



## Robinson Crusoe Retold by Nicholas Murgatroyd

### Aims

- To make students interested in the book.
- To give students the opportunity to do some creative writing.

### Pre-reading Activities

- 1 Tell students that the title of the book is *Robinson Crusoe*, and that this is the name of the main character of the book. Ask them to read Extract 1 (the blurb of the book). Talk about what students have learned from the blurb.

**Suggested answers:** Robinson Crusoe is the only person who hasn't died after a shipwreck. He has been living on an island far from anywhere and has built a home there. But now he has found a footprint and he's afraid.

Elicit what genre students think the book is from the blurb. If necessary write a list of genres on the board and ask students to choose which one they think it is.

**Answer:** Adventure.

- 2 Ask students to read Extract 2. Ask *Who is telling us this story?*

**Answer:** Robinson Crusoe.

Tell students – if they haven't realised – that the story is written in the first person and teach them about 'narration', where a book is written as if the character is speaking to the reader. Ask *What do you think the equivalent is in films?*

**Answer:** 'voice-over'.

Discuss the benefits and disadvantages of character narration.

#### Possible answers

**Advantages:** The book or film comes to life. We really get to know the main character well and we can feel as if we're in the story and it's happening to us.

**Disadvantages:** It may only work if we like the narrator and are interested in what's happening to them. We can only see the story through that character's eyes - we can't see what is going on anywhere else.

Then ask *Do you think first person narration is a good choice for this book? Why? Why not?*

- 3 Ask students to read Extract 2 again. In pairs, students discuss what they have learned about Robinson Crusoe's character and make notes.

**Possible answers:** He is young and has dreams of adventure. He feels tied down at home. He tries to do as his parents wish but just can't.

Ask *How do you think his parents are feeling?*

#### Possible answers

Mother: worried, trying to please everyone, still sad after the death of her other son. Father: angry, worried, has decided that Robinson won't go travelling.

- 4 Tell students that Robinson Crusoe does leave England and doesn't return for thirty-five years. Ask them to imagine a conversation between his parents after Robinson has been away for ten years. Students should make notes about how they think his parents feel. Ask *Are they sad? Angry? Do they blame each other? Have they done their best to forget Robinson?* When they are ready, students write the conversation using just dialogue. Now put students into pairs and ask them to act out their pieces of dialogue.
- 5 Ask students to read Extract 3 (a description of Robinson Crusoe's dramatic arrival on his desert island). As a class, discuss how the events in the extract could be turned into a part of a screenplay for a film. (NB If you wish, you could download and photocopy examples of how screenplays are laid out from the Internet and give these out to students.) Ask *Would you include any dialogue? Would you just show Robinson Crusoe's experience or would you cut to other things and back to Crusoe?*
- 6 Tell students that the island Crusoe lands and lives on has no name. Ask them to think of a name for the island. Write their suggestions on the board and hold a vote for the best name. (NB Students are not allowed to vote for their own suggestion.)
- 7 Tell students that Robinson Crusoe makes a raft (teach 'raft' if necessary) to go back to his wrecked ship to fetch some useful things from it before it

sinks. Elicit what items they think he might find and why they would be useful on the island.

**Suggested answers:** food, guns, tools, a sail, rope, clothes, animals.

- 8 Ask students to look at Illustrations 1 and 2 and elicit what they think Robinson Crusoe has done in order to make life more comfortable for himself on the island.

**Possible answers:** He has made clothes and shoes, an umbrella to keep the sun off him, a home and cooking pots. He has captured goats for food and to use for clothing.

