hid in his home, which he called his castle, thinking the footprint must have been from a savage. However, Robinson didn't see anyone else on the island, so he ventured outside his home again and resumed his usual life, expanding his home's fortifications. While searching for a place to build a new goat-pen, Robinson saw piles of human remains scattered on the shore around a fire pit, the remnants of a cannibalistic gathering. Disgusted, Robinson thought he should ambush the cannibals when they came to the island next and rescue their victims. But then he questioned whether he should let them live their own lives according to their own cultural norms, concluding that he had no right to kill savages who had done nothing to him. Hoping not to run into any savages, Robinson began to lead a much more cautious, careful life around the island.

By his twenty-third year on the island, Robinson felt content to live out the rest of his life on his island. Not long after, there was a great storm and Robinson heard gunshots from a ship in distress. The next day, he saw a ship wrecked on some rocks not far offshore. He hoped one or two sailors had made it safely to his island, but none had. He took his boat out to the ship and went aboard, where he found some supplies, as well as two drowned sailors. This episode made Robinson think more and more about trying to escape from his island. One night, he dreamed that a captive of some cannibal savages escaped and took refuge with him, becoming his servant. Robinson was

excited to have someone possibly able to guide him to land, only to wake up and realize he had only been dreaming. But about a year and a half later, Robinson saw a gathering of cannibals, one of whose prisoners escaped and ran toward Robinson's home. Robinson killed the cannibals chasing after the prisoner, thus rescuing him. The prisoner was so grateful that he vowed to serve Robinson for life. Robinson named him Friday and began to teach him English and explain Christianity to him. Robinson learned from Friday that Friday's native land was reachable from the island by boat and that beyond it was a land inhabited by Spaniards. Friday informed Robinson that a boat of Europeans had arrived in his native land and some of them now dwelled among his people. Robinson guessed that these were survivors from the ship that had been wrecked near his island. Robinson suggested that he and Friday make a boat so that Friday could go back to his land, but Friday refused to go without Robinson.

Robinson at last agreed to go with Friday, but these plans were put on hold when a band of cannibals arrived on the island. Robinson saw that they had a European prisoner, and so he and Friday ambushed them, killing the savages and rescuing the prisoner. In one of the savages' boats, they discovered another prisoner, who turned out to be Friday's father. The other prisoner, who was Spanish, told Robinson about how his ship had been wrecked in a storm and he and some other sailors were stranded in Friday's native land. After some time expanding his crops, Robinson sent Friday's father and the Spanish prisoner on a boat back to get the rest of the Spanish sailors, so that they could escape with Robinson on a ship. But before they returned, an English ship came to the island, and some of its sailors came ashore with three prisoners.

Robinson rescued the prisoners, one of whom was the captain of the English ship. The captain told Robinson that he had been the victim of a mutiny and the mutineers planned to leave him on this island to die. Robinson, the captain, and the other rescued prisoners killed two of the mutineers and forced the others to pledge allegiance to the captain again. Later, more of the mutineers came ashore and Robinson and his comrades captured them and demanded their surrender. The captain and his men then went back to the ship and recaptured it on behalf of Robinson. Leaving some mutineers behind on the island, Robinson at last left his island on the English ship. After a long voyage, he finally returned to England (with Friday) after having been away for 35 years.

Robinson felt like a stranger back in society. Both his parents were deceased now and his only family members left were two sisters and two nephews. Robinson traveled to Lisbon to find news of his plantation in Brazil. In Lisbon, the old Portuguese captain who had rescued him told him that his plantation was doing well and helped him send word to Brazil to have his fortune sent back to England (although Robinson originally wanted to voyage to Brazil himself). Robinson received

shipments of money, sugar, gold, and tobacco and now found himself immensely wealthy. Robinson was happy to have this fortune, but also felt that he now had more "care upon my head" than when he was on his island. He decided to journey back to England, but didn't want to go by **sea** and so joined a group of people on a land-journey to Paris (from where he would take a short boat trip to England). Before leaving, he arranged for a large amount of his money to be given to the loyal widow of the Portuguese captain who had looked after his money in England during his absence.

Robinson's group of travelers found a guide to take them across the Pyrenees (the mountains between Spain and France), but the guide ended up taking them along a perilous route where there were many wolves. The group was surrounded by hundreds of wolves and barely escaped, fending the wild creatures off with their guns. Robinson safely got to France and had an uneventful journey from there to England. Once back in England, he settled down, taking care of his two nephews, one of who became a sailor. Robinson had a desire to go back to **sea**, but stayed in England and got married. After his wife died, though, he joined his nephew on a trading ship to the East Indies.

On this voyage, Robinson revisited his island, where the Spaniards had established a colony and fended off various attacks from Caribbean natives, and then went to Brazil. He tells the reader that he will tell all the details of these adventures more fully in a future account.



CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Robinson Crusoe – Robinson is the protagonist and the narrator of the novel. He is individualistic, self-reliant, and adventurous. He continually discounts the good advice and warnings of his parents and others, and boldly seeks to make his own life by going to **sea**. He is at times overly ambitious and is unable to remain content with a comfortable life (whether in England or Brazil). Trapped on his island, he learns to survive all alone and also ends up becoming a devout Christian, repenting for his past sins and gaining a newfound confidence in God and his divine plan of providence. Robinson's extreme individualism is at times heroic, but also leads him to disregard others. While he values the loyal friends he finds over the course of his journeys (repaying and rewarding the captain's widow and the Portuguese captain, for example), he sells Xury into a kind of slavery or indentured servitude and treats Friday as an inferior servant. His self-reliance can also shade into narcissism, reflected in his narration's focus on himself and disregard for others: most of the other characters in the novel don't even get a name. But in spite of any of these faults, Defoe presents Robinson as the novel's intrepid hero, who draws on reserves

of ingenuity and bravery to survive incredibly against the whims of nature and fate.

Xury – A young boy who is sent with Robinson and Ismael on the Turkish pirate captain's fishing boat. He swears loyalty to Robinson after Ismael is pushed overboard and accompanies him along the coast of Africa and even to Brazil. Robinson sells Xury into the service of the Portuguese captain who rescues him.

The Portuguese Captain – A kind, generous captain who rescues Robinson and Xury off the coast of Africa. He takes Robinson to Brazil for free, gives him **money** for some of his cargo, and helps bring Robinson's English **money** back to Brazil. At the end of the novel, Robinson is able to visit the old captain in Lisbon and repay his kindness.

Friday – A Caribbean native, one of the "savages" that Robinson sees on his island. Friday is taken as a prisoner by some cannibals who prepare to eat him on Robinson's island, but he manages to escape. Robinson helps rescue him and he vows obedience to Robinson. He is a loyal friend and companion to Robinson (accompanying him back to Europe), but Robinson also treats him as an inferior servant.

Friday's Father – Robinson and Friday rescue two prisoners from some cannibals on the island: the Spanish prisoner and a man bound in a canoe. Friday is ecstatic when he realizes this man is actually his father. Friday's father lives on Robinson's island for a while and then is sent with the Spanish prisoner to bring back the rest of the surviving Spaniards from the shipwreck near Robinson's island.

The Spanish Prisoner – Robinson saves this man from being eaten by some cannibals on his island. He identifies himself to Robinson as "Christianus," which could be Latin for his name (Christian, or Christiano) or could simply identify him as a Christian. The prisoner tells Robinson that he was shipwrecked near his island and that he and some of his comrades made it safely to Friday's people. Robinson sends him with Friday's father to bring the rest of the Spaniards back to his island, so that they can escape together. However, Robinson ends up leaving before they return, so the Spaniards establish a colony on the island.

The English Captain – An English captain whose crew mutinies against him and plans to abandon him, his mate, and another loyal crewmember on Robinson's island. Robinson rescues the captain, who promises to take Robinson back to England in return. Robinson and the captain defeat the mutineers and take the ship back. Robinson sees the captain's arrival as an example of divine providence, as he allows Robinson to escape from the island. Similarly, the captain sees Robinson's existence on the island as divine providence for him, as Robinson saves him on an apparently deserted island. The two characters' intertwining fates show the unpredictable, ultimately good nature of God's providence in Defoe's novel.

Will Atkins – One of the sailors who mutinies against the English captain. The captain agrees to forgive most of the mutineers, but singles out Will as deserving to be killed for being the first to turn on him. But Robinson ends up leaving Will (and some of the other less trustworthy mutineers) on the island.

Crusoe's Nephews – When Robinson returns to England, the only remaining members of his family are his two sisters and two nephews. He takes care of the nephews and raises one as a gentleman, while the other becomes a sailor. The two young nephews represent the two paths of life Robinson himself had a choice between in his youth: a comfortable gentlemanly life in England or an adventurous life at **sea**. At the end of the novel, Robinson joins his sailor nephew on a trading voyage.

Crusoe's Wife – After returning to England from Lisbon, Robinson settles down, marries, and has children. His wife is a feature of the comfortable family life he has in England after his long, troublesome travels. However, once she dies, he goes to **sea** again. The brevity with which Robinson's wife and her death are described (she is not even named!) shows how narcissistic Robinson's narration can be—he is focused only on telling the reader about his own adventures.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Editor – The anonymous character who introduces Robinson's story in the preface as if it is a true account of a real man's adventures.

Crusoe's Parents – Robinson's parents promise him a comfortable, middle-class life in England and advise him not to seek his fortunes as a sailor. Robinson disregards their advice and by the time he finally returns to England, both his parents are deceased.

Crusoe's Friend – Robinson's friend encourages him to join a London-bound boat early in the novel. He is the catalyst who spurs Robinson to finally break free from his home and parents.

The Shipmaster – The master of the first ship Robinson joins. After his ship is wrecked in a terrible storm, he advises Robinson to turn back and go home. Instead, Robinson continues to London and joins another vessel.

The Captain of the Guinea Vessel – The kind captain who leads Robinson on his one successful voyage to Africa. He dies after they return, though, leaving Robinson to join the boat again under a new captain.

The Captain's Widow – The wife of the Guinea Vessel's captain, with whom Robinson leaves some of his **money** before voyaging to Africa for a second time. At the end of the novel, Robinson sees her again and thanks her by giving her a large amount of **money**.

The Turkish Pirate Captain – The captain of the Turkish pirates who capture Robinson on his way to Africa. The captain takes

Robinson as his personal slave.

Ismael – A man who is sent with Robinson and Xury on the fishing boat from Sallee. Robinson tricks Ismael into going far out to [sea](#), where he pushes him overboard so that he can escape.

Wells – Robinson's neighbor in Brazil, and a man of English descent. Wells is one of Robinson's few friends when he feels lonely on his plantation.

The Captain's Mate – The English captain's mate, who is left on the shore with him as a prisoner. He helps the captain take his ship back and kills the mutineers' captain, getting wounded in the process.

The Guide – While journeying to England from Lisbon by land, Robinson finds a guide to help direct his group across the Pyrenees, from Spain into France. The guide takes them by a route that ends up being dangerously filled with hungry wolves—one last mistake on Robinson's journey.

Captain of the ship from Brazil – The captain of the slave-trading ship that Robinson joins in a voyage to bring slaves from Africa to Brazil. The ship sinks, leading to Robinson being shipwrecked on the island.

being saved from drowning and ending up on the island with enough provisions to survive. After repenting, Robinson sees himself as further blessed by various miracles, whether the accidental growing of his first crops or the arrival of Friday and the English captain. In addition, Robinson comes to see various unpredictable natural disasters like storms, hurricanes, and the earthquake that damages his island home as signs from God, instruments of his divine agency.

As Christianity becomes more and more central to Robinson's life (and to Defoe's novel), one of the most important aspects of it is the idea of divine providence. Closely linked to ideas of fate, this is the idea that God has foresight of our fortunes and is looking out for us. Along this understanding, events that seem like coincidences or unexplainable surprises turn out to be part of God's wise plan. This is how Robinson ends up seeing his being shipwrecked. What seemed like a disaster at first turns out to be a blessing in disguise: Robinson grows to love the island, learns much from his experience there, and comes to Christianity as a result of his life there. When the English captain arrives on the island, Robinson sees this as further proof of divine providence, as someone has come to rescue him at last, while the captain sees Robinson as an instrument of God's providence for him: the captain thinks that Robinson was saved on the island precisely to help save him. These two characters have confidence in their belief in God's providence, that there is some overarching plan behind the unpredictable whims of fortune. And Defoe seems to share this conviction, as the fictional editor who introduces the novel claims that it is an illustration of "the wisdom of Providence in all the variety of our circumstances." The novel thus urges the reader to have faith in God's divine plan. Interestingly, the reader must place a similar kind of trust in Defoe, as he or she must trust that there is some overarching plan or purpose behind the meandering, wandering plot of the novel, that Defoe will deliver his reader to some kind of satisfactory conclusion or ending.



THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.



CHRISTIANITY AND DIVINE PROVIDENCE

As much as Defoe's novel is about Robinson's literal, physical journey, it is also about his more metaphorical, spiritual journey toward Christianity. In the beginning of the novel, Robinson disregards Christianity and leads a life that he later looks back on as wicked. He discounts his father's warning that God will not bless him if he goes to sea, and does not thank God when he is rescued from the storm on the way to London, or by the Portuguese captain off the coast of Africa. However, after he dreams one night of a strange figure scolding him for not repenting, Robinson turns to Christianity on the island and eagerly studies the Bible. With his newfound Christianity, Robinson is never entirely alone on his island, because he can converse with God through prayer. Moreover, Christianity offers Robinson a way to make sense of his life and its various twists and turns. He sees his rebelling against his father as his original sin, for which he was then punished by being taken as a slave and then by being shipwrecked. However, he was blessed and saved by God by



SOCIETY, INDIVIDUALITY, AND ISOLATION

At the center of *Robinson Crusoe* is a tension between society and individuality. As the novel begins, Robinson breaks free of his family and the middle-class society in which they live in order to pursue his own life. If he were to stay at home, he would live a life already arranged for him by his father and by the constraints of English society. By setting out to sea, Robinson prioritizes his sense of individuality over his family and society at large. Robinson gets exactly what he asks for (and more than he bargained for) when he finds himself stranded alone on his island. There, he lives entirely as an individual apart from society and is forced to struggle against nature to survive. He becomes self-sufficient and learns how to make and do things himself, discovering ingenuity he didn't know he had. Thus, one could say that being separated

from society leads to Robinson becoming a better person. Robinson himself seems to come to this conclusion, as he realizes that his experience brings him closer to God and that living alone on the island allows for a life largely without sin: he makes, harvests, and hunts only what he needs, so there is nothing for him to be covetous of or greedy for. And while he is alone, he does not suffer from lust or pride.

Robinson comes around to liking his individual existence on the island so much that, at times in the novel, it is unclear whether he even wants to be rescued and returned to society. And when he finally does return to England, he notes how much worry and stress issues of money and property caused him. Nonetheless, there are some problems with Robinson's valuing of individuality over society. For one, while Robinson values his own personal liberty, he doesn't respect that of others. He hates being a slave, but is quick to sell Xury into the service of the Portuguese captain. Similarly, he treats Friday as his inferior servant. This maltreatment of others can be related as well to Robinson's narcissistic style of narration. His narrative is always about himself, to the degree that he hardly even gives the names of other characters. We never learn the name of his wife, for example, whose death Robinson describes quickly and unemotionally at the end of the novel before hastening to tell us more of his own adventures. And finally, Robinson's intense individualism is inseparable from his painful isolation. He feels lonely in Brazil, and then is literally isolated (the word comes from the Latin word for island, *insula*), when he is stranded on his island all alone. His only companions are his animals and, while he learns to enjoy life on the island, he still feels a deep desire for the human companionship that he lacks. Thus, the novel values individuality, but also shows the dangers of narcissism and isolation that may come with it.

While Defoe presents individuality as important, Robinson does decide to leave his island in the end. And, as we learn when he returns, he turns his haven of individualism into a society—a thriving colony with a substantial population. Society may curb an individual's independence, but it also provides valuable companionship. While Robinson rejects the claims of society in favor of individuality in the beginning of the novel, he ultimately comes around to trying to balance the two.



ADVICE, MISTAKES, AND HINDSIGHT

Robinson Crusoe is constantly disregarding prudent advice. He begins the novel by discounting his parents' advice not to go to sea, disregards the shipmaster's advice to go home after the storm on the way to London, and goes against his own better judgment in trying to voyage from Brazil to Africa. Even at the end of the novel, he disregards the widow's advice in setting out on yet another sea voyage. Each time, Robinson later realizes that he should have listened to the advice he ignored—most especially that of his parents, who were right about the dangers of a seafaring life.

Robinson's double-position as both protagonist and narrator of his story means that he is often in this position of looking back on his life. With this hindsight, Robinson's retrospective narration often foreshadows the misfortunes that will befall him. However, this hindsight is only gained by making mistakes and learning from them. As Robinson's experiences on his island exemplify, knowledge in the novel is gained through experience: Robinson learns how to tame goats, cure grapes, build walls, and do all sorts of other things by trying to do these things and learning along the way (rather than following someone else's instructions). Similarly, throughout the entire novel Robinson must learn from his own experiences rather than relying on other characters' warnings. Somewhat paradoxically, Robinson must discount good advice in order to learn from his experiences and realize his mistakes; only then is he in a position to see how good such advice was. With the benefit of hindsight, Robinson often draws lessons from his own experiences for the reader and gives the reader advice—about obeying God or trusting in providence, for example. This may be precisely what the anonymous editor who introduces the novel in the preface has in mind, when he says that Robinson's story is more than just entertaining; it's educational. But, it is unclear whether we readers should really follow Robinson's advice to the letter or whether, much like Robinson himself might do, we must make our own mistakes.



CONTENTMENT VS. DESIRE AND AMBITION

Robinson leaves home at the beginning of the novel because he is not content with a comfortable, middle-class existence. In England, his father can provide for him and help him establish a life. He tells Robinson that their middle station in life is the most comfortable: it is free from the anxieties of power or privilege and from the suffering of poverty. But Robinson cannot stay content with mere comfort. He has ambition and desire for a greater, more interesting life, which leads him to the sea. In fact, this rejection of comfort is a repeated pattern. The entire plot of the novel can be seen as an alternation between Robinson's contentment with what he has and his desire for something more. Not content at home, he goes to sea. Then, while happy in Brazil, he becomes overly ambitious and voyages to get slaves from Africa. Just when he is finally learning to enjoy life on his island by himself, he rescues Friday. He leads a rather comfortable life with Friday on the island, but then desires to escape. And, finally, when Robinson is at last re-established in England, he is once more not content to stay still, and joins another voyage.

