



## Adventurous Elements in Daniel Defoe’s Novel *Robinson Crusoe*

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**Abstract:** Daniel Defoe’s period embodies political, religious, social and literary changes. He shares his own experiences to draw contrast between the successful and unsuccessful tradesmen. Defoe played all sort of men and now he became the interpreter of the mankind. Defoe in *Robinson Crusoe* presents a boy who disobeys his father and goes to the sea for trade. Some circumstances in his life drive him to an isolated island. There also, when he finds an opportunity to establish his empire and becomes an unchallenged king, from the beginning he snootily shows some tendency to rise above his middle class status. *Robinson Crusoe* can be read simply as a picaresque novel of travels and adventures of its protagonists, or as an allegory of the spiritual journey of the protagonist. Crusoe is not represented as a virtuous, religious man. Crusoe goes on adventures makes his habitance on the island and indulges in bread making and other activity of his life. Defoe portrays the character of Crusoe causing through the trajectories of life with great grit and élan.



Daniel Defoe’s period embodies political, religious, social and literary changes and definitely there were changes in law and rules as well. His whole life was full of trials and tribulations, which we can see also in his works. In one of his later work entitled *The Complete Tradesman* he gave much advice to young men in business. He shares his own experiences to draw contrast between the successful and unsuccessful tradesmen. His next work *The Shortest Way with Dissenters* was misunderstood by both sides and they were enraged. In *Robinson Crusoe* Defoe turned from the political writing to the adventures of a ship wrecked sailor: “Defoe played all sort of men and now he became the interpreter of the mankind. The last decade of his life was an amazing activity of creation. As his body grew weaker, his mind became more energetic.”

Defoe was nearly sixty years of age when, in the year 1719, he published *Robinson Crusoe*, the book whose universal appeal to youth has made him famous to many succeeding generations and has secured his position among the immortals. The original incentive to write *Robinson Crusoe* and the central idea of a man left by himself on a deserted island relying on his own resources for existence and maintaining his courage and cheerfulness. In spite of solitude and privation, came to Defoe from the actual experiences of Alexander Selkirk the history of whose sojourn on Juan Fernandez was the great sensation of 1712-13. In this novel Defoe presents the adventures and misadventures of a man, who was obsessed with sea fever. His courage and his power of enduring the pain are clearly brought out on account of his strange and surprising experiences on the desolate island. Defoe in *Robinson Crusoe* presents a boy who disobeys his father and goes to the sea for trade. Some circumstances in his life drive him to an isolated island. There also, when he finds an opportunity to establish his empire and becomes an



unchallenged king, from the beginning he snootily shows some tendency to rise above his middle class status.

It is a discussion of the life of the central character that belongs to the middle class but in his ambition to rise above his status he commits a sin against his parents. He ventures to the sea. However, his greed for money leads him to an uninhabited island. He prosper and feels happy to find himself in possession of a wealth which was all his. In this novel we are acquainted with a detailed account of his business but not much is told about his personal life. In fact, he unfolds his own life story and relationship for him has no more values than economic parameters. He gets married only to secure his money, leaves his family to go on another business tour. His relationship with his boys, Xury and Friday, are also based on the comfort which they both provide to him. Some of the critics have described it as an adventurous story, but it is due to his obsession with materialism that he gives no importance to any other thing in his life and risks this many a time. And in the end of the novel Crusoe presents himself as an absolute king of the island who has a number of slaves at his command.

Some critics highlight the adventurous element as a main feature in Defoe's fiction. Walter Allen in *English novel: A Short Critical History* observes *Robinson Crusoe* as an adventurous story, presented with the historical realism. Walter Allen is of the view that a new type of novel starts with Defoe. In the same way, some of the other important critics on Defoe are James Sutherland in *Daniel Defoe: A Critical Study* and H.K. Hawkins in *Selections from Daniel Defoe* emphasize the presentation of realism, autobiographical elements and adventure in Defoe's novels.

*Robinson Crusoe* can be read simply as a picaresque novel of travels and adventures of its protagonists, or as an allegory of the spiritual journey of the protagonist; it gives an idea of the relation between man and nature that comes from the depth of the English middle-Class view of life. Robinson Crusoe, the narrator, tells us that he was born in 1632 in the city of York, England. His father was a German immigrant. Very early in life, his head began to be filled with rambling thoughts. He wanted to go to the sea to improve his economic conditions as he, "had a prospect of raising my fortune by application and industry, with a life of ease and pleasure".

