Unit 2 : Daniel Defoe: *Robinson Crusoe* I

UNIT STRUCTURE

2.1 Learning Objectives

2.2 Introduction

2.3 Daniel Defoe: The Novelist

2.3.1 His Life

2.3.2 His Works

2.4 Context of the Novel

2.5 Summary of the Novel

2.6 Let us Sum up

2.7 Further Reading

2.8 Answers to Check Your Progress

2.9 Model Questions

2.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through the unit, you will be able to :

- receive a cursory glance of the times in which Defoe wrote
- discus the life and works of the author
- explain the background of the novel *Robinson Crusoe*
- summarise the sequence of adventures in the novel
- appreciate and enjoy the adventures contained in the larger narrative of the novel.

2.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit is based on Daniel Defoe's novel *Robinson Crusoe.* The narratives of adventure have always continued to stir our imagination. Perhaps, in the line of all-time adventure classics like *Treasure Island*, *Castaway* and other such works, Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) still continues to be one of the most interesting and wonderful examples. It is always a pleasure to read and re-read *Robinson Crusoe* and to receive a slice of adventure and excitement, from the life and adventures of Crusoe who survives the dangers and challenges on a deserted island, away from

the company of his family and friends for twenty eight long years. The inspiration for the novel is considered to have been drawn from a real life story that had occurred in 1709. In this unit, we will try to explore life and works of Daniel Defoe and also the times in which he had written his narrative, recreating two of the most memorable characters in English literature i.e., Robinson Crusoe and his endearing companion Friday. Besides, you will also be provided with an outline of the novel that will help you to reflect on the story of the novel.

2.3 DANIEL DEFOE: THE NOVELIST

Daniel Defoe is regarded as one of the pioneers of the novelistic form or genre and with his considerable amount of literary and journalistic works, as the founder of British journalism. As a writer, he roughly belonged to the period which was between the latter half of the 17th century and the beginning of the 18th century. He was a prolific journalist, author, essayist, pamphleteer, trader and a dissenter in his own right and was much inclined towards both religion and politics. Let us then, glance into the life and works of this major English novelist.

2.3.1 His Life

Daniel Defoe (1660-1731) was born as 'Daniel Foe' to Annie Foe and James Foe, a tallow-chandler in London. The Foes were a converted Presbyterian family because of which they had to suffer many restrictions under the prevailing law. The young Defoe received his early education at the Dissenter's academy at Newington Green which was under the Reverend Charles Morton (who later came to be the vice-president of Harvard University). Defoe's growing years were surrounded by the religious and political suffering of the Dissenters and he grew up always feeling like an outsider for his religious identity. The Dissenters (Protestants who did not follow the Church of England) were subject to several restrictions particularly the availing of higher education, which is why Defoe had dropped out of school at the age of 19. He also lost his mother

at the tender age of 11, when she had passed away in 1771. Although his father wanted him to join the ministry, instead of joining the Church he went on to pursue his interests in trade and business. He traded in varied commodities and it interested him so much that he even enjoyed 'writing' on aspects of trade and is considered today as a pioneer of 'economic journalism'. But even as a young trader, he held strong moral convictions and religious beliefs that had been instilled in him from his childhood years.

He was a close ally and supporter of William III and had also served in the Monmouth's Rebellion in the year 1685. The Dissenters were once again targeted under Queen Anne's rule, when she had ascended the throne after the demise of William III in 1702. Defoe was a politically conscious individual and also a 'whig' supporter and owing to his political activism through his controversial pamphlets like "The Shortest-Way With the Dissenters" (1702) was also subject to trial and arrest. Having spent three days in the pillory, he was shifted to the Newgate Prison but subsequently, released by Robert Harley, 1st Earl of Oxford and Earl Mortimer. The release came with Harley's offer to Defoe, to act as a secret agent for the Tory ministry, which Defoe had accepted in return for his freedom. But after the demise of Queen Anne, he switched to working undercover for the Whig government and subtly did away with writing in favour of the Tories.

Although, he was much involved and surrounded by the political changes during his time, Defoe had a stable married life with Mary Tuffley, the daughter of a London merchant, who he had married in 1684 and with whom he had eight children. Defoe's life was not easy by any means, as he was constantly surrounded by political conflicts and controversies right from his childhood. And in his later years, his popularity as a journalist had also suffered when his activities for the government had turned into an open-secret. To add to it, he also suffered bankruptcy, debts and losses resulting from the fluctuations in trade and commerce from time to time.

Defoe had several ups and downs in life but despite all hardships and circumstances produced a considerable amount of books, pamphlets and journalistic works. He breathed his last in the year 1731 at the age of 71 and was laid to rest in Bunhill Fields, London.

2.3.2 His Works

It will surprise you to know that Defoe took to writing only after crossing the age of fifty. Defoe is significantly considered to have given shape to the modern English novel. Defoe is credited with over 500 or more religious and political pamphlets and satirical poems and is known to have written at least under 198 pen names.

Having faced prison life, Defoe had penned a pamphlet titled "The Shortest Way to Dissenters" (1702), which had almost created a flurry amongst the Tories and opportunistic Dissenters as well. Due to this, charges of 'sedition' and 'libel' were pressed against him, which resulted in his not only being fined but also subjected to face humiliation in the pillory and later being held under prison custody at London's Newgate prison. It was during this time that he wrote and circulated his verses titled "Hymn to Pillory" which gained him mass supporters rather than just spectators in the pillory, so much so that he was garlanded and cheered by the crowds resulting in his subsequent release. That year he had started his own periodical the *Review* and his political views found a voice through its pages.