While on the island, Robinson himself recognizes his inability to remain content with what he has and calls the inability to be pleased with one's station in life "the general plague of mankind." Looking past on his story as he tells it as narrator, Robinson often laments his overly ambitious desires and

wishes that he would have simply stayed content and comfortable either at home in England or on his wealthy Brazil plantation. One can thus read *Robinson Crusoe* as showing the consequences of unrestrained ambition or desire. But, at the same time, Robinson's ambitions caused him to have a marvelous, adventure-filled life—one worth writing a novel about. Contentment might have led to a safer, quieter life in England, but would it have led to a better one?



STRANGERS, SAVAGES, AND THE UNKNOWN

Throughout his wandering journeys, Robinson continually encounters the unknown in a variety of forms. He visits unknown lands, sees strange plants and animals, and encounters foreign peoples. His first response to such experiences with various "others" is usually fear. He is especially frightened by the strange beasts he sees in Africa and on his island, as well as by the African natives he sees and the Caribbean "savages," who come to his island. Stemming in part from this fear, Robinson continually shows a prejudice against non-European peoples, whom he automatically refers to as "savages." Over time, Robinson at least becomes fond of Friday, but his relationship with Friday is still unequal. Friday acts as his servant, and Robinson is constantly condescending toward him. Although at times Robinson respects the cultural difference between him and the Caribbean people he sees (as when he decides not to involve himself in their cannibal rituals), he does not hesitate to teach Friday Christianity, not considering what beliefs of his own Friday might have. Moreover, Robinson does not allow Friday to try to translate or share his own name but instead decides on his name. It is telling that one of the first words Robinson teaches Friday is "master": despite any friendship between Friday and Robinson, their relationship is, at its core, one between a master and his servant. Beyond Friday, Robinson also has no qualms participating in the trans-Atlantic slave trade, as he leaves Brazil to gather slaves from Africa. While he is not as cruel as the Spanish colonists whom he criticizes for murdering natives, Robinson repeatedly establishes an unequal hierarchy between Europeans and natives of other lands. Such an attitude can even be seen in how Robinson approaches foreign lands: he buys land for a plantation in Brazil, regardless of any indigenous peoples, and claims ownership over "his" island. Robinson sees wild nature as something to be owned or tamed, much as he sees indigenous or foreign people as inferiors to be used or employed.

Nonetheless, while *Robinson Crusoe* cannot be taken out of its colonialist context (it is, after all, set in the 17th century), it is possible to find a reading of Defoe's text more amenable to the colonized, enslaved, and oppressed people it depicts. Most of the time, Robinson's fears about the unknown are later revealed to be unfounded. The natives he sees while sailing

along the coast of Africa and fears turn out to be generous, kind, and helpful. The island whose wilderness he fears supplies him with goats, grapes, turtles, and other things he needs to survive. And Friday, supposedly a "savage," is a loyal friend and companion. Indeed, the English mutineers who land on Robinson's island are just as dangerous to him as any cannibal (if not more dangerous). Thus, while there are real differences between Robinson and those he encounters during his journeys, one can read the novel as showing that prejudices against an "other" are often the result of irrational, false fears.



SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.



MONEY

Money in *Robinson Crusoe* is something highly valued (and valuable) in society, but utterly useless in nature. Robinson is enticed to go back to **sea** after making some money on his first voyage to Africa, and the possibility of profit is what drives him to establish a plantation in Brazil. However, once he is stranded on his island, money is completely useless to him. He finds money on his old ship and in the wrecked Spanish vessel, both times remarking that it was of no use to him on the island. In nature, Robinson discovers that things are only worth what they can be used for—he finds food, tools, and water much more valuable than coins. Moreover, money causes greed, from which he is free during his solitary life on the island. Money thus symbolizes the faulty value systems of society, in contrast to the authentic life Robinson discovers on his island. However, Robinson keeps his money on the island and takes it with him when he leaves. Moreover, once he returns to society he needs his fortune in order to establish a life (and repay the loyal widow and the Portuguese captain). While Defoe's novel explores the artificiality or falseness of money's value, it presents it as still necessary for life among society.



THE SEA

From the beginning of the novel, Robinson has an intense desire to go to sea, an urge that stays with him even at the novel's end. Going to sea symbolizes abandoning a life of comfort and ease in search of some greater ambition, whether profit or adventure: the ocean is dangerous, but also holds the promise of immense profit. The sea is also unpredictable and unknowable. As such, it can symbolize the divine forces of providence, to which Robinson surrenders himself. In his various vessels, Robinson's trips are somewhat determined by the capricious waves, currents, and conditions

of the sea. And when he is literally thrown into the sea during his shipwreck, his life is completely up to the unpredictable waves that are equally capable of dashing him against the rocks or carrying him safely to shore. Similarly, Robinson's entire fate is up to the capricious "waves" of fortune or providence. Robinson's going to sea is thus representative both of his desire to seek greatness in spite of danger and of his willingness to submit himself to the larger forces of fate and divine providence that determine the course of his life.



THE FOOTPRINT

The first sign Robinson sees of anyone else on his island is a footprint in the sand, which sends him running terrified to his dwelling. Through Robinson's reaction to the footprint, we see his ambivalence toward society. Instead of rejoicing at the possibility of rescue or of a companion, Robinson has grown to like his individual, solitary life so much that he reacts only with fear. Moreover, it is significant that the potential presence of other humans is symbolized by a footprint, a human's literal impression on the landscape. Over the course of the novel, Robinson and the Spaniards he leaves behind on the island leave a very different kind of "footprint" on the wild natural environment by cutting down trees, building dwellings, taming animals, and growing crops. The footprint can also be seen as a symbol of the human "footprint" that society and colonization leave on the untouched nature of the island—and the "New World" generally.

with a preface claiming that they were entirely true stories - often a manuscript abandoned and then found, or else a story written by or told to an editor who then presents it to the reader. Here, the anonymous editor seems to insist on the story's veracity (its claim to being true) in the interest of making the various morals more likely to be understood and followed by the book's readers.

In particular, the editor draws out one major lesson from the book that follows: the workings of divine Providence. We will see the main character of the book struggle himself with such questions of fate, coincidence, and divine will, and as readers we are meant to plunge into the book already thinking about what we might *learn* from Robinson Crusoe. This is, obviously, an idea of what literature can do that has little to do with entertainment or even worldly knowledge: instead, the notion is that novels should provide a moral grounding.

Chapter 1 Quotes

☞ My father, who was very ancient, had given me a competent share of learning, as far as house-education and a country free school generally go, and designed me for the law; but I would be satisfied with nothing but going to sea; and my inclination to this led me so strongly against the will, nay, the commands of my father, and against all the entreaties and persuasions of my mother and other friends, that there seemed to be something fatal in that propensity of nature, tending directly to the life of misery which was to befall me.

Related Characters: Robinson Crusoe (speaker), Crusoe's Parents

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 5

Explanation and Analysis

Robinson Crusoe is narrating the story of his own life with the privileged view of hindsight. In this passage, as throughout the book, he compares his past self to what he knows now, and laments how ignorant and naïve he once was. With the benefit of having lived long enough, he only now recognizes that his great hunger for life on the sea, for experiences more exciting and stimulating than those involved in the law, was almost certain to lead to his "misery."





QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Penguin Classics edition of *Robinson Crusoe* published in 2003.

Preface Quotes

☞ The story is told with modesty, with seriousness, and with a religious application of events to the uses to which wise men always apply them (viz.) to the instruction of others by this example, and to justify and honor the wisdom of Providence in all the variety of our circumstances, let them happen how they will.

Related Characters: Editor (speaker)

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 3



Explanation and Analysis

It was common for 18th-century novels in Britain to begin

However, at the same time, Robinson seems to acknowledge that there was little he could have done about this fatal flaw. His desire to go to sea, like his refusal to content himself with what he already saw and had, is in his very nature. Even his father's commands, of course, could do nothing to prevent him, and so even as he expresses regret for the decisions of his stubborn younger self, he accepts that he probably couldn't have done anything differently. Later in the book, this sense of inevitability will come to make sense to Robinson through the frame of divine Providence. Here, however, he still seems to be puzzling out what it means for his life to have seemed so inevitable.

●● He asked me what reasons, more than a mere wandering inclination, I had for leaving father's house and my native country, where I might be well introduced, and had a prospect of raising my fortune by application and industry, with a life of ease and pleasure. He told me... that mine was the middle state, or what might be called the upper station of low life, which he had found, by long experience, was the best state in the world, the most suited to human happiness, not exposed to the miseries and hardships, the labour and sufferings of the mechanic part of mankind, and not embarrassed with the pride, luxury, ambition, and envy of the upper part of mankind.

Related Characters: Robinson Crusoe (speaker), Crusoe's Parents

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 6

Explanation and Analysis

Robinson's father finds it difficult to understand why Robinson should want to leave everything he has - everything his father has worked so hard to achieve for his family - and seek a life of uncertain adventure on the sea. This novel was published around the time of the expansion of capitalism, when what we now call the "middle class" was exploding in England: a group of people lacking the luxuries of the royal family or of nobles but also living much more comfortable lives than the peasants of centuries past. The uncertain definition of this group is evident in the way Robinson's father talks about his station, using various terms like the "middle state" or "upper station of low life."



Middle-class stability is a relatively new good at this moment, and to Robinson's father it is something to be content with, something to embrace, rather than something to run away from. Robinson pays little heed to his father's


house. Only with the passage of time will the advantages of his father's position grow clear to him; nonetheless, even at this point in the book, Robinson's desire to run away to gain his own fortune does have some things in common with his father's emphasis on the importance of attaining financial stability.

Chapter 2 Quotes

●● The ship was no sooner out of the Humber than the wind began to blow and the sea to rise in a most frightful manner; and, as I had never been at sea before, I was most inexpressibly sick in body and terrified in mind. I began now seriously to reflect upon what I had done, and how justly I was overtaken by the judgment of Heaven for my wicked leaving my father's house, and abandoning my duty. All the good counsels of my parents, my father's tears and my mother's entreaties, came now fresh into my mind; and my conscience, which was not yet come to the pitch of hardness to which it has since, reproached me with the contempt of advice, and the breach of my duty to God and my father.

Related Characters: Robinson Crusoe (speaker), Crusoe's Parents

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 



Page Number: 9

Explanation and Analysis

This is the first ordeal that Robinson has to face after leaving his home and family, and he doesn't exactly react well to it. It suddenly becomes clear to him just how young and inexperienced he is, having never spent time on the sea. Even the fact that Robinson is terrified of the storm, while his shipmates around him pay him little heed, underlines how little he knows about what is normal and not on a ship. Still, this frightening period gives Robinson his first reminder that he was overly stubborn in refusing his father's advice. He also recognizes that the storm may well be a sign from God that he is on the wrong path. As we will see, however, it will take more than a storm for these thoughts, racing through Robinson's head in a panic, to truly sink in.

☛ That evil influence which carried me first away from my father's house—which hurried me into the wild and indigested notion of raising my fortune, and that impressed those conceits so forcibly upon me as to make me deaf to all good advice, and to the entreaties and even the commands of my father—I say, the same influence, whatever it was, presented the most unfortunate of all enterprises to my view; and I went on board a vessel bound to the coast of Africa; or, as our sailors vulgarly called it, a voyage to Guinea.

Related Characters: Robinson Crusoe (speaker), Crusoe's Parents

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 15

Explanation and Analysis

Robinson has finally made it back to England, and yet scarcely is he back on his home soil than he boards yet another ship, this time to the coast of Africa. The way Robinson describes his actions seems to take away any sense of agency, of responsibility for his actions. It is as if Robinson was picked up and thrown onto the ship against his will rather than walking onto it of his own accord. Nonetheless, this is really the way that Robinson finds he can best describe his state of mind. He believes that his father and even God would prefer he stay at home and accept his duty, but he is somehow unable to heed those desires.

Of course, one of the book's main paradoxes is that its very existence is only made possible by the fact that Robinson *did* flout his father's wishes, that he *did* act sinfully and against divine will. His mistakes, then - his burning desire to see and experience more - are to be judged by readers even as we accept that we are now enjoying the fruit of these very mistakes.

Chapter 3 Quotes

☛ At this surprising change of my circumstances, from a merchant to a miserable slave, I was perfectly overwhelmed; and now I looked back upon my father's prophetic discourse to me, that I should be miserable and have none to relieve me, which I thought was now so effectually brought to pass that I could not be worse; for now the hand of Heaven had overtaken me, and I was undone without redemption; but, alas! this was but a taste of the misery I was to go through, as will appear in the sequel of this story.

Related Characters: Robinson Crusoe (speaker), Crusoe's Parents

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 17

Explanation and Analysis

Robinson's ship is captured by pirates and he becomes the slave of the ship's captain at the port of Saltee. Looking back on these events now, Robinson notes that he thought things could really get no worse from here. He had been enthralled by the thought of gaining his riches after having so easily made money on the trip to Africa, and had once again brushed away his father's concerns. Now, though, Robinson reminds us that his father's worries were "prophetic," and he should have known that something would go awry. Robinson alternately locates the source of his woes in God's judgment and in his own mistakes: he doesn't exactly have a well-thought-out understanding of the relationship between his choices and the consequences, except to stress that he was mistaken about his ability to embrace danger without falling into trouble.

☛ For who would have supposed we were sailed on to the southward, to the truly Barbarian coast, where whole nations of negroes were sure to surround us with their canoes and destroy us; where we could not go on shore but we should be devoured by savage beasts, or more merciless savages of human kind?

Related Characters: Robinson Crusoe (speaker), Xury

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 21

Explanation and Analysis

After managing to swim away with Xury and escape the pirate ship, Robinson knows that his struggles are not yet over. He remains on edge as, even more than before, he realizes that he is in an unknown place with no one to protect him, and must remain on alert for any other sources of danger. Still, Robinson shows himself to be naturally suspicious of certain kinds of danger in particular.

Robinson had known theoretically that joining a merchant ship could be dangerous, but that was the kind of danger that didn't bother him. What does fill him with fright are the thoughts of strange, different peoples - in particular Africans. Robinson equates "savage beasts" with "savage"

men, espousing a crude, colonialist-inflected understanding of other peoples, especially dark-skinned peoples, as less than human. At the same time, the history of colonialism in Africa is such that it probably is probable, at this historical moment, that a white man would be (justifiably) looked upon with equal suspicion and fear by those peoples themselves.

Chapter 4 Quotes

☞ He offered me also sixty pieces of eight more for my boy Xury, which I was loth to take; not that I was unwilling to let the captain have him, but I was very loth to sell the poor boy's liberty, who had assisted me so faithfully in procuring my own. However, when I let him know my reason, he owned it to be just, and offered me this medium, that he would give the boy an obligation to set him free in ten years, if he turned Christian; upon this, and Xury saying he was willing to go to him, I let the captain have him.

Related Characters: Robinson Crusoe (speaker), Xury, The Portuguese Captain

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 29

Explanation and Analysis

If there's anything we've learned about Robinson through the first few chapters of the book, it's that he prizes his freedom and individuality above nearly all else. This is what has motivated him to go to sea and what has propelled him to escape - of course, with the help of Xury. Robinson seems to grant, at least implicitly, that there is a massive contradiction between wanting freedom for himself and agreeing to sell off someone else into slavery: this is why he makes clear that he was so reluctant to take away the boy's "liberty."

Still, Robinson cannot be that reluctant, since he soon agrees to the captain's terms. He seems to justify these terms to himself based on the captain's agreement to set Xury free if he converts to Christianity (though only in ten years) - which for him is significant enough to counteract any other questions. Although Robinson has spent a great deal of time with Xury, and though he seems to really enjoy his company, he fails to consider the boy, who is not from England, as a person with the same hopes, fears, and human dignity as himself.

☞ In this manner I used to look upon my condition with the utmost regret. I had nobody to converse with, but now and then this neighbour; no work to be done, but by the labour of my hands; and I used to say, I lived just like a man cast away upon some desolate island, that had nobody there but himself. But how just has it been—and how should all men reflect, that when they compare their present conditions with others that are worse, Heaven may oblige them to make the exchange, and be convinced of their former felicity by their experience—I say, how just has it been, that the truly solitary life I reflected on, in an island of mere desolation, should be my lot, who had so often unjustly compared it with the life which I then led, in which, had I continued, I had in all probability been exceeding prosperous and rich.

Related Characters: Robinson Crusoe (speaker)

Related Themes:    

Page Number: 30

Explanation and Analysis


Robinson has settled into the life of a middle-class sugar farmer in Brazil, and while he is relatively successful, he begins to become lonely. Robinson had never feared being alone before - indeed, he had left England largely with the express desire of being alone in the world. However, now that he is no longer on the sea, he finds himself in a place where society exists around him - but it is a society that is foreign to him, in which he doesn't truly belong.

At the time, Robinson compares his life to that on a "desolate island." Robinson the narrator, looking back on this moment, takes the opportunity - with the wisdom gained from the passage of time - to emphasize to the reader how dangerous it is to constantly be comparing one's experience to other, worse conditions. Looking back on his time in Brazil, Robinson recognizes that it was a good life, and could easily have made him rich: he should have been content with his time rather than constantly remaining unsatisfied with what he had. This dissatisfaction, indeed, would almost ensure that his feelings would be equated by reality later on.

☞ I smiled to myself at the sight of this money: "O drug!" said I, aloud, "what art thou good for? Thou art not worth to me—no, not the taking off the ground; one of those knives is worth all this heap; I have no manner of use for thee—e'en remain where thou art, and go to the bottom as a creature whose life is not worth saving." However, upon second thoughts I took it away.

