Treasure Island

Robert Louis Stevenson

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Sample extract from *Treasure Island* includes:

Introduction by Eoin Colfer

Who's who in *Treasure Island*

Extract from *Treasure Island*

Biography of Robert Louis Stevenson

INTRODUCTION BY
EOIN COLFER

What is every boy's dream?

To be plunged bodily into high adventure. To be plucked from everyday life and dropped into a seat-of-the-pants existence, with danger at every turn. And, of course, there must be pirates. Bloodthirsty, murderous sea dogs. Filthy as bilge water and treacherous with gold fever.

For me, this is the essence of *Treasure Island*. Jim Hawkins could be any boy on the planet. He is no muscle-bound superhero. He is an ordinary lad who finds himself in an extraordinary situation. In the reader's mind, he is Jim Hawkins. At least, he could be. It's just possible. I know that for eight hours in 1977 I was Jim Hawkins.

I remember approaching the book with great reluctance – after all, it is a classic, and teachers were always pushing classics at us. And if you read a classic without objection that would be just the same as admitting that teachers could occasionally be right. Surely that couldn't be true, could it?

Somehow *Treasure Island* penetrated my defences, and I began to read. Within pages, and quite against my will, I was completely immersed in Robert Louis Stevenson's world of danger and intrigue. I clearly remember being so worried about Jim Hawkins's immediate future that I actually left a sweaty handprint on my school desk. Of course, when the teacher asked me if I liked *Treasure Island*, I shrugged and said: "Sokay, I s'pose.' Even then, you could tell I was going to be a writer.

So now Jim is not alone on the *Hispaniola*, we are along for the ride with him, and we stay there by his side, inside his head, until the last page. We hide inside the apple barrel together, overhearing the pirates' plan. We fall under Long John Silver's spell and finally we triumph on Treasure Island. It is a breathless journey and the closest thing to a real pirate adventure we can experience without an eye patch and a time machine. *Treasure Island* makes us believe that adventure is not only possible, but probable. Every old man we see could be the one to hand up a treasure map and spark off a whirlwind adventure.

Reading *Treasure Island* again as a writer, Stevenson's characters make me grind my teeth jealously, which is not an attractive sight. Just think: Jim Hawkins, Billy Bones, Ben Gunn and, of course, Long John Silver are all in the same book! Most writers would get a trilogy from such a wealth of characters. Who hasn't heard of Long John Silver? As a teacher, I only had to mention the name in

passing and half the boys in my class would whack the fellow beside them, cackling 'Arr, Jim lad.'

But my personal favourite character is Pew, the blind beggar. Was there ever a moment in popular fiction more sublimely terrifying than when the beggar taps his way down the dark road, ever closer to the spot where Jim Hawkins is hiding? Don't try too hard to visualize that, you'll have nightmares.

In *Treasure Island*, Robert Louis Stevenson set the tone for a million pale imitations. The old phrase 'Oft imitated, never bettered' is very apt in this case. How many wannabe *Treasure Islands* have we read? How many diluted facsimiles have we seen on the movie screen? Of course there will never be another *Treasure Island*. It is a unique work of genius, and to date I have met at least a dozen respected writers who claim it as their favourite adventure story. Counting me, that's thirteen.

WHO'S WHO IN *TREASURE ISLAND*

THE LANDLUBBERS

Jim Hawkins – the son of an innkeeper, teenage Jim's life is transformed forever when old pirate Billy Bones comes to stay at the Admiral Benbow inn and draws Jim into a world of treasure, adventure on the high seas, and deadly danger.

Squire John Trelawney – a wealthy local landowner who buys the ship *Hispaniola* and accompanies it to Skeleton Island.

Dr David Livesey – local doctor and later ship's doctor.

Tom Redruth, John Hunter and Richard Joyce – three of Trelawney's servants who accompany him to Skeleton Island.

Mr and Mrs Hawkins – Jim's mother and father, who run the Admiral Benbow inn.

Mr Dance – local tax collector and customs officer.

THE SAILORS

Captain Smollett – captain of the *Hispaniola.*

Mr Arrow – drunken first officer of the *Hispaniola.*

Abraham Gray – carpenter's mate and honest seaman.

Tom and Alan – honest seamen.

THE PIRATES

Long John Silver – one-legged ship's cook, ex-quartermaster on Captain Flint's pirate ship the *Walrus*, and leader of the mutineers.