In the year 1703, a great storm had ravaged through London and Bristol taking a toll on human lives, also causing a tempest at sea and killing many people. Defoe wrote a first hand account of the Great Storm of 1703 in *The Storm* (1704) which came to be regarded as one of the best examples of modern journalism.

He wrote several manuals on conduct such as *Religious Courtship* (1722), *The Complete English Tradesman* (1726) and *The New Family Instructor* (1727); accounts of travel like *The History of the Union of Great Britain* (1709), *A General History of Discoveries*

and Improvements (1727), *Atlas Maritimus and Commercialis* (1728)and *A Tour Thro' the Whole Island of Great Britain* (1724–27); works voicing social concerns like *The Great Law of Subordination Considered* (1724) and *Everybody's Business is Nobody's Business* (1725) among other works. Being a tradesman himself, he held a great regard for the profession and one of his significant volume *The Complete English Tradesman* (1726) and *London, the Most Flourishing City in the Universe* (1728) provides a broad view of his insight into the workings and significance of trade in England.

Some of his best known works are *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and *Captain Singleton* (1720) based on travel and adventure; *Duncan Campbell* (1720);*Memoirs of a Cavalier (1720)* based on the English Civil War and the Thirty Years' War; *Journal of the* Plague *Year (1722*), a realistic novel based on Great Plague of London in 1665; *Colonel Jack* (1722) a picaresque novel which traces the trajectory of an orphan; *Moll Flanders* (1722) and *Roxana: The Fortunate Mistress* (1724), both centered on the development of women protagonists, which are also counted as two of his best works.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1. Who was Daniel Defoe?

Q 2. Where did Defoe receive his early education? Briefly discuss his childhood years?

Q 3. Which poem had gained him mass supporters at the pillory during his arrest?

Q 4. Name some of the best works of Daniel Defoe.

2.4 CONTEXT OF THE NOVEL

Let us explore the contents of the novel *Robinson Crusoe* through a wider approach to the text.

The life and times of Daniel Defoe revolved around the "ferment" of ideals and beliefs in the rapidly transforming socio-political scenario of England. Oliver Cromwell had led the puritan movement and introduced the parliamentary form of governance in England in place of the monarchy. In 1658, with the death of the Puritan leader Oliver Cromwell, the monarchy was restored in 1660 with Charles II as the new king. Charles II was succeeded by James II whom the Duke of Monmouth, the illegitimate son of Charles II had tried to overtake unsuccessfully. In a small way, Defoe had also extended his support to the Monmouth's Rebellion in 1865 but had some how escaped charges. Catholicism prevailed under the rule of James II but his son-in-law William of Orange was a protestant and much progressive in his views. Seven bishops had offered the throne to James' daughter and William-of-Orange together and this peaceful settlement without any bloodshed came to be known as the Glorious Revolution.

Following the Glorious Revolution of 1688, in which the monarchy was declared under the state, Defoe gladly sided with William of Orange and the Whig party. While the term 'Whig' was used for a supporter who upheld liberal views and supported the parliamentary form of governance, a 'Tory' supporter was one who upheld conservative views and supported the monarchy. This was also a period of literary journalism which saw the widespread publication and circulation of news papers, pamphlets, journals and periodicals like the *Spectator* and the *Tatler* which had also ushered in a new wave of intellectual growth. With financial aid, Defoe had himself launched an independent periodical *The Review* in 1703 which ran successfully for eleven years.

Defoe also rose from his humble beginnings to the middle station of life with his fortunes as a successful trader and merchant. Therefore, it can be aptly quoted: "Thus, Defoe himself as a manufacturer of writings, participates in the mercantile opulence, 'the increase and extensiveness of its commerce' which to him is the pride of contemporary Britain." (*Cassell's History* 332).

2.5 SUMMARY OF THE NOVEL

After reading through the text, the learner will find that the novel does not contain a particular form of chapterisation and that the narration progresses in a long, winding manner. Thus, the learner will do well to read through the entire text of the novel first, so as to gain a brief idea through the provided summary while reading along the novel. The summary is divided into smaller sections and highlighted with a caption, in order to make it easier for the learner to grasp the chronicle of events in a systematic manner.

The Preface :

Just before the narration opens, the Preface to the novel unfurls an anomymous editor's words of praise and appreciation for the life and adventures of Crusoe as worthy of publication. The words of praise which are in a stylish calligraphy read as follows: "The Wonders of this Man's Life exceed all that (he thinks) is to be found extant; the Life of one Man being scarce capable of a greater Variety."

The Preface adds in a word on how Crusoe's story is threaded with a narrative that is tinged with "modesty" and "seriousness" together with wise or religious ascriptions to such events as revealed in the narrative. It also takes into account the aim "to justify and honour the Wisdom of Providence" which takes its own course as in the story of Crusoe. On an ending note, the Preface sums up the editor's opinion of the entire account as a factual or better still as a "just History of Fact", the publication of which shall be considered as rendering of a "great Service" to the world.

York and sailing to London:

The narratorial voice of Robinson Crusoe begins in the first person narrative, through which he reveals his family and personal details to unfurl the story of his life and adventures. Being born of good parentage, in the city of York in 1632, the young Crusoe was christened 'Robinson Kreutznaer'. He was brought up with his two elder brothers and received a good education at home and at the country free-school. It was from his mother's side of the family that he had received the second part of his name 'Robinson' and through "the usual corruption of words" (3) the name

stuck as Crusoe and also his friends called him so. His eldest brother had served as a lieutenant colonel to an English regiment and died in war and no one knew what had happened to his other sibling. And as far as he was concerned, he only longed to go to the seas for adventure feeling strongly that "…I (he) would be satisfied with nothing but going to sea…" against all the will and requests of his family and friends (3).

