

# ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON'S *TREASURE ISLAND* & OTHER STORIES STUDY QUESTIONS

## PART 1 - THE OLD BUCCANEER

### CHAPTER 1 - THE OLD SEA DOG AT THE "ADMIRAL BENBOW"

1. Why does Jim Hawkins decide to keep the location of Treasure Island a secret from the reader? What does this decision tell the reader about the outcome of the story?
2. Briefly describe the captain. How do the patrons of the inn feel about the captain's presence at the Benbow?
3. Why does Jim dream about a one-legged man?
4. How does Dr. Livesey send the captain to his seat "like a beaten dog"?

### CHAPTER 2 - BLACK DOG APPEARS AND DISAPPEARS

1. Find an example of foreshadowing in the first paragraph of this chapter.
2. Briefly describe Black Dog. Why do you think Stevenson gives both the captain and Black Dog obvious physical flaws?
3. Some critics believe Stevenson is a master at creating characters who are obviously immoral, but do have some redeeming qualities. In what ways does Black Dog's behavior toward Jim support or refute this idea?
4. Why does the doctor think Bill's tattoo is prophetic?

### CHAPTER 3 - THE BLACK SPOT

1. Why does Jim agree to bring a glass of rum to Bill, knowing that the doctor believes that rum will kill the captain?
2. What instructions does Bill give Jim if he sees Black Dog or the one-legged man near the Benbow Inn? What will be Jim's reward for following the captain's instructions?
3. Why is Jim afraid of the blind beggar? The captain tells Jim the black spot is a summons. What can be inferred about its meaning by this passage from the story?  
... and he drew in his and looked sharply into the palm.  
"Ten o'clock!" he cried. "Six hours. We'll do them yet!" and he sprang to his feet."
4. Why does Jim cry after Bill dies?

### CHAPTER 4 - THE SEA CHEST

1. Why do the men in the neighboring hamlet refuse to return to the inn with Jim and his mother? In what ways do they agree to help them?
2. Why don't Jim and his mother just grab the money the captain owes them and run from the inn?
3. How do Jim and his mother know the pirates are coming? Why does Jim decide to take the oilskin package before they escape from the inn?
4. What does Jim mean when he says that he blames his mother for her "past foolhardiness and present weakness"? Is he fair?

## **CHAPTER 5 - THE LAST OF THE BLIND MAN**

1. Define “lubber” and “glim” in the context they appear in this chapter. What is the meaning of the whistling Jim hears from the hillside?
2. What is the meaning of the phrase “budge, you skulk” in the following passage from the chapter?  
“There’s Dirk again,” said one. “Twice! We’ll have to budge, mates.”  
“Budge, you skulk!” cried Pew.
3. Define “lugger.” How does its presence help to save Jim and his mother from the pirates?
4. Why do you think Jim decides to deliver the oilskin package to Dr. Livesey instead of giving it to Mr. Dance?

## **CHAPTER 6 - THE CAPTAIN’S PAPERS**

1. Define “atrocious miscreant.” What does the squire mean when he calls Jim a trump?
2. Why does the doctor quiz the squire about Flint’s reputation before opening the oilskin package?
3. Why is the doctor afraid of the squire?

## **PART 2 - THE SEA COOK**

### **CHAPTER 7 - I GO TO BRISTOL**

1. What evidence is there in the letter that the squire may be easily duped by the people he is trusting to outfit his ship?
2. Who is Long John Silver? What can the reader infer about his trustworthiness?

### **CHAPTER 8 - AT THE SIGN OF THE “SPY-GLASS”**

1. What happens at the Spy-glass to reawaken Jim’s suspicions that Long John Silver is the notorious one-legged man?
2. How does Long John Silver manage to convince Jim, the squire, and Dr. Livesey that he is telling the truth about Black Dog’s presence at his inn?
3. In what way is the incident at the Spy-glass an example of foreshadowing? How does it add interest to the story?

### **CHAPTER 9 - POWDER AND ARMS**

1. Briefly explain why Captain Smollett does not like this cruise, the men, or his first officer.
2. List the captain’s two requests.
3. What one piece of pertinent information about the trip is leaked to the men by a source other than the squire?
4. Define the following nautical terms used in this chapter: schooner, galley, port, long nine.
5. Why is Jim “quite of the squire’s way of thinking, and hated the captain deeply”?

