



COLLINS  
CLASSICS

**DANIEL DEFOE**  
**Robinson Crusoe**

# ROBINSON CRUSOE

Daniel Defoe

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Harper Press  
An imprint of HarperCollins Publishers  
77-85 Fulham Palace Road  
Hammersmith  
London W6 8JB

This edition published 2010

Daniel Defoe asserts the moral right to be identified as the author of  
this work

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN-13: 978-0-00-735084-1

Printed and bound in Great Britain by Clays Ltd, St Ives plc



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Classic Literature: Words and Phrases adapted from  
*Collins English Dictionary*

Typesetting in Kalix by Palimpsest Book Production Limited,  
Grangemouth, Stirlingshire

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# History of Collins

In 1819, Millworker William Collins from Glasgow, Scotland, set up a company for printing and publishing pamphlets, sermons, hymn books and prayer books. That company was Collins and was to mark the birth of HarperCollins Publishers as we know it today. The long tradition of Collins dictionary publishing can be traced back to the first dictionary William published in 1824, *Greek and English Lexicon*. Indeed, from 1840 onwards, he began to produce illustrated dictionaries and even obtained a licence to print and publish the Bible.

Soon after, William published the first Collins novel, *Ready Reckoner*, however it was the time of the Long Depression, where harvests were poor, prices were high, potato crops had failed and violence was erupting in Europe. As a result, many factories across the country were forced to close down and William chose to retire in 1846, partly due to the hardships he was facing.

Aged 30, William's son, William II took over the business. A keen humanitarian with a warm heart and a generous spirit, William II was truly 'Victorian' in his outlook. He introduced new, up-to-date steam presses and published affordable editions of Shakespeare's works and *Pilgrim's Progress*, making them available to the masses for the first time. A new demand for educational books meant that success came with the publication of travel books, scientific books, encyclopaedias and dictionaries. This demand to be educated led to the later publication of atlases and Collins also held the monopoly on scripture writing at the time.

In the 1860s Collins began to expand and diversify and the idea of 'books for the millions' was developed. Affordable editions of classical literature were published and in 1903 Collins introduced 10 titles in their Collins Handy Illustrated Pocket Novels. These proved so popular that a few years later this had increased to an output of 50 volumes, selling nearly half a

## DANIEL DEFOE

million in their year of publication. In the same year, The Everyman's Library was also instituted, with the idea of publishing an affordable library of the most important classical works, biographies, religious and philosophical treatments, plays, poems, travel and adventure. This series eclipsed all competition at the time and the introduction of paperback books in the 1950s helped to open that market and marked a high point in the industry.

HarperCollins is and has always been a champion of the classics and the current Collins Classics series follows in this tradition – publishing classical literature that is affordable and available to all. Beautifully packaged, highly collectible and intended to be reread and enjoyed at every opportunity.

# Life & Times

## About the Author

Daniel Defoe was born at the beginning of a period of history known as the English Restoration, so-named because it was when King Charles II restored the monarchy to England following the English Civil War and the brief dictatorship of Oliver Cromwell. Defoe's contemporaries included Isaac Newton and Samuel Pepys.

Defoe was born in London and during his formative years was witness to the Great Plague (1665-6) and the Great Fire (1666), both of which had considerable effect on the neighbourhood he lived in. In addition to these disasters, the English were at war with the Dutch between 1665 and 1667, which saw many privateer ships involved in attacking the Dutch fleet as Charles had insufficient money to fund the war. Privateers essentially paid themselves with the booty they acquired from the enemy ships, which included trade vessels as well as men'o'war. In turn this led to the evolution of piracy in times of peace. It is undoubtedly this roguish activity on the high seas that inspired Defoe to write his famous novel *Robinson Crusoe*.