It was his wise and concerned father who had warmly tried to counsel him one morning in his chambers. He had questioned his son's desire to sail across the high seas, when a prospect of raising fortunes with the industry and leading a pleasurable life was available to him. The old man after all, had also once lost his unheeding(eldest) son, whom he had dissuaded from fighting in the low Country Wars. Crusoe was moved by his father's prophetic discourse and had decided to alter his mind but it only lasted a few days with his thoughts "so entirely bent upon seeing the world" (6). This was at a time when the new worlds were being opened up through the sea routes and there were adventures to be explored. Thus, Crusoe tried to gain his father's consent by pressing on his mother to persuade him. But the old man persisted in his own belief.

Finally, one of Crusoe's companions had allured him to experiment and set sail on a journey to London on his father's ship. And it was after a year that Crusoe had almost secretly eloped from the comforts of his home without really letting his parents know, without receiving their blessing or asking for divine blessings and without "any consideration of circumstances or consequences" (7). Perhaps, at the age of nineteen, it was the rush in his young blood that had impulsively led him to decide on a sea journey which could and did prove fatal.

Thus, he boarded the ship bound towards London on the 1st of September 1651 which having sailed just a few nautical miles had been caught in a tempest or a storm at sea. And this is when he seriously came to reflect in his moment of panic and agony the gravity of the situation, having gone against all the entreaties and counsels of his parents, his "wicked leaving" from his home and abandonment of his duties(7). While the storm brewed and increased by the minute, he helplessly made avowals

to God to spare his life, promising to never leave home or sail the seas if he survived by the grace of a divine intervention. This was when he felt like a repenting prodigal son wanting in his repentance to return home to his father whose worst fears had only come true

But, the following day everything seemed fine and the sea was smooth without a trace of storm winds, bringing on a renewed hope and cheerfulness to an already sea-sick Crusoe. What had seemed like a tempest to Crusoe was in the words of his friend only "a squall of wind", who offered him drinks to drown all the distress of the previous night (8). On the sixth day, they had crossed the Yarmouth roads and it was on the eighth day that the increasing winds caught their masts before they could anchor. And though the master of the ship kept his calm and constant vigilance, Crusoe could hear him repeating: "Lord, be merciful to us, we shall all be lost, we shall all be undone" (9). Thus, you can imagine the kind of fears that wreck havoc in a person's mind and spirit being helpless and at the mercy of the infinite powers in the high seas as expressed in Crusoe's own reflections later on: "I know not what to call this, nor will I urge that it is a secret overruling decree that hurries us on to be the instruments of our own destruction, even tho' it be before us, and that we rush upon it with our eyes open"(12).

Having survived and grown all the more wiser for his experiences, he embraced offers of other sea voyages, sharpening his knowledge of mathematics, rules of navigation and sailing and qualifying himself both a sailor and a merchant.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 5: What does the Preface to the novel *Robinson Crusoe* reveal?

Q 6: a. Crusoe was christened as …….

b. Crusoe was ……years old when he left home.

Q 7: What did Crusoe's father question him?

Q 8: When did Crusoe secretly leave home to board a ship?

Sea voyage and settling in the plantations :

The shipmaster on having learnt that Crusoe had only sailed with them "for a trial in order to go further abroad" had begun to discourage him from returning to sea ever again and bringing misfortunes and ruin upon himself and also to return home to his father (12). With a little money left to him, Crusoe then travelled to London wondering on his future course of action and constantly remembering his father's words. But, it was not long before he boarded yet another ship for a new journey to the coast of Africa, a voyage to Guinea, as the sailors called it. As the ship sailed towards the Canary Islands, they were surprisingly caught by a sudden attack of the Turkish rovers or sea pirates. And although they fought in defense, they were easily outdone and taken as prisoners to Sallee, a port that belonged to Moors. Being young and resourceful, Crusoe was taken in to serve as a slave to the captain of the rovers. This had sealed his fate from that of a merchant to a slave. Thus, his new master or patron had him engaged in common household chores and gardening, while he went to sea. Thus, you will notice the turn of events that take place, Crusoe turns into a pirate's slave.

Two years had passed by and on many occasions, Crusoe had meditated on his escape, until one fine day when he took his chance while being sent to fish for food along with a young man named Moely and a little boy called Xury. As the patron had to attend his guests, these circumstances had presented itself as a perfect opportunity to escape. So, on this fishing trip, they took along jars of freshwater, basket full of biscuits, lumps of beeswax (to make candles), parcel of thread, hatchet, saw, hammer, gun powder and bullets. When they reached the bay of Cadiz, near the coast of Spain, Crusoe took his chance to escape by pushing Moely off the boat and threatening to shoot him if he swam back to the boat. Moely, the young man being an excellent swimmer swam away to their shore. In the meantime Xury, the innocent boy who seemed to mean no harm was taken into his confidence to faithfully accompany him.

Thus, they sailed southward to the Barbarian coast to lay off the rovers' suspicion because in all probability, they would not have suspected them to go that way, owing to the "nations of negroes" who posed as serious threats

on that side (19). On having safely sailed away for several miles from the port of Sallee, Crusoe was headed for a short adventure with Xury in tow. Together, they sailed on their boat without anchoring, for fear of dangers, until they were close to the islands of Canaries and the Cape de Verd Islands. European sailors sailing on a ship had received their signal and having located their boat through their perspective glasses had taken them aboard. The captain of the ship proved to be a very generous and hospitable person and had also brought Crusoe's boat and ammunitions for the ship. Crusoe had made a total of 220 pieces of eight with his stock. The captain had also offered him a good amount for Xury, whose freedom Crusoe was not ready to sell and whom he was reluctant to part with. But when Xury himself expressed his will to go with the captain, who had also offered to set him free after ten years, Crusoe let the good Captain take him along.