Related Characters: Robinson Crusoe (speaker)

Related Themes: 

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 47

Explanation and Analysis



Robinson has landed on the island as the sole survivor, although he does manage to return to the ship several times in order to obtain any useful provisions. As he rummages through the ship, he prizes anything he can find that would be valuable to him. In another place, at another time, a pile of money would have certainly been one of these valuable possessions. However, now Robinson fully recognizes that money is only valuable in society: when all one needs is to survive, nothing could be more useless.

Thus far in the book, Robinson has shown himself to pay very close attention to details of money and economic transactions, always mentioning how much he made at a certain job, and often recounting the exact logs of spending for the reader. It is ironic, then, that he must now come to terms with exactly how useless money is. Nonetheless, the fact that he does take the money away reminds us that Robinson is at heart a man of society: even if he now must play by different rules, the rules of an isolated man, he keeps the currency of society aside just in case it might serve him well.

Chapter 6 Quotes

☹☹ I had great reason to consider it as a determination of Heaven, that in this desolate place, and in this desolate manner, I should end my life. The tears would run plentifully down my face when I made these reflections; and sometimes I would expostulate with myself why Providence should thus completely ruin His creatures, and render them so absolutely miserable; so without help, abandoned, so entirely depressed, that it could hardly be rational to be thankful for such a life.

Related Characters: Robinson Crusoe (speaker)

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 51

Explanation and Analysis

Robinson has managed to create a somewhat stable existence for himself on the island. Although he is proud of his ability to live by himself, as he thinks about the future he

realizes that he may well be here forever, with no hope of ever seeing other humans again. He believes that God has intervened because of how foolhardy and thoughtless he has been, in refusing to follow his duty and listen to his father.

Although Robinson has a great deal of respect for Providence, he isn't exactly happy about the lesson that God seems to be teaching him. Providence in his view is a means of punishment, but even so he wonders why it is necessary for him to be taught a lesson so harshly. In attempting to develop a cause or greater plan for why he finds himself in such straits, Robinson at least in this moment fails to do so.

☹☹ Evil: I am singled out and separated, as it were, from all the world, to be miserable.

Good: But I am singled out, too, from all the ship's crew, to be spared from death; and He that miraculously saved me from death can deliver me from this condition.

Evil: I am divided from mankind—a solitaire; one banished from human society.

Related Characters: Robinson Crusoe (speaker)

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 54


Explanation and Analysis

In order to make himself feel better, Robinson begins to draw up a list of everything that has happened to him on the island, dividing it into two categories: the good and the evil. Although Robinson had sought great independence, had sought to assert his own individual will, in going to sea, now he fully recognizes the other side of that value: deep suffering that comes from being fully isolated from society. Robinson recognizes that a great deal of human meaning comes from being around others, and asserting one's individuality only really makes sense in the context of a social world. At the same time, Robinson recognizes that his isolation is at least in part due to the fact that he, among all members of his crew, was saved from death.

Robinson continues to have a businessman's mentality even as he makes a life for himself in a place where the pursuit of profit is no longer relevant. His pro and con list is another kind of income/expenses ledger. Robinson believes that by setting up his situation in such a way, the good will balance out the evil, even if his own personal experience ends up being less rational than a balance ledger would make it seem.

“ I had hitherto acted upon no religious foundation at all; indeed, I had very few notions of religion in my head, nor had entertained any sense of anything that had befallen me otherwise than as chance, or, as we lightly say, what pleases God, without so much as inquiring into the end of Providence in these things, or His order in governing events for the world. But after I saw barley grow there, in a climate which I knew was not proper for corn, and especially that I knew not how it came there, it startled me strangely, and I began to suggest that God had miraculously caused His grain to grow without help of seed sown, and that it was so directed purely for my sustenance on that wild, miserable place.

Related Characters: Robinson Crusoe (speaker)

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 63

Explanation and Analysis

Robinson had dumped a bag of rice and barley out onto the ground, discouraged since he saw that it had been almost entirely eaten by rats. However, soon enough he sees that stalks of rice and barley are growing out of the ground, even though he did nothing to sow their seeds or to ensure that they would grow well. It is interesting that Robinson's gradual embrace of Providence as a divine force - at least, as a divine force for good - takes place as a result of something that many readers would be tempted to simply call chance. But while Robinson has, earlier, tended to view what happens around him as a result of chance, now he is suddenly certain that God played a part in these happenings.

In fact, it seems that Robinson is growing more open to the workings of Providence in human affairs. Earlier, he had considered anything bad that happened to him a sign from God as well - a sign that God was judging or punishing him. Now, not only is he willing to see God's hand in something positive, but he also begins to believe that there is some redemption possible for him on the island.

“Now,” said I, aloud, “my dear father's words are come to pass; God's justice has overtaken me, and I have none to help or hear me. I rejected the voice of Providence, which had mercifully put me in a posture or station of life wherein I might have been happy and easy; but I would neither see it myself nor learn to know the blessing of it from my parents. ...Lord, be my help, for I am in great distress.” This was the first prayer, if I may call it so, that I had made for many years.

Related Characters: Robinson Crusoe (speaker), Crusoe's Parents

Related Themes:    

Page Number: 73

Explanation and Analysis

Robinson has grown seriously ill as a result of eating turtle meat, and he finds himself in both physical and spiritual torment. He begins to think about the fact that it has been many years since he's prayed - a lapse of time that, for him, signifies just how much he has discounted the will of God in favor of his own individual desires and ambitions. Our narrator - Robinson at a later stage in his life - has been reminding us all along the story how Providence has played a role in his life, but the Robinson of the past was still largely unconscious of this role.

This passage is this first moment in the book where Robinson finds himself not only in danger but truly at a crossroads between life and death. It is this acute peril that gives him the opportunity for an epiphany about the way he should live his life. Asking God for help requires the humility of knowing that one is not entirely isolated and self-sufficient, and may not be able to overcome struggles alone.

“Now I looked back upon my past life with such horror, and my sins appeared so dreadful, that my soul sought nothing of God but deliverance from the load of guilt that bore down all my comfort. As for my solitary life, it was nothing. I did not so much as pray to be delivered from it or think of it; it was all of no consideration in comparison to this. And I add this part here, to hint to whoever shall read it, that whenever they come to a true sense of things, they will find deliverance from sin a much greater blessing than deliverance from affliction.

Related Characters: Robinson Crusoe (speaker)

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 78

Explanation and Analysis

Robinson has begun to reflect seriously on his life up until now, and has begun to recognize just how wrong he has been and how many mistakes he has made in pursuing his own desires and ambitions above all else. Even in the past, when he has acknowledged the power of God in his affairs, it has been mainly as a source of fear - or even as power that could potentially influence his life for the better. Now

Robinson recognizes that even to pray for his own safety is selfish, and what he should be doing is praying for God to help him come to terms with the reality he is living. This is what Robinson means by "deliverance from sin" rather than from "affliction," and here he tries to share with his reader the lesson that it took so long for him to learn.

●● I could not tell what part of the world this might be, otherwise than that I knew it must be part of America, and, as I concluded by all my observations, must be near the Spanish dominions, and perhaps was all inhabited by savages, where, if I had landed, I had been in a worse condition than I was now; and therefore I acquiesced in the dispositions of Providence, which I began now to own and to believe ordered everything for the best; I say I quieted my mind with this, and left off afflicting myself with fruitless wishes of being there.

Related Characters: Robinson Crusoe (speaker)

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 87

Explanation and Analysis

Robinson actually does manage to spot some land from the hilltop of the island, so he realizes that he is not in complete isolation. However, now he has the humility to recognize that there is much that he does not know about the place he is inhabiting. Earlier, Robinson might have fought against fate and sought to change his situation based on his own merits. Now, though, he shows himself to be much more willing to accept the "dispositions of Providence" and recognize that his desires to be elsewhere or to find his way out of his situation will not help him accept the reality of his isolation on the island.

At the same time, Robinson also has a more practical reason for deciding not to venture out to the other lands.

Throughout the novel, Robinson is deeply suspicious of what he calls "savages." Here he uses the word to mean any native peoples of the Americas (as he used it before to refer to Africans), but, of course, the term also implies that these groups are barbaric, uncivilized, and frighteningly different than Europeans. At least for now, this assumption - unlike many others in Robinson's life - remains unchallenged.

●● I gave humble and hearty thanks that God had been pleased to discover to me that it was possible I might be more happy in this solitary condition than I should have been in the liberty of society, and in all the pleasures of the world; that He could fully make up to me the deficiencies of my solitary state, and the want of human society, by His presence and the communications of His grace to my soul; supporting, comforting, and encouraging me to depend upon His providence here, and hope for His eternal presence hereafter.

Related Characters: Robinson Crusoe (speaker)

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 90

Explanation and Analysis

Robinson is reading the Bible and comes across a passage that speaks of God's promise not to forsake his people. He is greatly cheered by this passage, as he has come to accept that he will have to live in total isolation from society on the island. Robinson has continued to hold an ambivalent attitude towards this fact. On the one hand, he misses the excitement of society and recognizes that his notions of individuality make sense largely within the context of other people around him. At the same time, his streak of independence makes him more open to the idea that isolation can be positive rather than negative.

Now, Robinson finds what he believes to be divine justification for the more positive elements of isolation from society. Other people may not be around Robinson, he argues, but he is in the presence of God, and this presence can be even better felt when no one else is around to distract him. Robinson takes comfort in the fact that he has come to believe in God's plan for mankind, so that he no longer needs to worry about his own plan for his survival-- or about ever being totally alone.

●● I believe few people have thought much upon the strange multitude of little things necessary in the providing, producing, curing, dressing, making, and finishing this one article of bread. I, that was reduced to a mere state of nature, found this to my daily discouragement. ...I had the next six months to apply myself wholly, by labour and invention, to furnish myself with utensils proper for the performing all the operations necessary for making the corn, when I had it, fit for my use.

Related Characters: Robinson Crusoe (speaker)

Related Themes: **Page Number:** 94**Explanation and Analysis**

As a member of society - and even as a farmer himself - Robinson has never had to really contemplate what it would be like to begin again from scratch, with none of the comforts of social life ready-made. Here he zooms in on one example of the difficulties that he has to surmount for something as simple as grinding corn and making it into bread. In his "state of nature," the simplest tasks become incredibly complicated and time-consuming, as Robinson must recreate the environment that he's grown used to.

The book is interested in chronicling just how excruciating this process is mainly in order to show how powerful it can be to be thrust away from society and be forced to figure things out on one's own. Here, the tools and processes that have been developed throughout history in order to make things easier for people are portrayed as signs of weakness, which a true individualist must learn either to do without or to recreate.

☝ In the first place, I was removed from all the wickedness of the world here; I had neither the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, nor the pride of life. I had nothing to covet, for I had all that I was now capable of enjoying; I was lord of the whole manor; or, if I pleased, I might call myself king or emperor over the whole country which I had possession of.

Related Characters: Robinson Crusoe (speaker)**Related Themes:**   **Page Number:** 102**Explanation and Analysis**

As the fourth anniversary of Robinson's stay on the island arrives, he takes the time to reflect on what he has learned and how he has changed since the shipwreck. He realizes that he has ceased to feel the driving desire and ambition that had been behind his motivations in England and eventually in Brazil. Indeed, Robinson recognizes that a large part of those desires came from the existence of a powerful social hierarchy that made it easy for one to constantly wish to climb up onto the next rung. Now, without anyone else to compete against, he can finally learn to be content with what he has.

Of course, part of that contentment stems from the fact that in terms of possession or use, Robinson *is* much

wealthier than he's ever been - he has the entire island at his disposal. Still, he makes the broader point that being surrounded by other people makes it easy to be jealous and over-ambitious, in the sphere of love and material possessions as well as life and social rank. It is easier for him to attempt to be a good, fully Christian person on the island than it was in society.

Chapter 14 Quotes

☝ It happened one day, about noon, going towards my boat, I was exceedingly surprised with the print of a man's naked foot on the shore, which was very plain to be seen on the sand. I stood like one thunderstruck, or as if I had seen an apparition. ...I went to it again to see if there were any more, and to observe if it might not be my fancy; but there was no room for that, for there was exactly the print of a foot - toes, heel, and every part of a foot. How it came thither I knew not, nor could I in the least imagine; but after innumerable fluttering thoughts, like a man perfectly confused and out of myself, I came home to my fortification, not feeling, as we say, the ground I went on, but terrified to the last degree, looking behind me at every two or three steps, mistaking every bush and tree, and fancying every stump at a distance to be a man.

Related Characters: Robinson Crusoe (speaker)**Related Themes:** **Related Symbols:** **Page Number:** 122**Explanation and Analysis**



For the past several chapters, Robinson has described to the reader in acute detail how he has developed a pleasant, sustainable life for himself on the island. He has learned to be content with what he has, and he hardly misses the excitement and companionship of society, having learned to exchange it for God's companionship. Suddenly, this mode of peaceful satisfaction is blown open. At first Robinson thinks the footprint must be an "apparition," a sign of the supernatural - he cannot bring himself to believe that it is truly another person.


Soon, though, Robinson recognizes the concrete reality of the footprint, and with it the undeniable fact of the presence of another person on the island, where he had previously thought himself not only alone, but indeed king and ruler of the entire place. Robinson has learned to move throughout the island easily and confidently, knowing that

no one will disturb him. Now he believes he sees another human at every moment, and he cannot relax. This passage thus marks a turning point in Robinson's story. While he has spent the first part re-learning what it takes to survive, and coming to embrace isolation as a definitively positive trait in individual development, now he must also re-create basic social processes of competition and defense, though against an unknown other.

☛ How strange a chequer-work of Providence is the life of man! and by what secret different springs are the affections hurried about, as different circumstances present! To-day we love what to-morrow we hate; to-day we seek what to-morrow we shun; to-day we desire what to-morrow we fear, nay, even tremble at the apprehensions of. This was exemplified in me, at this time, in the most lively manner imaginable; for I, whose only affliction was that I seemed banished from human society, that I was alone, circumscribed by the boundless ocean, cut off from mankind, and condemned to what I call silent life; that I was as one whom Heaven thought not worthy to be numbered among the living, or to appear among the rest of His creatures; that to have seen one of my own species would have seemed to me a raising me from death to life, and the greatest blessing that Heaven itself, next to the supreme blessing of salvation, could bestow; I say, that I should now tremble at the very apprehensions of seeing a man, and was ready to sink into the ground at but the shadow or silent appearance of a man having set his foot in the island.

Related Characters: Robinson Crusoe (speaker)

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 124

Explanation and Analysis


This passage is largely an intrusion by the Robinson Crusoe who is narrating the story, and who knows all that has happened and that will come to take place: he is therefore equipped with much greater knowledge and the ability to draw out greater meaning than the Robinson who is muddling his way through. With the self-awareness that comes from time, the narrator points out a central contradiction in his own reaction of fear and despair towards the footprint, evidence of the presence of at least one other human on the island. The only thing that has been difficult for Robinson on the island thus far has been the sense that he is "banished" from society and unable to

interact with other human beings. This is why he taught Polly to talk, and it is why it has taken him so long to finally feel content with what he has, learning to see isolation as a virtue rather than as a curse.

It is ironic, then, that the possibility of what Robinson has hoped for for so long - other people with whom to talk and to live - is now the occasion for feelings of such terror. Part of the reason, of course, is that Robinson thinks that a "savage" must have come here, and he does not consider savages as equals. But also, Robinson is clearly still learning to come to terms with the winding realities of fate through the guiding structure of Christian Providence.

☛ And therefore it could not be just for me to fall upon them; that this would justify the conduct of the Spaniards in all their barbarities practiced in America, where they destroyed millions of these people; who, however they were idolators and barbarians, and had several bloody and barbarous rites in their customs, such as sacrificing human bodies to their idols, were yet, as to the Spaniards, very innocent people; and that the rooting them out of the country is spoken of with the utmost abhorrence and detestation by even the Spaniards themselves at this time, and by all other Christian nations of Europe, as a mere butchery, a bloody and unnatural piece of cruelty, unjustifiable either to God or man.

Related Characters: Robinson Crusoe (speaker)

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 136

Explanation and Analysis

Having spent several years developing a fortress and strategies of defense, Robinson has begun to plan how he might spring upon the "savages" and kill them by surprise. However, he soon begins to think better of this plan. Although the English had plenty of colonies themselves around this time, many Englishmen tended to view the process of Spanish colonization with disapproval, claiming that the Spaniards had treated natives with great brutality and cruelty, without any justification for such actions. If Robinson too were to kill the natives for no reason, he would be no better than the Spanish.



Robinson also begins to wonder if certain practices, such as those of human sacrifice, are as undeniably evil as they seem to him. He recognizes that he does not have the knowledge or capacity to fully judge other peoples whose customs are so different than his own. While Robinson maintains that his own Christian religion is superior, then,

he does at least begin to express some openness regarding the potential legitimacy of unknown peoples' customs and cultures.

Chapter 21 Quotes

☞☞ But it occurred to my thoughts, what call, what occasion, much less what necessity I was in to go and dip my hands in blood, to attack people who had neither done or intended me any wrong? who, as to me, were innocent, and whose barbarous customs were their own disaster, being in them a token, indeed, of God's having left them, with the other nations of that part of the world, to such stupidity, and to such inhuman courses, but did not call me to take upon me to be a judge of their actions, much less an executioner of His justice - that whenever He thought fit He would take the cause into His own hands, and by national vengeance punish them as a people for national crimes, but that, in the meantime, it was none of my business.

Related Characters: Robinson Crusoe (speaker)

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 183

Explanation and Analysis

Robinson and Friday have observed the cannibalistic rituals of people from Friday's tribe who come to the island with their prisoners of war. Robinson, disgusted and shocked by this practice, decides to lie in wait and kill them. Soon, however, he once again begins to question his confidence about what is right and wrong. Attempting to apply questions of morality to their behavior, he concludes that these people have not hurt him, and that it is not his place to judge or condemn their behavior.

Of course, here Robinson shows little doubt that the strangers' actions are evil in the eyes of God, and that God (according to Robinson's understanding of Christian truth) will surely punish these peoples himself. However, this sense of cultural and religious superiority actually makes Robinson more reluctant to intercede against those he terms the "savages," since he considers it God's place, not his, to punish them.