Captain J. Flint – brutal, long-dead pirate captain, whose treasure is buried on Skeleton Island. Captain Flint is also the name of Long John Silver's parrot.

Billy Bones (or 'the captain') – sometime mate on Captain Flint's ship, who comes to stay at Jim's parents' inn.

Black Dog and Blind Pew – two old shipmates of Billy Bones.

Israel Hands – coxswain of the *Hispaniola* and ex-gunner on Captain Flint's ship.

Job Anderson – boatswain of the *Hispaniola.*

George Merry, Tom Morgan, O'Brien, Dick – piratical crewmen.

Ben Gunn – reformed pirate, marooned on Skeleton Island three years before our story starts.

To
S. L. O.,
An American gentleman,
in accordance with whose classic taste the following
narrative has been designed,
it is now, in return for numerous delightful hours,
and with the kindest wishes,
dedicated by his affectionate friend,
THE AUTHOR

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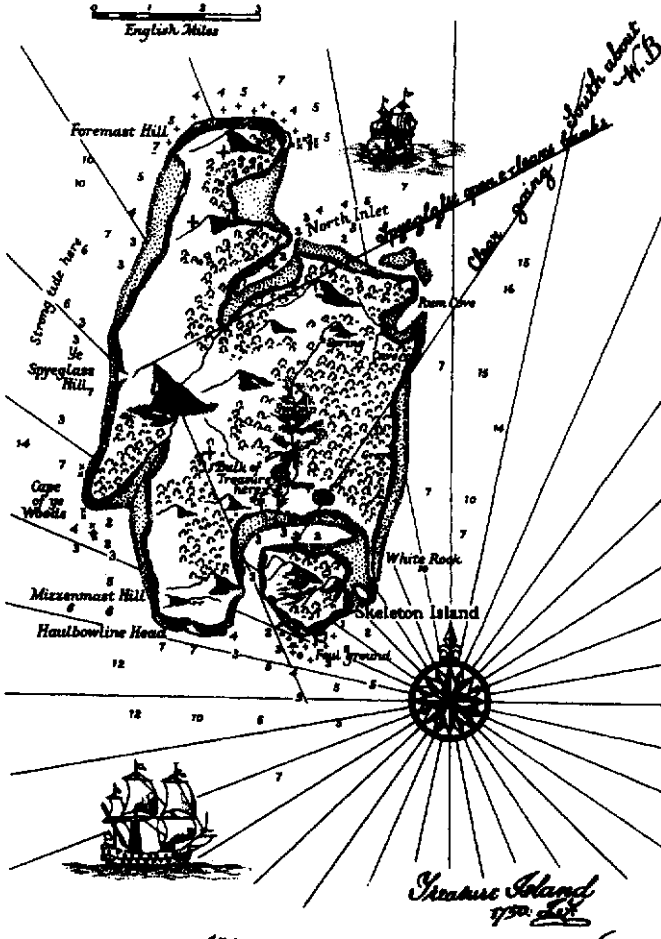
PART ONE

The Old Buccaneer



Given by above J.F. & Mr W Bones, Maite of Ye Walrus
Savannah this twenty July 1754 W. B.

Fac simile of Chart, Latitude and
Longitude struck out by J. Hawkins

1
The Old Sea Dog at the 'Admiral Benbow'

Squire Trelawney, Dr Livesey, and the rest of these gentlemen having asked me to write down the whole particulars about Treasure Island, from the beginning to the end, keeping nothing back but the bearings of the island, and that only because there is still treasure not yet lifted, I take up my pen in the year of grace 17—, and go back to the time when my father kept the 'Admiral Benbow' inn, and the brown old seaman, with the sabre cut, first took up his lodging under our roof.

I remember him as if it were yesterday, as he came plodding to the inn door, his sea-chest following behind him in a hand-barrow; a tall, strong, heavy, nut-brown man; his tarry pigtail falling over the shoulders of his soiled blue coat; his hands ragged and scarred, with black, broken nails; and the sabre cut across one cheek, a dirty, livid white. I remember him looking round the cove and whistling to himself as he did so, and then breaking out in that old sea-song that he sang so often afterwards:

'Fifteen men on the dead man's chest –
Yo-ho-ho, and a bottle of rum!'

in the high, old tottering voice that seemed to have been tuned and broken at the capstan bars. Then he rapped on the door with a bit of stick like a handspike that he carried, and when my father appeared, called roughly for a glass of rum. This, when it was brought to him, he drank slowly, like a connoisseur, lingering on the taste, and still looking about him at the cliffs and up at our signboard.