Settling down in the sugar plantations of Brasil :

Thus, Crusoe had settled down to a life in the plantations situated by the shores of Brasil, while also owning his own sugar plantation and sugar-mill (ingenio as they called it). Gradually, he came to purchase land for himself and settled down to what his father had called the 'middle station of life' which he would have easily had anyway, had he not runaway from his father's home. A good four years had rolled by and to add to the slave that the Captain had provided him with, he had brought himself a European servant and a black slave.

Even as he thought he was prosperous in the plantation life that he had led, the desires to return to sea and embark upon a new sea adventure had constantly stirred him into restlessness. Crusoe reflects thus: "I was still the willful agent of all my own miseries; and particularly to encrease my fault and double the reflections upon myself , which in my future sorrows I should have the leisure to make; all these miscarriages were procured by my apparent obstinate adhering to my foolish inclination…" (31). And finally, Crusoe "blindly adhering to the dictates" of his "fancy rather than his reason" had arranged for a ship and cargo to set sail (33). He went on board yet again on the fateful day of the first of September, 1659, exactly eight years since he had gone away from his parents.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 9: How was Crusoe's fate transformed from an Englishman to that of a slave?

Q 10: When did Crusoe take his chance to escape from the rovers?

Q 11: What was Crusoe's plan after parting ways with the Captain and Xury?

Second storm at sea and ship wreck :

Having sailed smoothly for several days, they had reached the northern part of Brazil away from the river Amazon and towards the river Oronoque (called the 'Great River'). But as the ship proved to be leaky and required assistance, a second storm had come upon them and the seas suddenly went wild. The storm was a fury and the crew of the ship were all "swallowed" by the sea in a moment that appeared to rise "as high as a hill" (37). But even as they were being driven by the waves, Crusoe did not lose his presence of mind. And this was until he had set his foot on land again, on an unknown shore and gained a new leash of life and courage to take his fate in his stride. He had found himself washed ashore on an unknown island; the waves had dashed him against the rocks and it took a while for his condition to sink into his consciousness. Infact, after he gained his composure, realising he was the sole survivor of the ship, he walked about the shore in disbelief, partly trying to register his own helpless condition in his mind. Just imagine how lonely it would be on an island all by yourself without a clue of which part of the world you could be in. And suddenly chasing his immediate fears of survival Crusoe had begun to run all about the place much like a mad man.

When the sea turned very calm at the tidal ebb, he decided to swim across to the ship wreck to look for some provisions. So he swam to the ship and climbed its forecastle and having searched, had found that dry and untouched provisions which had once again lifted his spirits.

Gathering his provisions on the island :

Immediately, Crusoe had begun his work and made a small but strong raft, to drift his provisions in order to carry them across the island. The first list of his collected provisions comprised of:

Bread, rice, Dutch cheese, dried goat's flesh, European corn, barley and wheat, gallows of rack and cordial waters, carpenter's chest, arms and ammunition like barrels of gun powder, fowling pieces, pistols and rusty swords.

Thus, he was well-freighted. Although it was not without his share of struggle, he took it all ashore. Next, he had intended to circumspect (look around) the countryside but he also had no idea, if he was on an island or on some continent, whether there were any inhabitants or wild beasts there. Gradually, he began to plan his trips to and fro the ship in order to procure anything and everything that would be necessary to him. On his second trip he had gathered the listed necessities such as:

Nails, spikes, screw-jack, hatchets, grindstone, iron-crows, barrels of musquet bullets, musquets, fowling pieces, small quantity of fowling pieces, gun-powder, small shot, big roll of sheet lead, clothes (of the crew), spare fore-top-sail, hammock and bedding.

Crusoe apparently was not without his apprehensions (fears of the provisions left behind on shore, being taken away by someone). And thus, till the "ship sat upright in that posture" he tried to make the most of it and gather as much useful necessities that he could find. On his third trip he gathered: small ropes, rope-twine, spare-canvas, barrel of gun powder and all the sails. And in the consecutive trips, he brought a great hogshead of bread, large runlets of rum or spirits, box of sugar, barrel of fine flour, cables, hawser, sprit sail-yard, missen-yard and iron. Although, he lost much of his collected cargo due to the currents, he managed to restore most of his freight. He had also collected broken oars, chest of tools, saws, axes, hammers etc. Thus, during the 13 days of his stay at the island, he had made eleven trips on board the ship. On his 12th trip he had collected razors, scissors, knives, forks, European corn, six pounds' value in money, pieces of gold and silver. His first thoughts were his own security from

savages, wild beasts or any unforeseen dangers and so he tried to find a place for his settlement where fresh water was available.

Crusoe's setting up his dwelling and encampment on the island :

Some of the favourable conditions he was looking for were:

- Health and fresh water
- Shelter from heat of the sun
- Security from ravenous creatures
- View from the sea in order to locate any ship that happens to pass by.

So, he had set up a tent on the side of a rising hill, crowing it with a semi-circle of two rows of strong stakes dug in or driven into the earth as a defensive fence. Only after having brought in his provisions and fortifying or securing his tent could he sleep peacefully at night. Thus, in his fancy he called his new homestead his "kitchen". In time, he had also acquainted himself with the whereabouts of the island and searched for food and hunting for meat.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 12: Make a list of some of the necessary provisions that Crusoe had gathered.

