English and American Classics Series

ROBINSON CRUSOE

Daniel Defoe

（英语原文本）

英美文学名著丛书

LǓBĪNSŪN PIĀOLIÚ JÌ

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Introduction

Daniel Defoe (1660—1731) was one of the most fascinating figures in the history of English literature, but most probably he himself had no idea that he would feature so largely in it. Born Daniel Foe, son of a dissenting tallowchandler, he led a varied existence, being by turns tradesman, journalist, political commentator, traveller, secret agent and finally novelist. There had been great upheavals in his fortunes. As he himself puts it:

> No man has tasted differing fortunes more,
> And thirteen times I have been rich and poor.
>
> —Preface to the 8th vol. of his *Review*

Yet ever energetic and resourceful, he was able to rise again and again, turning even the most disadvantageous situation to his advantage. When in 1702 he offended the government for writing a satirical pamphlet and was ordered to stand in the pillory, a punishment with the attendant danger of exposure to the stones and brickbats, not to mention jeers, of the street mobs of the time, he saved himself by promptly writing a "Hymn to the Pillory" and having it distributed beforehand, in which he said:

> But who can judge of Crimes by Punishment,
> When Parties rule, and Law's subservient.
> Justice with Change of Interest learns to bow;

And what was Merit once, is Murder now. This effectively won the sympathy of the crowds. So far from harassing him, they applauded him as an anti-government hero.

These vicissitudes gained for him a wide and diverse knowledge of life, an asset which served him well when he turned novelist later in life. Another asset was his vast experience as a journalist. He not only wrote voluminously on every possible subject, but in an easy, clear, vigorous style, good particularly at describing circumstantial detail and reporting street talk and the conversation of "lowly" people—just the kind of prose needed by the new, popular literary form, the novel. He can be flat and tedious, but is never lacking in imagination. In fact, inventiveness was another forte of his, so much so that his descriptions of the appalling scenes in London during the plague year of 1664–5, based on other people's writings, were for a long time taken to be eye-witness accounts. What finally lifted his writings out of the ordinary, however, was his Nonconformist conscience. The morality may have been shallow, but the conviction was deep, and it was a tradesman's conviction that the backbone of society was the merchant class. He never tired of lauding the virtues of those situated in "the middle station of life" and his slogan, battle cry even, was "Liberty and Property!"

All these attributes he turned to good account when he came to write, at the age of fifty-nine, a succession of great novels, such as *Robinson Crusoe, Moll Flanders, Roxana,* to mention only three of the most pupular.

Robinson Crusoe (1719) is the favourite of children and adults alike, not only in the English-speaking countries, but all over the world. It is an adventure story, based on the true experience of one Alexander Selkirk,

who was marooned on an island for five years (1704–9). Adventure stories arouse one's interest, but when they get too long, the interest falls, especially if the action is confined to a small place, like an island. Yet that is not the case with *Robinson Crusoe*. What is it then that sustains our interest throughout?

One factor is obviously that Defoe knows how to tell a story. And, what a story! Here we see man grappling with the central problem in life, that of survival. There is a shipwreck and Robinson Crusoe is the only survivor. Alone, faced with an indifferent, often hostile, Nature, he has to supply all his basic needs, such as food, clothing, shelter and means of getting about, all by his own hands or wits. We see how after the initial shock and dismay, he takes a grip on himself and sets about saving from the wreck whatever he can find that is yet unspoiled by water and useful to him. He swims back to the part of the ship still afloat, gets the things he needs and, with infinite ingenuity, ties together pieces of wood and planks to make a raft and carefully guides it to land with his first cargo. Twelve trips he makes in all, each an ordeal, but in the end he succeeds in moving ashore necessities such as bread, rice, flour, dried meat, cheese, rum, clothes, firearms and gunpowder, carpenter's tools and nails, and "that most useful thing", a grindstone.

With these Crusoe begins life anew. Not content with bare existence, he starts to make himself more comfortable. Having fortified his tent and cave, he makes a table and a chair. Now he can eat and write with some ease, in his Englishman's castle. He even manages to make an earthen pot, for boiling meat in. This last feat calls forth one of his characteristic reflections:

> No joy at a thing of so mean a nature was ever equal to mine, when I found I had made an earthen

pot that would bear the fire; and I had hardly patience to stay till they were cold, before I set one upon the fire again, with some water in it, to boil me some meat, which it did admirably well; and with a piece of a kid I made some very good broth, though I wanted oatmeal and several other ingredients requisite to make it so good as I would have had it been.

Pride in his own ability is evident. All people in the same situation will have the same sense of triumph, but perhaps only a Defoe can write with such mastery of detail and such practical wisdom. That last remark about "oatmeal and several other ingredients" not only adds to the verisimilitude of the account, but shows what an old hand Defoe was at cooking also and how for him as for his Crusoe life must go on improving.

