

ROBINSON CRUSOE

by Daniel Defoe



THE AUTHOR

Daniel Defoe (1660-1731) was born in London to middle-class parents. His parents were Presbyterians, and, because he was a Dissenter, he was unable to attend Oxford or Cambridge, though he nonetheless obtained a good education. Born in the year of the Restoration of the Stuart monarchy, he and his family faced religious persecution under Charles II and James II. Though he for a time considered studying for the ministry, Defoe instead became a successful salesman instead. After marriage to a wealthy woman, he settled down to a prosperous business career, but he soon became involved in politics, taking part in the Duke of Monmouth's rebellion at the accession of James II in 1685. When the rebellion failed, Defoe was forced to leave the country, returning only after the Glorious Revolution in 1688.

After his return to England, his business ventures began to fail, and he started writing in order to gain extra income. His first popular work was a poem, *The True-Born Englishman* (1701), which brought him some money as well as fame. Soon thereafter, he wrote a political satire, *The Shortest Way with Dissenters* (1702). When the Anglican aristocrats realized that they were the targets of Defoe's barbs, they had him placed in a pillory as punishment. He continued writing political pamphlets for whichever side would pay him to do so, and even spent some time as a spy for the government.

Only in later years did he turn to writing fiction. *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) was his first novel, and in fact many identify it as the first novel written in the English language. It was wildly popular, and he quickly churned out a sequel, *The Farther Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*, in the same year, followed later by *A Journal of the Plague Year* (1722), *Moll Flanders* (1722), and *Roxana* (1724), among many others. His work was never accepted by the literary figures of his day, though he sought to escape his middle-class background by changing his name (he was born Daniel Foe) and acquiring some of the material trappings of a gentleman. Defoe died in 1731 at the age of 70 and was buried in Bunhill Fields, along with other Dissenters including John Bunyan, Isaac Watts, John Owen, and Susanna Wesley.

Robinson Crusoe is considered by many to be the first English novel, and earns this distinction by the fact that it presents what purports to be a slice of real life rather than a fantastic narrative. In fact, many accused Defoe of fraud when they realized that his story was *not* true. The idea for the story came from the experience of Alexander Selkirk, a Scottish sailor who was marooned for four years on a tropical island in the Pacific. But *Robinson Crusoe* is far more than the adventure story it is often portrayed as. More than anything, it is the tale of a man's spiritual pilgrimage, from dissolute reprobate through repentance and faith to devout man of God, with many fits and starts on the way. Defoe's Puritan heritage is clearly displayed in the book, despite the fact that modern versions of the story, both in print and on film, whether live or animated, completely leave out the inner growth of the protagonist in favor of his many adventures.

PLOT SUMMARY

The novel is written in the first person, and Crusoe begins with a brief narrative of the circumstances surrounding his birth and early life. Born in 1632, the third son of a German immigrant father and an English mother, he is given a decent education and urged to study law. He longs for adventure, however, and is determined to go to sea contrary to the counsel of his father and the pleas of his mother. Finally, in 1651, he runs away from home without even telling his parents where he is going or saying goodbye. He boards a ship bound for London, which runs into a storm on the first day out. He becomes violently seasick, and his conscience quickly reminds him of the spurned advice of his parents, causing him to view himself as a prodigal son and vow to return home forthwith should he survive to reach land again. When the weather clears the next day, however, he forgets his vows and determines to pursue his adventure.

A week later, however, the ship encounters a terrible storm off the coast of Yarmouth. This one terrifies even the veteran sailors, who fear for the ship and their lives. Indeed, the ship does sink, though the passengers and crew are rescued by a boat from another ship. Despite the fact that the captain compares him to Jonah, blames him for the storm, and insists that he should return home and never go to sea again, Crusoe fears the embarrassment of returning without fulfilling his ambition and decides to go to sea once more, this time on a ship heading for Africa. This voyage is successful, and Crusoe makes a profit of almost three hundred pounds through trading on the Guinea Coast. Unfortunately, this only encourages him to try again.

On the next voyage, however, the ship is attacked by Barbary pirates and surrenders and Crusoe is enslaved by the captain of the pirate ship. Two years later, he and a young Morisco named Xury steal a fishing boat and escape from the pirate's home in Morocco. They make their way southward along the coast of Africa, landing occasionally to take on food and water. Their adventures include killing a lion and leopard and meeting some friendly African tribesmen. Eventually they encounter a Portuguese vessel bound for Brazil. They are taken on board and treated very kindly by the captain, who offers Crusoe free passage and buys both their boat and Xury, whom he promises to grant his freedom in ten years if he converts to Christianity. Upon reaching Brazil, Crusoe gets a job with a planter, and having seen the profits to be earned, he determines to buy land and start his own plantation. He gradually begins to make a profit, but after three years realizes that he could have done just as well by remaining in England rather than going through countless struggles thousands of miles from home. The Portuguese captain then returns to Europe and comes back with goods representing half the profits Crusoe had left behind him before venturing to Africa. These Crusoe sells for four times their value in England, and with the increase purchases two European indentured servants and an African slave.