### **CHAPTER 10 - THE VOYAGE**

1. Who is Israel Hands? How does Hands feel about Barbecue?
2. Why is Long John Silver proud of his parrot, Captain Flint?
3. Define the following terms as they appear in the chapter: duff, grog, broached, waist, luff.
4. Find an example of foreshadowing in this chapter.

### **CHAPTER 11 - WHAT I HEARD IN THE APPLE BARREL**

1. What does Silver say that makes Jim wish that he could kill him?
2. Who are “gentlemen of fortune”? What does Silver say about their way of life?
3. Give reasons why Silver and his men do not take over the ship right away.
4. What does Silver plan to do with the squire, the doctor, and their men after he takes over the ship?
5. How does Mr. Arrow die?
6. What is significant about the following line from the story? “Not another man of them’ll jine.”

### **CHAPTER 12 - COUNCIL OF WAR**

1. Why does Jim think Silver must be disappointed by the captain’s map of the island? What is the real name of Treasure Island?
2. How does Jim demonstrate his loyalty and bravery? What evidence is there that in the future he will again be key to the success of the mission?
3. Why does the captain think it is best if they just go on as usual, don’t confront the pirates, and don’t turn back?

## **PART 3 - MY SHORE ADVENTURE**

### **CHAPTER 13 - HOW I BEGAN MY SHORE ADVENTURE**

1. How does Silver demonstrate his anxiety over the conduct of the men?
2. Why does Jim decide he can leave the ship to go ashore with the crew?
3. Why do you suppose Jim leaps out of the boat and runs for the woods as soon as possible?

### **CHAPTER 14 - THE FIRST BLOW**

1. What does Jim learn about Silver in this chapter? How does this knowledge create a dilemma for Jim?
2. Some critics believe that this novel maintains its appeal through the years because each of the short chapters contains some new complication, without long descriptions of settings or motivations. Cite incidents in the chapter so far to support or refute this claim.
3. Find an example of foreshadowing in this chapter. Where is the most likely place to find examples of foreshadowing in this novel?

### **CHAPTER 15 - THE MAN ON THE ISLAND**

1. Briefly describe Ben Gunn. Sometimes Stevenson uses the physical descriptions of his characters to reveal personality traits. What is revealed about Ben Gunn by his appearance?
2. When does Jim begin to believe that Ben may be an ally?
3. What does Ben want from the squire? What kind of food does he miss the most?
4. Where does Ben keep his boat?

## **PART 4 - THE STOCKADE**

### **CHAPTER 16 - NARRATIVE CONTINUED BY THE DOCTOR: HOW THE SHIP WAS ABANDONED**

1. Why does Dr. Livesey believe that Jim Hawkins is dead?
2. Briefly describe the stockade. Why does the doctor decide to relocate his men here?

### **CHAPTER 17 - NARRATIVE CONTINUED BY THE DOCTOR: THE JOLLY-BOAT'S LAST TRIP**

1. List two reasons the last trip to the log house is the most dangerous for the doctor and his friends.
2. What is the long nine? How is it used by Silver's men?

### **CHAPTER 18 - NARRATIVE CONTINUED BY THE DOCTOR: END OF THE FIRST DAY'S FIGHTING**

1. Why do the men in the stockade decide to leave the flag flying, even though the mutineers are using it to aim their gun?

### **CHAPTER 19 - NARRATIVE RESUMED BY JIM HAWKINS: THE GARRISON IN THE STOCKADE**

1. Sometimes Ben Gunn is difficult to understand because he has spent so much time alone. What do you think he is saying in the following passage? "And if them pirates came ashore, Jim, what would you say but there'd be widders in the morning?"
2. What potentially important discovery does Jim make on his way to the stockade to rejoin his friends?
3. Cite evidence to support the idea that the doctor thinks Ben is probably sane.

### **CHAPTER 20 - SILVER'S EMBASSY**

1. What deal does Silver offer Dr. Livesey and the others?
2. What is the captain's counter offer?

### **CHAPTER 21 - THE ATTACK**

1. What happens in this chapter that could greatly reduce the chances of Dr. Livesey and the others against the pirates?
2. This novel is described as an action-adventure story. Cite three examples of action in this chapter.
3. In what way can the combat with the mutineers be called a victory for Jim and his friends?