'This is a handy cove,' says he, at length; 'and a pleasant sittyated grog-shop. Much company, mate?'

My father told him no, very little company, the more was the pity.

'Well, then,' said he, 'this is the berth for me. Here you, matey,' he cried to the man who trundled the barrow; 'bring up alongside and help up my chest. I'll stay here a bit,' he continued. 'I'm a plain man; rum and bacon and eggs is what I want, and that head up there for to watch ships off. What you mought call me? You mought call me captain. Oh, I see what you're at – there'; and he threw down three or four gold pieces on the threshold. 'You can tell me when I've worked through that,' says he, looking as fierce as a commander.

And, indeed, bad as his clothes were, and coarsely as he spoke, he had none of the appearance of a man who sailed before the mast; but seemed like a mate or skipper,

accustomed to be obeyed or to strike. The man who came with the barrow told us the mail had set him down the morning before at the 'Royal George'; that he had inquired what inns there were along the coast, and hearing ours well spoken of, I suppose, and described as lonely, had chosen it from the others for his place of residence. And that was all we could learn of our guest.

He was a very silent man by custom. All day he hung round the cove, or upon the cliffs, with a brass telescope; all evening he sat in a corner of the parlour next the fire, and drank rum and water very strong. Mostly he would not speak when spoken to; only look up sudden and fierce, and blow through his nose like a fog-horn; and we and the people who came about our house soon learned to let him be. Every day, when he came back from his stroll, he would ask if any seafaring men had gone by along the road. At first we thought it was the want of company of his own kind that made him ask this question; but at last we began to see he was desirous to avoid them. When a seaman put up at the 'Admiral Benbow' (as now and then some did, making by the coast road for Bristol), he would look in at him through the curtained door before he entered the parlour; and he was always sure to be as silent as a mouse when any such was present. For me, at least, there was no secret about the matter; for I was, in a way, a sharer in his alarms. He had taken me aside one day, and promised me a silver fourpenny on the first of every

month if I would only keep my 'weather-eye open for a seafaring man with one leg', and let him know the moment he appeared. Often enough, when the first of the month came round, and I applied to him for my wage, he would only blow through his nose at me, and stare me down; but before the week was out he was sure to think better of it, bring me my fourpenny piece, and repeat his orders to look out for 'the seafaring man with one leg'.

How that personage haunted my dreams, I need scarcely tell you. On stormy nights, when the wind shook the four corners of the house, and the surf roared along the cove and up the cliffs, I would see him in a thousand forms, and with a thousand diabolical expressions. Now the leg would be cut off at the knee, now at the hip; now he was a monstrous kind of a creature who had never had but the one leg, and that in the middle of his body. To see him leap and run and pursue me over hedge and ditch was the worst of nightmares. And altogether I paid pretty dear for my monthly fourpenny piece, in the shape of these abominable fancies.

But though I was so terrified by the idea of the seafaring man with one leg, I was far less afraid of the captain himself than anybody else who knew him. There were nights when he took a deal more rum and water than his head would carry; and then he would sometimes sit and sing his wicked, old, wild sea-songs, minding nobody; but sometimes he would call for glasses round, and force all

the trembling company to listen to his stories or bear a chorus to his singing. Often I have heard the house shaking with 'Yo-ho-ho, and a bottle of rum', all the neighbours joining in for dear life, with the fear of death upon them, and each singing louder than the other, to avoid remark. For in these fits he was the most over-riding companion ever known; he would slap his hand on the table for silence all round; he would fly up in a passion of anger at a question, or sometimes because none was put, and so he judged the company was not following his story. Nor would he allow anyone to leave the inn till he had drunk himself sleepy and reeled off to bed.

His stories were what frightened people worst of all. Dreadful stories they were; about hanging, and walking the plank, and storms at sea, and the Dry Tortugas, and wild deeds and places on the Spanish Main. By his own account he must have lived his life among some of the wickedest men that God ever allowed upon the sea; and the language in which he told these stories shocked our plain country people almost as much as the crimes that he described. My father was always saying the inn would be ruined, for people would soon cease coming there to be tyrannized over and put down, and sent shivering to their beds; but I really believe his presence did us good. People were frightened at the time, but on looking back they rather liked it; it was a fine excitement in a quiet country life; and there was even a party of the younger men who pretended to admire him,

calling him a 'true sea-dog', and a 'real old salt', and such-like names, and saying there was the sort of man that made England terrible at sea.