Q 13: Where had they reached before the storm destroyed the leaky ship?

Q 14: How many trips did Crusoe make to the wrecked ship?

Q 15: What were some of the favourable conditions that Crusoe had been looking for?

Activities on the island :

Thus, Crusoe took to breeding goats, made fire and even enlarged his cave. He would often wonder "Did not you come eleven of you into the boat? Where are the ten? Why were not they sav'd and you lost? Why were you singled out: is it better to be here or there?" (51). Crusoe went about the business of living a silent life. It occurred to him that in order to avoid losing his sense of time, he carved his weeks on a wooden cross with a knife and set it up on the shore, marking time from his first stepping

on the island. This was how he had marked time weekly, monthly and yearly in a systematic manner.

He had with him pens, ink, paper, various parcels, compasses, mathematical instruments, dials, perspectives, charts, books (particularly navigation books) and three good Bibles. Also, he had brought along with him two cats and a dog. During this time he also began to keep a journal that recorded his activities (almost like an activity log book). From his journal, we get a detailed account of the amount of toil, he had put into his each activity. He had widened his vault or cave in eighteen days, labouring with wood of iron tree, weaving an extra thatch with coarse grass, breeding live stock, poultry and pigeons, making candles out of goat tallow, cooking turtle meats and eggs, leavening his own bread, gathering drifting barrels of gun powder and even accidently scattering husks of corn stalks. To his luck, he also came upon the seaman's chest on the stranded ship which was of excellent use to him. Often he worried of running out of water in his habitation. At times he dreamt or even hallucinated and in his lonely hours remembered his father's words. From here on, you will find Crusoe often seeking solace and reassurance in reading the words of the Bible and growing spiritually.

Surrendering to the will of the Almighty :

This was when he made his first prayer in his distress crying out "Lord, be my help, for I am in great distress" (74). It was in one of the chests that he had found tobacco, few books and Bibles as a "cure, both for soul and body" (76). Thus, he had tried various ways of easing his anxiety by experimenting with tobacco to drug himself. During one such moment when he picked up and casually opened the Bible, he found the words: "Call on me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver, and thou shall glorify me", which was when he knelt to pray after a long time. Thus, began a spiritual journey and what could also be considered as a journey of self-discovery.

Shifting to new habitation and enjoying labour :

While on the island, he also happened to fall sick but recovered and took to surveying the island, discovering banks and brooks, savannas or meadows and higher grounds, wild plants and fruit trees like wild aloes,

sugarcane, cocoa trees, orange, lemon, citron, green limes etc. He took to drying grapes, limes and lemons to store for the wet season. And yet again he began considering on shifting his habitation and to start work immediately. Just before the August rains, he completed building his new bower and carved his "notches" on the wooden post to measure time. Gradually, he lost track of time and ran out of ink as well. Thus, he ate sparingly, used his supply and ammunitions with discretion and was particular not to waste much ink. He turned familiar with the various seasons on the island which also found a description in the pages of his journal.

Without the least idea of which part of the world he could have been in, he suffered unseen fears of man-eaters and cannibals in what he calls the "savage coast". Here he caught a young parrot for a pet and trained the bird to call out 'words', something that he really longed to hear. This presented itself as a welcome diversion from his lonely hours of toil and labour. Time and condition had seasoned him to be good and an all-rounder in all activities like sowing, arranging scarecrows, making wicker-ware, creating pottery, stone-cutting, baking bread, enlarging his barn, felling trees, growing grapes, carving his canoe, tailoring his own clothes, curing animal skin, brewing and various other activities to provide for his sustenance. Gradually, he also learnt to read currents and developed a sense of direction, building on his knowledge of navigation and to also fight the unpredictable eddies.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 16: What did Crusoe do in order to avoid losing his sense of time?

Q 17: How did he record his day-to-day activities?

Q 18: When did Crusoe begin to pray again?

Q 19: What did Crusoe finish just before the August rains?

Eleven years pass by and new unknown fears visit Crusoe :

'Poll', his parrot would often repeat "Robin, Robin, Robin Crusoe, poor Robin Crusoe, where are you? ...Where have you been?" and draw his thoughts which would occupy his mind mostly for want of conversation. Having passed eleven years on the island i.e., over a decade, he often

thought to himself, "I seem banished from human society", which he called his "silent life" (127). The dense semi-circle crown of dense stakes in front of his fortification had begun to grow in height.

One fine noon, he was alarmed at finding a 'footprint' of a man on the shore and his apprehensions and fears started crawling in his consciousness, racking through his imagination. But five years from that day, he was still without the shadow or appearance of another human figure on the island. Nevertheless, he drew his own "rational design" and made a second fortification in the same way and thickened his double wall and while, on the outside, it was a row of thickly growing trees, the inside part was thickened with earth (above ten foot thick) with seven holes, just about enough to plant his guns. In two years time, it had grown into a thick grove which made it "impassable" (131) and he used two ladders to get across his fortification. He spent another two years in his "uneasiness" fearing the presence of cannibals (native men who had a practice of eating human flesh) and their flesh-eating ways and eighteen years in total had passed by.

During this time, he rehearsed his every move to defend himself from any unwarranted attack. One fine day, he had discovered the insides of a cave that reflected hundred thousand lights from his tallow candles-not knowing whether this 'grotto' (a cavity in the rocks) was a tunnel of gold, diamond or other previous stones. He fancied this as a hideout in case, a strength of around five hundred savages came to hunt him.

