

Treasure Island

About the book

Treasure Island, written by Robert Louis Stevenson, was first published in 1883 as a serial in a children's magazine. It has an exciting plot with many twists and turns, originally designed to encourage readers to buy the next issue of the magazine.

Treasure Island is referred to in another well-known children's book, *Swallows and Amazons* (published in 1930) and also in the film, *Pirates of the Caribbean* (2003). In 2012 *Silver*, a sequel to *Treasure Island* written by the poet Andrew Motion, was published.

There are more film versions of *Treasure Island* than any other classic novel. There have also been television and radio productions and even, in 2009, a computer game.

The story of *Treasure Island* starts with a young boy, named Jim Hawkins, finding a map showing the location of buried treasure on a remote island. He tells Trelawney, who buys a ship (the *Hispaniola*), and they set sail in search of the treasure, with Jim on board as ship's boy. During the voyage, they discover that some of the crew are also secretly after the treasure. In this extract, Jim describes his first impressions of Treasure Island.

We had made a great deal of way during the night, and were now lying becalmed about half a mile to the south-east of Treasure Island. Grey-coloured woods covered a large part of the surface. This even tint was broken up by streaks of yellow sand in the lower lands, and by many tall trees of the pine family, out-topping the others – some singly, some in clumps; but the general colouring was uniform and sad. The hills ran up clear above the vegetation in spires of naked rock. All were strangely shaped, and the Spy-glass, which was the tallest rock on the island, was likewise the strangest in shape, running up sheer from almost every side, and then suddenly cut off at the top like a pedestal to put a statue on.

The *Hispaniola* was rolling under in the ocean swell. The mast was creaking, the rudder was banging to and fro, and the whole ship moaning, groaning and jumping like a factory. I had to cling tight to the ropes, and the world turned giddily before my eyes; for though I was a good enough sailor when there was way on, this standing still and being rolled about like a bottle was a thing I never learned to bear, without a qualm or two, on an empty stomach.

Perhaps it was this; perhaps it was the look of the island with its grey, melancholy woods, and wild stone spires and the surf that we could both see and hear foaming and thundering on the steep beach – and you would have thought anyone would have been glad to get to land after being so long at sea – but my heart sank into my boots; and from that first look onward, I hated the very thought of Treasure Island.

We had a dreary morning's work before us, for there was no sign of any wind, and the rowing boats had to be got out and the ship towed three or four miles up a narrow passage to the haven behind the island. I volunteered for one of the boats. The heat was sweltering, and the crew grumbled fiercely over their work. I thought this was a very bad sign; for up to that day, the men had gone willingly and briskly about their business; but the very sight of the island had relaxed the cords of discipline.

We brought up about a third of a mile from either shore, Treasure Island on one side, and Skeleton Island on the other. The bottom was clean sand. The plunge of our anchor sent up clouds of birds wheeling and crying over the woods; but in less than a minute they were down again, and all was once more silent.

The place seemed entirely land locked, buried in woods, the trees coming right down to high-water mark, the shores mostly flat, and the hill tops standing round at a distance in a sort of amphitheatre, one here, one there. Two little rivers, or, rather two swamps, emptied out into this pond, as you might call it; and the foliage round that part of the shore had a kind of poisonous brightness.

There was not a breath of air moving, nor a sound but that of the surf booming half a mile away along the beaches and against the rocks outside. A peculiar stagnant smell hung over the anchorage – a smell of sodden leaves and rotting tree trunks. I observed the doctor sniffing and sniffing like someone tasting a bad egg.

‘I don’t know about treasure,’ he said, ‘but I’ll stake my wig there’s fever here.’

2

...running up **sheer** from almost every side...

Give the meaning of the word *sheer* in this sentence.

1 mark

3

Look at the first paragraph, beginning: *We had made a great deal of way ...*

Which **two** statements about the trees on Treasure Island are **true**?

The trees on Treasure Island...

Tick **two**.

are all the same height.

☐

include pine trees.

☐

are mostly taller than the hills.

☐

are strangely shaped.

☐

all have a similar grey colour.

☐

1 mark

4

*We had made a great deal of **way** during the night.*

Which word most closely matches the meaning of the word *way*?

Tick **one**.

angle

☐

direction

☐

distance

☐

path

☐

1 mark

5

The following sentences are based on the paragraph beginning:
We had a dreary morning's work before us ...

Circle the correct word to complete each sentence below.

(a) We had a _____ morning's work before us.

long

dull

hard

(b) The weather was _____.

fine

sunny

scorching

(c) The crew _____ about their work.

sighed

argued

complained

2 marks

6

Look at the paragraph beginning: *We had a dreary morning's work before us ...*

Explain what Jim means when he says about the men:

the very sight of the island had relaxed the cords of discipline.

1 mark

7

Look at the paragraph beginning: *The place seemed entirely land locked ...*

Find and **copy** two groups of words that suggest that Jim is having trouble describing the island.

1. _____

2. _____

2 marks

8

Look at the paragraph beginning: *There was not a breath of air moving ...*
to the end of the text.

Give **two** ways that this section suggests that there may be danger on Treasure Island in the next part of the story.

1. _____

2. _____

2 marks