In one way, indeed, he bade fair to ruin us; for he kept on staying week after week, and at last month after month, so that all the money had been long exhausted, and still my father never plucked up the heart to insist on having more. If ever he mentioned it, the captain blew through his nose so loudly, that you might say he roared, and stared my poor father out of the room. I have seen him wringing his hands after such a rebuff, and I am sure the annoyance and the terror he lived in must have greatly hastened his early and unhappy death.

All the time he lived with us the captain made no change whatever in his dress but to buy some stockings from a hawker. One of the cocks of his hat having fallen down, he let it hang from that day forth, though it was a great annoyance when it blew. I remember the appearance of his coat, which he patched himself upstairs in his room, and which, before the end, was nothing but patches. He never wrote or received a letter, and he never spoke with any but the neighbours, and with these, for the most part, only when drunk on rum. The great sea-chest none of us had ever seen open.

He was only once crossed, and that was towards the end, when my poor father was far gone in a decline that took him off. Dr Livesey came late one afternoon to see

the patient, took a bit of dinner from my mother, and went into the parlour to smoke a pipe until his horse should come down from the hamlet, for we had no stabling at the old 'Benbow'. I followed him in, and I remember observing the contrast the neat, bright doctor, with his powder as white as snow, and his bright, black eyes and pleasant manners, made with the coltish country folk, and above all, with that filthy, heavy, bleared scarecrow of a pirate of ours, sitting far gone in rum, with his arms on the table. Suddenly he – the captain, that is – began to pipe up his eternal song:

'Fifteen men on the dead man's chest –
Yo-ho-ho, and a bottle of rum!
Drink and the devil had done for the rest –
Yo-ho-ho, and a bottle of rum!'

At first I had supposed 'the dead man's chest' to be that identical big box of his upstairs in the front room, and the thought had been mingled in my nightmares with that of the one-legged seafaring man. But by this time we had all long ceased to pay any particular notice to the song; it was new, that night, to nobody but Dr Livesey, and on him I observed it did not produce an agreeable effect, for he looked up for a moment quite angrily before he went on with his talk to old Taylor, the gardener, on a new cure for the rheumatics. In the meantime, the captain gradually

brightened up at his own music, and at last flapped his hand upon the table before him in a way we all knew to mean – silence. The voices stopped at once, all but Dr Livesey's; he went on as before, speaking clear and kind, and drawing briskly at his pipe between every word or two. The captain glared at him for a while, flapped his hand again, glared still harder, and at last broke out with a villainous, low oath: 'Silence, there, between decks!'

'Were you addressing me, sir?' says the doctor; and when the ruffian had told him, with another oath, that this was so, 'I have only one thing to say to you, sir,' replies the doctor, 'that if you keep on drinking rum, the world will soon be quit of a very dirty scoundrel!'

The old fellow's fury was awful. He sprang to his feet, drew and opened a sailor's clasp-knife, and, balancing it open on the palm of his hand, threatened to pin the doctor to the wall.

The doctor never so much as moved. He spoke to him, as before, over his shoulder, and in the same tone of voice; rather high, so that all the room might hear, but perfectly calm and steady:

'If you do not put that knife this instant in your pocket, I promise, upon my honour, you shall hang at next assizes.'

Then followed a battle of looks between them; but the captain soon knuckled under, put up his weapon, and resumed his seat, grumbling like a beaten dog.

'And now, sir,' continued the doctor, 'since I now know

there's such a fellow in my district, you may count I'll have an eye upon you day and night. I'm not a doctor only; I'm a magistrate; and if I catch a breath of complaint against you, if it's only for a piece of incivility like tonight's, I'll take effectual means to have you hunted down and routed out of this. Let that suffice.'

Soon after Dr Livesey's horse came to the door, and he rode away; but the captain held his peace that evening, and for many evenings to come.

AUTHOR FILE

NAME: Robert Louis Stevenson
BORN: 13 November 1850 in Edinburgh, Scotland
DIED: 3 December 1894 in Vailima, Samoa
NATIONALITY: Scottish
LIVED: all over the world, including Scotland, France, Switzerland, the USA, Australia and the South Pacific
MARRIED: to Fanny Osbourne, an American
CHILDREN: two stepchildren, Lloyd and Belle

What was he like?
Robert Louis Stevenson had an adventurous soul trapped in a weak body. He suffered from tuberculosis – a serious disease which at that time was incurable and which eventually killed him aged only forty-four. Yet he managed to fit more into those forty-four years than most people fit into eighty.