Despite his increasing prosperity, Crusoe continues to be restless, and when several local plantation owners propose to organize a voyage to Guinea to purchase slaves, he agrees to accompany them and serve as an intermediary with the natives. He writes a will, leaving everything to the kindly Portuguese captain on condition that half be returned to his family in England should he perish, and sets sail in September 1659, exactly eight years after his initial departure from his homeland. The ship soon is caught in a hurricane, by which it is driven along for twelve days. Soon they find themselves off the northern coast of Brazil and decide to continue northward into the Caribbean, intending to land at Barbados. Soon another storm arises and drives the ship aground near an unidentified island. Those who are still alive clamber into the ship's boat and begin rowing toward shore. The boat is soon swallowed up by a mountain of water, however, and Crusoe finds himself swimming for his life. Finally, he reaches the shore and climbs safely above the water line, realizing that he alone has survived the shipwreck.

After thanking God for his deliverance, he begins to explore the place. It soon dawns on him that he has no food, no clothing but what he is wearing, and no way to kill anything to eat or to defend himself from wild beasts - in fact, he has nothing but a knife, a pipe, and a pouch with a bit of tobacco. He discovers some fresh water, then settles down to sleep in a tree. In the morning, he finds that the boat has been washed ashore and the ship has been deposited only about a mile out to sea, and begins to plot how he might reach both to scavenge whatever might be useful from them. When he reaches the ship, he lashes together wood to form a makeshift raft, on which he loads food, drink, clothing, lumber, tools, guns, powder, and ammunition. He returns to the island and leaves the raft on shore in a small cove, then climbs a nearby hill, finding to his dismay that he is on an uninhabited island. He finds that birds are plentiful, though he has no idea which ones are edible. The next day, he visits the ship again, makes another raft, and returns with more stores, after which he constructs a tent with a piece of sail, secures his stores, and sleeps comfortably through the night. Over the next two weeks, he strips the ship of anything of value, including sails, ropes, and iron, and finally even discovers razors, scissors, knives and forks, and some money. The night after his final trip, another storm blows up and drives the ship off its landing and out to sea. He then turns to the construction of a more permanent shelter. Locating a small hollow in a cliff face behind a flat grassy area, he constructs a large tent and fortifies it with a fence, accessible only by a rope ladder, believing that this will protect him from savages or dangerous animals, and brings his treasures into the fortress. He soon finds goats on the island and learns to shoot them. As he prepares a safe place to build a fire and separates his powder into small parcels so it cannot be ignited by lightning, he meditates upon his dismal fate, but later realizes the extent to which he has been blessed by God in his circumstances. He soon sets up a cross as a means of keeping track of his time on the island, and begins to explore some of the parcels he rescued from the ship. Among these he finds paper and ink, various instruments, and three Bibles. He then makes a list of the positive and negative aspects of his situation, but readily admits that at this time he had no thoughts of God whatsoever. He soon begins to keep a journal, from which a small section of the novel is taken, but before long neglects the Sabbath despite his makeshift calendar. One of his greatest problems is the shortage of tools, of which he has very few. Because of this, the things he desires to make cost him a great deal of time and effort, though with many trials he manages to make boards, a spade, shelves, and tables and chairs.

Crusoe then includes sections of his journal in the narrative, occasionally stopping to interject comments. The early pages review what he has already told. In addition, we learn that

he expands his cave dwelling to include a separate entrance and storage space cut through the soft rock, and gain more details on his construction of a table, chair, and spade. One particularly notable event makes a big impression on him - he empties a pouch containing ruined seed from the ship, and later discovers that some of the seed has sprouted on the spot where he poured it out. This he sees as an act of Providence on his behalf, and begins to think seriously of his spiritual condition. The thoughts don't stick with him long, however.

Soon another critical experience changes his thinking. The island is shaken by a great earthquake, in which his carefully-dug home is almost destroyed and he is nearly killed. He realizes that he will have to find another shelter where an earthquake would not be so damaging, and begins constructing one more out in the open. Meanwhile, the earthquake has thrown up near shore further remnants of the ship, from which he scavenges other useful things. He also expands his diet to include sea turtles and their eggs, which he finds very good.

