

TREASURE ISLAND

By
ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON



**ROBERT
LOUIS
STEVENSON
(1850-1894),**



Robert Louis Stevenson was a Scottish writer famous for his adventure stories, such as *Treasure Island* and *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. He was born in Edinburgh in 1850 and often faced health problems throughout his life. Although he trained as a lawyer, Stevenson decided to become a full-time writer. He traveled widely and wrote many stories and books. He married Fanny Van de Grift Osbourne, who had two children from a previous marriage. Stevenson gained fame in the 1880s but struggled with his health. In 1888, he moved to Samoa for better health, where he lived until his sudden death in 1894 at age 44.

THEMES

The Search for Heroic Role Models «Treasure Island» is an adventure story about a boy named Jim who grows up

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and matures during his journey. At the start of the book, Jim is a shy child, but by the end, he has faced pirates, taken control of a ship, and saved many lives. Jim becomes an adult in his actions, even though he is still young in age. He tries out different male role models, like Dr. Livesey and Squire Trelawney, who are good people but don't have a strong impact on him.

When Jim meets the pirates, he is more interested in their behavior, especially Long John Silver. Jim starts copying some of Silver's actions and even becomes the captain of the ship. By the end, it's clear that the pirates, particularly Silver, have played a big role in shaping Jim's character, courage, and independence. Jim respects Silver and feels grateful for the influence he has had on his life.

The Futility of Desire

In «Treasure Island,» the main theme is the desire for treasure and how it motivates all the characters. At the end of the adventure, Jim and the crew get the treasure, and Stevenson describes them hauling the gold bars onto the ship. This shows their final successful achievement.

However, the story also suggests that the pursuit of treasure may not lead to true satisfaction. For the pirates, the treasure hunt is useless and leads to an empty hole, symbolizing the futility of their search and the loss of their souls. Their greed results in death and dissatisfaction.

Ben Gunn, who has had the treasure for three months,

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is now half mad and living alone in a cave, showing that the treasure is worthless without society to value it. Jim himself is not interested in the gold's monetary value but focuses on the coins' design and origin. He experiences nightmares about the gold and shows no desire to go back for the remaining silver. Jim has learned that greed and violence do not lead to a good life.

The Lack of Adventure in the Modern Age

In «Treasure Island,» Stevenson sets the story in the past, emphasizing that the pirate lifestyle is outdated. Jim narrates the story as a reflection after the adventure is over, revealing that he and his friends survive while the pirates die out quickly. The story associates the pirates with death and disappearance, symbolized by a skeleton near the treasure site.

Stevenson doesn't celebrate the end of piracy, but he uses Jim's farewell to Long John Silver to create a sad tribute to the pirate life. He suggests that the world might miss the charisma and spirit of pirates. Stevenson challenges the Victorian idea that traditional professional men are the only natural leaders of society. He critiques Victorian professionalism and presents a romantic view of pirates as a lost part of the modern world.

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Motifs

Solitude:

In «Treasure Island,» although Jim spends time with others, he often finds himself alone at key moments. For example, Jim is alone when he meets Pew, the pirate who starts the adventure, and when he learns about the mutiny. He is also alone when he meets Ben Gunn and when he sails in the coracle to stop the pirates from escaping.

These moments of solitude show Jim's ability to rely on himself and highlight his maturity. However, his preference for acting independently rather than as part of a team may have a downside. This independence might be why Captain Smollett tells Jim they will not sail together again, suggesting Jim may be too focused on his own path to be a good team player.

Animals

In «Treasure Island,» animals are associated with the pirates, not with Jim. Long John Silver has a parrot named Captin Flint, which highlights the pirates' cruelty and their history of crimes. The parrot's loud squawking mimics the pirates' singing about greed and violence. Stevenson also compares the pirates to different animals, like monkeys and sheep, to emphasize their lack of humanity.

When the pirates climb over the stockade fence, they resemble monkeys. When Jim first meets Ben Gunn, he thinks he looks like a deer. When Jim faces his captors,

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they stare at him like sheep, showing they act as a herd without individuality. In contrast, the captain's crew is never compared to animals, indicating they are decent human beings while the pirates are seen as less than human.

