
Robert Stevenson and His Treasure Island: The Book Review

About the Author and the Novel

"Treasure Island" was written by Robert Louis Stevenson. He was born on 13 November 1850 in Edinburgh, Scotland. He was a novelist, poet, and travel writer. During his early age, he suffered from poor health due to which it was difficult for him to do regular schooling. He went to many schools and universities including Mr. Henderson's School in Edinburgh (1857), Edinburgh Academy (1861), Boarding School in Isleworth (1863), and University of Edinburgh (1867). He showed no interest in studying engineering at university and devoted his time to art and literature. His popular works in the literature include "Treasure Island", "A Child's Garden of Verses", "The Master of Ballantrae" and "Kidnapped". He died on 3 December 1894 in Samoa.

"Treasure Island" is a classic adventure novel narrating a story of pirates, voyages, and treasure on an island. Before being published as a book in 1883, it appeared in a children's magazine named Young Folks during the period of 1881-1882. When it was published as a book, it became the author's first financial success.

Summary of the Novel

The story opens in an inn named "Admiral Benbow" near Bristol on the western coast of England. An old seaman, Billy Bones, arrives at the inn to stay there. He is carrying a sea-chest with him. He drinks too much rum and keeps singing an old sea-song:

"Fifteen men on the dead man's chest

Yo-ho-ho, and a bottle of rum!" (page-13).

All the locals are frightened due to his drunkenness. He asks the owner's son, Jim Hawkins, to keep looking for "a seafaring man with one leg". One day, a pirate called Black Dog arrives at the inn to meet Bones. They start fighting with each other and both get wounded. The pirate retreats escaping a knife attack from Bones. After that Bones tells Jim about Captain Flint's treasure. He and the pirate both were once in Captain Flint's crew. Now all the other crew members are after him to know the location of the treasure.

Meanwhile, Jim's father dies and Jim becomes busy in mourning and funeral work. For a few days, he gets no time to think about Bones' story. After some days, a blind beggar named Pew comes to the inn and gives a black piece of paper, "The Black Spot", to Bones. This is a summon to share the location of the treasure until 10 PM. Bones suffers a stroke and collapses immediately. After Bones' death, Jim tells his mother Bones' story of treasure. She decides to open the sea-chest and to make money from it, not more than what is due on Bones. They find coins from different countries, some clothes and some papers in the sea-chest.

Meanwhile, they see Pew and other pirates coming to ransack the inn. They escape from the

inn and take papers and money with them. The pirates do not find what they are looking for in the inn and are chased away by some officers from the town. Pew dies in an accident during the chase. Jim and the officers visit Dr. Livesey and Squire Trelawney. Jim hands over the papers to them. They contain the map of the island where the treasure is located.

In a few days, Trelawney gets a ship called Hispaniola commissioned and hires a crew for a voyage. Jim is to go on a voyage as a cabin-boy and Livesey as the ship-doctor. In the crew, there is a cook named Long John Silver who has only one leg. This reminds Jim of the seafaring man which Bones had told him to look for. But he does not look like a pirate and has a very good nature. Before starting the journey, Captain Smollet warns the squire and the doctor that the crew is not trust-worthy and they are planning a mutiny on the ship. Trelawney and Livesey have decided to keep the story of treasure a secret but the whole crew somehow knows it.

For a few days, everyone on the ship acts very well and nothing suspicious happens. One day, Silver is overheard by Jim. He is convincing one of the crew members to join the group of traitors. Jim gets to know that Silver is planning to kill everyone who is not in mutiny, once the treasure is found. He also learns that Silver is one of Flint's crew. He immediately tells all these things to the Captain, the squire, and Dr. Livesey. They decide against doing anything until they reach the island. When the ship reaches near the island, Livesey plans to separate the pirates. He tells the crew that some of them should go to shore in the boat for inspection. Silver goes with them to the shore and only six out of nineteen pirates remain on the ship.

Jim also sneaks to the shore and starts exploring the island. He sees two of the honest men, who don't want to join the mutiny, being murdered by Silver on the island. Terrified that he will also be killed by Silver on being seen there, he runs towards the woods. He finds a wild-looking and dirty man in the woods. After talking to him, he gets to know that he is Ben Gunn, one of Flint's old crew. Ben tells him that the treasure was buried by Flint on the island some years ago with the help of six men and he killed all of them after burying the treasure. Three years ago, Gunn came to the island along with some other men to search for the treasure. On not finding the treasure, the other men left him marooned on the island. Ben requests Jim to help him return home from the island and offers to help him find the treasure. Jim assures him that his friends will surely help him.