Where did he grow up?
Edinburgh, Scotland. Robert was sick with tuberculosis from a very early age, and he was forced to spend long months indoors, often in bed. It was then that he began to make up stories to entertain himself.

What did he do apart from writing books?
In an age when there were no aeroplanes and travel was uncomfortable and dangerous, he travelled all over the world. Along the way, he was suspected of being a spy by the French

police, chased Fanny Osbourne half-way round the world to persuade her to divorce her husband and marry him, and became deeply involved in native South Pacific island cultures at a time when most Europeans and Americans considered those people as little more than savage cannibals.

What did people think of* Treasure Island *when it was first published in the 1880s?
They loved it! It was a bestseller – the Harry Potter of its day, loved both by children and by grown-ups. It's said that the British prime minister of the time, William Gladstone, stayed up all night reading it to find out what happened.

***Where did Robert get the idea for* Treasure Island?**
It was actually Robert's twelve-year-old stepson, Lloyd Osbourne, who gave him the idea for *Treasure Island*, when the two of them sketched a map of a treasure island together. Real pirates were not much more common in the 1880s than they are now, so Robert decided to set *Treasure Island* over a hundred years earlier – in the 1700s, when famous pirates such as Captain Kidd and Blackbeard had roamed the seas. He probably deliberately used unusual words to create the impression that *Treasure Island* was an old story. It's likely that many of these words would have seemed as exotic to his first readers as they seem to us now.

What other books did he write?
Robert wrote over fifty books, including the adventure story *Kidnapped* and the beautiful *A Child's Garden of Verses*. He also wrote famous grown-ups' stories such as *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*.

A TOUR OF THE *HISPANIOLA*

Welcome aboard the *Hispaniola*! She's a 200-ton **schooner**: a swift, manoeuvrable, mid-sized sailing ship common in the 1700s and 1800s. Other ships mentioned in *Treasure Island* are the *Hispaniola*'s own small, portable rowing boats: its **gigs**, **jolly-boat**, and **bumboat**; Ben Gunn's primitive **coracle**, a simple round boat; and **frigates** and **men-of-war**, large sailing ships bigger than the *Hispaniola*.

On deck

First, imagine that you're standing **amidships** on the scrubbed wooden deck, which means that you are half-way between the **bow** (the front of the ship) and the **stern** (the back of the ship). The long sides of the ship are called the **broadsides**. Everything in front of you is **fore**, and everything behind you is **aft** – so the part of the deck behind you is called the **after-deck**. To the left of you is called **port**, and the right is **starboard**.

Where you're standing is a flat part called the **waist** – but not all the deck is flat. Behind you is a raised structure called the **quarter-deck**, and a covered entrance called a **companion**, leading to a ladder down to the lower decks. In front of you is the **forecastle** (or **foc's'le**), another raised structure, and another **companion**, sometimes called the **fore companion**, leading to another ladder. The **forecastle** is traditionally where the crew sleep, so **forecastle hands** or anyone who **sails before the mast** means non-officers.

On either side of you, the sides of the ship rise above the level of the deck: these are called the **bulwarks**, and the ledges running along the tops are called the **gunwales**, because they can be used to rest guns on. Near you, you can see the **capstan**, which looks like a huge drum fixed to the deck. It has **capstan-bars** sticking out of it, used to turn it round and round and winch up heavy weights. Also on the deck are the **blocks**, pulleys in movable wooden cases used to change the position of ropes in the rigging or to lift weights, the **swivel gun**, the ship's rotating cannon, called a **brass nine** because it's made of brass and is capable of firing cannonballs weighing up to nine pounds – and, of course, the famous **apple barrel** that Jim is hiding in when he hears of the mutineers' plot for the first time!

You walk around the forecastle to the bow of the ship, where you spot a carved head and torso on the front of the ship, the **figurehead** or ship's mascot, and, projecting from the front of the ship and occasionally plunging into the waves, the **bowsprit**, a horizontal pole (or **spar**).

The masts and sails

Above you billow the square sails of the *Hispaniola*. The ship has three masts, and you're standing near the **foremast**, to which is attached the **fore-sail**. Behind you, **amidships**, is the tall **mainmast** and **main-sail**, and, towards the stern, the **mizzen-mast** and **mizzen-sail**. There are also other, smaller sails, including the **jib**, which sits between the foremast and the bow.