## **PART V - MY SEA ADVENTURE**

### **CHAPTER 22 - HOW I BEGAN MY SEA ADVENTURE**

1. What two follies is Jim talking about in this passage? "This was my second folly, far worse than the first, as I left but two sound men to guard the house; but, like the first, it was a help towards saving all of us."
2. Define coracle. Why does Jim decide to try and cut the *Hispaniola's* anchor line?
3. Why does Jim think it "was a night one out of ten thousand for my purpose"?

### **CHAPTER 23 - THE EBB-TIDE RUNS**

1. Define ebb tide and spars. What does it mean when a sailor says a ship is “talking”?
2. Why does Jim think the devil and drink are both very busy aboard the *Hispaniola*?

### **CHAPTER 24 - THE CRUISE OF THE CORACLE**

1. Define gunwale and leeway.
2. Why does Jim risk boarding the *Hispaniola*?

### **CHAPTER 25 - I STRIKE THE JOLLY ROGER**

1. What bargain does Jim make with Hands? Define “Jolly Roger.”
2. What evidence is there that Jim cannot trust Hands.

### **CHAPTER 26 - ISRAEL HANDS**

1. Why does Hands think killing is a waste of time?
2. How does Jim know that Hands is up to no good when he asks Jim for a bottle of wine?
3. Find an example of an idiom in this chapter.
4. Cite incidents from the story to support or refute the following statement: the main reason he survives his fight with Hands is because Jim is lucky.

### **CHAPTER 27 - PIECES OF EIGHT**

1. Cite the clues that alert Jim to possible trouble in the stockade.

## **PART 4 - CAPTAIN SILVER**

### **CHAPTER 28 - IN THE ENEMY’S CAMP**

1. Why does Silver’s men want to kill Jim?
2. Why do you think Silver is very willing to switch sides at this point in the story?
3. Cite evidence that Silver respects Jim.

### **CHAPTER 29 - THE BLACK SPOT AGAIN**

1. List the four reasons Silver’s men want him deposed as their captain.
2. How does Silver answer each of these charges?
3. Cite incidents from the story to support or refute the following statement: Jim knows Silver is wicked, but he does not want to see anything happen to him.

### **CHAPTER 30 - ON PAROLE**

1. Cite evidence that Silver is really afraid of the gallows and not just pretending to be afraid to gain the doctor’s sympathy.
2. Why do you suppose the doctor tells Silver not to be in any hurry to find the treasure and to “look for squalls”?

### **CHAPTER 31 - THE TREASURE HUNT - FLINT’S POINTER**

1. What does Silver mean when he says that they are going on this treasure hunt with “sealed orders”?
2. Why is Jim disgusted with the pirates for living “hand to mouth”?
3. Briefly describe Flint’s pointer.
4. Find an example of an idiom in this chapter.

### **CHAPTER 32 - THE TREASURE HUNT - THE VOICE AMONG THE TREES**

1. Who is the speaker of the following quote from the story? “Darby M’Graw! Darby M’Graw! . . . Fetch aft the rum, Darby!”
2. What does Merry mean when he says, “Why, nobody minds Ben Gunn . . . dead or alive, nobody minds him”?
3. Find a passage in the story that illustrates Jim’s continuing mistrust of Silver and Silver’s promise to keep Jim alive.
4. What evidence is there that the treasure has been gone for a long time?
5. Support or refute the following statement by citing incidents from the chapter. Captain Flint is a legend among the mutineers.

### **CHAPTER 33 - THE FALL OF A CHIEFTAIN**

1. Find one good thing and one bad thing Jim observes about Silver’s character in this chapter.
2. Why does Jim use the term “obsequious” when describing Silver?
3. Briefly outline the doctor’s reasons for giving Silver the map and the stockade.

### **CHAPTER 34 - AND LAST**

1. What is the meaning of the following passage from the story?  
Silver was gone. The maroon had connived at his escape in a shore-boat some hours ago, and he now assured us he had only done so to preserve our lives, which would certainly have been forfeited if ‘that man with the one leg had stayed aboard.’”
2. How do you think Jim feels about Long John Silver at the end of the story? Does Jim see any good in the man?
3. This story is written in first person narration. What are the disadvantages of this type of narration when the reader is trying to understand a character like Long John Silver?
4. Give reasons why Jim does not want to take another trip to Treasure Island to retrieve the remaining treasure.

