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DANIEL DEFOE

ROBINSON CRUSOE
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FREE ONLINE ACTIVITIES

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Daniel Defoe was born in London, probably in 1660, but nobody knows the exact date. His father James Foe was not rich, but he was hard-working. He made and sold candles before becoming a butcher. Daniel added 'De' to his surname when he was older.

In 1684 Defoe married the daughter of a rich merchant. They were together for 50 years and they had eight children.

Defoe started his working life as a merchant. He bought and sold many different things and travelled a lot in Britain and all over the world. He was very interested in politics and wrote for political magazines. He also worked as a spy! When his business failed in about 1703, he decided to become a writer.

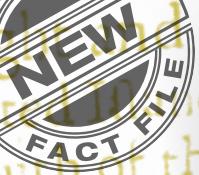
His book *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) is considered to be one of the first novels written in English and was very popular in both England and in Europe. In the same year he wrote another book called *The Farther Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*.

Defoe lived through two very important events in English history. In 1665 thousands of people died in the Great Plague of London. Much later Defoe wrote a book about it called *A Journal of the Plague Year*. In 1666 the Great Fire destroyed much of the city including the part where the Defoe family lived.

Defoe died in 1731.

GLOSSARY

- **candles:** sticks of wax to make light
- **merchant:** person who buys and sells things
- **novels:** see page 8
- **plague:** serious disease that usually ends in death
- **spy:** person who tries to discover secret information about a country



THE BIRTH OF THE NOVEL

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Clark

N: Printed to
in Peter-Noster-

Robinson Crusoe is considered to be the first novel written in English. And Daniel Defoe is often called the 'father' of the novel, which emerged as a new form of narrative at the beginning of the 18th century. As its name suggests, the novel was a literary novelty. It represented an enormous change from the unrealistic stories and romances of Elizabethan fiction and their mythological and biblical heroes. Defoe's hero, Robinson Crusoe, is an ordinary man, a person just like the readers. The book describes Robinson's struggle against a series of misfortunes and how he manages to resolve them.

Robinson Crusoe is a new kind of hero for the new capitalist system that was emerging in Britain at that time. The concept of capitalism is based on an idea of a society made up of individuals: each person with his or her own property and wealth and a determination to increase them. At that time Britain was becoming an important colonial power. Its colonies in North America and the Caribbean produced tobacco, cotton, sugar and lots of other materials that were important for the new industrial economy back at home. The slave trade was essential in order to find labour for these plantations. Likewise Robinson colonizes his island and makes the most of what he finds there.

Of course, there are other artistic, social, economic and political reasons behind the rise of the novel. Yet it is strongly connected with the birth of modern capitalism, and what was going on in the banks of London where lots of money began to change hands quickly, and where a new class of traders, of shop-keepers, of bankers, of investors were creating a new economic system.

DID YOU KNOW?

The word 'Crusoe' has become a common way to define a castaway, just like 'Friday' has become a synonym for helper.

GLOSSARY

- **castaway:** someone who is left alone on an island after a storm
- **colonial:** with colonies (areas of land that are controlled by other countries)
- **enormous:** very big
- **labour:** (here) workers
- **narrative:** how a story is told
- **novelty:** new thing
- **property:** things one owns
- **struggle:** fight

OVER TO YOU!

Robinson Crusoe is probably based on the real misadventure of **Alexander Kelkirk**. Find out more about his story on the Internet!



Robinson Crusoe



Robinson goes to sea



Poll

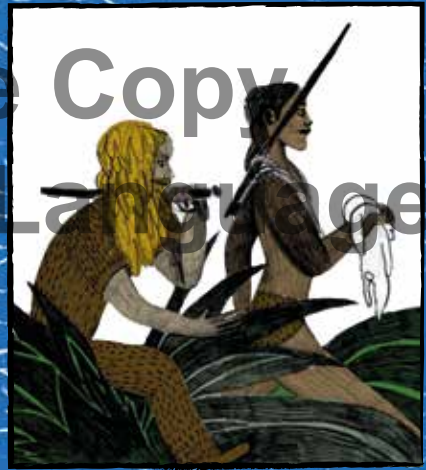
Robinson in Brazil



Robinson, Xury and the lion



Robinson is shipwrecked




Robinson and Friday



Robinson and the Europeans

1 My first time at sea

 My name's Robinson Crusoe and I'm 72 years old now. When I was a young man of 19, I left home and I went to sea. I had many adventures and I'd like to tell you about them.

My father was from Germany. He came to England and got a job in the city of York. He met and married my mother and they had three sons. I was born in 1632. My two brothers were both older than me.

When I was 18 my father told me to get a job and settle down.

'That kind of life isn't for me, Father,' I replied. 'I want to see the world.'