The top of each sail is fixed to a **yard-arm**, and the bottom of each sail is fixed to a **boom**. These are poles set horizontal to the masts, and they can swing around as the sails move. Other, smaller and stationary, poles, called **cross-trees**, are also set horizontal to the masts, and are used to tie ropes to. The sails are held in position and adjusted using a complicated system of different types of ropes: **halyards**, **hawsers**, **backstays**, **lanyards**, **sheets** and **shrouds**. This system as a whole is sometimes called the **cordage**.

Below decks

You turn and go down the ladder in the fore companion. This takes you down to the **fore-hold** – the foremost part of the storage and living space. Also here is the ship's **galley**, or kitchen, Long John Silver's hideout. The wooden walls all around you are called **bulk-heads**. You walk towards the aft end of the ship through a **sparred** (reinforced) **passage**, or **sparred gallery**. Down here you might also see the **kelson**, a particularly strong beam set horizontally across the ship to reinforce the **keel** and help support the decks. Finally, at the aft end is the captain's **cabin**.

PIRATE GLOSSARY

alow and aloft – nautical terms for below and above; in the book the phrase is used to mean 'thoroughly, in every possible place'

assizes – a court hearing

avast – stop!

ballad-book – a book a bit like an early sort of thriller, containing stories in rhyme that were usually very exciting and bloody

blunt – money

boat-cloak – a special kind of waterproof cloak

boatswain – the sailor who supervises maintenance and work done on deck; pronounced and often spelled 'bosun'

Bow Street runner – a policeman

cannikin – a small can or metal drinking cup

(to) cant – to lean over to one side

(to) careen – to tip your boat deliberately far over to one side so that it cannot sail, e.g. for repairs

chapling – chaplain, used to suggest someone who behaves like a chaplain, e.g. by not drinking as heavily as other sailors – or pirates!

chine – spine

chuck-farthen – a game in which coins are tossed against a wall or other solid object to bounce back; the player whose coin lands nearest the target is the winner. People often gambled on it

clasp-knife – a large, folding knife

clove hitch – a type of knot

cocked hat – a hat whose brim has been rolled up on three sides to form a stiff triangle

coxswain – the sailor who steers the ship

davy – short for affidavit, i.e. a statement made under oath

dead-lights – eyes

(to play) duck and drake – to go to waste

ebb – the ebb tide, i.e. when the tide is going out

ensign – a flag

fairway – a channel in a river, cove, harbour etc., deep and wide enough to take a ship

(to) gall – to hurt

gill – a quarter of a pint

glim – a light

gully – a large knife

handspike – an iron-tipped bar used as a lever

(to) haze – to treat badly

head sea – a current moving in the opposite direction to the way a ship is going, making sailing slow and difficult

holus bolus – all at once, altogether

hornpipe – a sailors' dance

(to) keel-haul – a very nasty naval punishment in which a sailor was hauled down one side of a ship, under the bottom, and up the other side

lee shore – a shore sheltered from the wind

leeway – an off-course, sideways movement of a ship, in the direction of the wind

link – a torch or light

lubber – short for land-lubber; when one sailor applies it to another, it's an insult

luff – the front edge of a sail, which is the edge attached to the mast; or, to bring a ship's bow closer to the wind

marlin spike – a pointed steel tool, used to separate strands of rope or wire

maroon – someone who has been marooned, i.e. abandoned on an island

mast-headed – to be sent to cling to the top of the mast as a punishment

noggin – a small measure of spirits

oilskin – a type of cloth, oiled to make it waterproof

pannikin – a small metal cup or pan

pigtail tobacco – a thin twist of tobacco

point – the distance between two compass points, e.g. between north and north-north-east

puncheon – a large cask used for holding, e.g., rum

quadrant – one of a ship's navigation tools

quartermaster – the sailor responsible for the ship's compass, steering, and signals

quid – a wad, e.g. of tobacco

round-house – a cabin located on the quarterdeck

sea-chest – a sailor's personal storage chest

sea-cloak – *see* boat-cloak

spy-glass – a telescope

stave – a song

swab – a useless person

tallowy – the colour of tallow, a white animal fat used in candles

trades – the trade winds, strong, reliable winds blowing almost continually towards the equator

weevil – a small insect that feeds on, amongst other things, biscuits and flour

widders – short for widdershins, meaning in a wrong or contrary direction

yaw – to swerve unpredictably from a straight course

Yellow Jack – yellow fever, a dangerous tropical disease