## **ESSAY TOPICS**

For each of these, remember to go beyond mere plot summary and argue a point.

1. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of Stevenson’s use of first-person narrative and how it affects both character and plot.
2. Compare and contrast Stevenson’s portrayals of pirates to real-life pirates of the period, the mid 1700s.
3. Discuss Stevenson’s characterization and use of physical flaws with the characters of Black Dog, Captain Bill, Long John Silver, and Pew.
4. Discuss Stevenson’s use and style of foreshadowing in each of the first four chapters.
5. Trace Jim’s changing opinion of Long John Silver.
6. *Treasure Island* can be seen as a coming of age story. Trace and discuss Jim’s growth and maturity into adulthood.

## **“THE GOLD-BUG” BY EDGAR ALLAN POE**

“The Gold-Bug,” written in 1843, displays an uncommon style of writing for Edgar Allan Poe. The story, although a member of the detective genre, is not related to Poe’s trilogy of detective stories, which track the exploits of C. August Dupin. “The Gold-Bug” follows the protagonist Mr. William Legrand, who is bitten by “the gold bug” and goes in search of treasure. Humor is provided with the help of a dim-witted character named Jupiter, who unwittingly delivers puns. Another distinguishing feature is the story’s happy ending, which contrasts to many of Poe’s more macabre tales.

Various similarities exist between “The Gold-Bug” and Edgar Allan Poe’s personal life. The story is set on Sullivan’s Island, where Poe had served a year in the army at Fort Moultrie. The protagonist, Legrand, is a solitary figure with a particular interest in cryptography, like the author. Legrand is driven to poverty by a series of unfortunate events; likewise, Poe’s career suffered from a chain of misfortunes. His work, although popular, did not earn a great deal of money, a fact that haunted the talented author. The stress that Poe endured made him agitated and overly sensitive to criticism, much like the character Legrand. In several instances, Poe’s retaliations against his critics resulted not only in lawsuits, but also in physical aggression.

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1. Describe Sullivan’s Island. What characteristics of Sullivan’s Island may also be used to describe Mr. William Legrand?
2. How does Jupiter’s character depict Southern racism during the mid-nineteenth century?
3. Describe the grand discovery that Legrand makes.
4. Legrand draws a picture of the beetle. What does the narrator think the bug resembles?
5. After drawing the sketch, why does Legrand become agitated with the narrator?
6. Describe Legrand’s behavior after he retrieves the sketch from the narrator.
7. Jupiter visits the narrator in Charleston one month after the bug is discovered. What does he report about Legrand?
8. The narrator accompanies Jupiter back to Sullivan’s Island. What is in the boat?
9. Jupiter tells the narrator that he fears Legrand has been bitten by the beetle. Legrand tells the narrator, “This bug is to make my fortune.” Explain the pun that Poe uses with these two comments.
10. Why does Legrand send for the narrator?
11. The men proceed to the mainland and begin walking into the hills, where the land is “excessively wild and desolate, where no trace of a human footprint was to be seen.” How does this description of the land affect the story’s mood?
12. Where do the men stop? What does Legrand ask Jupiter to do, and what does he find?
13. How does Legrand determine where to dig?
14. Why does Jupiter drop the bug through the skull a second time?
15. What does the second digging uncover?
16. The treasure contains antique coins from France, Germany, Spain, and England. The narrator notes that no American coins were found. What does the lack of American currency suggest?

17. What does the treasure contain, and what is its estimated worth?
18. Legrand explains how he discovered the treasure, beginning with the night that the narrator had visited. Why did Legrand suddenly change his mind about throwing the parchment into the fire?
19. How did Legrand make the picture of the kid appear on the parchment? What does the kid represent?
20. What string of coincidences lead to Legrand's discovery of the treasure?
21. What appears on the parchment when Legrand puts it in a pan to heat? Legrand begins to decipher the encrypted code on the assumption that it is based on the English language. Why does he make this assumption?
22. The most common symbol in the message is the number 8. Why does Legrand assume that 8 represents the letter "e," and how does he confirm his suspicion?
23. Legrand uses deductive reasoning to systematically interpret the code. Once completed, how does he decide where to place punctuation?
24. What is the Bishop's Hotel? How does Legrand find it, and what does he do when he gets there?
25. Why did Captain Kidd most likely use a skull as a marker?
26. Why did Legrand drop the beetle through the skull's eye instead of a bullet?
27. The narrator mentions the skeletons that they found buried with the treasure. How does Legrand account for the skeletons? Why does Poe end the story by mentioning the bones?