He was sad when he heard this. My mother was too. They both cried, so I stayed at home with them. I tried to forget my dreams, but I couldn't. About a year later I went to Hull with some friends. One of them was leaving for London on his father's ship.

'Why don't you come with us, Robinson?' he said. 'There's space for you on the ship.'

I decided to go with him and that evening I went on board a ship for the first time. I was happy to be with my friend and to be at the start of a new adventure. It was 1st September 1651.

When we sailed out of Hull a strong wind started to blow and the sea became very rough. The ship went up and down, up and down on the waves.

GLOSSARY

- **blow:** when the wind becomes strong
- **on board:** on a ship or plane
- **rough:** with high waves
- **settle down:** stay in one place and live a quiet life
- **space:** empty place
- **waves:** movement in water, normally sea

I felt very ill.

‘I’m going to die!’ I thought as I lay on my bed.

The storm got worse during the night. I couldn’t sleep.

‘Please, God!’ I said. ‘Don’t let me die! If you let me live, I promise• to go back home.’

The weather was better the following day. There was still a strong wind but the sea was calmer•. That night I slept well.

‘Well, Robinson?’ said my friend in the morning. ‘How do you feel?’

‘I’m fine now!’ I said. ‘What a terrible storm!’

My friend laughed.

‘Storm! That wasn’t a storm. Just a bit of wind! Come on deck•. It’s a beautiful day!’

He was right. The sun was shining and the sea was calm. My friend and I had a drink and I felt very happy. I completely forgot my promise to God.

After a few days of good weather there was another storm. This one was worse than the one before. The waves were like mountains. Every two or three minutes a big one came over the sides of our ship and filled it with water. I was very afraid. The sailors• were too. The captain fired the guns• to call for help. Soon some men in a small boat arrived and saved us. Luckily we all got off the ship just before it went down.

GLOSSARY

- **calmer:** less rough
- **deck:** part of a ship that you walk on
- **fired the guns:**



- **promise:** say something and then do it
- **sailors:** people who work on a boat or ship

The men in the boat took us to a town on the shore•. The people there were very kind and looked after us. They even gave us money for our journey home. I didn't want to go back to York, so I went to London instead and looked for another opportunity• to travel. In London I met the captain of a ship. He told me about his trip to Africa.

'Before I left,' he said, 'I bought some small things to take with me – toys, mirrors, knives. I gave them to the people in Africa and they gave me gold. When I got back, I sold the gold in London. I made a lot of money.'

He saw that I was interested, so he invited me to go with him on his next trip. Before leaving I bought some small things to sell for gold and a few days later I went to sea for the second time.

TRAVELLING

② Ask and answer the questions with a partner.

- 1 Do you like travelling?
- 2 What kind of places do you like visiting?
- 3 What do you like doing in new places?
- 4 What's the best way to travel? Why?

• **opportunity:** right moment

• **shore:** land beside sea or lake

It was a good trip and I returned to London with some gold. I sold it to a bank for £300.

'Now I'm a real merchant,' I thought.

Unfortunately my next trip to Africa was less lucky than the first one. While we were sailing along the coast, a Turkish ship followed us and attacked our ship. The Turkish sailors came on board and there was a fight. At the end of it, many of our men lay dead on deck and the rest of us were the prisoners of the Turkish captain. He put us on his ship and took us to a city called Sallee in Morocco.



1 Complete the conversations or sentences by choosing the correct answers. Use the underlined words to help you.

- a** 'Why don't you get a job and settle down?'
1 'We must reach the shore to settle down.'
2 'A good job is hard to find.'
3 'That kind of life isn't for me.'
- b** 'The pots are almost empty.'
1 'We must go and look for some fresh water.'
2 'We must find the other sailors.'
3 'We must hurry and go back to the ship.'
- c** The sea became very rough...
1 because it was summer.
2 because of the high waves.
3 because of the strong wind.
- d** 'I saw the footprints of a man in the sand.'
1 'They must be cannibals.'
2 'There must be other people on the island.'
3 'We must hurry and go back to the ship.'
- e** 'Captain, the men put up their hands in surrender!'
1 'Quick, bring me my gun!'
2 'Stop firing!'
3 'This is a mutiny!'
- f** Our army was small, but...
1 our enemies weren't ready for a fight.
2 it was very useful.
3 we need more gunpowder.
- g** They lifted their spears
1 in order to hide themselves.
2 to kill the prisoner.
3 but the boat could not move anymore.