Chapter 22 Quotes

☞☞ My island was now peopled, and I thought myself very rich in subjects; and it was a merry reflection, which I frequently made, how like a king I looked. First of all, the whole country was my own property, so that I had an undoubted right of dominion. Secondly, my people were perfectly subjected - I was absolutely lord and lawgiver - they all owed their lives to me, and were ready to lay down their lives, if there had been occasion for it, for me. It was remarkable, too, I had but three subjects, and they were of three different religions - my man Friday was a Protestant, his father was a Pagan and a cannibal, and the Spaniard was a Papist. However, I allowed liberty of conscience throughout my dominions.

Related Characters: Robinson Crusoe (speaker), Friday, Friday's Father, The Spanish Prisoner

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 190



Explanation and Analysis

After having begun his time on the island entirely alone, Robinson now has a relatively thriving community around him. The irony is that he has spent much of the book learning to embrace his isolated existence on the island, even claiming its superiority to the temptations of society. But rather than attempt to create another kind of society once he has assembled a group of people around him, Robinson seems to recreate a social hierarchy, making himself the king and the others his subjects.

Robinson does consider himself relatively more enlightened than European monarchs, since he allows freedom of religion in his "kingdom" - not something that was historically common at the time. He thus shows more openness towards different peoples and customs than might be expected for an Englishman of his time and place. At the same time, however, Robinson has hardly let go of the cultural and social assumptions with which he began his stay on the island.

☞☞ So little do we see before us in the world, and so much reason have we to depend cheerfully upon the great Maker of the world, that He does not leave His creatures so absolutely destitute, but that in the worst circumstances they have always something to be thankful for, and sometimes are nearer deliverance than they imagine; nay, are even brought to their deliverance by the means by which they seem to be brought to their destruction.

Related Characters: Robinson Crusoe (speaker)

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 199

Explanation and Analysis

As Robinson looks at the English prisoners, he is reminded of how he himself felt when he first arrived on the island, as a prisoner not of a single person or group of men but of his own circumstances. This remembrance causes him to remind himself once again that even when he believed he was absolutely desperate, God's will was behind everything

that was happening to him.

Indeed, Robinson can now comfort himself - with the benefit of hindsight - that he was never truly alone. Indeed, he has come to believe that everything he thought was a sign of his impending doom, such as his shipwreck and the lack of other humans on the island, was actually crucial in allowing him to survive, and thus was contributing to his "deliverance." Of course, it seems that this is a lesson that can only be learned little by little, according to a person's own experience, so it is doubtful whether or not Robinson's lessons are entirely relevant to the prisoners that now find themselves in a different desperate situation.



SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

PREFACE

An anonymous editor tells the reader that the following account of a man's adventures is more amazing than any account currently published and so is worth making public. The editor says that the story is entirely true, offers a useful example for others to learn by, and justifies "the wisdom of Providence in all the variety of our circumstances." He says it will be both educational and entertaining.

The editor presents Robinson's tale as an educational example for the reader offering moral improvement, not unlike the forms of advice that Robinson himself will continually reject. Specifically, the editor emphasizes how Robinson's story displays the workings of divine providence.



CHAPTER 1

The narrator summarizes his early life. He was born in 1632, in York, England, though his father's family (the Kreutznauers) were originally German. His mother was English, with the last name Robinson. He was named Robinson Kreutznauer, but the last name became corrupted in English, so he was known as Robinson Crusoe.

In a sense, Robinson has two last names (since "Robinson" comes from his mother's maiden name). His entire identity is dictated by his family. In order to become his own individual, he will have to break free from his own home.



Robinson felt a strong desire to go to **sea**, even though both his parents were against this idea. One day, his father called him into his room. He told Robinson that going to **sea** was for desperate people, or wealthy people seeking adventures, and that Robinson was middle class. His father told him that the "middle station" was the best position in life, free from both the anxieties that come with privilege and power and the problems of poverty.

Robinson's father wisely advises him against going to sea, but Robinson will have to learn the dangers of the seafaring life for himself. Robinson's life in England is comfortable and nice, but it is precisely this stagnant comfort that he desires to get away from in wanting to risk a life at sea.



Urging Robinson not to go, his father promised to help establish him in a comfortable life at home, but, amid tears, warned him that if he joined a boat and went to **sea**, there would be no one to help him in his troubles and God would not even bless him. Robinson notes that this last part of his father's speech was prophetic.

Robinson's father again stresses the comfort of his family's life in England. Looking back, Robinson sees that his father's comment about God was prescient: he will later come to see his rebelling against his father as his "original sin."



After speaking with his father, Robinson resolved to stay home, but this feeling wore off after a few days. He planned to run away and told his mother, who warned him that he would ruin himself if he left. About a year later, Robinson finally "broke loose" and left home, when a friend encouraged him to join a ship from Hull to London.

Robinson tries to stay in England, but is unable to be content with a comfortable, unexciting life. He feels the need to break free from his family and lead a life as his own person.



CHAPTER 2

Robinson joined the London-bound ship on September 1st, 1651. The ship soon encountered a storm and Robinson became sick and frightened. Remembering his parents' warnings, he vowed to return home if he ever made it safely to land again. The other sailors onboard, however, did not think much of the storm.

The **sea** got calmer as the storm died down, and Robinson joined some other sailors in getting drunk on some punch. In about six days, Robinson says he had gotten over his conscience at disregarding his vows to return home. Then, the ship encountered an even worse storm. Even the experienced sailors were scared, and Robinson heard the master of the ship cry out to God for help.

Robinson was terrified, and some sailors said that the ship was going to founder (sink), though at that time Robinson didn't know the meaning of this word. The ship sprang some leaks and Robinson and other sailors tried to pump water out of the ship. Robinson was so scared he fainted. Another ship came to the aid of Robinson's, and rowed a boat over to rescue the sailors.

After returning to shore, Robinson says that he should have gone back to Hull, but "ill fate" pushed him to go to London against reasonable judgment. The shipmaster told Robinson not to tempt Providence and to go back to his father, or else he would "meet with nothing but disasters and disappointments."

Robinson traveled to London by land, debating his next course of action. He says that some "evil influence" made him disregard all of the warnings he received. He joined a ship bound for Guinea, on the coast of Africa.

According to Robinson, this was his only successful voyage. The ship's captain of the ship bound for Guinea taught him astronomy and math, and he became a sailor-merchant, bringing back three hundred pounds of gold, which filled him with the desire to return to **sea** and find more wealth, a desire that would be the ruin of him.

CHAPTER 3

Robinson prepared to go on the same voyage again, though the captain of the Guinea vessel had died and been replaced. Leaving two hundred pounds of his **money** with the old captain's widow, he voyaged to Guinea again, but "fell into terrible misfortunes."

After disregarding his parents' advice, Robinson soon comes to see how correct their warnings were when he gets his first taste of the dangerous life at sea. Note, though, that Robinson's fear stems mainly from inexperience.



Yet Robinson quickly forgets his earlier vows, and finds himself in even more danger—in storm at sea that has even the experienced captain scared. While the captain calls out to God for help, it is not until much later that Robinson will fully turn to God in his own distress.



The terrified Robinson is an inexperienced sailor, unaware even of what it means for a ship to founder. But it is only through the experience of going to sea for the first time that he becomes a better seaman: he must make mistakes in order to learn.



Citing providence, the shipmaster gives Robinson more good advice, which Robinson ignores, because God's providence and fate have something else in store for him.



Robinson continues to disregard everyone's warnings, driven by a mysterious influence that he will later understand as God's will.



Finding some success only brings Robinson a greater desire for more. Not content with the money he acquired on the first voyage, he goes back seeking a greater fortune.



Robinson's desire and ambition for greater wealth bring him further misfortunes.



Along the way, Robinson's ship was captured by a Turkish pirate ship and he was taken as a prisoner to Sallee, a Moorish port. Robinson was made the slave of the pirate ship's captain. He didn't think his fortune could get any worse, but says that these events were "just a taste of the misery I was to go through."

Ironically, while setting out to make his own life, Robinson ends up losing his individual personhood, becoming a slave. From his retrospective position as narrator, he knows that this was just the beginning of his miseries.



Robinson stayed in Sallee as a slave for two years, constantly thinking of a way to escape but finding none. He finally devised a means of escape when he was sent with a Moor named Ismael and a boy named Xury on a small row-boat to go fishing. He tricked Ismael into loading the boat with plenty of provisions, including gunpowder and guns.

Robinson relies on his own cleverness to plot his escape, rather than waiting for someone else to rescue him.



When Robinson and Ismael went out to fish, Robinson deliberately lost any fish he had hooked, and told Ismael that they needed to go farther out to **sea** to catch fish. When they were a ways out at **sea**, Robinson pushed Ismael overboard. He told Ismael to swim back to shore and threatened to shoot him if he tried to swim back to the boat, because he was "resolved to have my liberty."

Robinson is determined to have his own liberty, but this focus on himself makes him rather unconcerned for the wellbeing of others—in this case Ismael, whom he throws overboard.



Robinson then turned to Xury and told him, "if you will be faithful to me I will make you a great man," but that, if not, he would throw him into the **sea**, as well. Xury swore his loyalty to Robinson. Out of fear of being caught, he sailed southward for six days, not daring to go to shore. He finally anchored at the mouth of a river one evening.

While fiercely individualistic, Robinson keeps Xury as his one companion on this new journey. As later with Friday, Robinson's self-sufficiency is to some degree reliant on a subservient (non-European; non-Christian) companion.



Xury and Robinson did not sleep that night, as they heard strange creatures come into the water. One of these creatures came close to the boat and Robinson shot at it. The next day, Robinson and Xury were still afraid of going ashore, because they might encounter "savages," but they needed to go find fresh water. The two of them went ashore with jars for water and Xury found a source of clean water.

Robinson and Xury are afraid of the unknown creatures on land, as well as any possible inhabitants, whom they automatically assume must be savages.



Xury and Robinson saw no other humans around them. Robinson didn't know where exactly they were, but thought that if they waited off the shore of Africa long enough, they would encounter an English merchant ship. One day, Robinson and Xury shot a huge lion and brought its hide back aboard their boat.

While strongly individualistic, Robinson still hopes at this early point in his journeys to be rescued by a European ship and return to society at large.



Robinson decided to sail south, making for the Cape de Verd, where he knew European merchant ships often passed by. As they went further south, they began to see inhabitants on the shore. Xury was wary of going ashore to speak with these Africans, but Robinson sailed close enough to shore to see that they had no weapons and made signs to them indicating that he was in need of food.

Some native inhabitants brought back food for Robinson and Xury. Then, two strange creatures came running down the mountains toward the water, frightening the Africans. The creatures jumped into the water and one swam close to Robinson's boat. Robinson shot and killed the animal. The Africans were astonished at and frightened by Robinson's gunshot but were grateful and amazed when they saw the dead creature (a huge leopard) float ashore.

The natives supplied Robinson with some fresh water and Robinson continued to sail south, until he neared the Cape de Verd. Xury spotted another ship, which turned out to be a Portuguese vessel. The Portuguese took them aboard and the Portuguese captain promised to take Robinson to Brazil for free.

CHAPTER 4

The Portuguese captain bought Robinson's small boat from him. He offered to buy Xury, as well, but Robinson was hesitant to give up Xury's liberty. The captain promised to free Xury in ten years, provided that he would convert to Christianity, and Robinson agreed.

Robinson had a safe voyage to Brazil and the Portuguese captain gave him **money** for some of his cargo. Robinson lived for some time on a sugar plantation and, seeing how profitable it was, decided to go into the business himself, buying some land.

Robinson soon found that he needed help working the land and regretted selling Xury to the Portuguese captain, but says that it is no surprise that he made a mistake, as was his habit. He began to be dissatisfied with his new life, as he was approaching the sort of comfortable middle-class existence he could have easily had in England.

Robinson and Xury are cautious toward the native Africans they encounter, fearing these unknown people, though Robinson is desperate enough to ask for their help.



The unknown land that Robinson has sailed to is filled not only with strange peoples but also with amazing, dangerous beasts. Now and later on his island, Robinson must survive in spite of such dangers.



Despite Robinson's fears about "savages," the natives are kind and generous to him. In a twist of fate, Robinson and Xury are rescued by a helpful Portuguese captain.



Again, Robinson values his own individual liberty, but not that of others, as he sells away Xury. He agrees to do this in part because Xury is not Christian, and the captain promises to convert him.



Newly established in Brazil, Robinson begins to build a comfortable, profitable life as a plantation owner.



Robinson realizes his mistake in selling Xury too late (though he sees the mistake as giving up a helpful laborer rather than seeing anything morally wrong with selling Xury). The more comfortable his new life gets, the more Robinson itches to seek more exciting adventures.



Moreover, Robinson was lonely. His only friend was Wells, a man of English descent who owned a neighboring plantation. He thought that his life was like being stranded on an island. He cautions the reader not to compare one's life to worse situations, or else fate may very well put one in that worse situation. This was the case for Robinson, as he soon would find himself actually alone on an island.

The kind Portuguese captain offered to have some of Robinson's **money** in England sent to Lisbon, so that he could then bring it to Robinson in Brazil on his next voyage. Robinson eagerly agreed. The captain kept his word and returned with Robinson's **money**, as well as some farming tools and a servant. Robinson used his new **money** to buy another European servant and "a Negro slave."

Robinson had some success growing tobacco on his plantation, but says that this moderate success made him overly ambitious. Just as he felt compelled to break away from his parents, he now felt a need to rise beyond this new comfortable existence and try to grow his plantation beyond what was naturally feasible.

While in Brazil, Robinson spoke with some locals and other plantation owners and told them the story of his travels along the coast of Africa. Some of them made a proposal to him, suggesting that he join a voyage to Africa to bring back slaves to work on their plantations. Robinson says that he "was born to be my own destroyer," and thus accepted the offer.

Before leaving, Robinson arranged for people to look over his plantation and wrote a will, making the kind Portuguese captain his heir. Robinson departed on this new voyage on September 1st, 1659, the same ill-fated day on which he had departed on the failed voyage from Hull to London.

About twelve days into the voyage, the ship encountered a hurricane and Robinson was sure that the ship would be sunk. The captain of the ship from Brazil wanted to return to Brazil, because the ship was damaged in the storm, but Robinson suggested that they try to find help on an English island and continue with the trip.

Robinson now experiences some of the loneliness that comes with extreme individualism. Looking back on his own story, he knows that this was nothing compared to the isolation he would later endure, and he tries to offer the reader advice based on his experiences.



Despite the fact that he recently experienced life as a prisoner and slave and was desperate to reclaim his personal liberty, Robinson has no qualms in hiring servants and buying an African slave.



A small amount of success only makes Robinson ambitious for more, just as he felt the need to leave his comfortable life in England or to go on another voyage to Guinea after having one successful trip.



Robinson again has no qualms in participating in the slave trade, despite how highly he values his own individual liberty. Looking back on his life, Robinson realizes with hindsight all of his mistakes, and how he acted unwittingly as his own "destroyer."



The coincidence of the dates foreshadows the bad outcome of this trip, and can be seen as proof of providence dictating the seemingly random events of Robinson's life.



Robinson's ambition prevents him from making the safer decision to go back to Brazil and makes him want to continue the trip, a mistake that will change his life drastically.



After setting off again, the ship encountered another large storm that drove them off-course. A sailor spotted land, but no one knew what land this was or where they were. Robinson and some others attempted to escape the ship on a smaller boat, which they tried to row to shore, though they were in danger of being dashed upon the rocks on the dangerous shore.

A humongous wave rose up before them and toppled their boat. Thrown into the violent **sea**, Robinson tried to hold his breath as waves drove him onto the shore. A wave slammed Robinson against a rock, nearly killing him. Robinson was finally able to climb ashore and get himself onto dry, safe land out of the reach of the violent ocean and thanked God for saving his life.

Robinson says he never saw his shipmates after this and assumes they drowned. After thanking God for being saved from the ocean, Robinson looked around him and realized that he was now in a dire situation, stranded on an apparently uninhabited island with nothing but a knife, some tobacco, and a pipe. He climbed up into a tree and slept there that night.

CHAPTER 5

When Robinson awoke the next day, the storm was gone. He saw his old ship stranded about a mile out at **sea**. Along the shore, he saw the wrecked remains of the boat he and the other sailors had tried to escape in. When the tide went out, Robinson was able to walk out until the ship was only a quarter-mile from him, so he swam to the ship and climbed aboard, hoping to find some supplies.

On the ship, Robinson found some food and other supplies. There were no small boats, though, so he had to construct a raft from some scrap pieces of the ship's wood. He loaded the raft with food, liquor, guns, ammunition, and some tools. Using some broken oars, Robinson was able to guide the raft toward the land and into the mouth of a river.

Robinson's raft was unstable and he almost lost all of his provisions into the water several times, but he was able to guide the raft along the river and find a place to put the raft on the bank and get all of his supplies onto dry land. Robinson then climbed to the top of a nearby hill to survey where he was: he found that he was on an uninhabited island.

On the sea, Robinson and his shipmates are subject to the whims of the unknown and unpredictable ocean. After devoting himself to Christianity, Robinson will later look back upon such natural disasters as this as instruments of providence, the divine plan of God.



Robinson is miraculously saved and thanks God, though this religious thinking is short-lived.



Robinson now finds himself completely isolated, stranded in the wilderness of a completely strange, unknown place.



He doesn't recognize it as such now, but Robinson will later appreciate how fortunate he was that the ship was stranded so close to shore, an example of God's good will and providence.



By himself, Robinson cleverly salvages some scraps of wood into a raft, exemplifying the kind of resourcefulness that a life of isolation requires.



Robinson now realizes that he is indeed all alone on this island. He is isolated in every way imaginable from society.



On the way back to his cargo, Robinson shot a bird and says that this was the first time a gun had ever been fired on this island. He made "a kind of hut" with some barrels and chests and planned to make another expedition to the ship.

Completely separated from society, the island had never before heard the shot of a gun—though it's interesting that the sign of civilization is the sound of the firing of a weapon. Robinson begins to make a dwelling, the first step in establishing a life on the island.