The Color Black

In «Treasure Island,» Stevenson often uses the color black to represent the pirates. The Jolly Roger, their flag, is black and contrasts with the colorful British flag. The pirates give out «black spots» as verdicts to their victims, and one pirate is named Black Dog. Pew, another pirate, is blind and lives in darkness.

When Jim is among the sleeping pirates, he goes where the darkness is thickest, likening the pirates to chunks of blackness. Many of Jim's scary encounters with the pirates, such as his exploration of the dead Billy or his accidental entry among the sleeping pirates, happen in the dark of night.

Black is associated with death and mourning, as the pirates leave death in their wake wherever they go. It also symbolizes absence and the lack of light or enlightenment, contrasting with the glimmering gold the pirates seek, which they believe will brighten their dark lives.

Symbols

The Coracle:

In «Treasure Island,» Jim finds a coracle, a small boat made by Ben Gunn, near the end of Chapter XXII. Jim uses the coracle to sail to the Hispaniola, cut it adrift, and ruin the pirates' chances of escape. He also climbs aboard the ship and kills Israel Hands. The story of a small boy using a small boat to defeat a larger man on a big ship is like the story of David and Goliath, showing Jim as a victorious underdog.

However, the coracle, which belongs to a former pirate, symbolizes Jim's departure from Captain Smollett's orders. By going off on his own to find the boat, Jim acts a bit like a pirate himself. His actions may not be entirely good in a moral sense, which could be why the captain doesn't want Jim to join him on future voyages.

Despite Jim's disobedience, his adventurous spirit allows him to save many lives and stop the pirates from escaping. The coracle represents Jim's moral ambiguity and his learning experience as a pirate apprentice.

The Treasure Map

In «Treasure Island,» the treasure map plays a key role from the start when Jim and his mother find it in Billy Bones's sea chest. The map is like a magical item that draws people into the adventure. It transforms Jim from an ordinary innkeeper's son into a sailor and hero, and

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changes the squire and doctor into maritime adventurers.

However, the map also represents desire and the futility of that desire. Everyone wants the map and is willing to go to great lengths to get it. But in the end, the map turns out to be useless, as Ben Gunn has already moved the treasure. The map leads Silver, who possesses it, to an empty hole instead of happiness, showing the pointlessness of searching for material satisfaction.

Rum

In «Treasure Island,» rum is a symbol of the pirates' reckless, violent, and uncontrolled behavior. Unlike the refined wine that the captain's crew drinks occasionally, the pirates use rum heavily and destructively. For example, Billy Bones drinks himself to death despite warnings, and Mr. Arrow, the first mate, is often drunk until he falls overboard and presumably dies. When Jim gets on board the ship, he finds the watchmen drunk and out of control, with one having killed the other. Jim can defeat his attacker Israel Hands because Jim is sober while Hands is drunk. Rum, therefore, represents a lack of control over one's possessions, mission, and self.

Plot Overview

Jim Hawkins, a young boy, finds a treasure map in an old sea captain's chest at his parents' inn. He shares the map

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with Dr. Livesey and Squire Trelawney, who organize a voyage to find the treasure. They set sail on the Hispaniola, but many of the crew, including Long John Silver, plan to mutiny.

On the island, Jim overhears the mutiny plans and joins Captain Smollett's group. Jim meets Ben Gunn, a marooned sailor who has already found the treasure and hidden it. The captain's group defends themselves against the pirates, while Jim cuts the ship loose to strand the pirates.

Jim is captured by Silver but escapes when the pirates are defeated. He guides Silver and the men to the treasure, but they find it already gone. Dr. Livesey and Ben ambush the pirates and scatter them. Jim, Silver, and the others find the treasure hidden in Ben's cave.

They sail home, leaving the remaining pirates marooned. Silver steals some treasure and disappears. Captain Smollett retires, Ben becomes a lodge-keeper, and Jim decides to never treasure hunt again, haunted by his adventures.

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Character List

Jim Hawkins:

Jim Hawkins, the young narrator, tells most of the novel's story. He is an innkeeper's son from England and is eager to go on a treasure hunt. Jim is brave and courageous but modest, never bragging about his actions. Although he can be impulsive, he becomes wiser and more thoughtful as the story progresses.