That is the enterprising spirit. The erstwhile tradesman, despite his repeated business failures, has never let go in his fight for a better material existence. Gold has a strange fascination for his characters. We see how on one of his trips to the wreck Crusoe discovers and counts the coins left on board. Even though he knows and indeed laments that money has no use for him temporarily, he nevertheless takes the coins, having a shrewd eye on their use in future.

The novel is loosely constructed, episodic, yet manages to lead us on, because Crusoe is forever looking forward to his rescue. We wait with him. There is always a future looming ahead. One aspect of the future is the coming of Man Friday. This complicates life on the island. Human or rather economic relationship functions again. There is a society, indeed, a colony, with a master-slave structure. Friday provides labour, which Crusoe exploits. Crusoe exercises absolute control over Friday's person, including the right to name him, and the

name Friday is really a numeral, not far short of the numbers given in later ages to the inmates of a prison or concentration camp. Defoe wasn't exactly anticipating, though, for he wrote the novel at a time when his fellow merchants were already busy following the flag to the ends of the earth and designating large areas of Africa and Asia by new, more English-sounding names.

There is thus a lot to explore underneath the surface in *Robinson Crusoe*. But whether we have here a myth or an archetypal situation, the book remains a gripping tale to read. That again shows the great merit of Defoe's style. Its importance goes far beyond the handling of words, though Defoe the supposedly plain writer is actually full of cunning. Something far more crucial, with grave consequences for the future, was at stake, namely, whether the modern novel could emerge. It was lucky that it was an enterprising tradesman-journalist who set it up, and not a refined man of letters. Refined gentlemen had tried their hand not so long ago.

Wrecks like *Arcadia* and *Euphues*, with their insipid characterization and thin, monotonous plots, made even more tiresome by their artificial style, reminded people of what not to do in writing fiction. Shoving aside the old rhetoric and the fine writing, Defoe broke out with a new prose fully in line with the new realism. These two formed an organic whole. The new realism required the new prose; without the new prose, there wouldn't be realism. This development had been eagerly awaited by the reading public, now much enlarged by middle-class newcomers. At this critical moment in literary and cultural history, Defoe arrived with his intimate knowledge of new-type characters, who were changing the world, and his prodigious writing ability. He came in the nick of time, the first of the moderns.

Wang Zuoliang (王佐良)

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A Warning

I was born in the year 1632, in the city of York, of a good family, though not of that country, my father being a foreigner of Bremen who settled first at Hull. He got a good estate by merchandise and, leaving off his trade, lived afterward at York, from whence he had married my mother, whose relations were named Robinson, a very good family in that country, and from whom I was called Robinson Kreutznaer; but by the usual corruption of words in England we are called, nay, we call ourselves, and write our name "Crusoe," and so my companions always called me.

I had two elder brothers, one of which was lieutenant-colonel to an English regiment of foot in Flanders, formerly commanded by the famous Colonel Lockhart, and was killed at the battle near Dunkirk against the Spaniards; what became of my second brother I never knew, any more than my father or mother did know what was become of me.

Being the third son of the family, and not bred to any trade, my head began to be filled very early with rambling thoughts. My father, who was very ancient, had given me a competent share of learning, as far as house education and a country free school generally goes, and designed me for the law; but I would be satisfied with nothing but

going to sea; and my inclination to this led me so strongly against the will, nay, the commands of my father and against all the entreaties and persuasions of my mother and other friends that there seemed to be something fatal in that propension of nature tending directly to the life of misery which was to befall me.

My father, a wise and grave man, gave me serious and excellent counsel against what he foresaw was my design. He called me one morning into his chamber, where he was confined by the gout, and expostulated very warmly with me upon this subject. He asked me what reasons more than a mere wandering inclination I had for leaving my father's house and my native country, where I might be well introduced, and had a prospect of raising my fortune by application and industry, with a life of ease and pleasure. He told me it was for men of desperate fortunes on one hand, or of aspiring, superior fortunes on the other, who went abroad upon adventures, to rise by enterprise, and make themselves famous in undertakings of a nature out of the common road; that these things were all either too far above me, or too far below me; that mine was the middle state, or what might be called the upper station of low life, which he had found by long experience was the best state in the world, the most suited to human happiness, not exposed to the miseries and hardships, the labor and sufferings of the mechanic part of mankind and not embarrassed with the pride, luxury, ambition, and envy of the upper part of mankind. He told me I might judge of the happiness of this state by this one thing, viz., that this was the state of life which all other people envied; that kings have frequently lamented the miserable consequences of being born to great things, and wished they had been placed in the middle of the two extremes, between the mean and the great; that the wise

man gave his testimony to this as the just standard of true felicity, when he prayed to have neither poverty or riches.

