

Introduction

This is a story about an Englishman called Robinson Crusoe. He loved sailing and became rich by trading in different parts of the world. He bought a farm in Brazil and lived there, but one day he set off again to sail to West Africa. Unfortunately, his ship was wrecked in a storm. He swam to a desert island and found himself all alone. He had to build his own house, find his own food, and protect himself from danger including wild animals and cannibals — people who eat humans!

Robinson Crusoe is based on a true story of Alexander Selkirk. In 1704 Selkirk was sailing in the Pacific Ocean off the coast of South America, to watch the Spanish and Portuguese merchant ships for the English government. The stormy season came and the ship was damaged. The captain, William Dampier, stopped at an island called Mas a Tierra, four hundred miles from the coast of Chile. Although Selkirk thought that the ship would soon break and was no longer safe to sail in, the captain decided to sail again. Selkirk therefore chose to stay alone on the island to wait for help. He took with him from the ship his bedding, a gun and bullets, tobacco, a small axe, a knife, a kettle, a Bible, his mathematical instruments, and some books. In Defoe's story, Robinson Crusoe also got some of these things from the ship, then lived in a cave and tamed goats, just as Selkirk did. Selkirk had stayed on the island for four years when an English ship came and saved him. But it is a different story for Crusoe.

Robinson Crusoe is written in the first person, like a diary. Let's read what Crusoe tells us about his life on the island!

About Daniel Defoe

Daniel Defoe was born Daniel Foe in London in 1660. Later he added 'De' to his surname. He was a journalist and a poet, and was arrested a few times because he wrote something against the government. He did not start writing novels until he was nearly sixty. He was one of the earliest English novelists and he published his first novel *Robinson Crusoe* in 1719. It was followed by *The Farther Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*, which is about Robinson Crusoe's second visit to the desert island. Defoe, who was considered 'the founder of the English novel', died in 1731 in London.

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Shipwrecked

A voyage to West Africa

I was born in the year 1632, in York, a city in the north of England. From the time I was very young I was always interested in ships and the sea. When I was nineteen I made my first voyage. I quickly learnt all I could about sailing and how to find my way around the world. Everywhere we went I did some trading, and I soon became quite rich. 5

Later I bought a farm in Brazil, in South America. I thought I would live there for the rest of my life, and that I would never go to sea again. But some of my friends in Brazil heard that I was a good sailor, and that I had twice been to West Africa. They wanted to do some business in West Africa. They asked me to go there and trade for them. Foolishly, I agreed. 10 15

A ship was made ready and the cargo was put on board. Our ship was not very large — about one hundred and twenty tons. It carried six guns and fourteen men besides the captain, his boy and myself. Our cargo was beads, bits of glass, shells, mirrors, knives, scissors, axes and other small things that we could trade in Africa. 20

Stormy weather

I went on board on 1st September 1659, and we set sail the same day. First we travelled towards the north, along the coast. We had good weather, but it was very hot all the way until we came to Cape St Augustino. From this point we sailed out to sea, out of sight of 25