Before long, he is weakened by a fever, which leaves him nearly delirious for over a week and unable to pursue normal activities for several weeks thereafter. This sickness brings him finally to the point of repentance - he acknowledges his sin before God and determines to mend his ways. He sets out on a program of reading the Bible thrice daily, finding the food he needs for his soul in the words of Scripture, and returns to Sabbath observance, while enumerating the great blessings God has given him, not only in sparing his life, but especially in bringing him such trials as led him to repentance.

After dosing himself with a concoction of rum and tobacco, he recovers enough to begin a thorough exploration of the island. Inland he finds a verdant valley, and decides that this would be an ideal place to plant his grain, from which he has been saving the seed. He makes an enclosure there, delighted to find that the stakes he cut from nearby trees took root and grew into a living hedge, then develops rough techniques for plowing and harvesting. The problem of goats and birds eating his crop is soon solved, and his harvests grow apace for several years. He also learns to dry grapes and store raisins as food for the rainy season, which he learns to anticipate and use for his benefit. As the harvests increase, he devises means to grind his grain. On the far side of the island, he finds a lovely beach where turtles are plentiful. He also captures several young goats and brings them home to begin a herd of domesticated animals. In addition to the dog and two cats he rescued from the ship, he now acquires a young parrot, whom he soon teaches to speak its own name (Poll). By the end of three years, he has learned to make kiln-fired clay pots for cooking and storage and a small oven for baking bread. He is now secure in his ability to provide plentifully for his daily needs.

While he had been on the opposite side of the island, he had spied far off a large piece of land, and now he often considers the possibility of trying to travel there. He is dissuaded, however, by the fear that it is likely to be inhabited by fierce beasts and cannibals. Having noticed long ago that the ship's boat had been cast ashore on the island, he now attempts to right it and repair it, but after much effort realizes that one man alone cannot possibly budge it from the place where it was grounded. He then devotes much time to the construction of a 22-foot dugout canoe, but again is unable to move it from the place in which he makes it. Frustrated with his own folly, he now devotes time to considering the great grace of God in his life - how much worse off he could have been, how he had been the recipient of mercy rather than judgment, and how God had brought him to repentance through his experience. Having been on the island for more than four years, his ink is gone, his clothing is much decayed, and his powder is very low. He has, however, learned to cure and utilize animal skins for clothing, and his domestication of goats and

ability to catch plentiful turtles has greatly limited his need for powder. He even manages to make an umbrella to shield himself from the tropical sun.

For the next five years, his life is fairly uneventful, with the exception of the construction of a smaller canoe, which he does manage to get into the open water. The trip is almost a fatal one, however, because he gets caught up in a strong current that runs around the tip of the island and is almost washed out to sea. God's deliverance again reminds him of the extent to which he has been blessed on his little island home, and he desires to set out to sea no more. He sets himself to improve his skills, and does so, both in basket-weaving and pottery-making, even to the point of learning to make a pipe so he could smoke his stores of tobacco. He also learns to make butter and cheese from goats' milk.

Then a life-changing experience shatters his peace and comfort on the island. One day on a trip to the opposite shore of the island, he sees a human footprint in the sand. Once he determines that it is not his own, he becomes fearful and considers what he must do to save himself from what are evidently savages who visit the island. He considers destroying his shelters, livestock pens, and crops, but then realizes that the God who has given him all these good things is perfectly capable of protecting them. Caution, however, drives him to build additional fortifications around his shelters and separates his herds so that, should one be found, others would remain. He also determines to store up more than one year of grain in case of emergencies. Later, he visits an end of the island where he has not previously explored and is shocked to see human remains scattered all over the beach. Obviously, cannibals had come here regularly to enjoy their feasts of human flesh. For a while he plots how to attack and destroy such a raiding party, liberating their captive in the process, but soon reconsiders, not only because he realizes that, should even one escape, he would return with thousands of his fellows to destroy him and his little kingdom utterly, but also because he reasons that they have done him no harm, that their treatment of one another is God's providential judgment on their society, and that, should he murder them in cold blood, he would be no better than the Spaniards, who had earlier massacred the Aztecs. He also reasons that, in what has now been more than twenty years on the island, he has never encountered these savages, so they obviously never venture inland; he now decides simply to avoid the shore where they hold their gruesome feasts. In time, he stumbles upon a cave with a long, narrow tunnel entrance, where he hides his powder, extra stores of grain, and in which he is sure he can defend himself against any number of savages should the occasion require it. He has by this time been on the island for twenty-three years.