He bid me observe it, and I should always find, that the calamities of life were shared among the upper and lower part of mankind; but that the middle station had the fewest disasters, and was not exposed to so many vicissitudes as the higher or lower part of mankind; nay, they were not subjected to so many distempers and uneasinesses either of body or mind as those were who, by vicious living, luxury, and extravagances on one hand, or by hard labor, want of necessaries, and mean or insufficient diet on the other hand, bring distempers upon themselves by the natural consequences of their way of living; that the middle station of life was calculated for all kind of virtues and all kinds of enjoyments; that peace and plenty were the handmaids of a middle fortune; that temperance, moderation, quietness, health, society, all agreeable diversions, and all desirable pleasures, were the blessings attending the middle station of life; that this way men went silently and smoothly through the world, and comfortably out of it, not embarrassed with the labors of the hands or of the head, not sold to the life of slavery for daily bread, or harassed with perplexed circumstances, which rob the soul of peace and the body of rest; not enraged with the passion of envy or secret burning lust of ambition for great things; but in easy circumstances sliding gently through the world, and sensibly tasting the sweets of living, without the bitter, feeling that they are happy and learning by every day's experience to know it more sensibly.

After this, he pressed me earnestly, and in the most affectionate manner, not to play the young man, not to precipitate myself into miseries which Nature and the station of life I was born in seemed to have provided

against;that I was under no necessity of seeking my bread; that he would do well for me, and endeavor to enter me fairly into the station of life which he had been just recommending to me; and that if I was not very easy and happy in the world, it must be my mere fate or fault that must hinder it, and that he should have nothing to answer for, having thus discharged his duty in warning me against measures which he knew would be to my hurt. In a word, that as he would do very kind things for me if I would stay and settle at home as he directed, so he would not have so much hand in my misfortunes as to give me any encouragement to go away. And to close all, he told me I had my elder brother for an example, to whom he had used the same earnest persuasions to keep him from going into the Low Country wars, but could not prevail, his young desires prompting him to run into the army where he was killed; and though he said he would not cease to pray for me, yet he would venture to say to me that if I did take this foolish step, God would not bless me, and I would have leisure hereafter to reflect upon having neglected his counsel when there might be none to assist in my recovery.

I observed in this last part of his discourse, which was truly prophetic, though I suppose my father did not know it to be so himself; I say, I observed the tears run down his face very plentifully, and especially when he spoke of my brother who was killed; and that when he spoke of my having leisure to repent, and none to assist me, he was so moved that he broke off the discourse and told me his heart was so full he could say no more to me.

I was sincerely affected with this discourse, as indeed who could be otherwise? and I resolved not to think of going abroad any more but to settle at home according to my father's desire. But alas! a few days wore it all off; and in short, to prevent any of my father's

farther importunities, in a few weeks after I resolved to run quite away from him. However, I did not act so hastily neither as my first heat of resolution prompted, but I took my mother, at a time when I thought her a little pleasanter than ordinary, and told her that my thoughts were so entirely bent upon seeing the world that I should never settle to anything with resolution enough to go through with it, and my father had better give me his consent than force me to go without it; that I was now eighteen years old, which was too late to go apprentice to a trade or clerk to an attorney; that I was sure, if I did, I should never serve out my time, and I should certainly run away from my master before my time was out and go to sea; and if she would speak to my father to let me go one voyage abroad, if I came home again and did not like it, I would go no more, and I would promise by a double diligence to recover that time I had lost.

This put my mother into a great passion. She told me she knew it would be to no purpose to speak to my father upon any such subject; that he knew too well what was my interest to give his consent to anything so much for my hurt, and that she wondered how I could think of any such thing after such a discourse as I had had with my father, and such kind and tender expressions as she knew my father had used to me; and that, in short, if I would ruin myself there was no help for me; but I might depend I should never have their consent to it; that for her part she would not have so much hand in my destruction; and I should never have it to say that my mother was willing when my father was not.

Though my mother refused to move it to my father, yet as I have heard afterwards, she reported all the dis-

course to him, and that my father, after shewing a great concern at it, said to her with a sigh, "That boy might be happy if he would stay at home, but if he goes abroad he will be the most miserable wretch that was ever born. I can give no consent to it."