- 9 Ask students to read Extract 4. Elicit the meaning of 'cannibals'. Ask *Do you agree with Robinson Crusoe's opinion about the cannibals?*

- 10 Ask students to continue writing after the end of Extract 4. Prompt them by asking questions – e.g. *What happens? Does Robinson come face-to-face with the cannibals?*

### Post-reading Activities \_\_\_\_\_

- 1 Ask students to think of a new title for the book. Share these with the whole class, and if you wish, hold a vote to find the most popular title choice.
- 2 Ask students to write a time line for the book, showing when important events take place during Crusoe's life.
- 3 As a class, discuss how different the book would be if it were set in the present day. Ask *What would need to be changed? Why?*
- 4 Tell students that in the United Kingdom, there is a radio programme called *Desert Island Discs*. Someone – usually someone famous – is interviewed about his or her life. During the interview they have to imagine they have been shipwrecked on a desert island and to say which eight records or pieces of music they would like to have with them. They are also allowed to choose one book and one luxury item. Teach 'luxury' if necessary (e.g. *an object that makes life nicer but is not a necessity*). Now ask students to choose their own eight pieces of music and their own book and luxury. Share these with the whole class.

## Extract 1 \_\_\_\_\_

I couldn't sleep all night long. I didn't know whose footprint it was. How had they got to the beach? Had another sailor been shipwrecked? Was it a cannibal? Or a monster?

Robinson Crusoe is the only survivor of a shipwreck and is left on a remote island. He gradually builds a lonely but comfortable life for himself in his new home. But then he realises he is not alone.

## Extract 2 \_\_\_\_\_

My parents wanted me to go to university and become a lawyer, but I told them I wanted to become a sailor and see the world. I was sure I'd be able to travel and make money at the same time, but my father wanted me to stay at home.

He said, 'Why do you want to do such a dangerous thing? I told your brother to stay at home, but he never listened. He wanted to be a soldier and now he's dead. Travel won't make you happy. Everything you need for happiness is here in England. And it's safe here.'

Seeing that my parents didn't want me to travel, I promised to stay in England. However, making promises is much easier than keeping them. After a few weeks I forgot all the promises I'd made and went to speak to my mother about wanting to travel. I knew it would be easier to persuade her than my father, so I waited until we were alone together. I told her that I wanted to travel, but I promised her that I would return. I said, 'If I don't like travelling, I will come home and become a lawyer.'

My mother was worried, but she still asked my father if I could go.

My father said, 'He'll be happiest if he stays at home. If he travels he'll be very unhappy. He mustn't go.'

## My notes \_\_\_\_\_

**Extract 3** \_\_\_\_\_

We dropped one of the ship's small boats into the wild sea and jumped into it. The boat had no sail and the waves were so powerful we thought we'd sink, but there was no choice. Working together, we managed to row about seven kilometres before a wave as high as the highest mountain on earth started coming quickly towards us. We knew it would destroy us. It took the boat and threw it into the air like a ball.

I fell into the sea. Water filled my mouth. I could hardly breathe. I looked for the other sailors, but before I could find them, another huge wave came. I couldn't fight against it. I thought I was going to die. But then I suddenly saw that I was close to the shore. Another wave came and carried me even closer. My feet touched sand. The waves continued to push me and throw me against the rocks, but I eventually managed to reach the beach. Exhausted, I moved on my hands and knees to a place where the waves couldn't reach me and sat on the grass.

**Extract 4** \_\_\_\_\_

When I got to the beach, I saw a terrible sight. The beach was covered with human bones: arms and legs and skulls. They must have been cannibals! I was thankful the cannibals hadn't come looking for me, but I was also very angry. How could men eat other men? It made me feel sick even to think about it.

I returned home, but I stayed angry for many days. I couldn't believe cannibals had eaten men on my island. I was sure they'd return one day and I started to make plans. I thought of ways I could hide in the forest and shoot them all when they arrived on the beach. Then I started to change my mind. I wondered what my life would have been like if I'd been born in the same village as the cannibals. I realized that I'd probably have become a cannibal too. They ate other people because they thought it was natural, not because they were awful people. It wasn't their fault that they hadn't had the good education I had.

**My notes** \_\_\_\_\_

