

DER PRACEL
Treasure Island
Study Guide
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For the novel by Robert Louis Stevenson



Progeny Press

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Synopsis

A tale of high adventure set in the 18th century by Robert Louis Stevenson, and his first published novel, *Treasure Island* is the story of a brave boy who sets off with an assorted cast of characters on a quest for buried treasure. When the story opens, Jim Hawkins lives with his parents who own and run the Admiral Benbow Inn near an unidentified British seashore. The arrival of Billy Bones the pirate changes their lives, eventually leading Jim's father to an early death, leaving Jim and his mother to run the inn. Soon afterwards, the arrival of another pirate to deliver the "black spot" (a death warning) to Billy Bones changes their lives even more. In fear and with a heart weakened from his rough lifestyle, Billy dies almost immediately, leaving a huge debt for his lengthy stay at the Admiral Benbow.

Knowing other pirates are soon to come to the inn to claim Billy's possessions, Mrs. Hawkins refuses to leave until she has taken enough from Billy's sea chest to offset his debt. With pirates on their trail, Mrs. Hawkins and Jim escape from the inn with a map from Billy's sea chest. Jim and Mrs. Hawkins get help from Dr. Livesey and Squire Trelawney, who identify the map as a genuine treasure map. The squire goes to Bristol to find a ship and crew to prepare for a voyage to Treasure Island. His lack of discretion, however, regarding the quest for hidden treasure attracts a crew of pirates masquerading as honest sailors.

During the voyage Jim overhears a conversation that reveals the crew's true identity, and by the time they reach the island the pirates have mutinied. Their leader turns out to be Long John Silver himself, the one-legged man Billy Bones most feared.

Once on the island, they find a castaway named Ben Gunn, who is befriended by Jim. With Ben's help and knowledge of the island, Jim and his friends struggle to find the treasure and stay one step ahead of the pirates. But Long John Silver still has a part to play, and only he knows his heart and whom he'll help in the end.

Part II—The Sea Cook

Chapters 7–12

Vocabulary:

The *synonym* of a word is another word that has the same or nearly the same meaning as the original word. Choose the word from the box below that completes each sentence. Not all words will be used. One or more synonyms for the missing word is given in parentheses.

Word Box

agitated	anecdote	anticipations	simultaneously	lament
avowed	burnished	calumnies	commentary	mutiny
congregated	corruption	countenance	prosperous	duplicity
	immortal		indomitable	

1. “I lived on at the Hall under the charge of old Redruth, the gamekeeper, almost a prisoner, but full of sea-dreams and the most charming _____ (*expectations*) of strange islands and adventures.”
2. “At that I gave up all attempt at _____ (*remarks*) and read straight on.”
3. “They go the length of declaring that this honest creature would do anything for money, that the *Hispaniola* belonged to him, and that he sold it to me absurdly high—the most transparent of _____ (*slander*).”
4. “Long John Silver, he is called, and has lost a leg; but that I regarded as a recommendation, since he lost it in his country’s service, under the _____ (*famous forever*) Hawke.”

Thinking About the Story:

7. In Chapter 10, with the voyage just underway and the true character of the crew still unknown, how does Stevenson use the sea shanty, “*Fifteen men on the dead man’s chest,*” as a type of foreshadowing?

8. After Jim tells the doctor, squire, and captain what he’s heard in the apple barrel, whom does the doctor say can help them more than anyone? Why? What is Jim’s reaction?

9. *Pace* is the rhythm of a story or the speed of the action in a story. The pace of a story varies depending on the story structure. For example, the climax of an adventure narrative will unfold at a brisk pace. The writer deliberately creates this pace with short, punchy sentences built on strong, transitional verbs. In general, pace is a complex mix of word choice; length of sentences, paragraphs and sections; transitions; and structure and sequencing.

A *transition* is a passage in a piece of writing that smoothly connects two topics or sections to each other. How does Stevenson use Jim’s time in the apple barrel and the sighting of the island to transition and increase the tension and pace?

10. In literature, the term *stereotype* refers to a character with exaggerated characteristics intended to represent all members of his or her group. A stereotype is a widely believed but unchanging and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person or thing. How is the stereotypical pirate portrayed in common culture? Choose one or two quotes from Chapters 7–12 to show what Long John Silver is like. Is he stereotypical? Why or why not?

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11. *Idioms* are sayings that don't literally mean what the words mean. If someone says he is "really beat" we know that he means he is tired, rather than that he has been beaten by someone, or to be "wet behind the ears" means to be inexperienced, not to actually have water behind your ears. When an author writes using idioms, the language of the story sounds more true to life. Underlined in the sentences below are some of the idioms found in the story. After each, write what the words mean literally, and what we understand them to mean *contextually*, or in the context of the sentence.

