

**SEBASTIAN FAULKS ON ROBINSON CRUSOE****a. Listen, read and fill in the gaps**

This is where it all started, with a ..... we all think we know: Robinson Crusoe.

The British ..... found its first hero here, washed up on a ..... after a shipwreck. For more than 25 years he defeated everything ..... could throw at him: wild animals, storms, marauding cannibals and most painfully of all his own agonizing .....

Daniel Defoe's novel was published in 1719 the story of a young adventurer shipwrecked on his way to buy ..... in Africa. In the past, in Homer, the ....., or Shakespeare, the hero was ..... and remote. But Crusoe isn't like that. He's more like you and me.

Crusoe's a Yorkshire man and it shows. He has a highly individual, rather \*\*\*\*\* turn of mind. He's ..... and resourceful, he gets things done. But, for all his bravery, he's still a ..... being. He could still be one of us.

Crusoe's an ordinary man, caught up in ..... circumstances. All the time a part of us is wondering how we might cope in his place. But the true excitement of the story is finding out how this one man in ..... will manage.

**b. Reading from Robinson Crusoe**

*The text read is a variation from the original. Compare the original lines with the read text and put the unsaid words in brackets:*

"... for I was wet, had no clothes to shift me, nor anything either to eat or drink to comfort me; neither did I see any prospect before me but that of perishing with hunger or being devoured by wild beasts; and that which was particularly afflicting to me was, that I had no weapon, either to hunt and kill any creature for my sustenance, or to defend myself against any other creature that might desire to kill me for theirs. In a word, I had nothing about me but a knife, a tobacco-pipe, and a little tobacco in a box. This was all my provisions; and this threw me into such terrible agonies of mind,..."

So as well as struggling with the physical dangers, Crusoe also has to rustle with his inner psychological turmoil. His greatest challenge comes from within. He survives without the sound of a human voice or the touch of a human hand and for me this is the most terrifying aspect of his own ordeal.

**c. Listen to Simon Armitage speaking about Robinson Crusoe**

Answer the following questions:

- What doesn't Robinson know?

.....

.....

- What's at stake really for Robinson Crusoe? What's the battle he has to win?

- .....
- In which sense does Simon Armitage think Robinson “heroic”?
- .....
- .....

### Reading from the text:

“For a while I ran about like a madman. I was a prisoner locked up with the eternal buzz and bolts of the ocean, in an uninhabited wilderness. But then I began to look upon the bright side of my condition and less upon the dark side”.

### Sebastian Faulks’s commentary

He blesses the Providence that it smiled on him since he came ashore. At one point he comes close to actually thanking God for having shipwrecked him. But he never quite loses the sense that he is the master of his own destiny. Even today this unexpected resilience comes as a surprise to those forced to endure solitude.

- d. [Brian Keenan \(Author and former hostage\)](#) speaks about his own experience as a hostage for years in Lebanon. Write down what you understand of what he says.
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....

### Sebastian Faulks’s conclusion

Ultimately Crusoe must survive on his own inner strength. His island lacks the religious certainties of Milton’s Paradise Lost and Bunyan’s Pilgrim’s Progress written only 50 years earlier. The story of Crusoe’s lonely life can be read as an allegory of all sorts of things. To me the most interesting is the massive fought for evolution. The ability of an individual to survive and flourish outside the group was a crucial moment in human evolution and Crusoe not only overcomes his agonizing loneliness, he carries with him anything he’s learnt and imposes those values on his remote island. Crusoe is a child of his time, of the Enlightenment. Defoe reflected the new importance society attached to individual life and Crusoe determines his own fate.