Twenty six long years :

He spent many good years in the company of his parrot and loving companion, his dog. In the twenty third year, he had come to discover savages at a good distance through his perspective glass in his side of the island. This caused him to both prepare for retaliation as well to pray. The savages who were stark naked, had rowed towards the shore in their boats and later had left behind "a dreadful sight" of blood, bones and human flesh. Although, Crusoe was alert all the while, he used his discretion to hold his fire and avoid unnecessary attention.

The sight of ship wreckage :

After around a year and three months in the twenty fourth year, a strange encounter had taken place in which Crusoe noticed a ship in distress and later found its wreckage, to realise that the stretch of concealing or hidden rocks that had once proven his saving grace had turned into the cause of destruction for the unassuming crew of the ship. He was so desperate for company that he searched the wreckage, in the hope to find "some living creature on board" (154) to not only save a life but also comfort his own. But having found only a set of necessities, he assembled a cargo of rice, umbrella, large pot of fresh water, dozens of small loaves or barley cakes, goat's milk, cheese etc.

You will notice that this is when he faces a Hamletian situation i.e., whether to sail away from the island or not with this thought "[a]nd now I was to launch out into the ocean, and either to venture, or not to venture". But he gave up the very thought to rescue a dog, the only life in the remains of the wreckage. To enlist his provisions from the wrecked ship, he collected: casks of liquor, muskets, powder, fire-shovel, tongs, brass kettles, copper pots, clothes and a chest with paper money and coins (of which kind he had collected from his own ship as well). Two more years had sailed by.

A dream comes true :

One morning, Crusoe dreamt of two canoes and eleven savages landing ashore and one savage escaping from their clutches. And he dreamt that upon revealing himself to the savages, the man knelt in front of him for assistance and on being showed the way to the cave, decided to become his servant. Note the psychological conflicts, mental configurations, action plans, "his secret disputes" with himself and finally his resolutions to take on the savages as and when they come.

But his dream had come true indeed, when savages landed on the island in a total of five canoes. Suddenly he felt unprepared and saw that while they cooked one of their victims, another was waiting his fate! Taking it upon himself to save the victim's life, he tried to befriend the victim who had tried to escape, by coming in his way. And they were both equally frightened at seeing each other. Only gradually after having gained Crusoe's

trust, he drew nearer and knelt down after ten-twelve steps in acknowledgement of Crusoe's acting as his miraculous rescuer or better still, his saviour. When Crusoe smiled and through signs bade him to draw nearer, the man gestured his servitude for life.

Hearing the man speak in his own tongue, Crusoe found it pleasant to his ears "for they were the first sound of a man's voice that he had heard …for above twenty five years" (166). Together they fought the savage men and buried them soon after. Crusoe took the young savage to his cave and provided him bread and water and a place to lie down and rest.

Master and Friday :

While Crusoe taught the man to call him "Master", he named the man- 'Friday' for he was saved on a Friday. The canoes had left assuming that two of their companions had been lost. Later Crusoe and Friday discovered parts of human flesh and bones strewn on the shore and Crusoe at this point threatened and instructed Friday to never touch or desire human flesh or ever return to their cannibalistic practices. As a provider, Crusoe sewed clothes for Friday and provided him with lodging and although was initially scared of being attacked, gained a gradual sense of trust.

Crusoe then took to teaching Friday who was to him "the aptest schollar" (171). He taught him all that was useful, handy and helpful and most importantly taught him his "language". Crusoe endeared Friday particularly for his "simple unfeign'd honesty" and knew that Friday loved him more than anything, even more than it would ever be possible for him to, for he had saved his life.

Language and discourse :

Soon, Friday learnt the English language well enough to make conversations in broken words. While Crusoe once again began to have use of his language, Friday took to asking questions in his master's language. Thus, their discourses, conversations, discussions and arguments had begun. They both talked about their Gods and beliefs. While Crusoe asserted the supremacy of his Christian God, to Friday 'Benamuckee' was the guardian spirit, manifested in nature and just as Christians had their own clergy, Friday's people had mediators called 'oowocakee'. In one such significant discussion, when Crusoe asserted

the supremacy of God, Friday listening as seriously as a child asked his master: "if God much strong, much might as the devil, why God no kill the devil, so make him no more do wicked?" (178).

Nevertheless, Crusoe was very grateful to God for providing him with a good company. And together, they had completed three happy years on the island. Crusoe related his own story, taught him religion and the Christian doctrine, taught him to shoot, armed him with weapons of his own and further, taught him to carve a boat of good wood and stitch sails to make him an expert sailor.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 20: Who repeated the words given below?

"Robin, Robin, Robin Crusoe, poor Robin Crusoe, where are you? ...Where have you been?"

Q 21: Briefly state Crusoe's significant dream?

Q 22: What had Friday learnt from his master?

Another rescue and addition to Crusoe's family :

Friday narrates of how he had seen a boat of white men land in their nation, who even lived there in harmony with the natives, having made a peaceful truce with them. When Crusoe suggested that Friday could return to his own people, a hurt Friday with tears in his eyes asked his master: "Why you angry with Friday, what me done?" In Friday's reply, he would rather die in his master's hands than sail away without him which indeed reflected his "utmost affection" towards his master.