Soon after he sees canoes on his side of the island - the first time he had seen them venture so close to his dwelling. His fear returns, and he again considers whether or not he should attack the savages. Later another great storm arises, and he hears the firing of a ship's cannon. Hoping for rescue, he lights a great fire on a hill atop the island, but when he awakes the next morning, he sees that the ship in which he had put so much hope had been wrecked in the storm. He goes out to see the wreck, discovers no living creatures aboard except a dog, and brings back a few useful stores and a substantial amount of money, which is of no use to him whatsoever. Two years pass, and he finds himself more and more longing for human company. One night he has a dream, in which a savage about to be eaten by the cannibals runs away and finds refuge in his shelter, becoming his servant out of gratitude for being delivered from death. This dream gives Crusoe an idea - that he should rescue one of the doomed natives and use this servant, who would no doubt have knowledge of the mainland, to help him effect his escape.

In his twenty-fourth year on the island, the opportunity arises for him to put his plan into effect. A group of thirty savages lands on the island, within two miles of his dwelling, and begins one of their horrid feasts. As Crusoe moves toward them with his guns, one of the captives makes his escape, being chased by only two of the captors. He outruns them easily, then Crusoe steps between them, killing one of the pursuers and wounding the other. After dispatching the other pursuer and assuring the escapee that he has nothing to fear, he takes him away to his cave. He names him Friday, after the day of the rescue, and soon finds him a faithful servant and eager learner. He teaches him to speak English, eat goat flesh rather than the flesh of men, trains him in the skills necessary to sustain life on the island, and teaches him about the Christian faith, to which he becomes an ardent convert. He also discovers from Friday that the land he can see in the distance is the island of Trinidad [some critics have argued that Crusoe's island is the island of Tobago], that seventeen sailors had survived the wreck two years earlier, and that these Europeans were living peacefully among Friday's people.

For a while Crusoe considers going with Friday to his homeland and contacting the Europeans in order to find some means of escape, but fears that they may kill him rather than cooperating with him. Friday himself has no desire to leave his new master, and will consider a return to his home only if Crusoe comes with him to teach his tribe to live in a civilized manner and speak to them about the Gospel, though Crusoe feels inadequate for such a task. The two of them do make a large canoe, however, taking advantage of the lessons learned more than twenty years earlier when Crusoe had put so much effort into building a large vessel that he had then been unable to move.

Three years after Friday's arrival, another group of savages lands nearby, and Friday goes to reconnoiter the situation. He reports that one of the captives about to be eaten is a white man - one of the Europeans who had been living among Friday's people. Crusoe determines to rescue him, and he and Friday, with their guns, easily rout the natives, killing seventeen of the twenty-one who landed and rescuing two of the captives - a Spaniard and a native who turns out to be Friday's father! Now the possibility of managing an escape seems stronger than ever. The Spaniard tells Crusoe that the surviving Europeans could be trusted implicitly, since they were struggling to survive and had no means of growing crops or defending themselves and would gladly submit to the leadership of one who might deliver them. The four citizens of the island then decide that the Spaniard and Friday's father would return whence they came and place the Europeans under contract to obey Crusoe, after which they would all return to the island and prepare their escape to a part of America inhabited by Europeans.

Before they are able to return, however, an English ship appears and lands a boat less than half a mile from Crusoe's shelter. Some inner prompting keeps him from revealing himself, and he is later glad he used caution. By observation he comes to the conclusion that the members of the boat's crew are mutineers, and that they intend to leave their prisoners, the captain and two others loyal to him, on the island. Crusoe and Friday succeed in rescuing the prisoners, capturing the mutineers, and retaking the ship, after which the captain agrees to take Crusoe and Friday back to England with him. Crusoe mercifully offers to allow the mutineers to remain on the island (they would have faced hanging had they returned to England), teaches them all they need to know to take advantage of the work he had done, and leaves with them a message for the Spaniard and his companions. Finally, after more than 27 years on the island, Robinson Crusoe returns to his home in England on June 11, 1687.

Upon returning to England, he finds his parents dead, two of his sisters surviving in straitened circumstances, and the faithful widow to whom he had entrusted the care of his English property still alive, but elderly and impoverished. He then travels to Lisbon to find the Portuguese sea captain whom he had made the executor of his will. By now retired, the captain tells Crusoe that his Brazilian plantation has prospered exceedingly under the management of his partner, and that Crusoe is now a wealthy man. He communicates with his partner, who is overjoyed to find him still living, and the two make an amicable arrangement for the ongoing management of the plantation, after which Crusoe handsomely rewards his faithful friends. At this point his intention is to return and settle in Brazil, but he wants to find the widow first and see that she is properly cared for. He thus determines to return to England. Fearing another accident at sea, he decides to travel overland to Calais, then cross the English Channel, but is delayed by early snows in the Pyrenees. He finds a guide willing to take them by a safe route through the mountains, and they embark. On the way, they are attacked by hungry wolves and a bear. Friday kills one of the wolves and frightens the others away, then tricks the bear up into a tree before killing him as well. Later, they are surrounded by as many as 300 ferocious wolves at once, but they manage to fight them off. After this, the remainder of their trip into France and back to England is uneventful.