Before his leaving home there is a debate between the parents and himself about economic circumstances. Crusoe was warned by his father that if he acted contrary to his advice, he would come to grief. According to his father peace of mind and prosperity can be attained only by a middle station in life. But he paid no attention to his father's warning and one day, having casually gone out to Hull, and boarded a ship bound for London. It was on 1<sup>st</sup> September 1651 that he left home to go on the voyage. Hardly had the ship sailed out of the harbor when a strong wind began to blow and grew into a furious storm and as a consequences of which the ship was wrecked. However, Crusoe and others on board were saved by another ship, and were landed upon the shore near Winterton. From there Crusoe went onwards to London by road. From London he sailed Guinea on the African coast in the company of an English Sea-Captain who had become very friendly with him. Having bought certain goods in London on the advice of his friend, Crusoe sold these goods in Guinea and earned a profit. He decided to become a



merchant operating between London and Guinea. He did not have the least fear of the sea storm on his mind. He went on another voyage, but his ship was captured by the pirates and taken to the Moroccan Port called Sallee. From there Crusoe's companions were taken to the emperor's court as prisoners, while Crusoe was kept by the Captain of the Turkish ship as his personal Slave. Crusoe spent two years of his life in a state of slavery. He was ordered to go for fishing and in this way one day he managed to escape from there in his master's boat. With the help of another slave, Xury, he arranged food and other material and then they escaped. Not knowing whither to go or sail they kept drifting in sea for several days. But fortunately they were helped by Portuguese sea captain and taken to Brazil. Now he wanted to settle in Brazil with the help of this captain. With the money he had, he bought some land. Crusoe's business instincts didn't abandon him. He realized that he was now coming to the middle of his life which his father had advised him to attain in England. But he very intelligently made a 'will' before going to the journey for the preservation of his plantation. The ship in which he left for Africa was wrecked by storms and went ashore off an island near the mouth of the Orinoco, all on board perishing except Crusoe. He fought his way out of the water and, more dead than alive, found himself alone on an uninhabited island on 30<sup>th</sup> September 1659. With this adventure, Robinson Crusoe takes another turn with life on the lonely island. It was broad day now and he could see the ship near the shore.

His new life on the island was full of upheavals. Yet he came to terms with his physical condition and found the ways and means to keep himself alive and well. He swam to the ship and obtained from it a large number of articles which could prove useful for him in his desolate condition on the island. Now Crusoe proceeded to find a suitable place for his habitation near the sea shore. After some time a made a fence and then dug a cave to keep the goods dry for use a long time. He made all efforts to save himself from any danger. He fired at some birds and goats and tortoise for food. But after some months it started raining heavily and Crusoe caught influenza. At this he was full of distress and longed for human company and prayed to God for this. Crusoe often travelled over the island in order to explore it. In the course of his exploration of the island, he found a region where he grew fruits of all kinds. He found an opulence of grapes which he dried thus making raisins from them. The island offers him the fullest opportunity to realize the absolute economy, social and intellectual freedom. On the island Crusoe enjoys the absolute freedom sans social restrictions. There are no family ties. Crusoe Island was a kingdom for him and he was the king. Crusoe had now spent about two years on the island and experienced its climatic conditions. Now he knew that he should sow seeds on the eve of rainy season, because he had already made good experiment on plantation. He could get two crops a year. After careful observation and book keeping, he was able to predict the exact division of the year when he could plant and when he could not. He found the southern part of the island more lush and fertile; replete with turtle, she-goats and penguins there. He also caught a parrot for which he made a small cage. Due to loneliness he started to teach the parrot to speak and he was delighted to hear someone talking after such a long time. Now he also had more pet animals.



This will, therefore, fulfil his urge to talk in human voice which he had been cherishing for a longtime.

Some days later, Crusoe found the print of a man's naked foot on the shore. He stood there like a thunder struck, as if he had seen a ghost. Totally confused and somewhat frightened, Crusoe went back to his fortified hut and thought that the devil was attempting to trick him in some way. In this confused state turn to the Bible for some consolation and begins to believe that may be it were his own footprints that he had seen on the sea shore. Now he seldom went out of his cave. Some months later he heard a gunshot, the next morning he went down to investigate that another ship had hit the rocks and the crew had drowned. He went to the ship and collected some useful things like liquor, tobacco, some brass cattle and so on. And after about a year and half, Crusoe was surprised one morning at the sight of five canoes on the shore. They were fully armed and some of them were cooking meat. He also saw two men who were obviously captives, one of whom was cut open into edible portions. But while this was going on the other prisoner escaped. The man swam across a creek where Crusoe was standing. Crusoe fired a shot which killed two men on the spot and rest of the crew retreated from there. Crusoe's relationship with man Friday are similarly ego-centric. He doesn't ask him his name, but gives him one. Friday must be bent to serve Crusoe's need and this was what Crusoe want from Friday. He doesn't teach Friday anything more than to say 'Yes' and 'No'. Crusoe was making plans to escape from the island. But in the meanwhile he had also saved two more prisoners and now he became the monarch of three subjects. After a long struggle and planning Crusoe was able to capture the ship and the mutineers. Defoe never regarded himself as a writer of fiction. He has palmed off Robinson Crusoe as an existing person and his island as an existing place. Robinson Crusoe can be enjoyed as a story of; "strange, surprising adventure." But it is much more than that. Crusoe could not quite except that his destiny was to fit into a middle class niche, even though his values may have been middle class in themselves.

It is becomes discernible to note that William Golding in *Lord of the Flies* also highlights the vagaries of life being experienced by the shipwrecked children. Crusoe is not represented as a virtuous, religious man. Crusoe goes on adventures makes his habitance on the island and indulges in bread making and other activity of his life. Defoe portrays the character of Crusoe causing through the trajectories of life with great grit and élan.

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