



The 'Real' Robinson Crusoe

Since the first graded readers for learners of English, the story of Robinson Crusoe has been a regular favourite. The original book by the English author, Daniel Defoe was published in 1719. Many people say Robinson Crusoe is the first English novel (long story). Robinson Crusoe is a real story. The 'real' Robinson Crusoe was Alexander Selkirk.

The story of Robinson Crusoe is written in the style of an autobiography. We seem to be reading Robinson Crusoe's own story about his life and adventures. Robinson Crusoe tells us about his life as a seaman working on sailing ships and travelling the world. The most famous part of the story describes a time when his ship was destroyed in a storm. All the people on the ship died. Robinson Crusoe did not die. He landed on an island near the coast of South America.

Robinson Crusoe describes his life on the island. He eats fruit and fish. He learns to catch animals for meat. He builds a house for himself. He discovers that there are native people living on the island. He makes friends with a native man and gives him the name 'Friday' because they met on that day. At the end of the story Robinson Crusoe is saved by an English ship which stops at the island.

Daniel Defoe, the writer of Robinson Crusoe, thought of the idea after he heard about the adventures of Alexander Selkirk.

Alexander Selkirk was a Scottish seaman and a very good sailor. He was sailing on a ship around the south of South America. There were many storms and the ship was damaged. Alexander Selkirk thought it was too dangerous to continue. He asked his captain to leave him on the next island they passed. The ship stopped at the island called Más a Tierra, near the coast of Chile. When it was time for the ship to leave, Alexander Selkirk said "I have changed my mind. I want to come back to the ship." The captain and the other sailors laughed and they sailed away leaving Alexander Selkirk alone on the island. Alexander Selkirk stayed on the island for four years. He lived a life like Robinson Crusoe. He did not find a native friend called Friday because there were no other people on the island. After four years, another ship passed the island. It stopped and saved Alexander Selkirk. He returned to England and wrote about his adventures. He became a famous man but he didn't like the busy London life. He wanted to be alone again. He went to live in a small village called Largo, in Scotland. He died in 1721.





Robinson Crusoe Factsheet

Activity 1

Look at these words. Three of these words are not from the dossier. Can you underline these words?

story	island	sailor	ship
storm	video	eat	alone
email	saved	adventure	fashionable

Check your answers when you read the dossier.

Activity 2

As you read the dossier, complete these sentences with the correct names.

Alexander Selkirk	Daniel Defoe	Robinson Crusoe
-------------------	--------------	-----------------

- _____ was an English author.
- _____ was a Scottish seaman.
- _____ is a person in a story.

After reading the dossier

Activity 3

Find the words in the dossier which have these meanings. Use the words in the table below.

- _____ a long book which tells one story.
- _____ the story of someone's life written by that person.
- _____ bad weather with strong winds and heavy rain
- _____ a person who was born in the country where they live.
- _____ not safe
- _____ a person who works on a ship at sea.
- _____ known by many people
- _____ a small group of houses in one place

dangerous	village	autobiography	native
storm	sailor	novel	famous

Activity 4

Read the questions and choose the correct answers.

- Who wrote the story of Robinson Crusoe?
a) Robinson Crusoe b) Alexander Selkirk c) **Daniel Defoe**





PENGUIN DOSSIERS

2. What was Robinson Crusoe's job?
a] an author b] a seaman c] a teacher
3. What destroyed Robinson Crusoe's ship?
a] a big fish b] a bomb c] bad weather
4. What happened to the other people on the ship?
a] They ate fish. b] They became famous. c] They died.
5. What did Robinson Crusoe build?
a] a house b] a ship c] an island
6. What did Robinson Crusoe call his native friend?
a] Friday b] Alexander Selkirk c] Daniel Defoe
7. Where did Alexander Selkirk come from?
a] London b] Scotland c] Chile
8. Why did Alexander Selkirk leave his ship?
a] He wanted to be alone. b] The ship was dangerous. c] The weather was bad.
9. How long did Alexander Selkirk stay on the island?
a] Nearly 300 years. b] Six weeks c] Four years
10. Who read about Alexander Selkirk's adventures?
a] Robinson Crusoe b] Friday c] Daniel Defoe

Activity 5

Discussion.

When the ship left Alexander Selkirk on the island he asked to have a gun and some gunpowder, a carpenter's tools, a knife, his clothes, and a copy of the Bible.

Think about five things and one book you would ask for if you were going to live alone on an empty island. Talk to your friends and make a list.