On arriving back in England, Crusoe decides to sell his plantation in Brazil and settle down. He marries happily, and his wife bears him three children, but he soon becomes restless, eager not only to visit Brazil once again, but also to see his island. His wife offers to come with him despite the fact that she has no real desire to do so, but Crusoe soon puts his dream to one side as he concentrates on raising his children. When his wife dies, however, the old dream is revived, and Crusoe places his children in the care of his friend the widow and sets sail with his nephew, who by now is the captain of a ship of his own. The date is 1694, and he is approaching his 62nd birthday.

MAJOR CHARACTERS

- Robinson Crusoe - A young Englishman who goes to sea against his father's wishes and is marooned on a desert island for twenty-seven years, learning vital life lessons in the process.
- Xury - A Morisco boy who escapes with Crusoe from the Moorish pirate captain who had enslaved them, then is sold by Crusoe to the captain of the Portuguese ship that takes them to Brazil.
- The Portuguese Captain - He rescues Crusoe after his escape from the Moorish pirate, cares for him thoughtfully, and later is made the executor of his estate, overseeing the handling of his plantation in Brazil during the many years of his absence.
- The Widow - A widow of one of Crusoe's shipmates, she faithfully cares for his property in England while he is gone.
- Friday - A Carib native rescued from cannibals by Crusoe, he is converted to Christianity and becomes Crusoe's servant.

- Friday's Father - Rescued from cannibals by Crusoe and Friday.
- The Spaniard - Rescued from cannibals by Crusoe and Friday, he seeks to bring sixteen other Europeans from his ship to the island to plan a means of escape.
- The English Captain - He is overthrown by his crew in a mutiny, and Crusoe helps him regain his ship. He then takes Crusoe back to England.

NOTABLE QUOTATIONS

“If I did take this foolish step, God would not bless me; and I would have leisure, hereafter, to reflect upon having neglected his counsel, when there might be none to assist in my recovery.” (Crusoe's father's advice, ch.1, p.3)

“[I] had in five or six days got as complete a victory over conscience as any young sinner, that resolved not to be troubled with it, could desire.” (Crusoe, ch.2, p.7)

“I have often since observed, how incongruous and irrational the common temper of mankind is, especially of youth, to that reason which ought to guide them in such cases, viz., that they are not ashamed to sin, and yet are ashamed to repent; not ashamed of the action, for which they ought justly to be esteemed fools; but are ashamed of the returning, which can only make them be esteemed wise men.” (Crusoe, ch.2, p.12)

“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 its creatures, and render them so absolutely miserable; so abandoned without help, so entirely depressed, that it could hardly be rational to be thankful for such a life.” (Crusoe, ch.6, p.54)

“Upon the whole, here was an unbounded testimony, that there was scarce any condition in the world so miserable, but there was something negative, or something positive, to be thankful for in it; and let this stand as a direction, from the experience of the most miserable of all conditions in this world, that we may always find in it something to comfort ourselves from, and to set, in the description of good and evil on the credit side of the account.” (Crusoe, ch.8, p.58)

“It is impossible to express the astonishment and confusion of my thoughts on this occasion. 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 things 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 the events of the world.” (Crusoe, ch.9, p.68)

“I do not remember that I had, in all that time, one thought that so much tended either to looking upward towards God, or inwards toward a reflection upon my own ways; but a certain stupidity of soul without desire of good, or consciousness of evil, had entirely overwhelmed me; and I was all that the most hardened, unthinking, wicked creature, among our common sailors,

can be supposed to be; not having the least sense, either of the fear of God, in danger, or of thankfulness to him, in deliverances.” (Crusoe, ch.10, p.77)

“Then I cried out, ‘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.” (Crusoe, ch.10, p.79)

“This was the first time in all my life I could say, in the true sense of the words, that I prayed; for now I prayed with a sense of my condition, and with a true scripture view of hope, founded on the encouragement of the word of God: and from this time, I may say, I began to have hope that God would hear me.” (Crusoe, ch.11, p.84)

“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.” (Crusoe, ch.11, p.85)

“From this moment I began to conclude in my mind that it was possible for me to be more happy in this forsaken, solitary condition, than it was probable I should ever have been in any other particular state of the world; and with this thought I was going to give thanks to God for bringing me to this place.” (Crusoe, ch.12, p.98-99)

“Now I saw, though too late, the folly of beginning a work before we count the cost, and before we judge rightly of our own strength to go through with it.” (Crusoe, ch.14, p.111)

