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Robinson Crusoe

Daniel Defoe

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Book Summary

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

He was rescued by a Portuguese ship and started a new adventure. He landed in Brazil, and, after some time, he became the owner of a sugar plantation. Hoping to increase his wealth by buying slaves, he aligned himself with other planters and undertook a trip to Africa in order to bring back

a shipload of slaves. After surviving a storm, Crusoe and the others were shipwrecked. He was thrown upon shore only to discover that he was the sole survivor of the wreck.

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

As time passed, Crusoe became a skilled craftsman, able to construct many useful things, and thus furnished himself with diverse comforts. He also learned about farming, as a result of some seeds which he brought with him. An illness prompted some prophetic dreams, and Crusoe

began to reappraise his duty to God. Crusoe explored his island and discovered another part of the island much richer and more fertile, and he built a summer home there.

One of the first tasks he undertook was to build himself a canoe in case an escape became possible, but the canoe was too heavy to get to the water. He then constructed a small boat and journeyed around the island. Crusoe reflected on his earlier, wicked life, disobeying his parents, and wondered if it might be related to his isolation on this island.

After spending about fifteen years on the island, Crusoe found a man's naked footprint, and he was sorely beset by apprehensions, which kept him awake many nights. He considered many possibilities to account for the footprint and he began to take extra precautions against a possible intruder. Sometime later, Crusoe was horrified to find human bones scattered about the shore, evidently the remains of a savage feast. He was plagued again with new fears. He explored the nature of cannibalism and debated his right to interfere with the customs of another race.

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

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

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

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

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



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