The Storm

It was not till almost a year after this that I broke loose, though in the meantime I continued obstinately deaf to all proposals of settling to business, and frequently expostulating with my father and mother about their being so positively determined against what they knew my inclinations prompted me to. But being one day at Hull, where I went casually, and without any purpose of making an elopement that time; but I say, being there, and one of my companions being going by sea to London in his father's ship and prompting me to go with them, with the common allurement of seafaring men, viz., that it should cost me nothing for my passage, I consulted neither father or mother any more, nor so much as sent them word of it; but leaving them to hear of it as they might, without asking God's blessing, or my father's, without any consideration of circumstances or consequences and in an ill hour, God knows, on the first of September, 1651, I went on board a ship bound for London. Never any young adventurer's misfortunes, I believe, began sooner or continued longer than mine. The ship was no sooner gotten

out of the Humber but the wind began to blow and the sea to rise in a most frightful manner; and as I had never been at sea before, I was most inexpressibly sick in body and terrified in my mind. I began now seriously to reflect upon what I had done, and how justly I was overtaken by the judgment of Heaven for my wicked leaving my father's house and abandoning my duty; all the good counsel of my parents, my father's tears and my mother's entreaties came now fresh into my mind, and my conscience, which was not yet come to the pitch of hardness to which it has been since, reproached me with the contempt of advice and the breach of my duty to God and my father.

All this while the storm increased and the sea, which I had never been upon before, went very high, though nothing like what I have seen many times since; no, nor like what I saw a few days after. But it was enough to affect me then, who was but a young sailor and had never known anything of the matter. I expected every wave would have swallowed us up and that every time the ship fell down, as I thought, in the trough or hollow of the sea, we should never rise more; and in this agony of mind I made many vows and resolutions, that if it would please God here to spare my life this one voyage, if ever I got once my foot upon dry land again, I would go directly home to my father and never set it into a ship again while I lived; that I would take his advice and never run myself into such miseries as these any more. Now I saw plainly the goodness of his observations about the middle station of life, how easy, how comfortably he had lived all his days, and never had been exposed to tempests at sea or troubles on shore; and I resolved that I would, like a true repenting prodigal, go home to my father.

These wise and sober thoughts continued all the while the storm continued, and indeed some time after; but the next day the wind was abated and the sea calmer, and I began to be a little inured to it. However, I was very grave for all that day, being also a little seasick still; but towards night the weather cleared up, the wind was quite over, and a charming fine evening followed; the sun went down perfectly clear and rose so the next morning; and having little or no wind and a smooth sea, the sun shining upon it, the sight was, as I thought, the most delightful that ever I saw.

I had slept well in the night and was now no more seasick, but very cheerful, looking with wonder upon the sea that was so rough and terrible the day before and could be so calm and so pleasant in so little time after. And now lest my good resolutions should continue, my companion, who had indeed enticed me away, comes to me. "Well, Bob," says he, clapping me on the shoulder, "how do you do after it? I warrant you were frighted, wa'n't you, last night, when it blew but a capful of wind?" "A capful, d'you call it?" said I, " 'twas a terrible storm." "A storm, you fool, you," replies he; "do you call that a storm? why, it was nothing at all; give us but a good ship and searoom, and we think nothing of such a squall of wind as that; but you're but a fresh-water sailor, Bob; come, let us make a bowl of punch and we'll forget all that; d'ye see what charming weather 'tis now?" To make short this sad part of my story, we went the old way of all sailors; the punch was made, and I was made drunk with it, and in that one night's wickedness I drowned all my repentance, all my reflections upon my past conduct and all my resolutions for my future. In a word, as the sea was returned to its smoothness of surface and settled calm-

ness by the abatement of that storm, so the hurry of my thoughts being over, my fears and apprehensions of being swallowed up by the sea being forgotten, and the current of my former desires returned, I entirely forgot the vows and promises that I made in my distress. I found indeed some intervals of reflection, and the serious thoughts did, as it were, endeavor to return again sometimes; but I shook them off and roused myself from them as it were from a distemper and, applying myself to drink and company, soon mastered the return of those fits, for so I called them, and I had in five or six days got as complete a victory over conscience as any young fellow that resolved not to be troubled with it could desire. But I was to have another trial for it still; and Providence, as in such cases generally it does, resolved to leave me entirely without excuse. For if I would not take this for a deliverance, the next was to be such a one as the worst and most hardened wretch among us would confess both the danger and the mercy.

The sixth day of our being at sea we came into Yarmouth Roads; the wind having been contrary and the weather calm, we had made but little way since the storm. Here we were obliged to come to an anchor, and here we lay, the wind continuing contrary, viz., at southwest, for seven or eight days, during which time a great many ships from Newcastle came into the same Roads, as the common harbor where the ships might wait for a wind for the river.

We had not, however, rid here so long, but should have tided it up the river, but that the wind blew too fresh; and after we had lain four or five days, blew very hard. However, the Roads being reckoned as good as a harbor, the anchorage good, and our ground-tackle very strong, our men were unconcerned and not in the