“I was here removed from all the wickedness of the world; I had neither the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, nor the pride of life. I had nothing to covet, for I had all that I was now capable of enjoying.” (Crusoe, ch.14, p.112)

“The nature and experience of things dictated to me, upon just reflection, that all the good things of this world are of no farther good to us than for our use; and that whatever we may heap up to give to others, we enjoy only as much as we can use, and no more.” (Crusoe, ch.14, p.112)

“All our discontents about what we want appeared to me to spring from the want of thankfulness for what we have.” (Crusoe, ch.14, p.113)

“Thus I lived mighty comfortably, my mind being entirely composed by resigning to the will of God, and throwing myself wholly upon the disposal of his providence. This made my life better than sociable, for when I began to regret the want of conversation, I would ask myself, whether thus conversing mutually with my own thoughts, and, as I hope I may say, with even God himself, by ejaculations, was not better than the utmost enjoyment of human society in the world?” (Crusoe, ch.14, p.118)

“Thus we never see the true state of our condition till it is illustrated to us by its contraries, nor know how to value what we enjoy, but by the want of it.” (Crusoe, ch.15, p.121)

“Thus my fear banished all my religious hope, all that former confidence in God, which was founded upon such wonderful experience as I had had of his goodness, as if he that had fed me by miracle hitherto could not preserve, by his power, the provision which he had made for me by his goodness.” (Crusoe, ch.17, p.136)

“It is never too late to be wise.” (Crusoe, ch.19, p.153)

“How frequently, in the course of our lives, the evil which in itself we seek most to shun, and which, when we are fallen into, is the most dreadful to us, is oftentimes the very means or door of our deliverance, by which alone we can be raised again from the affliction we are fallen into.” (Crusoe, ch.19, p.157-158)

“I have been, in all my circumstances, a *memento* to those who are touched with the general plague of mankind, whence, for aught I know, one-half of their miseries flow; I mean that of not being satisfied with the station wherein God and nature hath placed them.” (Crusoe, ch.20, p.169)

“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.” (Crusoe, ch.24, p.206)

“Let no man despise the secret hints and notices of danger, which sometimes are given to him when he may think there is no possibility of its being real. That such hints and notices are given us, I believe few that have made any observations of things can deny; that they are certain discoveries of an invisible world, and a converse of spirits, we cannot doubt; and if the tendency of them seems to be to warn us of danger, why should we not suppose they are from some friendly agent (whether supreme or inferior and subordinate, is not the question), and that they are given for our good?” (Crusoe, ch.25, p.214)

ESSAY QUESTIONS

Discuss the following in a five-paragraph essay:

1. Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* is often thought of as an adventure story, or even a children's story, but it is really a tale of a man who finds God under the most extreme of circumstances. How are the fundamental themes of the novel altered when the story is presented as an adventure tale, focusing on what the protagonist *does* rather than what he *is*?
2. Daniel Defoe was raised in a Presbyterian family, and early in life fought in opposition to Stuart tyranny and wrote against the persecution of Dissenters. What elements of his Puritan upbringing show through in his most famous novel, *Robinson Crusoe*? Is the protagonist, like the author, a Puritan? Why or why not? Support your answer with details from the novel.

3. When Daniel Defoe wrote *Robinson Crusoe* in 1719, England was still in the early stages of building its empire. The novel reflects in various ways on the mentality of imperialism. Did Defoe favor British imperial expansion, or would you classify him as a critic of the empire-builders? Support your assessment with specifics from the novel.
4. Discuss the attitude toward slavery found in Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. To what extent was the author a man of his times in this respect? Evaluate his understanding of slavery in the context of the Bible's teaching on the subject.
5. Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* is often regarded as a racist novel. Though the attitude toward people of other races displayed in the novel was commonplace in the eighteenth century, this is no excuse for racism. Would you agree with the assessment of critics that Defoe's novel demonstrates an almost casual racism? Why or why not?
6. Compare and contrast Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* with William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*. What do these "people stranded on a deserted island" stories have in common? Consider major themes along with views of man and society in answering the question.
7. Unlike the situation in William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*, where the children are stranded on a desert island with no resources other than those to be found on the island itself, the protagonist in Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* is well-supplied from the shipwreck that strands him on the island. How do the two authors use these different conditions to contribute to their respective central ideas, such as human depravity and divine providence?
8. Unlike the situation in William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*, where the children are stranded on a desert island with no resources other than those to be found on the island itself, the protagonist in Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* is well-supplied from the shipwreck that strands him on the island. How would Defoe's story have been different had Crusoe had no resources like the children in Golding's novel? Would this have altered the fundamental themes of the story? Why or why not?
9. Discuss the spiritual pilgrimage of the protagonist in Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. How is he converted? What important lessons does he learn? How does he grow in knowledge of God and knowledge of himself during his twenty-seven years on the island? Use specific quotations to support your argument.
10. Discuss the spiritual failures of the protagonist in Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. When he backslides, what are the causes of his spiritual decline? What lessons does the author intend the reader to learn from these incidents? Choose three specific examples of backsliding and expound on the ways that God uses even our sins and failures to promote spiritual growth.