Billy Bones -

Billy Bones is an old sailor who stays at Jim's parents' inn. He used to be part of Silver's crew and is grumpy and rude. Billy hires Jim to watch for a one-legged man, bringing Jim into the pirate world. His sea chest and treasure map start the whole adventure. Billy refuses to pay his bills, showing pirates' disregard for law and order. His illness and love of rum represent the weaknesses of the pirate life.

Black Dog -

Black Dog, a pirate and enemy of Billy, unexpectedly threatens him, prompting Billy to attack. Black Dog flees but remains a harbinger of violence in the story. His name symbolizes the dark and bestial aspects of piracy.

Squire Trelawney -

Squire Trelawney is a nobleman from Bristol. He

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plans the journey to the island for the treasure hunt. He represents authority and a comfortable life but is easily tricked by the pirates when hiring them as his crew due to his lack of street smarts.

Dr. Livesey –

Dr. Livesey is a local doctor who is wise and practical. Jim respects him, but Livesey isn't particularly inspiring. On the island, Livesey shows common sense and understands human nature well, such as by using Ben to frighten the pirates. He treats the pirates and his own men fairly. His name suggests his focus on everyday life and reality, not on adventure or fantasy.

Captain Smollett -

Captain Smollett leads the voyage to Treasure Island. He is cautious and suspicious of the crew Trelawney has hired. Smollett is very professional and skilled at negotiating. Like Dr. Livesey, he is competent and dependable but not particularly inspiring to young Jim. Smollett values rules and dislikes Jim's disobedience, even saying he wouldn't want to sail with Jim again.

Long John Silver:

Long John Silver is the cook on the voyage to Treasure Island and the leader of the pirate group. He is strong, deceptive, and greedy. Silver is untrustworthy but kind to

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Jim, showing affection for the boy. He is a mix of charm and destructive behavior, both independent and reckless.

Ben Gunn:

Ben Gunn is a former pirate left stranded on Treasure Island for three years by Flint's crew. His isolation has made him a bit wild, and he looks disheveled. Despite his past, he is morally better than the pirates and switches to help Jim and Livesey. His imitations of Flint's voice give him a ghostly presence.

Pew -

Pew is an old, blind pirate who gives Billy a black spot, demanding the contents of the sea chest. Billy dies soon after Pew's visit. Pew himself dies in a carriage accident. Pew's role hints at the many pirate deaths in the story.

Israel Hands -

Israel Hands is a ship's coxswain and former gunner. He stays on the ship while others are ashore, but he gets drunk, kills the other guard, and lets the ship drift aimlessly. Hands represents the pirates' reckless behavior.

Tom Redruth -

Tom Redruth is one of Jim's companions on the ship. He is killed by pirates and given a respectful burial on the island, showing the good men's honor for the dead.

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Chapter 1

At the urging of Squire Trelawney, Dr. Livesey, and others, a boy named Jim Hawkins records his story about Treasure Island. He omits the island's exact location, as a portion of its treasure still remains buried there.

Jim begins the story by recounting his first meeting with a ragged but imposing old seaman who shows up at the Admiral Benbow, the inn Jim's father owns. The old sailor throws down a few gold coins and moves in, staying at the inn for far longer than his payment covers. He hires Jim to stay on the lookout for a one-legged sailor whom he apparently fears.

He terrorizes the others in the inn with his coarse sailor's songs and heavy drinking. Livesey cautions the sailor about the dangers of drinking, but these warnings enrage the seaman, who threatens Livesey with a knife. Livesey subdues the man with his calm authority.

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Open-Ended Questions

1. What is the significance of the old seaman's fear of a one-legged sailor in the story?
2. What can be inferred about the old sailor's character from his behavior at the inn?

Comment on the Quotations in short

1. «Livesey subdues the man with his calm authority»
2. «He terrorizes the others in the inn with his coarse sailor's songs and heavy drinking»

Complete the following Sentences:

1. Jim is hired by the old sailor to stay on the lookout for a sailor, whom he seems to fear greatly.
2. Dr. Livesey cautions the old seaman about the dangers of drinking, but the warnings only serve to him.
3. The old seaman throws down a few coins when he arrives at the Admiral Benbow.

Discuss

1. In what ways does Dr. Livesey's interaction with the old sailor demonstrate his leadership and composure?
2. What role does Jim play in the interactions between the old sailor and the other characters at the inn?