- a. I am afraid I led that boy a dog's life; for as he was new to the work, I had a hundred opportunities of setting him right and putting him down, and I was not slow to profit by them.

Literal Meaning:

Understood Meaning:

- b. You're a lad, you are, but you're as smart as paint.

Literal Meaning:

Understood Meaning:

- c. Oh, I know'd Dick was square.

Literal Meaning:

Understood Meaning:

- d. Long John's eyes burned in his head as he took the chart; but, by the fresh look of the paper, I knew he was doomed to disappointment.

Literal Meaning:

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Understood Meaning:

Dig Deeper:

12. Other than finding a ship, what did Squire Trelawney's letter reveal he'd done in Bristol? Read Proverbs 17:28; Ecclesiastes 3:1, 7; and Proverbs 2:11. What do these verses say? How might things have gone differently if Trelawney had done what these verses teach?

13. When Jim overhears the mutiny plans while in the apple barrel, he immediately goes to the doctor, the squire, and the captain. Read Proverbs 15:22 and 19:20. What do these verses teach? How does this apply to this situation?

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Answer Key

Activities for Prereading

7. stroll—walk; forth—forward; hither—here; bade—requested; effectual—effective; whence—where; parlor—living room; thither—there; shall—will; choicest—best

Part I—The Old Buccaneer

Chapters 1–6

Vocabulary:

1. c; 2. d; 3. b; 4. c; 5. c; 6. b; 7. b; 8. a; 9. a; 10. atrocious—d, miscreant—a; 11. b; 12. c; 13. a

Questions:

1. It is isolated and receives very little company.
2. He asks Jim to look out for a seafaring man with one leg.
3. Billy Bones grows pale, looks as if he's seen a ghost, and later has a stroke.
4. Flint was the bloodthirstiest buccaneer that sailed, Blackbeard was a child to Flint. It is rumored that Flint buried a vast treasure.
5. Answers will vary, but may mention the following: Stevenson used a blind man as a contrast between strength and weakness between Billy Bones, who has dominated the inn (strength), and a blind man (a symbol of weakness). Also, the other pirates were afraid of Billy Bones and perhaps felt it less likely that he would attack a blind man.
6. The inn has been ransacked and the clock thrown down. The captain's money-bag and the silver from the till were taken.
7. Both her honesty in refusing to take more than was due her and her greed in insisting that they be paid and not simply dismissing the debt, puts them in danger as the pirates grow close. Her foolhardiness is in the previous actions of time-consuming plundering through the chest, and her weakness is in fainting at the nearness of the pirates.

Thinking About the Story:

8. Answers will vary but may mention some of the following: treasure; "Fifteen men on the dead man's chest"; "a seafaring man with one leg"; stormy nights when the wind shook the four corners of the house; the surf roared; rum; wild sea-songs; hangings; walking the plank; Dry Tortugas; and the Spanish Main. The mood seems dangerous, stormy, anticipating adventure and pirates.
9. The doctor is afraid of Squire Trelawney, because he cannot keep a secret and the pirates are determined to get the map and thereby the money. This hints that there may be trouble if the squire talks. The squire promises to be as silent as the grave. Answers will vary.
10. Answers will vary but may mention: Jim's father is seen only briefly at the beginning of the story and, due to his illness, remains an unknown character. When Jim's father dies, Jim is so busy caring for the practical things, "the visits of the neighbours, the arranging of the funeral, and all the work of the inn," he has little time to deal with his emotions. The captain's death brought new problems, as well. Billy Bones had run up a debt and there appeared to be no hope of recovering it. There were also additional funeral expenses. Also, the captain, though obnoxious and demanding, had brought excitement into Jim's life, which, at his death, appeared to be ended. It may also have been what is sometimes called *transference*, which is transferring one's feelings from the actual source of those feelings onto something else. In other words, Jim may be transferring or releasing his sadness over his father's death at Billy Bone's death.
11. a. "You might/can call me captain." b. "I have a son of my own," said he, "identical to you and he's the pride of my heart." c. "I'll shake out/untie another strip of sail (to either catch more wind or catch less wind in a gale) and fool them all again."
12. People in crowds tend to act as a mob, fear spreads from one person to the next until the crowd is frightened. Argument, if persuasive, can incite an entire crowd to anger and make them bold for action.

Dig Deeper:

13. The Lord sees all that happens throughout the world and all the good things and evil things people do. He hears our cries. The Lord examines our lives and ways. We have no secrets from God.