## “THE MURDERS IN THE RUE MORGUE”

“The Murders in the Rue Morgue” is the first in a series of three detective stories that Edgar Allan Poe wrote between 1841 and 1844. The series, which also includes “The Mystery of Marie Rogét” and “The Purloined Letter,” centers on an eccentric but brilliant young Frenchman named C. Auguste Dupin. In each of the stories, Dupin’s unidentified friend functions not only as narrator, but also as a mediator for the reader. The technique of using an amateur detective and sidekick is a fundamental element for detective stories, a well-known example being Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson. Poe created the term “Tale of Ratiocination” to describe his use of formal logic. His detective tales, however, allow the reader to interact in the mystery solving process. With the help of the narrator, Poe provides the clues necessary to solve the crime; the reader needs only to apply logic.

Poe is the inventor of detective fiction and, therefore, defined the fundamentals of the genre. One basic element of detective fiction is that the crime takes place in a locked room from which there appears to be no escape. Various settings, such as a moving train, may be used, but the concept of an isolated environment remains. Another feature is that the evidence points to an innocent person. Frequently, the detective is drawn into the case to assist a friend or acquaintance. An additional characteristic is that the crime is solved through an unexpected method. The solution, despite the clues that are provided, is surprising; only in retrospect does the conclusion seem logical. Additional features of detective fiction include a brilliant amateur detective, a sidekick, and incompetent police. “The Murders in the Rue Morgue,” as Poe’s prototype for detective fiction, contains each of these features.

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1. The opening epigraph reads, “What song the Syrens sang, or what name Achilles assumed when he hid himself among women, although puzzling questions are not beyond all conjecture.” What does the passage mean?
2. Summarize the opening of the story. What mood does the narrator create with the introduction?
3. Describe Monsieur Dupin.
4. How do the narrator and Dupin meet? Describe their relationship.
5. How does Dupin astonish the narrator during their walk in Palais Royal?
6. What is the Rue Morgue? What does the name indicate?
7. Describe the details of the crime as relayed in the “Gazette des Tribunaux.”
8. Based on neighbors’ testimonies, what can be discerned about the lifestyle and relationship of Madame and Mademoiselle L’Espanaye?
9. Describe the voices that the witnesses claim to have heard.
10. What is particularly interesting about Mademoiselle L’Espanaye’s body being in the chimney?
11. What elements about the crime scene are particularly perplexing?
12. Describe the victims’ physical injuries.
13. Who do the police arrest for the murders, and on what evidence is the arrest based?
14. Explain Dupin’s opinion of the Parisian police.

15. Dupin wishes to examine the crime scene, saying, “An inquiry will afford us amusement.” The narrator finds Dupin’s choice of words odd, but he does not ask for further explanation. Why does Dupin think that investigating the crime scene will be amusing?
16. Where does Dupin stop after he leaves the house on Rue Morgue, and why?
17. According to Dupin, why should the case be easy to solve, despite the unusual circumstances? What reason does he give for the police department’s inability to solve the crime?
18. Why does Dupin give the narrator a pistol?
19. What does Dupin find peculiar about the witnesses’ testimonies?
20. Dupin analyzes the scene of the crime for the narrator. What does he determine to be the means of escape for the murderer, and how does he reach this conclusion?
21. According to Dupin, how did the murderer get into the house on Rue Morgue?
22. Why does Dupin dismiss the notion of a motive?
23. According to Dupin, why do the police overlook the obvious fact that the pavement is the blunt object that battered Madame L’Espanaye?
24. How does Dupin deduct that the assailant is not human? What does he believe committed the murders?
25. Who does Dupin believe owns the animal, and how does Dupin lure him to his home?
26. Is Dupin’s assumption correct?
27. How did the orangutan obtain a razor, and why did it use it on Madame L’Espanaye?
28. Why did the orangutan stuff Mademoiselle in the chimney and throw her mother out of the window?
29. Why is Dupin not the narrator in *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*?
30. How does the narrator act as a foil?