11. How does Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* illustrate the meaning of the Cultural Mandate (Genesis 1:28)? Pay special attention to the protagonist's interaction with the natural environment in which he finds himself marooned. Is he a good steward of his island? Why or why not?
12. To what extent is Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* a good illustration of the Protestant Work Ethic? The protagonist is clearly a compulsive and diligent worker, but be sure to examine his motives for working. Are these motives based on or derived from biblical principles, or are they more humanistic in character? Support your arguments with specific quotations from the novel.
13. Discuss the economic implications of Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. Karl Marx, in his *Das Kapital*, argued that Crusoe's experience supported Communism because labor has more value than money in the story. What basic economic principles does the novel assume, or even promote? Use specific incidents and quotations from the novel to support your arguments.
14. In Act II, scene two of William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, the protagonist says, "There is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so." To what extent does Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* support the Prince of Denmark's assertion? To what extent does this statement reflect biblical truth? Support your arguments from the novel and from Scripture.
15. Near the beginning of John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Satan says, "The mind is its own place, and in itself / Can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven." Would Robinson Crusoe agree with Satan's assertion? Does the Bible agree? To what extent? Use specific incidents and quotations from Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and from Scripture to support your argument.
16. Early in Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, the protagonist says, "I have often since observed, how incongruous and irrational the common temper of mankind is, especially of youth, to that reason which ought to guide them in such cases, viz., that they are not ashamed to sin, and yet are ashamed to repent; not ashamed of the action, for which they ought justly to be esteemed fools; but are ashamed of the returning, which can only make them be esteemed wise men." Compare Defoe's novel to the biblical story of the Prodigal Son. What parallels do you see? Are the lessons of the stories the same? In what important ways do the two stories differ?
17. Discuss the concept of divine providence as it is used in Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. What signs of Providence does the protagonist observe, and how do they impact his life? Is the author's presentation of the subject biblical? Why or why not?
18. Discuss the role of prayer in Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. What circumstances drive the protagonist to prayer? Are his prayers biblical ones? How do the prayers he offers throughout the book demonstrate spiritual growth?

19. In Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, the protagonist at one point advises his readers that "they will find deliverance from sin a much greater blessing than deliverance from affliction." How does the novel illustrate this truth? Why is this biblical principle so difficult for people to grasp? Why are peace and gratitude in this life dependent on doing so?
20. After becoming firmly established on his island, the protagonist of Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* concludes, "I was here removed from all the wickedness of the world; I had neither the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, nor the pride of life. I had nothing to covet, for I had all that I was now capable of enjoying." Is this true, or was Crusoe deceiving himself? What biblical teachings contradict the protagonist's assertion? What incidents in Church History show him to be mistaken?
21. Discuss the role of thankfulness in Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. At one point in the novel, the protagonist says, "All our discontents about what we want appeared to me to spring from the want of thankfulness for what we have." Evaluate Crusoe's statement on the basis of Scripture and illustrate it using incidents in the novel.
22. Do you consider the protagonist in Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* a heroic figure? Why or why not? Do you think that Defoe intends to portray him as such, or does his value as an exemplar lie more in the fact that he is a flawed human being with no qualities that would make him special?
23. What do you consider the greatest strengths in the character of the protagonist in Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*? Choose three and argue why these three are the most important, especially in relationship to the major themes of the novel.
24. What do you consider the greatest weaknesses in the character of the protagonist in Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*? Choose three and argue why these three are the most important, especially in relationship to the major themes of the novel.
25. In Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, to what extent may Friday and the Portuguese ship captain be viewed as foils? Consider both the similarities and differences and how these emphasize important aspects of who they are. How may the juxtaposition of these two help to bring out the leading themes of the novel?
26. Daniel Defoe, the author of *Robinson Crusoe*, was a contemporary of Thomas Hobbes and John Locke, two great political theorists who had diametrically opposing views of human nature, and thus of the nature of the ideal society. With which of these political theorists would Defoe have been more in agreement, both as to the fundamental qualities of human nature and as to the nature of a just society? Support your arguments with specifics from the novel.

