

Unit 5

Crusoe

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The Original Robinson Crusoe

Background

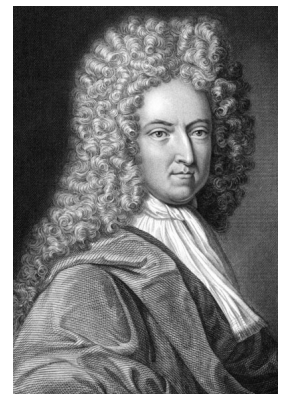
In 1704 a Scottish sailor, Alexander Selkirk, was left on a small island in the Pacific Ocean, about 600km from the coast of Chile. He stayed there for 4 years until he was rescued by a passing ship.

The story of Alexander Selkirk helped inspire Daniel Defoe (born London, England 1659-1731) to write a novel (1719) about a sailor, Robinson Crusoe, who was shipwrecked, and lived alone on a small island for many years, until he too was eventually rescued.

Defoe wrote not only of Crusoe's experiences and exciting adventures, but also his deepest thoughts and fears, and his feelings about God, the devil and mankind. After many years alone Crusoe finds a companion, whom he calls Friday, after the day they first meet, and their relationship changes from fear to friendship.

This book is thought to be the very first novel written in English. It quickly became very popular and, within a hundred years, was translated into dozens of languages.

Now the island where Selkirk lived alone for so many years is officially known as Robinson Crusoe Island, and is home to about 1,000 people.



ROBINSON CRUSOE (extract from Chapter 11)

I was the lord of my island. Like a king I ate alone, with my servants around me. Poll, my parrot, was the only person who could speak to me. My dog, who was now old and crazy, always sat on my right, and two cats sat on each side of the table waiting for a little bit of food from my hand.

But if anyone in England could see me now, it must either have frightened him, or caused much laughter. My clothes were made of goatskin. I had a shapeless cap with a flap hanging behind to keep the sun and rain from my neck. I had a short goatskin jacket and breeches down to my knees; stockings and shoes I had none. On my back I carried a basket and on my shoulder a gun, and I always held a great, ugly, goatskin umbrella. But it was of no importance for there was no-one to observe me.

But now I come to a new scene in my life. It happened one day, about noon, on the far side of the island. I was amazed to see the print of a man's naked foot in the sand on the shore. I stood without moving, like I had seen a ghost. I listened, I looked round me, but I could hear nothing, nor see anything. There could be no mistake, it was the print of a foot. How did it get there? I knew not.

Wild ideas and strange thoughts came into my mind. I returned to my castle like someone who is hunted, looking behind me every two or three steps, thinking every tree is a man. I didn't sleep that night. How strange are we? Today we seek what tomorrow we fear. I, who was surrounded by the endless ocean, and cut off from mankind, now tremble with fear at the thought of seeing another man.

After three days without leaving my castle I realized that it might be my own footprint. I decided to go again to look at the print, but I found my foot was much smaller, and again I felt possessed by fear. Fear of danger is ten thousand times more terrifying than the danger itself.

The confusions of my thoughts kept me awake all night, but in the morning I fell asleep, and when I awoke I was able to think clearly again. I had lived fifteen years on this island, and had not met with even the shadow of another person, and if anyone should come here it is probable that they would go away again as soon as possible.

(by Daniel Defoe, abridged and simplified)

Exercise

Write a short summary (5 words or less)
for each paragraph of the story.
(The first paragraph is given as an example)

*Description
of dinner*

Discussion

Make a small group

Discuss the points below (in any order)
(Think for a few minutes before starting)

- Compare your summaries for each paragraph.
- Why do you think Robinson Crusoe was scared by the footprint?
- Could you make your clothes from live goats?
- What is the longest time you have been alone?
- Do you sometimes like to be alone?
- If you were alone on a small island:

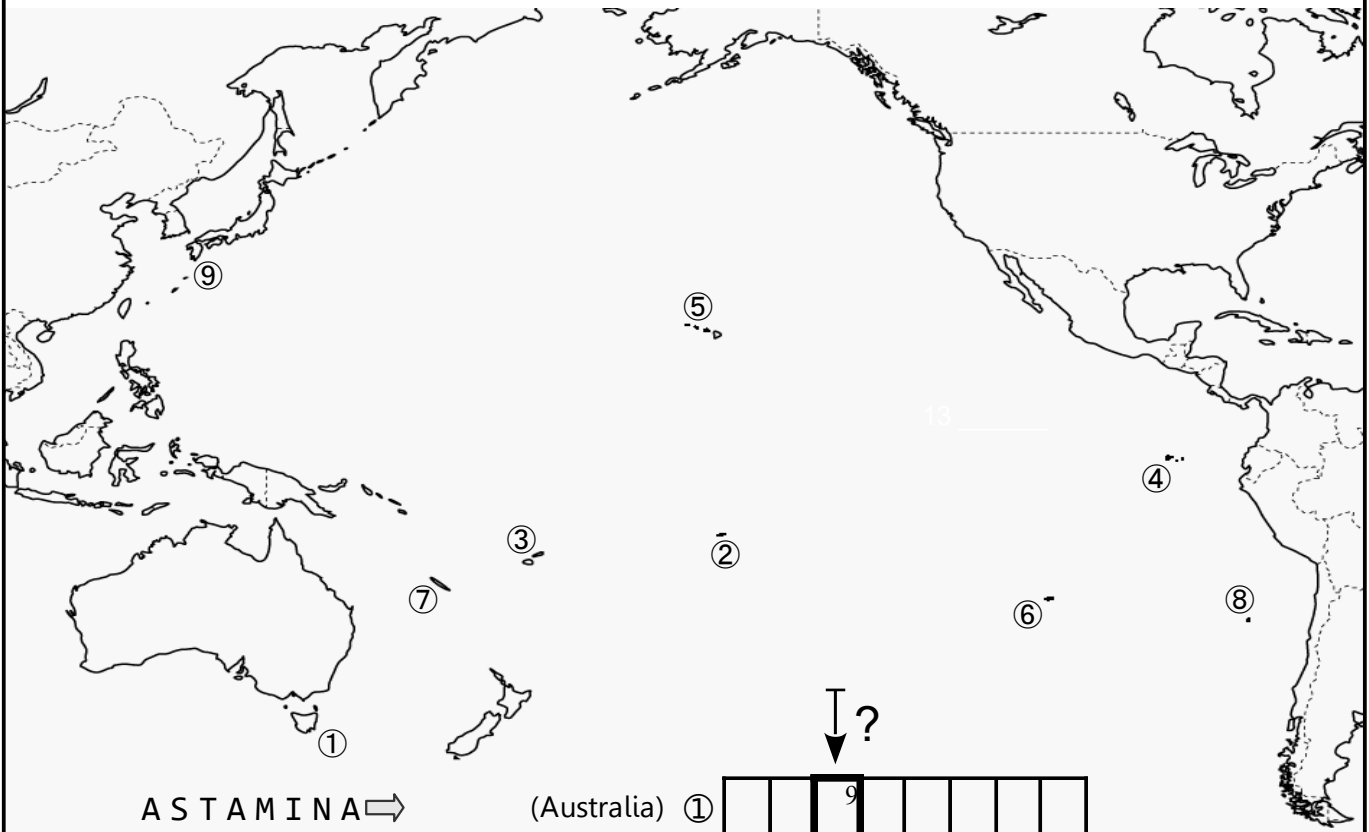
What musical instrument would you most like to have?

What piece of furniture would you most like to have?

What drink (excluding water) would you like in endless supply?

Pacific Ocean Islands puzzle

Rearrange the letters to find the names of some islands.



ASTAMINA →

(Australia) ①

ITHATI →

(France) ②

JIFI →

③

SPAGGALOA →

(Ecuador) ④

IWIAHA →

(USA) ⑤

TEASER →

(Chile) ⑥

EWN ECOLANDIA →

(France) ⑦

(Chile) ⑧

HUSUKY →

(Japan) ⑨

				9					
				5					
			1						
								10	
								3	
					2				
					11		7		
								4	

Islands

Island

Island

1 2 3 4 5 6 & 7 2 8 9 10 11 became close friends.

Writing

The next day Robinson Crusoe wakes and sees a man sleeping under a tree near to his castle.
Continue the story ...