Robinson went to the ship many more times, bringing back more food, tools, guns, and various scrap parts of the ship. One time, he found some **money** on the ship and laughed at how useless it was. He used the ship's sail to make a tent and fortified it all the way around with boxes and barrels to protect him from any wild animals. One day, a powerful storm blew the remains of Robinson's old ship away.

Already isolated on the island, Robinson surrounds his dwelling with a fortification, cordoning himself off even more as an individual. Robinson realizes that outside of society, in a state of nature, money is completely worthless.



Robinson saw a raised plateau against a rock face and decided to move his tent there so that he could see if any ships came by at **sea**. Using parts of the wrecked ship, he built a protective fence around it, though he says he now knows there was no reason for such caution.

With hindsight, Robinson realizes he didn't need his fence. The fence can be seen as symbolizing his isolation, as he is figuratively fenced off from the rest of the world on the island.



CHAPTER 6

Robinson moved all of his things into this new dwelling and made a smaller tent within his large tent to better protect him and his things from any rain. While he was constructing and improving this dwelling (including building a cellar and carving a kind of cave into the rock at the back of the plateau), a storm came and Robinson feared that his stores of gunpowder might be struck by lightning.

Separated from society, Robinson struggles to survive against the forces of nature. On the island, he actually builds his own life, not relying on anyone else to help make his new home.



After the storm, Robinson put his gunpowder into small containers and stored them all separately, so that if one exploded, he wouldn't lose everything. He explored around the island a little bit and hunted some goats for food.

The unknown island ends up not containing dangerous beasts or savages, but rather supplies Robinson with goats for food. This, again, can be seen as an act of Providence.



Robinson was pessimistic about his chances for being rescued and thought that it was a "determination of Heaven" that he would die there. He cried and questioned "why Providence should thus completely ruin its creatures." But he cheered up when he thought of his shipmates that had drowned and reflected that he alone had at least survived and was able to get so many provisions from the ship.

Robinson already sees the events of his life as determined by God, but does not yet see divine providence as ultimately good. He still laments his fate on the island, despite the miracle of his being saved from the shipwreck to an island lacking predators and full of things he can use and eat.



CHAPTER 7

To keep track of time, Robinson constructed a large wooden cross that he mounted on the shore and cut notches into it to mark each day. Along with his more practical supplies, Robinson had taken some pens, paper, books, and Bibles from the ship. In addition, he had brought the ship's dog and two cats back to shore with him.

Robinson says that it was nearly a year before he finished building his dwelling, because he lacked all the proper tools. Seeking to ease his mind, Robinson wrote down in two separate columns all the bad and good things about his current condition.

In the "evil" column, he listed the facts that he was alone with no one to speak to, was stranded on a desolate island, had no clothes, and had no method of defense against men or beasts. In the "good" column, Robinson listed that he was alive, not drowned, not starved, with provisions, and not in danger from any wild animals as far as he could tell.

Robinson set about enlarging the cave behind his tent and making his fence into more of a wall. He says that he had never used tools before in his life, but quickly learned by doing and was able to make a table and chair. Robinson also began keeping a journal, which he was too busy and distraught to do earlier.

Robinson then gives the reader the text of his journal, which chronicles his time on the island up to the time he ran out of ink. The first entry of the journal describes his shipwreck and being stranded upon what he has chosen to call the "Island of Despair." The journal narrates how Robinson went to the ship and took provisions from it until the storm blew away the ship's remains.

The journal continues to narrate the events Robinson has just told the reader about: how he moved his things to the plateau under the rock wall and built his dwelling, how he hunted, and how he built things he needed like a chair.

Robinson made a makeshift pickaxe from some iron he salvaged from his ship and used the wood from a particularly strong tree he found to make a kind of shovel, but he was in need of a wheelbarrow. He then got to work deepening the cave he was carving out behind his tent, which he had connected to the tent.

While completely cut off from society, Robinson still keeps track of the months and days of the year—he brings society with him to the island in this way. His only companions on the island are the cats and dog from the ship.



Robinson has to build all the things he needs himself. He must become truly self-sufficient on his island.



Robinson takes stock of his life, and how content he is with his fate. At this point, he still regards his isolation on the island as a negative thing, though he will later come to appreciate his solitary existence.



While inexperienced with tools, Robinson learns by doing, and eventually teaches himself how to use them, rather than relying on another person's instructions.



Robinson's journal allows him to reflect on his past with some of the benefit of hindsight (as his role as the novel's narrator also does). Writing in the journal can also be seen as a kind of substitute for a companion: since Robinson has no one to tell his story to, he writes it down—he tells it to himself.



The journal narrates Robinson's resourceful, self-sufficient life on the island by himself.



Robinson makes his own tools in order to improve his dwelling. Living alone has made him into a more skilled, capable person.



Just as Robinson felt that his cave was complete, part of it collapsed and the earth above it fell in. Robinson was fortunately not in this part of the cave when it collapsed and he set about clearing the fallen earth and propping up his cave's roof with posts. He continued hunting for food and organizing his things on shelves in the cave.

While hunting goats, Robinson crippled one and took it back to his dwelling, where he put the animal's leg in a splint. The goat healed but was now tamed and would not leave Robinson's home. By now it was January, and Robinson worked to enlarge the wall surrounding his dwelling. He built a huge turf wall around this wall, so that if anyone came upon the island he wouldn't see Robinson's tent.

Digressing from his journal entries, Robinson describes how he looking in a bag of grain and found that it had been eaten by rats and all that was left was husks. He dumped the husks out on the ground outside his dwelling and was shocked soon after to see stalks of rice and barley growing there. Robinson was convinced that this was a miracle from God.

Returning to the journal, in April Robinson finished making a ladder to climb over his wall (which he would take with him inside when he went into his dwelling. But the very next day, a huge amount of earth fell down the rock cliff, caving in Robinson's cave-dwelling. Robinson fled his dwelling and climbed over his wall when he realized that the landslide was being caused by an earthquake.

Robinson was terrified but notes that he "had not the least serious religious thought," during the whole earthquake. After the earthquake, a violent storm forced Robinson to go back into the cave, though he feared it would collapse. He realized then that he would need to build a new dwelling, since the cave was unsafe in the event of an earthquake.

Robinson planned to construct a wall similar to the one he already had elsewhere, in an open area safer from earthquakes, but not to move his tent until this new area was ready. As April ended, Robinson fashioned and readied his tools for this new construction project.

However, Robinson put this project on hold because he noticed on May 1 that the wreckage of his old shipped had been washed ashore in the earthquake and subsequent storm. He set to work salvaging wood and other parts from the wreck during all of May and until June 15.

Like the sea with its storms, the island is an unpredictable, mostly unknown feature of nature. The coincidence of the cave collapsing just as Robinson was finished with his work can be seen as divinely willed.



The goat is another animal companion for the lonely Robinson. While he laments the fact that he is separated from society, he continues to construct more and more elaborate fortifications around his dwelling, isolating himself more and more even on the island.



This is one of Robinson's rare moments of religious thought prior to his full repentance, as he sees the growing crops as a divinely willed miracle.



Like the earlier collapse of Robinson's cave, the earthquake is both an unpredictable natural disaster in the face of which Robinson has to survive by himself and perhaps an instrument of God's will.



While Robinson was quick to thank God for the miracle of his crops, he still does not pray to God in distress at this point. This will change when he more fully devotes himself to Christianity.



Robinson prepares to construct another dwelling all by himself, relying only on his own tools and labor.



Just as his ship had been providentially stranded close to shore, now its remains fortunately wash ashore, giving Robinson more supplies.



Robinson found a turtle on the shore, cooked it, and ate it. Soon after, he became very sick with a fever and was ill for about a week. He began to feel better and ate some goat, but then felt horribly sick and prayed to God to get better.

Dehydrated and feverous, Robinson had a dream that he was sitting outside his walled dwelling during an earthquake. A storm grew and a man came down from a black cloud "in a bright flame of fire," and stepped on the earth. The man came toward Robinson with a weapon and said, "Seeing all these things have not brought thee to repentance, now thou shalt die."

Robinson admits that he had not had religious thoughts for some time and it had never even crossed his mind that his predicament was a divine punishment for his sins. Even when he made it safely to land after his shipwreck and thanked God, he did not reflect at all "upon the goodness of the hand which had preserved me."

Robinson cried and prayed, remembering his father's warning that God would not bless him if he went to [sea](#). He lamented that he had neglected God and "rejected the voice of Providence," which has given him a comfortable life.

The next day, Robinson felt slightly better but assumed that he would be sick again that night. Walking around, he began thinking about God and concluded that God must have willed for him to end up here, as punishment for his "dreadful misspent life." In a chest salvaged from the ship, Robinson found some tobacco and a Bible. He boiled some tobacco and read the Bible, stumbling upon the phrase, "Call on me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me."

Robinson drank some of the tobacco-water (mixed with rum) and fell asleep. For the first time, he prayed to God before going to sleep. He slept for an entire day and when he woke up he was amazed to feel healthy and refreshed. He gradually recovered from his illness and thanked God.

Starting July 4, Robinson began to read the Bible seriously. He reflected on his earlier wicked life, repented, and prayed earnestly to God. Robinson notes that his idea of "deliverance" changed, as he now prayed to be delivered from his former sin and guilt, not necessarily from his situation on the island.

Robinson prays to God, but at this point—before his repentance—has not thought deeply about his own sin or his duty to God.



Robinson's terrifying dream causes him to reflect on his religious thoughts. The mysterious figure refers to all of Robinson's sufferings ("all these things,") as brought about to bring Robinson to repentance.



Robinson realizes the shallowness of his former beliefs. While he thanked God occasionally, he did not think deeply about God or see his life as dictated by God's will.



Looking back on his mistakes, Robinson realizes he should have heeded his father's warnings and should have been thankful to God for his comfortable life.



As Robinson turns fully to Christianity, he comes to perceive his being shipwrecked as divinely ordained punishment for his previous behavior. Nonetheless, the biblical verse he finds also introduces the possibility of divinely willed deliverance from his suffering, foreshadowing that while his mistakes have brought him to the island the island will be the means of his redemption.



This marks a turning point in Robinson's religious thinking. He truly prays for the first time, recovers, and is now completely devoted to Christianity.



As Robinson continues to read the Bible, he comes to see his being stranded alone on the island as a good thing, a deliverance from his former life of sin.



Having been on the island for ten months, Robinson was sure that he would never be rescued from it, and also sure that he was completely alone on the island. He decided to explore the island more fully, finding tobacco and sugar plants, as well as a forested area with various fruit trees.

Robinson tried to bring some fruit back to his home, but most of it spoiled or got bruised on the way back. He considered moving his dwelling to the forested, fruitful part of the island. However, he decided it was better to stay at his current dwelling, in view of the ocean. Nonetheless, he built a smaller dwelling in the forest, where he would occasionally stay.

Robinson dried a great quantity of grapes he found, so that he had a large supply of raisins that would keep during the upcoming season. Robinson mentions that at this point, one of the cats he had brought from the ship, which had run away, returned to him with three kittens. Before long, Robinson was "so pestered with cats," that he had to kill them and drive them away from his home.

After a period of incessant rain, Robinson realized that it was the one year anniversary of his arrival on the island. He spent the day fasting and praying to God. After this, he decided to keep track of weeks as well as days and to observe the Sabbath. He learned to expect the rainy and dry seasons, though he notes, "I bought all my experience before I had it."

Robinson tried sowing some barley and rice, but after planting a great quantity of it, there was a dry spell and nothing grew. He tried again later, in a different spot, and with the help of some rainy weather his crops grew. From this, he learned when and how to sow his grains.

Returning after some time to his small dwelling in the forest, Robinson found that some of the stakes that he had cut from trees to use in a fence had sprouted and grown into small trees. He cut more of these stakes and planted them around his first dwelling on the plateau, in order to grow a hedge that would cover and protect his home.

Beginning to accept his new solitary life, Robinson sets out to explore the wilderness of his largely unknown island.



While Robinson is becoming more comfortable with his solitary life, he still does not want to move his main dwelling from within view of the ocean, so he can see if any ships come to the island.



The wilderness of the island, which Robinson at first feared, again supplies him with food. Robinson's only companions are his animals, including the cats who pester him. The cats appear to be "civilizing" the island themselves.



Robinson's day of fasting shows his newfound devotion to Christianity. He notes that all of the knowledge he has gained has been earned ("bought") by making mistakes and learning along the way. Note how he now tracks the days in order to observe the Sabbath.



Again, Robinson learns by doing. Only after making the mistake of sowing some barley and rice in the wrong location does he realize how to grow his crops effectively.



Robinson continues to cover and fortify his dwellings on the island, in a sense isolating himself even further isolating, walling himself off from the world. He continues to fear the unknown.



CHAPTER 8

Robinson learned that the year could be divided into the rainy and dry seasons. Having experienced how bad it was to be stuck outside his home during the rainy season, he took care to stock up on provisions in advance of rains. He had need of some kind of basket and notes that it is fortunate that as a young boy he would watch a basket-maker work and often helped with the craft. Using some twigs from near his smaller forest dwelling, he made some baskets.

One day, Robinson journeyed to the opposite end of the island from where his home was. He saw land far away across the ocean, but figured it was inhabited by savages, so that it wasn't worth trying to get there. He says that he "acquiesced to the dispositions of Providence," and accepted his life on the island.

Robinson found this side of the island better than the one he had chosen to inhabit. It was full of open savannah fields with flowers and grass and had many wooded areas. He even captured a parrot which he would teach to talk to him. Although there were many more animals to hunt in this area of the island, Robinson had no desire to move, as he was attached to his new home.

Robinson learns how to deal with the rainy season by making the mistake of being stuck in it. All alone, he has to make his own baskets, just as he has learned to make all his own tools.



Robinson assumes that the unknown land is inhabited by dangerous savages (though the only indigenous people he has encountered so far have been helpful). He now accepts his life on the island as determined by God's providence.

Robinson realizes that he made a mistake placing his dwelling on the part of the island where he did—remember that he built his dwelling where he did because he hoped for rescue, for deliverance from the island. The parrot, which Robinson can teach to talk, offers some consolation for his lack of companions.



CHAPTER 9

Robinson journeyed back to his dwelling, which he now fondly thought of as his home. Along the way, he captured a goat and brought it back home, where he tamed it and it became another one of his pets. As the two-year anniversary of his arrival on the island came around, Robinson began to think that his life on the island was better and happier than the "cursed, abominable" life he had led before.

One day, Robinson was again feeling sad about his circumstances, but he opened his Bible and read the words, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." He reasoned that it was much better to be forsaken by the world and not by God than vice versa.

Robinson kept busy his third year on the island by hunting, building improvements for his dwelling, and reading the Bible. His barely and wheat began to grow and he fenced off these plants to keep wild animals away from his crops. Birds, however, started eating his crops, so he shot several birds and hung them up just as "notorious thieves in England," were punished. This scared away the birds, who left Robinson's crops alone.

As Robinson becomes more accustomed to life at his new home with his pets, he begins to see his life of solitude as a good thing in comparison to his wicked former life, rather than as a punishment. He is now somewhat more content with his fate.



Robinson's new faith causes him to see his isolated, Christian life as superior to a less religiously devout life in society.

Robinson continues to read the Bible and fend for himself, figuring out how to keep the birds away from his crops. His comparison of the birds to thieves underscores how alone he is. Robinson has no human company—only pets and wild animals.



Robinson reflects on how difficult it is to harvest grains and make bread. He had to do this without a spade, a harrow, a mill to grind grains, yeast and salt to make bread, and an oven to bake bread. Nonetheless, he was able to make bread through "labour and invention."

Robinson's solitary life makes him more inventive and hard-working, as he labors to make his own bread without all of the requisite tools and ingredients.



CHAPTER 10

Robinson set to work planting more crops and entertained himself by teaching his parrot, named Poll, to speak its own name. He tried making jars and bowls out of clay, but many were misshapen and easily broke. However, he found a broken piece of one of his failed jars that had been burned in his fire and noticed that it was "hard as stone." Thus, he discovered how to bake his pottery.

Robinson discovers how to bake his pottery by accident, as he mistakenly burns a piece of a broken jar. Poll is Robinson's only company for conversation, emphasizing how alone he is on the island.



With his new pottery, Robinson was able to make a huge pot in which to boil meat. He made a mortar and pestle to grind corn and decided to use some sailors' clothes he had saved from his ship as a sieve for preparing his grain. Finally, Robinson was able to bake some bread. All this work kept him busy for his third year on the island.

Robinson is now able to make a somewhat more comfortable life alone on the island, as he learns to boil meats and make bread.



CHAPTER 11

Robinson often thought about the land he had seen from the other end of the island and fantasized about getting to it somehow, but also worried that it might be inhabited by savages or cannibals. He found himself wishing for Xury.

Despite coming to value his life on the island, Robinson is still lonely without any companions. Again, he assumes that unknown lands may be inhabited by "savages."



Robinson returned to the small boat that had been washed ashore back when he was shipwrecked, and he tried to repair it. Unable to, he decided to make a canoe. He tells the reader that he should have thought about how he would bring the canoe to the water, but instead went a head and cut down a large cedar tree. He made it into a canoe, but then realized he had no way of moving it to the water.

From his standpoint as narrator, Robinson realizes his foolish mistake in constructing the canoe far from water. However, this is knowledge that he only gained by making that very mistake.



The canoe was about 100 yards away from a creek, so Robinson thought he might dig out a canal leading the water to the boat. He soon figured out that this was too difficult for him to do alone and realized his folly in building the canoe with no way of bringing it to the water.

Robinson realizes too late how foolish it was to build the canoe so far from the water.



On the fourth anniversary of his coming to the island, Robinson reflected on his situation. He says that he was free from the wickedness of the world because, all alone, he had no lust or pride, and had nothing to covet. He had no rivals and had as much food and provisions as he needed.

Having no need for surplus food, Robinson only grew and hunted what he needed and concluded that the only value of things was in their use. The **money** he had salvaged from the ship, for example, was utterly useless on the island.

Looking on the bright side of his situation, Robinson was thankful for what he had and especially thankful that his ship had been stranded so close to shore. He says that he was "sensible of the goodness of Providence."

