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Treasure Island

Robert Louis Stevenson · *1883 · original English text*

A boy from an English inn ships as cabin-boy on a hunt for buried gold, and learns that courage, loyalty and a clear word are worth more than a chest of coins. Stevenson's adventure is cleanly plotted and morally sharp: Long John Silver is charming, the stockade is costly, and Jim's growing nerve is never quite the same thing as lawlessness.

THE CENTRAL QUESTION

When gold and a winning voice are pulling, what keeps a boy loyal to his word?

"Them that die'll be the lucky ones."
Long John Silver · Chapter XX

Silver can lead, joke, and threaten in one breath, and Jim feels the pull of him. The book's goods are Captain Smollett's stubborn duty, Dr. Livesey's steadiness, and Jim's risky, finally faithful courage. Treasure is found; it does not make the men who loved it good.

KEY CHARACTERS

Jim Hawkins
courage growing into loyalty

Long John Silver
charm, craft, and a will to live

Captain Smollett
duty that will not bargain

Dr. Livesey
steadiness and fair dealing

Squire Trelawney
generous, too talkative

Ben Gunn
the maroon; a late usefulness

Billy Bones
the old seaman who brings the map

Israel Hands
the coxswain; deadly at close quarters

Grades 5–8
Read the full text free at classicslaunch.org.

01 The Admiral Benbow

PART ONE, CHAPTERS I–VI

A sea-chest, a black spot, and a map.

- Jim Hawkins keeps the inn with his parents; the wrecked old seaman Billy Bones takes a room and watches the sea
- Blind Pew brings the black spot; a raid follows; Billy dies of stroke
- Jim and his mother open the chest and barely escape with a packet
- Squire Trelawney and Dr. Livesey find in it the map of Treasure Island

> *"Fifteen men on the dead man's chest— / Yo-ho-ho, and a bottle of rum!"*
> **Billy Bones, singing** · Chapter I

02 The Sea-Cook

PART TWO, CHAPTERS VII–XII

A ship is fitted, and the wrong crew is hired.

- Trelawney, talking too freely, hires hands at Bristol, including the one-legged cook **Long John Silver**
- The *Hispaniola* sails under Captain Smollett, who already distrusts the arrangements
- Jim, in the apple barrel, overhears Silver's plan of mutiny once the gold is raised
- He warns the captain, the doctor and the squire: a handful of honest men against many

03 Shore and Stockade

PARTS THREE–FOUR, CHAPTERS XIII–XXI

The island is claimed in blood, and a flag is raised.

- Most of the crew go ashore; Jim slips away and meets the marooned **Ben Gunn**
- The honest party seizes an old stockade; there is a fight and lives are lost
- Silver comes under a flag of truce with terms; Smollett will not bargain away duty
- Silver's last word as he leaves is a threat: those who die will be the lucky ones

> *"Them that die'll be the lucky ones."*
> **Long John Silver** · Chapter XX

04 Jim's Sea Adventure

PART FIVE, CHAPTERS XXII–XXVII

A boy cuts the ship loose, and pays for the daring.

- Jim finds Ben Gunn's coracle and cuts the *Hispaniola* adrift from the pirates
- He boards her again and, after a desperate fight, kills Israel Hands
- The ship is beached where his friends can use her
- Returning overland, he walks into the enemy's camp

05 Captain Silver

PART SIX, CHAPTERS XXVIII–XXX

A hostage among gentlemen of fortune.

- The stockade has been yielded in a bargain Jim does not understand
- Silver claims the boy as his man and holds the crew by force of will
- A black spot is passed to Silver; he talks his way through it with the map as his card
- Jim, honest even here, will not promise what he cannot keep

> *"I'm cap'n here by 'lection. I'm cap'n here because I'm the best man by a long sea-mile."*
> **Long John Silver** · Chapter XXVIII

06 The Cache

PART SIX, CHAPTERS XXXI–XXXIV

The gold has already been moved, and the voyage comes home.

- The treasure-hunt finds an empty cache; the pirates turn, and a hidden ambush saves the honest party
- Ben Gunn has already carried the gold to his cave
- They load the ship, leave the worst men, and sail for home
- Silver deserts with a bag of coin; Jim still hears the island, and the parrot, in his dreams

Loyalty | Courage | Duty | Temptation | Cunning vs Honor | Coming of Age

What to watch for as you read

GRADES 5–8

1. The sea-song in Chapter I is a warning as well as a tune. Treasure in this book is never only a prize.
2. Silver is brave, funny, and treacherous. Why does Jim keep almost admiring him, and where must that admiration stop?
3. Smollett will not bargain the stockade into shame. Compare his speech under truce with Silver's talk of luck and 'lection.
4. Jim's solo adventures win the ship, and they also leave his friends in the dark. When is daring a virtue here, and when is it self-will?
5. Listen for the parrot's "Pieces of eight." It is comic until it nearly betrays Jim.
6. The gold is found because Ben Gunn has already suffered for it. What does the ending say about who actually profits?

Quotations are verbatim from the original English text, Project Gutenberg #120, the public-domain text hosted at classicslaunch.org/works/treasure-island/. Citations give book and chapter (or canto and line) so every line can be checked.