One morning Friday brought him news of three canoes with two captives, one being a European man and as Friday discovers later to his utter amazement, his own father. Together they rescued the two captives from the clutches of the natives, although two of their men had escaped in their boats. Thus, the new guests had been welcomed and well provided for. It was from this European man (a Spaniard) that Crusoe learnt of how fourteen of his country men were still alive and if his crew were to take their group on board to any of the Christian colonies, they would have to make a good offer for the same, such as a running food supply. Because in having

four more persons (Crusoe and his group) to provide for, the crew might decide not to rescue them, unless they would be offered a good food supply. Thus, with the Spaniard's caution and suggestion, they waited for another harvest, reaping a good harvest of several bushels and jars of rice.

A New Arrival :

Having gathered sufficient supply, Crusoe sent the Spaniard and Friday's father to the mainland to approach the fourteen men with his proposal in the form of a formal written order, which was to be duly signed by them, acknowledging that they would be subject to Crusoe's commands (202). Thus, they left in the same boat that they had been brought in, being entrusted with muskets and gun powder, supplied with provisions and reminded to send a signal on their return.

Eight days after their departure to the mainland, Friday brought in news of yet, another arrival which Crusoe discovered to be that of an anchored English ship at around two and a half leagues distance and an approaching boat with mostly Englishmen. And even when he saw his own countrymen after so many years, he could not hold back his apprehensions. They landed on shore, leaving behind two men in their boat, to simply wander about the woods on the island. This was when Crusoe cautioned Friday to load himself with arms and took them by surprise to first assure them of assistance instead of attacking them directly. At this point a commander, who was brought captive by the men, revealed how his men had mutinied against him and instead of murdering him, had sent him on shore to the desolate island with the two men on the boat in charge (one being his mate and the other being a passenger). Thus, Crusoe availed the opportunity to lay down certain terms and conditions if he was to be delivered. The terms were if their ship was recovered, it would be commanded by him and secondly, the commander would pretend no authority on the island.

Upon this, the commander provided his assurances but warned Crusoe of the two villains who had been the main instigators in that conspiracy and who would bring back the entire crew if they had managed to escape. Although, the Captain was bent on to having them severely punished, you will find that Crusoe's better sense had prevailed. And in

keeping with Crusoe's stratagem, the commander approached the ship and following a sudden charge of attack, in which the main sailor (who had recently turned into the new conspiring-captain) along with his men had died, took control of the ship. And after the ship was secured, the commander had fired a signal, anchoring the ship on shore just past the midnight hour. When Crusoe saw the anchored ship, he was left at a complete loss of words and had almost broken into tears. The cheerful commander had brought with him bottles of lime juice, sugar, flour, lemon and among other things, clothes and presented Crusoe with one of his good suit along with his clean shirts and neck clothes which also symbolised a return to his old self, an English gentleman.

Crusoe spared the two villains from punishment and instead provided them the option of staying back to look after the island, which the two had willingly accepted. Thus, Crusoe provided them a history of his stay at the island in order to make their stay comfortable and informed them of the fourteen Spaniards who were to be expected soon on the island (for he had sent for them). And thus, leaves a letter for them so that the arriving Spaniards were assured of being treated equally by the two men.

Finally setting sail after a period of twenty eight years :

Having arranged all the preparations to embark on his long-awaited journey, he left the island on the 19th of December after a period of twenty eight years, two months and nineteen days. He took along with him his goat's skin cap, umbrella, his parrot and his money. And after a long voyage, had arrived at England on the 11th of June, 1687 (having been absent for a long thirty five years).

In England, he was taken for a perfect stranger. His benefactor whom he visited to acknowledge her former kindness and also his faithful steward were still alive. But, his father and mother and most of his family members had long passed away, except his two sisters and two of his brother's children. Although, he learnt that no provision was really left for him due to his long absence, to his good fortune and surprise, he had was presented with a gift of gratitude of almost 200 pounds sterling, from the merchants who had learnt from the commander, about Crusoe's act of delivering the



Homo Economicus: The term implies the 'economical man' an example of which is crusoe himself.

commander and the ship with all its cargo intact. And with this, Crusoe sailed towards Lisbon along with his man Friday as Crusoe says "…my man Friday accompanying me very honestly in all these ramblings, and proving a most faithful servant upon all occasions" (227).



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 23: What were the two terms that Crusoe had laid down for the commander?

Q 24: When did Crusoe leave the island and when did he arrive at England?

Final adventure :

Crusoe's old acquaintances had been very kind to him which had touched him emotionally. He received congratulatory letters and gifts in gold and kind, from his old plantation partner with which he also provided generously for his original benefactor, the captain who had been very charitable to him earlier. Also he provided well for the kind widow of his first benefactor (the old captain) while also providing for his own sisters. At the same time, he generously gave a good portion for charity to the St. Augustine monastery and the poor and along with his abundant stock and crew had set out for a new sea journey.

Crusoe narrates his final account of travelling through Madrid, Spain and Pampeluna towards the edge of Navarre, at the French and later the Gascoign side of the mountains. Travelling in a carriage drawn by horses, they ran the risk of crossing through a snowy terrain lurking with ravenous wolves. And although, they were well armed and had a French guide in tow, to show them the way, the pack of wolves at the foot of the mountains and vast forests were too fierce to be done away with. You can easily imagine, the kind of fear and uncertainty that they had faced on being surrounded by two to three troops (around three hundred wolves) on all sides, ready to tear them to pieces. The snow had dazzled their eyes but Crusoe quickly devised his strategy of placing the horses (the chief target of the hungry wolves) in the middle and his small troop of men enclosing the horses in the formation

of a triangle. They fired several volleys at the wolves and even blew up gun powder to kill scores of wolves and chase the remaining away.