Meanwhile, Dr. Livesey, the Captain, Trelawney, and some other honest men on the ship collect food, drinks, and some weapons on a boat and leave the ship. The pirates start firing cannon-balls at them but they miss their target. Trelawney shoots some of the pirates on the ship. They take shelter in a stockade on the island. On hearing the sound of firing, Jim and Ben start running in different directions. Jim reaches the stockade. A battle occurs between the pirates and the men at the stockade. Pirates' count is now reduced to nine and two of the honest men also die in the battle. Captain Smollet is also wounded. After taking some rest, Livesey arms himself and leaves the stockade to meet Ben Gunn as told by Jim. After Livesey leaves, Jim also arms himself with two pistols and a knife and sneaks away. He finds the boat, about which Ben has mentioned during the talk, behind a white rock. He takes the boat to the shore and starts sailing towards Hispaniola. On reaching the ship, he cuts its anchor cables. He climbs on board and finds one dead pirate and one wounded pirate on the ship. Jim brings the pirate some wine to drink and some biscuits to eat and also binds his wound. The pirate promises Jim to help him sail the ship to shore. Jim starts sailing the ship as instructed by the pirate. Once they reach the shore, the pirate attacks Jim. He saves himself by climbing up the rigging. The pirate throws his knife which gets pinned to Jim's shoulder. Then Jim shoots and the pirate falls

in the sea and dies. He safely returns to the stockade and plans to surprise his sleeping friends. On entering the stockade, he hears Silver's parrot crying, "Pieces of Eight!".

Pirates are there inside the stockade and they capture him. Jim promises Silver that he will protect him from being hanged on return to England. So, Silver takes Jim's side while other pirates want to kill him. Then Silver reveals the treasure map, which has been given to him by Livesey, to the pirates. Jim wonders why the doctor has given a map to Silver. Now the pirates agree on not killing Jim. The next morning, Livesey comes at the stockade to treat the wounded pirates (He believes that he should always fulfill his duty as a doctor regardless of who the patient is). Jim tells the doctor about his last night adventure with the ship. The doctor tries to convince Jim to run along with him from there. But he does not agree and says that Silver has saved his life. When the doctor leaves, Silver, Jim and some of the pirates go to search the treasure.

On the way, they find a skeleton lying below a tree whose arms are pointing in the direction of the treasure. Then they hear the distant voice of a man singing the old sea-song. Some superstitious pirates get terrified as they think that Flint's ghost is there in the woods. Silver tells them to keep these thoughts aside and continue on the way. On reaching the location of the treasure, they find that nothing is left there except a single gold coin. Someone has found the treasure before them. Knowing that Silver already knew that there is nothing left and has fooled them taking there, the pirates get enraged and try to kill Jim and Silver. At the same moment, Livesey, Ben, and another honest man appear from behind the trees and shoot the pirates. Thus both are saved. After that Livesey tells Jim that Ben found the treasure and hid it in a cave and he got to know this when he met Ben after the battle that day. On returning to the stockade, he handed over the map to Silver to distract the pirates, and he along with Trelawney and Smollet left the stockade to protect the treasure in the cave.

Now all of them load the treasure on the ship and sail off the shore. They leave three pirates in the stockade marooning on the island with some food, medicines, wine, and guns. On the way home, they stop at a port in South America. Silver escapes from the ship during the stop and takes a bag of gold coins with him. They return to England and take their share of the treasure. The author does not reveal the location of the island until the end because there is still treasure left on the island.

My Opinion about the Novel

I enjoyed a lot reading this novel. This is an adventure novel. All the scenes have been created in such a way that one can imagine it while reading. Scenes have been described in much detail. But the grammar used in the novel is terrible. It is quite different from what I know. "You was", "I care", and many other such phrases have been used in the novel which absolutely makes no sense. Also, many old English words have been used in the novel. I recommend this book to other readers. Those who love adventure novels must read this because in my view it is the best adventure novel. I give it 4 stars out of 5.