Moreover, Robinson was happy because he thought his previous life of wickedness, during which he and his fellow sailors rejected religion, did not merit all the blessings that God bestowed on him. He remembers that he didn't even thank God when he escaped from Sallee or was rescued by the Portuguese captain.

Thinking that God had accepted his repentance, Robinson was no longer sad and gave thanks for his new life. His ink was running out, so he now only recorded the dates of important events. In writing his journal, he realized some odd parallels: he left home on the same day of the year he was taken as a prisoner to Sallee, he escaped the storm on the way to London on the same day as he escaped Sallee, and he was washed up on his island on the day of his birth.

Robinson's clothes were starting to decay and he needed garments to protect him from the sun's rays. He made some clothes out of animal skins, and then made himself an umbrella so that he could walk around in the extreme heat of day.

As Robinson became more comfortable on the island, he began to think that this life was better than life among society. He thought that conversing with God was better than conversing with other people.

Having spent four years on the island, Robinson now regards his isolated life as better than life in society. Isolated on the island, he finds himself more able to avoid sin and temptation, more able to be a good Christian.



Living apart from society, Robinson has no greed and values only what is useful or necessary to him, in contrast to the way people in society over-value money and always measure themselves against others.



Robinson now perceives his being stranded on the island as a blessing rather than a curse, and believes in the ultimate goodness of providence.



Having repented and become deeply Christian, Robinson now looks back on his former life with regret, seeing it as wicked and sinful.



Robinson's new devotion to Christianity helps him to become content and happy with his life on the island. The coincidences of dates can be seen as evidence of divine providence, a hint of order or some plan behind the apparently random events of Robinson's life.



All by himself on the island, Robinson makes his own clothes, just as he has made everything else he uses there.



Now comfortable on the island, Robinson would rather live alone with God than in society without him.



CHAPTER 12

For five years after this, not much happened, as Robinson continued to grow barley and rice, harvest grapes and dry them into raisins, and hunt. He built a smaller canoe than his earlier one and was able to bring this one to water. Stocking it with provisions and building a sail, he set off in the canoe to sail around the perimeter of his island.

When he got to the western side of the island, Robinson went ashore, climbed a hill, and looked out on the water, seeing a dangerous current that his boat might be caught up in. Indeed, the next day, he was swept up in the current and feared that he would be driven far out to **sea**. He says that this showed him "how easy it was for the providence of God to make even the most miserable condition of mankind worse."

Fortunately, though, Robinson was able to direct his small boat into an eddy that brought him back toward the island. He got to shore on the island's north side, and gave thanks to God, resolving not to try to escape his island any longer.

Not wanting to risk the open **sea** again, Robinson piloted his boat into a river and harbored it in the stream before walking back to his home. He noticed that he was only a little farther away than when he had journeyed here by foot. He took with him from his boat only his gun and umbrella.

Robinson made it to his little dwelling in the forest, which he called his "country house," and slept. He was awakened, though, by a voice calling, "Robin, Robin, Robin, Crusoe; poor Robin Crusoe! Where are you, Robin Crusoe?" Robinson woke up shocked, but saw that it was merely his talking parrot Poll.

Robinson returned to his home, content to stay on his area of the island and resign himself "to the dispositions of Providence." He continued to make tools, pottery, and wickerware, and was particularly pleased to be able to make a tobacco pipe. His gunpowder, though, was running low.

Robinson continues to live self-sufficiently on the island. Now that he is relatively comfortable and content with his life there, he sets out to explore around the island's perimeter.



The dangerous current reminds Robinson how easily God can drastically change one's life—for better or for worse.



Robinson thanks God for not being driven out to sea, and resolves to be contented with his life on the island.



Having nearly been driven away from the island by the current, Robinson is happy to be safe and content to walk home and not risk journeying by boat again. This contentment stands in contrast to his lack of contentment with the comfortable life offered to him by his parents. He had to make mistakes and be marooned on the island in order to find it.



Robinson's talking parrot is his only speaking companion and emphasizes his lack of fellow humans on the island. With his "country house", Robinson continues to "civilize" the island for himself.



Robinson is now comfortable and content with the solitary, self-sufficient life he has been dealt by fate and God's providence.



CHAPTER 13

In order to preserve ammunition, Robinson made traps to try to capture goats, so that he wouldn't have to shoot them. He captured several young goats and brought them to his home to tame them, hoping to breed goats at his home. He constructed a large enclosure for them, and soon had a tame flock of goats to supply him with meat and milk, from which he made butter and cheese.

Robinson exclaims, "how mercifully can our Creator treat his creatures," and says he dined like a king, accompanied by Poll, his dog, and two cats. Wanting to get his canoe back somehow, Robinson set out by foot to go to the hill where he had stopped while sailing around the island.

Robinson notes that he had a ridiculous appearance, with all of his ill-fitting clothes made of goatskin and a long mustache. But there was no one there to see him, so it didn't matter. When he got to the hill, he saw that the ocean was calm, without any dangerous currents. Still, he was too scared of being driven out to **sea** to try to sail his canoe back around to his home.

Robinson describes the two "plantations" he had on the island. He had his main dwelling, fortified with a wall, that adjoined the rock cliff into which he had hollowed a large cavern with several rooms, and his "country house," a fenced-off dwelling with a tent in the forest. In addition, he had his enclosure with goats and his small fields of barley and rice.

Robinson continues to build a comfortable life by himself on the island, taming his own flock of goats for food.



Robinson is happy with his life on the island and thankful to God for how his life has turned out. His pets are makeshift companions in his solitude.



Robinson is amused to think of how he would appear to other people. Separated from society on his island, his appearance does not matter as it might in society.



Robinson has now established a pleasant, comfortable existence on his island, with two "plantations" perhaps not so different from his profitable plantation in Brazil. The pleasantness of his life, and his contentment with his solitary life, approaching a kind of paradise on the island, serves to make the revelations of the next chapter—that he is not alone on the island—even more shocking.



CHAPTER 14

Robinson was shocked and frightened one day when he saw a man's **footprint** in the sand along the shore. He ran to his home (which he now called his castle), stayed there all day, and was unable to sleep all night. At first he thought the **footprint** was from the devil, but then reasoned that it was likely from a savage who had ventured to the island by canoe.

Robinson was thankful that he was not seen by these savages, but worried that they would see his enclosure with the goats, and his crops. His fear took away all his "former confidence in God." Robinson calls life a strange "chequer-work of Providence," and notes how strange it is that, all alone without any other humans, he was so terrified by this prospect of another human being on the island.

Whereas Robinson would have previously wished for someone to come and rescue him, now he has come to appreciate his solitude so much that he reacts to the possibility of someone else on the island with only fear. At the same time, the footprint represents the return of the unknown to his life, when he had so civilized the island that it had become thoroughly known to him.



Robinson automatically assumes that any native people he might encounter are savages. His fear causes his strong faith in God to waver. In retrospect, Robinson notes how strange his reaction to the possible presence of another person was.



Robinson continued to reflect on the situation and concluded that it was not his place to question the "providence of God," and that he should "resign" himself to God's will. He remembered the Bible verse, "Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me," prayed, and regained his spirits.

After three days within his "castle," Robinson ventured out into the island again. He reasoned that the **footprint** could have been an old one of his, and convinced himself that there was nothing to worry about. However, when he returned to the **footprint**, he saw that it did not match the size of his foot.

Robinson says that fear often causes men to discount reason and describes how he planned to destroy his livestock enclosure and send his goats into the wild and destroy his crops and "country house," so that whoever else was on the island wouldn't see these signs of habitation.

Robinson admits that he did not cry out to God in his distress instead of relying on "his providence." He thought that savages perhaps often went to his island by boat, so he decided to expand the fortifications around his dwelling, adding another outer wall with holes through which he could fire his guns. Scared of losing all his goats if attacked, he scouted out another place where he could build an enclosure for some of the goats, so that they would not all be in the same place.

CHAPTER 15

All because of his fear at seeing a single **footprint**, Robinson worked tirelessly in constructing his new goat pen, building a strong fence around it. He says that he lived under anxious fear from the **footprint** for two years. He prayed to God only out of great distress, fearing that he would be taken by cannibals or savages, and says that he thus did not pray properly with "a temper of peace, thankfulness, love, and affection."

Robinson then explored the island for another place to build a small livestock pen, and while walking up a hill saw a boat out at **sea**. When he came down the hill to the shore, he saw skulls and human bones scattered all around and a fire pit. He was so horrified and disgusted by this and by the thought of cannibalism, that he vomited.

Robinson's faith returns and his belief in God helps him through his fear. The idea of providence provides a comforting structure or purpose behind events like his finding the footprint.



Robinson stays safely insulated and isolated from the world within his "castle" for three days before finally venturing out and examining the footprint, a threat of intrusion and the unknown into his life of solitude.



Robinson continues to fear the unknown stranger who left behind the footprint, whom he assumes would be hostile. He generalizes from his own experience in order to give the reader advice about fear clouding one's reason.



Robinson prepares to defend his isolated home against any savages (though he has yet to encounter any). His fear again causes him to momentarily forget his trust in divine providence.



Robinson continues to be driven by fear at the unknown person who left the footprint. Looking back as narrator, he realizes how his fear caused him to waver in his devotion to God and stop praying properly.



This is Robinson's first encounter with any evidence of cannibalistic behavior among "savages." He reacts with a mixture of fear and disgust.



Robinson hurried back home and thanked God that he had not been born among such savages as those who had left the remains of their victims on the shore. Back safe in his "castle," Robinson reasoned that he had been on the island for eighteen years without encountering any savages in his part of the island, and so he would likely be able to continue living here without encountering them.

Nonetheless, Robinson remained frightened for the next two years, during which time he never ventured beyond his "castle," his "country house," and his new goat enclosure. He gradually became more at ease again and, amid such danger, was newly appreciative of the fact that his life could have turned out to be much worse.

Robinson harbored thoughts of attacking the cannibal savages when they next landed on the island and of rescuing their victims. He planned to hide and ambush them with his guns and started going to a tall hill every day to look for any ships coming to the island.

The more he thought about this, though, the more Robinson thought he had no right to intervene in the savages' lives. He thought that God had seen it fit that they should live in this way and he reasoned that from the savages' perspective it was not unlawful or wrong to kill and eat prisoners.

Robinson concluded that he had no right to kill the savages and thought of how this would be similar to the "conduct of the Spaniards in all their barbarities practised in America," describing how the Spanish killed millions of innocent people. Moreover, he realized that it was also not practical to attack the savages, because their comrades might come to avenge them by killing him after.

Robinson considered the savages to be innocent "as to him," because they had not done anything to him. He said that it was up to God to judge their crimes against each other. He thanked God for allowing him to come to this realization before making the mistake of killing any innocent men and prayed that he would continue to be safe from any "barbarians."

The sight of the human remains gives Robinson another reason to be thankful to God—for being born in a Christian society where cannibalism does not occur. Robinson hopes that he can continue to live a solitary, secluded life on his island.



Scared of encountering a savage, Robinson isolates himself even further on his already isolated island, not venturing outside of his dwellings. Still, throughout all of this, he comes to a greater appreciation for his life, since it could have been much worse.



Robinson's fear of the cannibals leads to thoughts of violence, as he plans to attack the next group of them he sees.



Upon reflecting, Robinson develops some respect for the indigenous people's way of life, even though it is so radically different from his own, based on the idea that God has allowed them to live as they do.



Robinson concludes that he should not attack the "savages," and distances himself from the cruel behavior of Spanish colonists (though Robinson himself has had no problems with profiting from the enslavement of Africans).



Robinson's relative tolerance toward the "savages" derives from his trust and faith in God, as he realizes that he himself should not take it into his hands to judge others and should instead leave such judgment to God.



CHAPTER 16

For the next year, Robinson did not venture to where he saw the skulls and human bones to see if the savages came again. He hid his boat in a cove and mostly stayed within his "castle," leaving to tend to his goats. He was glad that he had not run into the savages back when he wandered the island much less cautiously and thanked "that Providence which had delivered me from so many unseen dangers."

Robinson realized that Providence often saves men when they are completely unaware of it, and that often in a dilemma people have an innate sense or hint of what should be done. He decided always to obey "those secret hints or pressings of mind," and now advises all men "not to slight such secret intimations of Providence."

Not wanting to be seen by anyone, Robinson decided only to burn fires at his dwelling in the forest, where he discovered a natural cave behind some trees he cut down. Inside the dark cave, he saw and heard some kind of creature, which terrified him, but it turned out to be only an old he-goat.

Inside the cave was a kind of tunnel with a low roof, through which Robinson crawled to find a larger cavernous chamber with some kind of diamond or precious metal shining in the rock. Pleased with this secret, protected place, Robinson brought his gunpowder to store here.

Robinson says that he was now in his twenty-third year upon the island and was now perfectly happy to live the rest of his life there, with his parrot, dogs, and cats for company, as well as his goats and some tamed birds. He was content to go on living here, but says that "it was otherwise directed," and urges the reader to take from his story the conclusion that the evil one fears is often "the very means or door of our deliverance."

CHAPTER 17

Around December, Robinson's usual harvest time, he noticed a fire one day about two miles away from him on the shore. Frightened, Robinson retreated into his "castle" and prepared to defend himself if necessary. After waiting for a few hours, he climbed to the top of a nearby hill and looked out using a perspective glass from his old ship. He saw nine "naked savages" sitting around a fire.

Robinson is again thankful to God for not having encountered any savages—he sees the things that happen to him as part of God's plan. He continues to live his solitary, isolated life, scared of encountering anyone else on the island.



Not only does Robinson reflect on his new understanding of providence, but he also draws from his experience to give the reader advice about providence.



Robinson's experience with the goat is, in a sense, a microcosm of his experiences with the unknown. He reacts first with fear only to find that what he was scared of was actually harmless, and potentially even helpful.



The unknown wilderness of the island, which Robinson feared when he was first stranded on it, continues to be helpful, providing Robinson with food, animals, and now a protected storage place.



Robinson repeats his assertion of how content he had become with his solitary life on the island, with no one but his pets for company. Nonetheless, it was up to fate and God's providence to determine the course of his life. Robinson encourages the reader to learn from his example, as he offers advice.



Robinson again responds to seeing other people on his island by retreating to his isolated, protected "castle."



As soon as the savages left, Robinson walked to where he had first seen the skulls and human bones so long before. There, he saw evidence that even more savages had been there and left behind all sorts of human remains from their cannibalistic feast. Disgusted, Robinson felt resolved to kill the next savage he saw on his island.

After this, Robinson was continually worried that he would fall into the hands of savages at some point. He was thankful that he had a tame herd of goats and so did not need to hunt, because the noise of his gun would alert others to his presence.

Robinson continued to be anxious and "slept unquiet." On the night of May 16, there was a strong storm and Robinson heard the noise of a gun. He went to the top of the hill by his dwelling and heard another gunshot. Figuring that this was a ship in distress in the storm, Robinson started a huge fire on top of the hill to catch the attention of the ship.

The next day, Robinson saw a ship out on the ocean not moving. He went to the shore and saw that the ship was wrecked upon some rocks. He wondered if the sailors of the ship had tried to get to shore, or if they had been rescued by another ship, or if they had all drowned. These guesses made him thank God again for his situation.

Seeing the wrecked ship made Robinson wish deeply that one or two sailors had made it to shore, so that he could have had a companion on his island, "one fellow-creature to have spoken to me," as he put it. In all his time on the island, he had never before felt such a longing for human company.

CHAPTER 18

While Robinson wished that someone had survived the wreckage and made it to shore, he says that this was not in his fate. He saw a drowned boy from the ship wash ashore and found in his pockets some **money** and a tobacco pipe. He says that the pipe was much more useful to him than the **money**.

Despite his earlier reasoning to let the "savages" live as they are accustomed, Robinson's direct encounter with the evidence of their cannibalism disgusts him so much that he again plans to attack them.



Robinson now to some degree returns to his prior state of anxiety and fear of encountering the "savages." At the same time, he is comforted by the work he has done to make the island habitable and tame, as that work now protects him.



The ship is the first possibility of other Europeans coming to Robinson's island. Unlike when he first saw the "savages," he immediately tries to get the attention of the ship. Note, though, that his effort is not to get rescued from the island—he is content on the island—but rather to try to help the ship. Robinson has become the helper, now.



The more things Robinson sees and experiences, the more reasons he finds to be thankful to God when he looks back at what has happened to him.



Although Robinson has been content with his life on the island, the appearance of the wrecked ship brings to the surface his feelings of loneliness and desire for human company.



Robinson wishes for some human companion, but is resigned to the fact that this was not his fate. The uselessness of the money emphasizes how isolated Robinson is from society.



Robinson couldn't resist his urge to go out to the stranded ship, both to see if anyone was alive on it and if it had any supplies, so he loaded his boat with some provisions and prepared to go to the boat. But when he was a little ways off-shore, he noticed a powerful current and was worried that he would be driven off to **sea**, out of sight of his island.

Robinson wants to go to the ship partly because he hopes for a companion on the island. From his previous mistake of going out canoeing almost being driven far out to sea, he has learned to be more careful in venturing onto the water.



Robinson went back to land and climbed a hill to get a better view of the ocean currents. He noticed another current moving back toward the island, so that he would be able to use this one to return to the island after paddling out to the ship. The next day, he went to the ship, but there were no survivors—only a dog, which he fed and took aboard his boat, and two drowned sailors.

Having learned from his previous boat trip around the island, Robinson now checks the currents before going to the ship. On the ship, he finds no human companions, only another pet.



The ship was a Spanish vessel, with many supplies on board. Robinson took some chests, some casks of liquor, some gunpowder, and some kitchen implements onto his boat and brought it all back to his island. In the chests, he found some clothes, some bottles, and a good deal of **money**, which Robinson says was as useless to him as dirt.

Money is again useless to Robinson, since he is living apart from society. However, he takes it back to the island, showing that he still has some hope of one day returning to society.



Robinson returned to his prior lifestyle on the island, but his mind was full of plans and ideas for how he might escape the island. He says that his life is a prime example of "the general plague of mankind," which is not being pleased with one's station in life. He says that if he had stayed in Brazil, he could have been one of the foremost planters there.

