

I Go to Sea

My name is Robinson Crusoe. I was born in 1632 in the city of York, in England. I came from a good family. My father was from Germany. He made his money as a merchant – buying and selling things – and came to live in York, where he married my mother.

I had two older brothers. One became a soldier and was killed in France. And I never knew what happened to my other brother – just as my mother and father never knew what happened to me.

I had a good education. I went to a good school, and learned a lot at home. My father wanted me to get a good job. But I had other ideas. I wanted to go to sea. I could not think about anything else, even though my parents and friends argued strongly against it. It was as if something was pushing me towards the terrible life that lay ahead of me. One day my father called me to his room and asked me why I wanted to leave his house, and England.

‘People who go to sea are not like you,’ he said. ‘They either go because they have no money, or because they are very rich, and they want an adventure. You are lucky because you are neither rich nor poor. Poor people have to worry about finding food and somewhere to live. Rich people have to worry about looking after their money. You are in the best place, because you are in the middle. You can have a comfortable life if you stay at home.’

My father promised to do many things for me if I listened to him. With tears running down his face, he told me to remember my older brother. He had gone away to become a soldier and been killed.

'If you go to sea, God will not be pleased with you,' he warned me. 'I think you will be very sorry if you do not listen to me – and you will have no one to help you.'

I listened carefully to my father's words, and for a few days, I changed my mind about leaving home. But within a few weeks, I had decided to go away once more. I asked my mother to talk to my father. I told her that I wanted to go on one voyage¹². I said that if I did not like it, I would come home and work very hard.

But my mother was very upset. She said she would not talk to my father. She said she did not know how I could even think of going to sea. And she told me that she would not help me to do foolish things with my life. A year went by, and my parents would still not let me go to sea.

Then one day I went to the city of Hull and met a friend. His father owned a ship which was sailing to London, and I decided to go with them, without even telling my mother or father.

When the ship left Hull, the wind began to blow and the sea turned rough¹³. As I had never been to sea before, I was terrified, and became very seasick¹⁴. Suddenly I thought about what I had done. I remembered my mother and father's words, and felt terribly sorry for not listening to them. I promised to myself that if God let me live, I would go straight home to my father and never go in a ship again.

The next day, the sea was a little calmer¹⁵, but I still felt seasick. The following morning, however, when I got up, the sun was shining on a clear sea. I thought it was the most beautiful thing I had ever seen. That evening, I drank too much rum¹⁶ with the other men on the ship. I completely forgot all the promises I had made when I felt so ill.

A few days later, when we came near the shore¹⁷, a terrible storm blew up. The sea was very rough, and waves¹⁸ that were as high as mountains broke over the ship every few minutes.

This storm was nothing like the first one. Even the other men on the ship had faces full of fear¹⁹. They said they had never seen anything like it. We all prayed²⁰ for our lives.

In the middle of the night, one of the men told us that there was a leak²¹ in the ship – water was coming in. The men worked as hard as they could to get the water out, but everyone knew that the ship was going to sink²². I felt as if my heart had died inside me. The captain²³ told the men to fire²⁴ guns to show other boats that we needed help. But the sea was too rough for a boat to come near.

At last, however, the storm started to die down²⁵ a little, and a boat managed to come close to the ship. After trying many times, we finally pulled the boat near to our ship and climbed into it. As we rowed²⁶ away, we saw our ship go down in the rough sea. I was so frightened I almost couldn't watch.



We rowed safely to the shore, where we were well looked after. There, we were given enough money to go on to London or back to Hull. I could have gone back home to Hull. My father would have been pleased to see me, and I could have had a quiet happy life. But something inside me would not let me go back.

A few days later, I met my friend, whose father was the captain of the ship. My friend explained to his father that I had come on the voyage to see whether I would like to travel abroad by sea.

‘Young man,’ he said, ‘you should never go to sea again. God is showing you what will happen if you ever go on another voyage.’

The captain asked me about myself. When I told him that my father had not wanted me to go to sea, he became quite angry.

‘Why did this boy have to come into my ship?’ he cried. ‘Believe me, young man, if you do not go back home, terrible things will happen to you. Your father told you that God would not be pleased with you, and his words will come true.’

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*I Am Captured by Pirates*²⁷

I went to London, and stayed there for a while. I tried to decide whether to go home or go to sea. There I met the captain of a ship which was going to Africa. The captain was a very good man, and he said I could go with him. He told me to bring some toys and other small things to sell for gold. The voyage went very well, and when we came back, I sold the gold for a lot of money. This made me think that I could become very rich as a merchant.