27. To what extent is the protagonist of Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* a materialist? Consider his attitudes toward material possessions, the words he speaks on the subject, and the actions in which he engages. Evaluate his relationship to material things in the light of the teachings of Scripture.
28. Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* contains many biblical allusions, including ones to the stories of Adam and Eve, Job, and Jonah. How does the experience of the protagonist relate to these biblical narratives? Are the parallels extensive, or are they restricted to limited aspects of the Bible stories in question?
29. On several occasions in Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, the protagonist plans to attack cannibals who have landed on his island, but finds that pangs of conscience prohibit him from doing so. Evaluate his reasoning in these situations. Does he have the right to attack and kill the cannibals because of the abominations they practice, or is he right to conclude that he should leave them to the judgment of God? Support your conclusions from the novel and from Scripture.
30. Discuss the treatment of cultural relativism in Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. To what extent does the author believe that each culture has the right to establish its own moral standards, and to what extent does he believe that universal standards of morality exist and ought to be enforced, even upon those who are ignorant of them? How does Defoe's answer to this question contribute to his view of the British colonial enterprise?
31. Evaluate the protagonist's attitude toward religious toleration in Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. Defoe himself, a committed Presbyterian, had been the object of religious persecution in his early life. To what extent would you describe Crusoe as religiously tolerant, despite his own description when he says, "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." Use details from the novel to support your conclusions.
32. Some critics believe that Part I of Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* was in part a satire of Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, the most famous fictional travelogue of his day. Discuss any connections you see between the two works, and give examples of ways in which the later work may be intended to ridicule the earlier.
33. Compare and contrast the changes experienced by the protagonists during their adventures in Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* and Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. Which man benefits more from his experiences? Cite specifics from the two novels to support your arguments.
34. Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* was in part a satire of Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, yet the two novels are very different in their focus. Would you agree that Defoe's work is more concerned with the inner life of the protagonist, while Swift's is more concerned with influencing society? Why or why not? Cite specifics from the two books to support your conclusions.

35. Jonathan Swift was a minister of the Church of Ireland, and had no time for either Dissenters or Catholics. Daniel Defoe was a Presbyterian with definite Puritan leanings. How are the differing religious perspectives of the two authors discernible in their two most famous writings, *Gulliver's Travels* and *Robinson Crusoe*? Be sure to cite specifics from both works as you answer the question.
36. When the protagonist first arrives on the island in Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, he sets up a cross on the beach and begins to make notches in it to keep track of his time on the island. What is the symbolic significance of this action? How does it relate to the overall theme of redemption that is woven throughout the novel?
37. Discuss the role of suffering in bringing to pass the purposes of God in a person's life as it is reflected in Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. Consider elements like the protagonist's enslavement, his shipwreck, and the sickness that brings about his conversion in constructing your answer.
38. Discuss the role of dreams in Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. Besides the obvious element of foreshadowing, how do the protagonist's dreams affect his development as a person along with the plot of the story?
39. In the early years of English fiction, some critics complained that fiction was no more than lies, and that as such it imperiled the souls of the readers. To what extent is Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* a response to these fears? In what ways does the novel demonstrate the capacity of fiction to edify as well as entertain? Cite specific incidents and quotations from the book to support your arguments.
40. Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* is written as a first-person narrative, but aside from the Journal entries is presented in retrospect - the protagonist is describing his experiences long after they actually happened. Because of this, the narrative is full of Crusoe's editorial comments about his experiences. What aspects of the narrative demonstrate that Crusoe writes as a Christian, even when describing the time of his life before his conversion?
41. In Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, to what extent does the isolation of the protagonist on a desert island make him an Everyman whose spiritual pilgrimage is intended to symbolize what all who come to Christ must experience? Why does the element of isolation present this theme in bolder relief than would have been the case had Crusoe lived his life in the midst of society, either in England or in Brazil?
42. The great works of John Bunyan, including the spiritual autobiography *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* (1666), were written during the lifetime of Daniel Defoe. To what extent is Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* intended to function as a spiritual autobiography despite its fictional format? What does it have in common with Bunyan's work? To what extent do the two follow the same pattern in their descriptions of the religious experiences of the central figures?

43. The great works of John Bunyan, including the allegory *Pilgrim's Progress* (1678), were written during the lifetime of Daniel Defoe. To what extent is Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* intended to function as a narrative of a man's journey from sin to salvation despite its fictional format? What does it have in common with Bunyan's work? To what extent do the two follow the same pattern in their descriptions of the religious experiences of the central figures?
44. In Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, to what extent does the protagonist ultimately reproduce on the island what he insists he has been trying to flee? Consider the question from religious, economic, and political perspectives. Does the irony of the fact that he becomes a Christian, a middle-class capitalist, and an imperialist contribute to the themes Defoe is trying to address?
45. Discuss the idea that Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* may be understood as an evangelistic tract, not in the sense that we think of today, but in the sense of being created largely for the purpose of turning the heart of the reader to God. In answering the question, consider the relative importance of different aspects of the novel, especially the relationship of the adventure story to the spiritual pilgrimage of the protagonist.