And thus, after having survived this dangerous adventure with Friday, he travelled from Thoulouse to Paris and then to Dover. Following the good advice of his true friend the widow, he kept away from travelling and instead took to raising his two nephews, the eldest as a gentleman to look after his own estate and the other as a captain of a ship. He even married and had three children, two sons and a daughter. And long after his wife's death, he visited the island his "new colony" as he called it, to also provide his men with their necessary cargoes and supplies there. While reserving most of the island for his own, he also gave them portions of their choice as well. Thus, "beginning foolishly, but closing much more happily" (248) in the words of Crusoe, he led an eventful and a truly adventurous life.

Crusoe also ends his narrative, on the note that he would further share his new travel and adventures on another account.



2.6 LET US SUM UP

After reading the above sections of the unit, you have seen how the narrative imbued with the spirit of adventure as unravelled through Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* have always continued to please the imagination of the readers. From your reading of the unit, you will certainly gain a keen interest in the life and adventures of Robinson Crusoe who survives the dangers and challenges on a deserted island, away from the company of his family and friends for twenty eight long years.

What makes the narrative more fasinating is the fact that it was inspired from a real life story that took place in 1709. Besides, familiarising yourself with the life and works of Daniel Defoe, you will receive a cursory glance of the times in which Defoe wrote, explain the background of the novel discuss the string of adventures in the novel and appreciate the larger narrative of the novel in its entirety.



2.7 FURTHER READING

1) Conrad, Peter. (2006). *Cassell's History of English Literature.* London: Weidenfield and Nicolson.

2) Long, William J. (2007). *English Literature: Its History and Its Significance.* New Delhi: Surjeet Publications.

3) Man, John. (ed). (1998). *Robinson Crusoe by Daniel Defoe.* London: Everymen.

4) Sanyal, Lopa. (2006). *English Literature in Eighteenth Century.* New Delhi: Discovery Publishing House.



2.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: Journalist, author, essayist, pamphleteer, trader and a dissenter.

Ans to Q No 2: The young Defoe received his early education at the Dissenter's academy at Newington Green which was under the Reverend Charles Morton (who later came to be the vice-president of Harvard University). His growing years were surrounded by the religious and political suffering of the Dissenters and he grew up always feeling like an outsider for his religious identity.

Ans to Q No 3: "Hymn to Pillory".

Ans to Q No 4: *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), *Captain Singleton* (1720), *Duncan Campbell* (1720), *Memoirs of a Cavalier* (1720), *Journal of the Plague Year* (1722), *Colonel Jack* (1722), *Moll Flanders* (1722) and *Roxana*: *The Fortunate Mistress* (1724).

Ans to Q No 5: The Preface to the novel unfurls an anonymons editor's words of praise and appreciation for the life and adventures of Crusoe as worthy of publication.

Ans to Q No 6: a. Robinson Kreutznaer, b. Nineteen.

Ans to Q No 7: He had questioned his son's desire to sail across the high seas, when a prospect of raising fortunes with the industry and leading a pleasurable life was available to him.

Ans to Q No 8: He had secretly boarded the ship bound towards London on the 1st of September 1651.

Ans to Q No 9: Crusoe was taken as prisoner to Sallee by the pirates and being young and resourceful was made to serve as a slave to the captain of the rovers.

Ans to Q No 10: He had taken his chance to escape, after two years while on a fishing trip when Crusoe had reached the bay of Cadiz, near the coast of Spain.

Ans to Q No 11: Crusoe had settled down to a life in the plantations situated by the shores of Brasil, where he became the owner of his own sugar plantation and sugar-mill.

Ans to Q No 12: Try and make a list on your own.

Ans to Q No 13: They had reached the northern part of Brazil away from the river Amazon and towards the river Oronoque (called the 'Great River').

Ans to Q No 14: Thirteen.

Ans to Q No 15: a. Health and fresh water

b. Shelter from heat of the sun

c. Security from ravenous creatures

d. View from the sea in order to locate any ship that happens to pass by.

Ans to Q No 16: In order to avoid losing his sense of time, he carved his weeks on a wooden cross with a knife and set it up on the shore, marking time from his first stepping on the island.

Ans to Q No 17: Journal that recorded his activities (almost like an activity log book).

Ans to Q No 18: During one such moment when he picked up and casually opened the Bible, he found the words: "Call on me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver, and thou shall glorify me", which was when he knelt to pray after a long time.

Ans to Q No 19: He had completed building his new bower.

Ans to Q No 20: Poll, Crusoe's pet parrot.

Ans to Q No 21: Crusoe dreams of two canoes and eleven savages landing ashore and one savage escaping from their clutches. Further, upon revealing himself to the savages, the man knelt in front of him for assistance and on being showed the way to the cave, decided to become his servant.

Ans to Q No 22: Friday learnt the English language well enough to make conversations in broken words.

Ans to Q No 23: Crusoe availed the opportunity to lay down certain terms and conditions if he was to be delivered. The terms were if their ship was recovered, it would be commanded by him and secondly, the commander would pretend no authority on the island.

Ans to Q No 24: He left the island on the 19th of December after a period of twenty eight years, two months and nineteen days. And after a long voyage, had arrived at England on the 11th of June, 1687 (having been absent for a long thirty five years).



2.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q 1. What does the Preface of the novel reveal? Why is it important?

Q 2. Discuss the life and works of Daniel Defoe.

Q 3. Describe Crusoe's first sea adventure in the novel *Robinson Crusoe*.

Q 4. Describe the context of the novel by highlighting the thematic significance of the novel.

Q 5. Briefly chronicle the twenty eight years that Crusoe spends on the island.

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