Defoe's original surname was simply 'Foe' and his family were humble traders, but he added the prefix to make himself sound more continental and sophisticated. Defoe became interested in social reform and used his first efforts at writing to promote ideas for improving social and economic conditions in London. He was arrested for his activities but had caught the attentions of Robert Harley, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Oxford, who made him an agent for gathering intelligence about his political rivals.

His literary journey began soon after this when Britain was struck by a full scale hurricane in 1703, which travelled across the Atlantic Ocean and ravaged the southern British Isles for two whole days. The storm killed thousands of people, felled millions of trees and damaged every building in its path. Defoe was inspired to record many first-hand accounts of the hurricane, which he published the following year in *The Storm*.

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For the next fifteen years Defoe was very active politically, writing hundreds of documents for the Tory party, a party which had emerged as a political wing of the Cavaliers following the English Civil War. They were essentially royalists with deeply held conservative views. There had been many stories of pirate adventures in exotic places and a Scotsman named Alexander Selkirk had been rescued in 1709 after four years castaway on Juan Fernández, a tropical island in the south Pacific, off the coast of Chile. Clearly Defoe had been inspired by these tales of danger and derring-do. In 1719, Defoe published his masterpiece, *Robinson Crusoe*, which is widely considered to be the first English novel.

The novel was an instant success, seemingly because there was a great appetite in England for yarns about intrepid explorers who survived against the odds in far flung corners. Added to that, there was a certain innate appeal about the idea of fending for one's self in isolation – building one's own shelter, making clothes, finding food and water, staying alive. It seemed to resonate with a primal desire in people that had lain dormant since time immemorial – the reawakening of the hunter gatherer instinct.

This reaction to *Robinson Crusoe* was perhaps an expression of the way developing society was making people feel trapped by circumstance. The British Agricultural Revolution was beginning, soon to be followed by the Industrial Revolution, and these events were compartmentalizing society, so that people had defined jobs to do rather than being required to put their hands to a number of tasks. The psychological effect was to divorce people from their fundamental sense of self worth and independence. Crusoe's ordeal may have been tough and isolating but it was also life affirming and character building. Most of all, Crusoe had his own kingdom to reign over, when most English men, women and children couldn't call any patch of land their own.

The psychological freedom delivered to Crusoe seemed worth all of the hardship he endured over his 28 years waiting to be rescued. There must have been many a reader who would have gladly swapped their life for his, so Crusoe became a kind of folk hero even though he lived only in the world of fiction.

Despite its attraction as an escapist fantasy, *Robinson Crusoe* also reminds the reader that they are essentially social animals and that loneliness is the enemy of most humans. Crusoe fears that he may never see another person again and die alone, but then he sees a footprint in the sand. It is the moment of his reconnection with humanity. Although he doesn't know whether the footprint belongs to a potential friend or enemy he is compelled to seek out that person whatever the outcome.

This is why the book is considered the first novel, because it says something between the lines, about the human condition. It contains allegory and makes the reader think beyond the plot. The reader becomes the intimate voyeur, feeling Crusoe's emotions, frustrations and revelations as he learns to cope with his surroundings. Ultimately he turns the wilderness into his home because he comes to realize that we all come from the wilderness, but we have forgotten our prehistory.

## Robinson Crusoe

At the time that Daniel Defoe wrote *Robinson Crusoe* many European countries were conquering new lands around the globe and enterprising men were making their fortunes through trade of goods and slavery. Defoe used this world as the backdrop for his story.

When Crusoe first sets out into the world he is shipwrecked and captured by pirates who make him their slave. He then escapes and manages to make his own fortune by establishing a sugar plantation. The tables are then turned again, when he is shipwrecked a second time and has to survive by his wits on an island. Defoe cleverly allows Crusoe to acquire the life experience to make his story of survival believable. He probably recognized that a European gentleman would not have fared very well had he been stranded on a maiden voyage.