No longer content with his comfortable existence on the island, Robinson now desires to escape his isolation. With hindsight, Robinson sees that this is a pattern with him, as he is repeatedly unable to remain content with a comfortable life.



But Robinson concedes that this kind of ambition and desire is typical of youth, and it is only with "the dear-bought experience of time," that one realizes the folly of it. Unable to be satisfied with his station on the island, Robinson schemed how he might escape.

Robinson presents knowledge as bought experience: one has to pay for it by making mistakes and learning along the way. Unsatisfied with his comfortable island life, Robinson is now bent on escaping.



Unable to sleep one night in March, Robinson thought over his life and how ignorant he was at first of the possibility of running into savages on the island. He thought of "how infinitely good that Providence is," for protecting him from dangers he didn't even know about.

Looking back on his earlier life, Robinson realizes how ignorant he was. Again, the more Robinson thinks about his life, the more reason he finds to be thankful for God's providence.



He then pondered the savages themselves, wondering why God let them live their lives so horribly as cannibals. Robinson thought of how they were able to get to his island by boat, which led him to think that he could probably travel to their land by boat from his island.

Robinson's encounter with the "savages" causes him to come near to questioning God's plan for the world. His thoughts are now completely preoccupied with the prospect of leaving his isolated island.



Robinson knew that sailing to the "main land" would be dangerous, as he might fall into the hands of savages, but he thought he might be able to find "some Christian ship" that would rescue him. Robinson says he felt powerless against the desire to leave the island and seek the "main land."

Robinson finally fell asleep and dreamed that some savages came to his island preparing to eat one of their captives. The captive escaped and ran to Robinson's "castle," where Robinson took him in and made him his servant. He was excited to have this servant to help guide him to land, but then he woke up and was disappointed to find that it had been a dream.

Nonetheless, Robinson's mind was now set on rescuing one of the savages' captives and making the captive his servant so that he could escape the island as he had planned in his dream. He constantly kept watch for any canoes coming to the island.

Robinson debated in his mind whether it was justifiable for him to kill some savages in order to free their prisoner and help his quest of getting off the island. While reluctant to kill anyone, Robinson eventually decided that he had to do this, and eagerly looked for any savages coming to the island. He saw none, though, for a year and a half.

CHAPTER 19

About a year and a half after having these thoughts, Robinson woke one day to see five canoes landed on his side of the island. He climbed the hill by his home and saw thirty savages dancing around a fire. He saw the savages had two captives, one of which they killed. The other escaped and started running in Robinson's direction, pursued by about three savages.

The fugitive swam across a creek and two of the savages pursued him, while the third was unable to swim. Robinson took a gun and went down from his hill. He waved to the fugitive and beckoned him to come near. When one of the pursuing savages ran up to him, Robinson knocked him out with the butt of his gun and shot the other one.

The escaped prisoner was so frightened by the gunshot that he approached Robinson very gradually and tentatively. He knelt on the ground and placed Robinson's foot on his head as a sign of submission and thanks for saving his life. Robinson took this to mean that he would be his servant for life.

Robinson is powerless against his characteristic desire and ambition, in this case to escape his isolation. As earlier, he assumes that any indigenous peoples he might encounter will be "savages."



As will become apparent, this dream is somewhat prophetic, and foreshadows the events of the next chapter. As such, the dream can be seen as an instrument of God's providence, preparing Robinson for what will soon actually happen.



Robinson's desire to escape his solitary life on the island outweighs his fear of any "savages." Note how Robinson values his own independence, but thinks it only natural to turn the savages into his servants.



Robinson is deeply conflicted about whether he can justifiably kill people who have done nothing to him. Yet his desire to escape the island overcomes his anxiety at killing others, even "savages."



These events are almost exactly the same as Robinson's earlier dream, perhaps suggesting that providence is at work here.



After so much internal debate earlier, Robinson is quick to action in killing the "savages" he encounters.



Robinson values his individuality, but is quick to accept the prisoner as his servant for life, assuming that he understands what the prisoner's gestures mean.



The savage Robinson had knocked out began to come to and sat up. The prisoner motioned toward Robinson's sword, which Robinson gave to him, and the prisoner cut the other savage's head off. He then laid the head and the sword at Robinson's feet.

Curious about the savage Robinson shot to death, he examined the body and its bullet wound. He buried both the dead savages in the sand, so that their comrades wouldn't see the bodies, and Robinson took the prisoner to the cave by his forest abode, where he gave him food and water.

Robinson describes the attractive appearance of the tawny-skinned prisoner "with straight, strong limbs, not too large, tall, and well-shaped." He began to teach the man how to speak English and named him Friday, after the day on which Robinson rescued him. He taught Friday to call him Master.

Friday and Robinson walked by where the two dead savages were buried in the sand, and Friday made signs suggesting that they eat them. This greatly upset Robinson, who communicated to Friday that he was deeply against doing this.

Robinson saw that the savages' canoes were gone, so he and Friday went to where the savages had gathered. Robinson was disgusted to see human bones and remains all over the ground. Robinson had Friday gather all these remains and burn them in a fire.

Back in his "castle," Robinson made Friday some clothes, which it took him some time to get used to. Robinson built him a tent in the space between his two walls, so that Friday couldn't get inside the inner wall at night. But he was soon convinced of Friday's good nature so that he realized he didn't have to take this precaution.

His experience with Friday prompted Robinson to reflect that God made all men with "the same powers, the same reason, the same affections, the same sentiments of kindness and obligation, the same passion and resentments of wrongs, the same sense of gratitude, sincerity, fidelity, and all the capacities of doing good, and receiving good."

Robinson has feared what "savages" might do to him, but the prisoner is already loyal to him and grateful for being saved.



Robinson now has a companion on his island for the first time. His wishes to escape total isolation from other humans have been met.



Robinson sees Friday as a companion, but there is a clear hierarchy in their relationship: Robinson is Friday's master, and Robinson teaches Friday English (and even gives Friday a new name), while not bothering to learn his language or customs. Robinson (and Defoe) simply assumes that he should be Friday's master, that such an arrangement is the only one that makes sense.



While Robinson earlier had some respect for the cultural differences between the "savages" and himself, he draws the line at cannibalism, which he will not permit his new companion Friday to engage in.



Robinson is again disgusted by the cannibalistic behavior of the "savages."



Robinson is first wary of the unknown Friday, but soon learns that he is a friendly and loyal companion.



Robinson's experience with Friday makes him think that God made all humans equal, but he still does not treat Friday as his equal, keeping him as a servant.



This caused Robinson to wonder why Friday and his people were not given knowledge of Christianity and were fated to live savage lives. But he decided not to question God's wisdom. He grew fond of Friday and started to teach him various things, especially how to speak English. He says that his life began to be so happy that he did not even care if he never left the island.

Now that he has a companion, Robinson is again content with his life on the island. His encounter with non-Christian "savages" make him almost question God. While he starts to see Friday as a friend, he is still patronizing toward him, teaching him but not trying to learn anything from him or about Friday's way of life.



CHAPTER 20

Hoping to rid Friday of his cannibalism, Robinson took him one day to go kill a goat. Robinson shot a goat, and the gunshot frightened Friday, who checked to see if it was he who had been shot. Robinson realized that Friday thought he was going to be killed, and laughed to show Friday that it was okay.

Robinson's rather patronizing narration presents the non-European Friday as almost childlike in his amusing ignorance.



Robinson shot a bird to show Friday how the gun worked again, and Friday marveled at it. Robinson says that Friday would have worshipped him and his gun if he had let him. He saw Friday talk to the gun later, praying for it not to kill him.

Robinson again presents Friday as an inferior, ready to worship him and his gun.



Robinson cooked some goat for Friday, who enjoyed the meat (but would not eat it with salt, as Robinson suggested). Robinson showed Friday how to beat and sift grain and planned to plant enough barley and rice to support the two of them. Robinson says that this was "the pleasantest year," of all his time on the island, and Friday began to speak decent English.

Robinson is delighted to have a human companion on his isolated island. However, while Friday is a friend, he is still treated as an inferior. Rather than mutually exchanging ideas, it is only Robinson that teaches Friday. The novel is a product of its times, and at the time when it was written Europeans considered themselves to be naturally superior to the "savages" of tropical climes.



One day, Robinson asked Friday about his native land. Friday said that he had been captured with some others during a war, and that he had been to the island before with others of his people. Robinson realized that Friday had been among one of the groups of savages he had seen on the island long ago.

Robinson realizes that Friday was one of the savages he was so afraid of earlier. But the very person he feared is now a helpful, trusted friend.



Robinson asked Friday about the land visible from the island, and learned that it was Trinidad and far beyond it there were Spaniards, who had killed many of Friday's people. Friday told Robinson that it was possible to get to where the Spaniards were by boat, and Robinson started to hope that he might escape the island after all.

Despite how happy Robinson is on the island with Friday, as soon as the possibility of escape appears his thoughts of leaving the island return. He is happy in isolation, until he realizes that maybe he doesn't have to be isolated.



CHAPTER 21

After Friday learned to speak English almost fluently, Robinson taught him how to use a gun and gave him a hatchet. He told Friday about Europe, England, and Christianity, and explained how he had ended up on this island.

Robinson again teaches Friday about his way of life, and again never thinks to try to find out about Friday's culture.



Robinson showed Friday the remains of the boat on which he'd tried to escape his shipwreck, and Friday said that a similar boat had landed in his country, full of white men who were now living among his people. Robinson excitedly thought these might be survivors from the Spanish ship he saw get wrecked in the storm.

Robinson asked why Friday's people did not eat these white men, and Friday explained that they only ate prisoners of war. One day, the weather was clear and Robinson and Friday were able to see the mainland of America. Friday jumped in excitement at seeing his native land, and Robinson wondered whether Friday would turn on him if he somehow got back to his people.

But Friday showed nothing but friendliness and loyalty, and any suspicions Robinson had dwindled. He asked Friday if he wanted to go back to his native land, and Friday said yes. He said he would teach his people the ways of Christianity and not to eat humans ever again.

Friday said he would only go back to his native land if Robinson would come, as well. He assured Robinson that he would tell his people to be kind to him, as they were to the white men who had come in the boat. Robinson was eager at the opportunity of meeting these other Europeans.

Robinson showed Friday his large canoe, which he hadn't been able to bring to the water. He suggested that they could make another boat like this and Friday could take it back to his homeland. Friday was confused and asked why Robinson was mad at him and sending him away. He insisted that Robinson come with him and teach his people to live civilized, Christian lives.

Robinson said that he would stay on his island, but Friday gave him his hatchet and said that he would prefer for Robinson to kill him than to send him away alone. Robinson finally decided to go with Friday, wanting to see the Europeans there among his people.

Robinson and Friday worked hard, felling a tree near a river and making it into a large canoe. Robinson constructed a sail, a mast, and a rudder for it. Friday was very skilled at paddling the canoe, but did not know how to sail, which Robinson taught him. Friday was a quick learner, but could not learn to understand how to use a compass.

Robinson is excited by the idea of rejoining others from European society. Despite the comfort of his life on the island, he again has a deep desire to escape it.



Friday explains that his people are not lawless savages, but have their own rules and customs. Robinson is still at this point hesitant to trust Friday fully. He still sees Friday as belonging to an unknown world. It is interesting that Robinson wants to escape the solitary world of the island, but fears Friday doing the same.



As narrator, Robinson presents Friday as obediently eager to spread Christianity and European customs to his own people.



Friday is now attached to Robinson as a friend. Robinson, meanwhile, is greatly interested in meeting other Europeans. While he now has Friday, he is still in isolation from European society.



Again, Robinson presents Friday as wanting to bring Christianity and civilized customs to his people, though one may question how reliable this representation is.



Friday displays his intense loyalty to Robinson. After living alone for so long, Robinson now has a lifelong companion.



Robinson continues to use the ingenuity and resourcefulness he learned while living alone now that he finally has someone else with him on the island.



Now, after being on his island for 27 years, Robinson was convinced that his "deliverance was at hand." Nonetheless, he went about his planting, fencing, and husbandry as usual while he and Friday prepared for their voyage. They waited during the rainy months of November and December.

As the weather improved, Robinson got ready for the voyage, and one day sent Friday to find a turtle on the shore. Friday came back running, panicking, and shouting that three canoes had landed on the island. Friday was scared, but Robinson told him that they must prepare to fight the newly arrived men.

Robinson armed Friday and himself with weapons and climbed his hill, from where he saw that there were 21 savages on the shore with three canoes and three prisoners. Disgusted by the savages' plans of cannibalism, Robinson gave Friday a gun and told him he was resolved to go and kill the savages.

Friday and Robinson set out toward the savages, but Robinson's resolution in the attack wavered, as he wondered whether he had any right to kill those who had done nothing to him. Robinson decided to go and observe the savages first, before doing anything.

Robinson and Friday went to the edge of a forest near the savages and saw that they were feasting upon one of their prisoners, a savage, and preparing to eat another prisoner next who was European. Enraged, Robinson went to some bushes from where he would be able to ambush the savages.

CHAPTER 22

Robinson saw that the savages were about to kill their European prisoner, so he and Friday shot at them, killing several, wounding others, and terrifying all the savages. Some of them jumped into a canoe to flee, as Friday continued to shoot at them and Robinson ran to free the European prisoner. Robinson asked the prisoner who he was and he responded in Latin with "Christianus."

Robinson gave the prisoner, who turned out to be Spanish, a sword and pistol. Together with Friday, they fought off the rest of the savages, killing all but four, who escaped in a boat. Robinson jumped into another of the boats, ready to pursue, but found another prisoner bound inside the boat.

Robinson is sure that he will now leave the island, but providence may have other plans. If Robinson's past experiences have taught him anything, it should be that he should be wary of predicting his own future.



Robinson's first reaction to more people landing on the island is a hostile one. He now sees the "savages" as people whom he must fight.



Robinson's disgust at the savages' cannibalism again overcomes any qualms about killing someone. It is noteworthy that he does trust Friday enough at this point to give him a gun. He believes that Friday will work with him and not betray him.



Robinson begins to doubt whether it is right for him to interfere in the savages' lives and kill them when they had done nothing to him (murder is, after all, a serious sin).



Robinson is not moved by the idea of a non-European being eaten by the savages, but the sight of a European prisoner about to suffer the same fate causes him to lose any hesitation about attacking.



It is not clear if the European prisoner gives his name as Christian or Christiano, or if he is simply identifying himself to Robinson as a fellow Christian, hoping that this commonality will make Robinson help him.



Robinson and his allies defeat the "savages" rather easily, since they have guns. This unequal interaction can be seen as representative of much of the violence of European colonization in the Americas.



When Friday saw the prisoner and spoke to him, he literally jumped for joy, laughed, and cried. He told Robinson that this was his father. Robinson gave some food to Friday's father and then Friday went running to bring back a jug of fresh water for his father and the Spanish prisoner.

Friday took care of both the prisoners and moved the Spaniard to the boat where Friday's father was. He got in the boat and paddled it around to the creek nearer Robinson's home. Robinson devised a "kind of hand-barrow" by which he and Friday could carry the two prisoners to his dwelling. Unable to carry them over his fortifications, he built a tent right outside his outer wall for them.

Robinson says that he now felt like the king of a populated island, with three subjects. He cooked some goat meat for everyone and then ordered Friday to get their weapons, which they had hurriedly left at the scene of their battle. He also ordered Friday to bury all human remains there.

Robinson had Friday ask Friday's father if there was any chance that the escaped savages might come back with a large army to take revenge on them, but Friday's father said that the savages were scared of Robinson and his guns and thought that he and Friday were gods. As more and more time passed, Robinson became comfortably confident that the savages would not return, just as Friday's father said.

Robinson learned from the Spaniard that he had been aboard a Spanish ship with some Portuguese sailors that had wrecked. The Spaniard and some others were stranded "on the cannibal coast," where they expected to be killed, but were taken in by Friday's people, where they lived without the provisions or vessel necessary to go back to [sea](#).

Robinson asked the Spaniard how he and his sailors might respond to a proposal of escaping with him. He told him that he was worried the Spaniards and Portuguese might turn on him after he helped them. The Spaniard assured him that his comrades were so desperate that they would be thankful for Robinson's help and would not turn on him. Moreover, he swore that they were "very civil, honest men."

Friday's being reunited with his father is an extraordinary, serendipitous twist of providence.



Robinson now has several comrades on his island, but the new companions do not go inside his dwelling yet, perhaps symbolic of how Robinson has not yet entirely welcomed them into his solitary life.



Robinson is even happier now that he has three companions on the island, though he refers to them as subjects, making a clear hierarchy with himself as a ruler. Robinson values his own individual freedom, but often neglects that of others.



Robinson's narrative again paints the "savages" as naïve and easily scared, since they are terrified of Robinson's guns. That the savages view Robinson as a god again shows the novel's general sense of the superiority of Europeans.



Like Robinson, the Spanish and Portuguese sailors assumed that indigenous people would be dangerous, though some of the natives turned out to be kind and somewhat hospitable.



Robinson is eager to have comrades, but is still cautious toward the Spaniard, and not trusting at first, since he does not know the sailors personally.



Robinson planned to send Friday's father and the Spaniard back to their people so that the rest of the Europeans could come back with them to Robinson's island, from where they could depart with Robinson. The Spaniard agreed with the plan, but told Robinson to sow more crops first, so that he would have enough food for all of these new people.

Robinson thought this was a good idea, and so set about growing more crops, gathering and drying more raisins, and capturing more goats. He also started cutting down trees to use to construct a boat. After the next harvest, he sent Friday's father and the Spaniard on their journey. As best as Robinson could reckon, they left some time in October.

Eight days later, Robinson was awoken by Friday running to him and shouting, "Master, master, they are come, they are come!" But when Robinson looked, he saw a boat with a sail coming from the wrong direction for it to be Friday's father and the Spaniard. He climbed his hill and looked with his perspective glass to see further off-shore an English ship.

Robinson was confused by this, especially because no English trade routes came this way and there had been no recent storm to blow the ship off its course. Feeling suspicion, Robinson kept observing at a safe distance. He encourages his reader similarly to obey the "secret admonition," to pay attention to feelings of danger. Robinson saw eleven men come to shore from the English boat, three of whom were prisoners.