2 Complete the following sentences with the present or past form, affirmative or negative, of the verb to be.

- a 'I going to die,' I thought as I lay on my bed.
- b 'There any wild animals here,' I wrote on my list.
- c 'Was it true? I really going home at last?'
- d I told my friend to swim to the shore. He was a good swimmer and we far from land, so I worried about him.
- e It strange to hear another voice after so many months.
- f 'What country it?' I said to myself. 'Do cannibals live there?'
- f He very tall but he was strong.
- h 'Here some guns and gunpowder,' I said.
- i 'You are our friend now. Nobody going to eat you.'

3 Complete the word formation table below.

| ADJECTIVE | NOUN |
|-----------|----------|
| SAD | SADNESS |
| ..... | COMFORT |
| STORMY | ..... |
| ..... | USE |
| HOT | ..... |
| ..... | SAFETY |
| REAL | ..... |
| ..... | FAITH |
| SAD | ..... |
| ..... | STRENGTH |
| LUCKY | ..... |

K Cambridge English: Key English Test Reading and Writing Part 5

1 Here is the imaginary email that Robinson wrote to his parents from the island. Fill each gap with **ONE** word.

● ● ●
Send

From: Robinson
To: Mum and Dad

Dear Mum and Dad,

I am so sorry I didn't (1) goodbye when I left, but I didn't know that I was going to be away so long.

I am writing from a very distant island. I got here after our (2) broke into pieces and we all fell into the water. I arrived safely on the island, but my friends are all dead, and now I am completely (3) Luckily, I took lots of useful things from the ship.

Life is hard here, but I must stop feeling sad and sorry for myself. That is why I (4) two lists: one of all the bad things about my situation, and the other of all the good ones. The lists show (5) very important: that it is always possible to find something good even in a bad situation. I have to accept that my (6) life is here, on this island.

I don't know how long I must stay here before a ship comes, so I am going to (7) a new house. The house must be safe, so it must have thick walls. Then I (8) to put branches on the roof to keep out the rain. I also want to make (9) furniture, for example a couple of tables and a chair.

Please don't worry about me, I am sure I (10) survive until someone comes to save me.

Love,
Robinson

K Cambridge English: Key English Test Reading and Writing Part 6

2 Write Robinson's parents reply asking some questions and giving some advice. Write 50-70 words.



K Cambridge English: Key English Test Reading and Writing Part 4

3 Complete the text below about Daniel Defoe by choosing the best word (A, B, or C) for each space.

Daniel Defoe represented a kind of Englishman who was becoming increasingly prominent during the eighteenth century: that (1), the man from the lower classes who educated himself and became a man of wide learning who (2) speak a number of foreign languages. Defoe was a shopkeeper, a manufacturer and a government spy, before (3) a journalist and professional writer. He wrote his two famous novels when he was (4) sixty. Before that, he wrote a great number of works covering a lot of issues. He wrote about almost (5) kinds of subjects. He wrote about politics, about bankruptcy (a subject he knew well), about insurance, about legal reforms. He got into trouble many times, and was arrested. His success in life was closely connected with his Protestant religious beliefs, which stimulated his courage and initiative, the qualities that Robinson Crusoe is famous (6) Defoe's novel is a success story and reflects the possibilities for human beings at any time in history. Defoe's writing style is 'plain', with no rhetorical elements. There is (7) love or passion in the novel, but there is just about everything (8) – materialism, isolation, travel, friendship, imperialism, obedience, learning by doing, and the relativity of wealth.

- | | | | |
|---|------------|-------------|-----------|
| 1 | a means | b is | c was |
| 2 | a could | b can | c must |
| 3 | a becoming | b became | c become |
| 4 | a only | b at | c about |
| 5 | a many | b all | c various |
| 6 | a about | b for | c with |
| 7 | a any | b no | c some |
| 8 | a around | b important | c else |

4 Imagine you are Robinson and you have just discovered the footprints on the island shore. What questions do you ask yourself? Write about 50 words.

DANIEL DEFOE

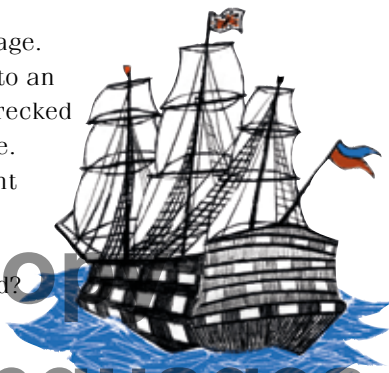
ROBINSON CRUSOE

Adapted by Jennifer Gascoigne

“We can always find something good in a bad situation if we look for it.”

Robinson Crusoe looked for adventure from an early age. He preferred life at sea and travelling to new places to an easy life at home. Then on one journey he was shipwrecked and forced to make his home on a desert island, alone. Robinson has a choice. He can give up all hope or fight to survive.

What will Robinson decide and will he ever be able to escape from the island and return home to England?



Recording in British English

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