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The Mysterious Island

Jules Verne · *1874-75 · W. H. G. Kingston*

Five Northerners balloon out of a Confederate prison and fall on an uncharted Pacific island. They name it for Lincoln, civilize it by work and ingenuity—and find that a hidden hand has been helping them. This is W. H. G. Kingston's English of 1875, and it meets Captain Nemo at the end.

THE CENTRAL QUESTION

What can human skill make of a bare island, and who has been watching the colonists in the dark of the sea?

"Let us call it Lincoln Island!"

The colonists name their land

Cyrus Harding, the reporter Spilett, the sailor Pencroft, young Herbert, and the servant Neb (with the later-found Ayrton) turn wreckage and rock into a colony: a name, a granary, a ship, a moral life. The island answers, sometimes too helpfully. Kingston's 1875 English is the hosted text (PG #1268). Late in the book the hidden helper is named: Captain Nemo, and the Nautilus, dying far from the world of Twenty Thousand Leagues. Quote this page, including the spelling Pencroft (no second 'e' in this English). The book is adventure with a moral of work, loyalty, and a last mercy.

KEY CHARACTERS

Cyrus Harding
The engineer, the colony's mind and quiet commander.

Pencroft, Spilett, Herbert, and Neb
Sailor, reporter, boy, and loyal servant—the working body of Lincoln Island. This English spells the sailor Pencroft.

Ayrton
The later-found man whose past links this island to other Verne seas.

Captain Nemo
The hidden helper, named late, dying aboard the Nautilus.

A NAME FOR THE ISLAND

> *"Let us call it Lincoln Island!"*
> The colonists name their land

Grades 6–12
Read the full text free at classicslaunch.org.

01

A Balloon, and a Shore

THE ESCAPE AND THE LANDING

From a city under siege they rise in a balloon and are thrown, after storm and hunger, upon an unknown Pacific island. The first work is simply to live and to find one another.

- The war behind them is the American Civil War; they are Union men.
- Harding's disappearance and return already hint that the island is not ordinary.
- Courage here looks like practical intelligence.

02

Lincoln Island

THE NAMING AND THE COLONY

They claim the land with a Union name and begin the long labor of granaries, a dwelling in the granite, fields, and a boat.

- The cry is exact: 'Let us call it Lincoln Island!'
- Verne's pleasure in making and measuring is the middle of the book.
- A colony still needs law, patience, and gratitude.

> *"Let us call it Lincoln Island!"*
> The colonists name their land

03

A Hidden Hand

THE MIDDLE MYSTERIES

Crates, rescues, a current, a lead—again and again help arrives that no colonist gave. The island is inhabited by more than their own industry.

- Keep the mystery as the book keeps it; do not name the helper too soon in a first reading.
- Ayrton's later story ties this book to Verne's earlier island tales.
- The colonists' virtue is still required; the help is not a charm against work.

04

Captain Nemo

THE LATE RECOGNITION

The hidden benefactor calls them. 'Captain Nemo, you asked for us! We are here.' The Nautilus is named, and the dying captain is known at last.

- The line is exact in Kingston, including the closing dashes: 'We are here.--'
- This Nemo is the same captain, at the end of his long withdrawal.
- His last gifts and his story are a moral accounting, not only a sequel hook.

05

An Island's End

THE CLOSE

The island will not remain a fortress forever. The colonists must leave, carrying the memory of work, of a name, and of the man who watched them from the sea.

- The hosted text includes the proper end; it is not a fragment.
- Kingston's English is the same translator tradition as the site's Swiss Family Robinson (a different book—do not mix them).
- A fine adventure for a wide band of readers, with a late death to be treated gravely.

Work and Ingenuity | Colony and Loyalty | Mystery | A Hidden Mercy | A Last Accounting

What to watch for as you read

GRADES 6–12

1. The hosted text is W. H. G. Kingston's 1875 English (Project Gutenberg #1268). Quote Kingston. The sailor's name is spelled Pencroft in this text (not 'Pencroftfe' or the sometimes-seen Pencroff). The island's name is Lincoln Island.
2. Captain Nemo appears late. The colonists' greeting is exact: "Captain Nemo, you asked for us! We are here.--" (closing dashes in this file). Do not treat the book as only a Nemo sequel; the colony's work is the main action.
3. This Kingston is not the same book as The Swiss Family Robinson (also a Kingston English on the site). Keep the plots distinct. The hosted text has a proper ending, including the island's last fate and Nemo's death.

Quotations are verbatim from the W. H. G. Kingston, Project Gutenberg #1268, the public-domain text hosted at classicslaunch.org/works/the-mysterious-island/. Citations give book and chapter (or canto and line) so every line can be checked.