After a number of years alone Crusoe discovers that other people visit the island from time to time. He is alarmed to discover that they practice cannibalism, but then realizes that their culture is so different from his own that he has no moral right to condemn their



actions. This shows considerable wisdom on the part of Defoe, because he is acknowledging that the ethics of what is right and wrong depends on social context. Nevertheless, Crusoe still decides to rescue a captive about to be ritually slaughtered and in doing so finds himself a devoted companion in the form of a native he calls Friday. As unlikely as it may seem, Crusoe has managed to keep an accurate calendar and knows which day of the week the rescue took place.

As the book was intended for an English market, Defoe has Crusoe teach Friday to speak the king's tongue and convert to Christianity. There are then various further twists and turns to the plot that see Crusoe and Friday eventually arrive in England. What is more, Crusoe is able to claim back the wealth from his sugar plantation and live the rest of his life a wealthy man.

There is a forgotten sequel to *Robinson Crusoe*, titled *The Farther Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*. Crusoe decides to revisit his island, establishing a civilized colony there, but Friday is killed by attacking cannibals. Crusoe then embarks on a series of adventures around the world, including Madagascar and Asia. Defoe published this sequel later in the same year, 1719.

The story of Crusoe, in particular his time spent alone on his island, has remained an inspiration for many writers ever since. As well as inventing the novel, Defoe also invented the survival genre, so that any similar story is automatically seen to allude to *Robinson Crusoe*, even when it happens to be a true story. There is an enduring attraction to the idea that humans can, when given no choice, manage to find ways to cope. Common sense, resourcefulness and self reliance are qualities we admire in others and in ourselves, because they reassure us that it is possible to get by without the trappings of the modern world.

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## CHAPTER 1

My Birth and Parentage – At Nineteen  
elope with a Schoolfellow, and go to Sea –  
Ship founders – Crew saved and landed  
near Yarmouth

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 afterwards 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 now 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 and 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 go, 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

propensity 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 only men of desperate fortunes on the 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; and 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 labour 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 had 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 nor riches.

He bade 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 uneasiness, either of body or mind, as those were, who, by vicious living, luxury, and extravagances on one hand, or by hard labour, want of necessaries, and mean and 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 kind 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 labours of the hands or of the head; not sold to a 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 the 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, or 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 endeavour 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 my 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, 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 afflicted 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 further importunities, in a few weeks after, I resolved to run quite away from him. However, I did not act so hastily neither, as the first heat of my 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, but 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 double diligence, to recover the 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 any such thing so much for my hurt – and that she wondered how I could think of any such thing, after the discourse 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 I heard afterwards, that she reported all the discourse to him; and that my father, after showing 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 ever was born – I can give no consent to it.”

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, whither 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 him, with the common allurements of a seafaring man, that it should cost me nothing for my passage, I consulted neither father nor 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 of consequences, and in an ill hour, God knows, on the 1st 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 got out of the Humber, than 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 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 went very high, though nothing like what I have seen many times since – no, nor 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 it did in the trough or hollow of the sea, we should never rise more. In this agony of mind, I made many vows and resolutions, that if it would please God to spare my life in 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; but 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 comfortable he had lived all his days, and never had been exposed to tempests at sea, nor trouble on shore; and, in short, 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 sea-sick 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 sea-sick, 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 a 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 upon the shoulder, “How do you do after it? I warrant you were frightened, weren't you, last night, when it blew but a capful of wind?” “A' capful d'ye 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 sea-room, 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 way of all sailors; the punch was made, and I was made half drunk with it, and in that one night's wickedness I drowned all my repentance, all my reflections upon my past conduct, all my resolutions for the future. In a word, as the sea was returned to its smoothness of surface, and settled calmness, 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, endeavour to return again sometimes; but I shook them off, and roused myself from them, as it were from a distemper; and, applying myself to drinking and company, soon mastered the return of those fits (for so I called them); and I had, in five or six days, got a complete victory over my 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 an one, as the worst and most hardened wretch among us would confess both the danger and the mercy.