Friday thought that the Englishmen were going to eat the prisoners, but Robinson doubted this. Robinson watched the three prisoners, whose despair reminded him of himself when he was first stranded on the island. He thought of how fortunate he was that his ship had been stuck close to the shore and again noted that people are "sometimes nearer their deliverance than they imagine."

CHAPTER 23

Around two o'clock in the afternoon, the Englishmen sought shade from the afternoon heat in some woods where they fell asleep, leaving the three prisoners on the shore. Seeing an opportunity, Robinson went to the prisoners and told them that he could help them. One of the prisoners was astonished and asked whether he was speaking to God, an angel, or a man.

Robinson is pleased to be on the island with three companions (or subjects), but he is still determined to plan an escape from the island. That Robinson would have to plant more crops is an indication that with society comes responsibility—he is not just supporting himself any longer.



Robinson continues to use the skills he learned by necessity while living all alone on the island, preparing for his upcoming voyage.



In a bizarre turn of providence, a ship from Robinson's own country arrives just as he is planning to escape by other means.



Robinson draws on his own experience to offer the reader a lesson about listening to one's feelings of danger. However, this is precisely the kind of sage advice that Robinson himself often disregarded in living his own life.



Like the "savages," the English come to the island with their own prisoners (though not to eat them). Robinson's memory of first being stranded on the island reminds him of the beneficence of providence.



Like Robinson, the prisoner turns to God in his distress. The sailor's religious belief is on full display as he sees Robinson as not just an instrument of God's will but possibly even as an angel or God himself. This might also attest to Robinson's own more religious nature that he could be mistaken in such a way.



Robinson assured him that he was a man and asked what the prisoners' situation was. The man identified himself as the captain of the ship anchored in the water and said that his crew had mutinied and planned to leave the captain and two of his men (including his mate) to die on this island.

Robinson asked if they should try to kill the mutineers or take them prisoner. The captain informed Robinson that there were two villains who couldn't be trusted, but that the others could be taken prisoner. Robinson and the three Englishmen withdrew to the cover of some woods to talk more, so that the other Englishmen wouldn't see them if they woke.

Robinson promised to help the captain and his men on two conditions: that they obeyed him while on the island, and that they carried Robinson and Friday to England if they recovered their ship. The captain eagerly agreed and promised that he would keep his word.

Robinson, the captain, and the two other prisoners attacked the mutineers, killing two. The captain promised to let the others live if they promise their loyalty to him and pledge their help in recovering the ship for the captain. They agreed and three other sailors, who had been apart from the group returned and submitted to the captain.

Now that the mutineers were taken care of, Robinson told the captain his story. The captain marveled at it and thought that Robinson was preserved on the island "on purpose to save his [the captain's] life." The captain admired Robinson's "castle" and fortifications.

The captain informed Robinson that there were still 26 mutineers aboard his ship, and therefore that he did not know how to proceed in recovering it. Robinson decided that they should take the boat on the shore and carry it away from the water, empty it of its supplies, and put a hole in it, so any mutineers from the ship could not use it anymore if they came to shore.

The ship fired some guns as a signal to the mutineers who went ashore, but when there was no response, another boat with ten men was sent from the ship to the shore. The captain could see the men on the boat and told Robinson that three of them were honest, while the rest were not. The captain was frightened, but Robinson reassured him and reminded him of his thought that Robinson had been preserved specifically to save him.

While the English are not cannibals, they too have brought their prisoners to die on this island. In some ways they are not unlike the "savages" Robinson has encountered.



Robinson is quick to help the captain for several possible reasons, whether out of a sense of duty to a fellow Christian, or out of desire for another friend or ally, or because he thinks the captain might be able to help him escape the island.



Robinson sees an opportunity to get a ship to escape his isolated life on the island, and is thus eager to help the captain.



Robinson is now gradually amassing a group of allies to help him reclaim the English ship and escape from the island, far from his prior life of complete isolation on the island.



The chance meeting of Robinson and the captain shows the workings of providence: Robinson has miraculously survived on the island to save the captain, who himself can then rescue Robinson.



After living and surviving by himself for years on the island, Robinson now must rely on the help of allies like the captain in order to return to society.



Robinson reminds the captain of his belief in divine providence, which gives both of them confidence in facing their dangerous situation.



Two of the former mutineers were deemed by the captain to be honest, so Robinson armed them and they joined Robinson, Friday, the captain, and the captain's two men who had been prisoners with them. With this group of seven, Robinson planned to overtake the new boat of ten sailors, who came ashore and started shouting, looking for their lost comrades.

When the sailors heard no response, three of them went back into the boat and waited out on the water, while the other seven stayed on land. Now Robinson could not attack the seven on land without the three on the boat going back to the ship for reinforcements. Robinson, however, devised a strategy.

Robinson sent Friday and the captain's mate onto the shore out of sight of the other English sailors, near a creek. The two then shouted as if they were the sailors' comrades. They kept shouting and retreating into the woods, so that the seven pursued them. Meanwhile the three Englishmen in the boat sailed up into the creek, where Robinson and the rest of his crew surprised them and they surrendered.

As night approached, the other seven sailors came back to the boat, shocked to find it empty and their companions nowhere to be found. They worried aloud that the island may be enchanted. The captain and Friday then attacked them, and the leader of the group was killed. Robinson and the rest of his group surrounded the mutineers and demanded their surrender, claiming that they had an army of 50 men.

CHAPTER 24

The captain spoke to the mutineers and they all apologized and begged for their lives. The captain told them that their fate was in the hands of the governor of the island: Robinson. The captain said that Robinson would probably send the mutineers to England to face justice, except for Will Atkins, who would be put to death for being the first to turn on the captain. Atkins begged for his life.

Robinson ordered the captain to take Atkins and two more of the worst prisoners to his cave, where the least trustworthy of the mutineers were being kept as in a prison. The rest of the mutineers were sent to Robinson's bower in the forest, where they were bound.

Robinson now has a sizable group of companions with whom he can retake the English ship, something he could not have done relying only on himself.



Now that he has companions, Robinson is still able to use the cleverness and resourcefulness he learned from a life of solitude in order to plot his escape.



Robinson's clever plan relies on the help of his new companions; again, he wouldn't be able to escape the island relying only on himself.



The sailors' fears about the island are reminiscent of Robinson's early fear of the unknown wilderness.



Robinson, who has had the experience of being a prisoner and slave and greatly values his independence, must now decide what to do with his own prisoners. The death penalty is depicted as just for the worst offenders in something like a mutiny.



After living alone for so many years, Robinson now has a sizable group of friends and prisoners with him. He is now in charge of the fate of other men; he controls their freedom or confinement.



Robinson sent the captain to speak to this second group of mutineers and see if they might help recover the ship. In return, the captain promised them to lobby Robinson for their pardon. They readily agreed. Robinson had the captain select five of these men to join them and kept the other two, along with the three worse prisoners, as hostages, who would be killed if the mutineers went back on their promise.

Robinson and Friday now planned to stay on land and look after their prisoners, while the captain and his men went to take back the ship. The captain and his men went in two boats to the ship around midnight, tricking the mutineers on board into thinking that they were the other mutineers returning from land. The captain's mate killed the mutineers' captain and the ship was recovered.

The captain fired seven gunshots from the boat, the agreed-upon signal to Robinson that the ship was safely recaptured. Robinson went to sleep, tired, and was woken by the captain, who happily told him that the ship was his. Robinson looked and saw the ship anchored just off-shore.

Robinson was so overcome with emotion he cried and couldn't speak. At last, he embraced the captain and told him that he "looked upon him as a man sent from Heaven to deliver me." He said that these recent events were confirmation of "a secret hand of Providence governing the world," and thanked God.

The captain brought Robinson a gift from the ship: liquors, wine, tobacco, meat, sugar, flour, and many other supplies, in addition to new clothes. Robinson and the captain then debated what to do with their prisoners. Robinson had Friday bring the five worst prisoners from the cave to the bower, where Robinson would speak to them.

Robinson spoke to the prisoners as "the governor," and told them he had learned of their mutinous ways and their plans "to commit further robberies, but that Providence had ensnared them in their own ways." He told them that the new captain of the mutiny had been killed and would be hanged from the yard arm. He then asked them why he shouldn't execute them.

Robinson is willing to take the risk of pardoning some of these unknown strangers, because he needs their help to get off his island.



Robinson's plan of escape from his island relies on the help and cooperation of his new comrades.



With the help of his new allies, Robinson now has the means to escape his life of isolation on the island.



Robinson sees his rescue from the island as definitive proof of the fact that God's providence is in control of the world. Earlier the captain saw Robinson as an instrument of divine providence. Now both men see each other as such instruments; each man being directed by God to save the other.



Robinson values the ideals of independence and individuality, so to what degree will he rob his new prisoners of their own independence and freedom?



Robinson sees providence as determining all events, from his being stranded on the island to the mutineers' defeat, to his eventual rescue.



The prisoners begged for mercy and Robinson gave them the option of staying on the island or going back on the ship as prisoners, to be tried for mutiny at the first English colony they came to. The prisoners asked to stay on the island. Robinson told them his story of how he had survived on the island, showed them his fortifications and dwelling, and explained how he made bread, planted his crops, and dried his grapes.

Robinson left the prisoners some weapons, including guns and gunpowder, and told them about the Spaniards due to return soon, making them promise to treat the Spaniards well. Using some ink from the ship, he left a letter explaining what had happened to the Spanish prisoner. The next day, Robinson left the island and went onto the ship.

Before the ship left, two of the prisoners swam to the ship and begged to be taken aboard, because the other three prisoners would kill them. Robinson took them aboard, they were "soundly whipped and pickled," and they became "very honest and quiet fellows." Finally, on December 19, 1686, twenty-eight years after arriving on the island, Robinson departed.

Robinson notes that this was the same day of the month on which he had escaped Sallee so long ago. As remembrances of his time on the island, Robinson brought with him his goat-skin cap, his umbrella, one of his parrots, and the **money** that had so long been useless to him on the island. After a long voyage, Robinson arrived back in England on June 11, 1687, after being away for 35 years.

CHAPTER 25

When Robinson returned to England, he felt like "as perfect a stranger to all the world as if I had never been known there." He found the widow with whom he had left his **money**, and promised to help her when he had recovered his fortune from the Brazil plantation. He went home, but found that his parents were both dead and his only family members left were two sisters and two nephews. The English captain who Robinson had rescued gave him a reward of nearly 200 pounds.

Robinson gives the prisoners the opportunity to maintain their independence and lead free lives alone on the island, which they opt for instead of returning to society as criminals. The island becomes the locale for these mutineer's deliverance, just as it was for Robinson. Perhaps these men, too, will find God.



The providential, unpredicted arrival of the English ship has completely altered Robinson's earlier plan to escape with the Spanish ship.



After 28 years of isolation and life apart from society, Robinson voyages back to European society.



Now that Robinson is returning to society, money is once again valuable to him. The souvenirs he brings with him show how fondly he now remembers his isolated life on the island. The coincidence of the dates is more evidence for Robinson of God's providence.



Robinson's parents and most of his family have died, leaving Robinson alone in one sense, even as he returns to civilization. Robinson's life of isolation on the island has rendered European society strange to him.



Robinson decided to go to Lisbon with Friday to learn what had happened with his land in Brazil. There, he found the old Portuguese captain who had rescued him so long ago, who informed him that his plantation was doing well, but in his absence its profits were being divided between the king and the church. Because it was not certain if Robinson was dead or not, the captain had been unable to take control of Robinson's fortune, even though he was his rightful heir.

The Portuguese captain promised that Robinson would get his rightful fortune back, and Robinson thought of going over to Brazil to reclaim his plantation. Instead, the captain suggested that Robinson send an official letter on a merchant ship to Brazil to have his **money** sent back to Lisbon. Robinson did this and in seven months received all sorts of wealth (in **money**, sugar, tobacco, and gold), as well as letters from his former partners in the plantation business.

Robinson was so overcome with emotion at this sudden influx of wealth that he became ill and says that he would have died if it weren't for the care of a doctor. The first thing he did was to repay the Portuguese captain for his kindness and generosity, saying that it was because of him, as well as "the providence of Heaven," that he had come into such a fortune.

Robinson says that he had "more care upon my head now than I had in my silent state of life in the island," as he didn't know where to keep his **money** safely. He wanted to go back to Brazil, but was also reluctant to live in a Catholic country. Moreover, he needed to take care of his property in Europe. So, he decided to journey back to England. First, though, he arranged for the captain's widow back in England to be given a substantial amount of **money**.

Robinson says that he had a "strange aversion" to traveling to England by boat, and tells his reader not to "slight the strong impulses of his own thoughts in cases of such moment." He planned to take a long journey through Paris, by land, and then to take a very short voyage across to England. He was joined by several English merchants and several Portuguese merchants, and the group set out.

The group had trouble crossing the snow-covered Pyrenees, and Friday was terrified by the cold weather, which he had never experienced before. Fortunately, the group found a guide who led them on a safe route through the mountains.

In a twist of fate, Robinson's plantation did not enter into the control of his heir, the Portuguese captain, whom he is fortunately able to find in Lisbon after so many years. That Robinson existed in this strange place between life and death suggests that his time on the island was a kind of Purgatory, which is interesting as Purgatory is a place where souls go to serve penance before being allowed to enter heaven. In similar fashion, the island served as a place for Robinson to realize the error of his godless early days and to come to Christianity and save his soul.



Now that Robinson is no longer living in isolation, he has desire for wealth beyond simply what he needs to survive. On the island, his fortune would have been useless.



In contrast to when he was first rescued by the Portuguese captain, Robinson now sees him as an instrument of providence, showing how fully he has adopted a Christian outlook on the world.



All of Robinson's money brings with it worries and cares that he didn't have while he was living simply on the island. While Robinson is happy to have been rescued from the island, it is not clear that society is completely better than his isolated life.



Robinson again uses his own experiences to give the reader advice. Even though he is now set for a comfortable, wealthy life, Robinson plans another adventurous journey.



Robinson and Friday confront another unknown wilderness, this time quite different from the island. Friday is fearful of the strange, new climate.



CHAPTER 26

One night, Robinson's group encountered two wolves and a bear. The wolves attacked their guide, wounding him before Friday shot and killed one. The other wolf was scared by the gun and fled. Friday then noticed a bear that was minding his own business and walking away from their group. Wanting to entertain everyone, he harassed the bear and had it chase him up a tree, where he teased and tricked it before killing it.

The group journeyed on and encountered many more wolves, which they shot at to scare away. They came across the corpses of two men eaten by wolves and soon found themselves surrounded by hundreds of hungry wolves in a forest. They circled around their horses and shot at the wolves. Robinson ignited a line of gunpowder on the ground that scared many of them away, and the group survived the fight.

Robinson and his fellow travelers finally made it to France and stopped in Toulouse, where the townspeople informed Robinson that his guide was foolish to lead him the way he had, through an area notorious for dangerous wolves. They told Robinson that he was exceedingly lucky to have survived.

From there, Robinson had an uneventful journey back to England, where he saw the kind widow again. He decided to sell his Brazil plantation and settled in England, taking care of his two nephews. One he "bred up as a gentleman," and the other went to [sea](#) as a sailor.

Robinson and his group have to deal with the unpredictable forces of nature, from cold weather and snow to wild beasts. The story about the bear is an odd one, in which a man shows his superiority to the animal by teasing it before killing it. The lack of care that the men show to the bear is oddly reminiscent of the lack of care that Robinson and the other Europeans show to the natives, though it is not at all clear that such a parallel is intended by Defoe.



The encounter with the wolves is even more dangerous than any run-in with strange wild beasts that Robinson feared so much during his prior journeys. This raises the question of whether Defoe is simply trying to pack more action into his novel or if he is suggesting that Robinson perhaps should have stayed on his island, that this experience is another result of a mistake. Either way, Robinson again uses ingenuity to save the day.



Robinson characteristically makes a mistake, trusting a guide who led him by a very dangerous path. Nonetheless, Robinson survived against the odds, perhaps thanks to divine providence.



Robinson now settles into a comfortable life in England, the sort of life offered by his parents that he originally ran from. It seems as if providence has taught him his lesson and, in response to his turn to Christianity, rewarded him. His two nephews show the two different paths Robinson himself chose between so long ago: a stable life at home or an adventurous one at sea.



Though comfortably established in England, Robinson could not help but want to go to **sea** again. The widow dissuaded him from this for about seven years, during which time Robinson married and had two sons and a daughter. But after his wife died, Robinson decided to join his nephew on a trading ship to the East Indies.

Robinson summarizes this journey, during which he revisited his island, where the Spaniards had established a successful colony (with the English mutineers working under them). He learned that they had fended off attacks from various Caribbean natives and left them with supplies and two workmen he brought from England.

Then, Robinson sailed to Brazil, and sent more supplies, animals, and even women on a boat to the island. But he says that all of the details of these events—in addition to the battles between the island colonists and "Carribeas"—will be told more fully in a sequel to this account.

Yet even after all of his dangerous adventures—even after he married and had children—Robinson cannot be content with a comfortable life at home. In fact, his interest in his comfortable life is so meager that he never even gives the name of his wife or his children, and leaves his children to go on more adventures. It is unclear how to interpret Robinson's choices here, as they seem to stand in contrast to his progression over the novel and his realizations on the island. How is it any less of a sin for him to leave his children to go on an adventure than it was for him to refuse to listen to his parent's advice. It seems almost as if Defoe was struggling at the end of the novel with an issue that afflicts many a blockbuster novel or film: the need to create a cohesive narrative being in tension with the desire to create room for a sequel. It is worth noting that Robinson's lack of care for the society in which he finds himself in England does again raise the question of whether he was better off leaving the island and the solitary life he loved.



Robinson's island, once a wilderness where he had to lead a self-sufficient life all alone, now has its own small society, as it has been turned into a colony. This also suggests that Robinson wouldn't actually have been able to continue to live a solitary life on the island even had he stayed.



Again, Robinson turns his haven of individualism into a fully-fledged, well-populated colony. Unable to stay satisfied with a comfortable, ordinary life, Robinson has plenty more adventures to tell the reader about in a future story.





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