

Treasure Island

Full Book Synopsis

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Act One: The Admiral Benbow

The story is narrated by Jim Hawkins, a boy who grew up at his father's coastal inn, the Admiral Benbow in Black Hill Cove, and who later set down these events at the request of Squire Trelawney and Dr. Livesey. The adventure began when a mysterious, scarred old seaman calling himself the Captain—later revealed as Billy Bones, former first mate to the pirate Flint—arrived at the inn seeking remote lodgings. Bones spent his days scanning the horizon with a brass telescope and his evenings drinking rum, paying Jim a silver fourpenny piece each month to watch for a one-legged seafaring man. His presence drove away customers and hastened the decline of Jim's already ailing father.

Two visitors shattered the uneasy routine. First came Black Dog, a pale, two-fingered former shipmate who fought Bones with cutlasses before fleeing wounded; the shock brought Bones down with a stroke. Then came the blind beggar Pew, who pressed a black spot—a pirate summons reading "You have till ten tonight"—into Bones's palm. Bones read it, cried out that he had six hours, attempted to rise, and died of apoplexy on the parlor floor. Jim's father had already died that same evening, leaving Jim and his mother alone.

Jim and his mother returned to the inn to claim the money owed them from Bones's sea-chest. Breaking it open with a key found around the dead man's neck, they discovered a canvas bag of mixed gold coins and an oilcloth packet of papers. Jim's mother counted out only what was rightfully owed before Pew and his crew arrived and ransacked the place. Jim dragged his fainting mother under a bridge as the buccaneers searched. The timely arrival of revenue officers led by Supervisor Dance scattered the pirates; Pew, abandoned by his own men, was trampled to death by a horse. Jim escaped with the oilcloth packet and rode with Dance to Squire Trelawney's hall, where Dr. Livesey—a physician and magistrate who had once faced down Bones with calm authority—was dining.

Opening the packet together, the squire and doctor discovered two documents: a ledger recording Captain Flint's plundered ships and treasure over twenty years, and a detailed map of an island roughly nine miles long, shaped like a fat dragon, with two harbours, a central hill called the Spy-glass, and three red crosses marking buried treasure.

The southwestern cross bore the inscription "Bulk of treasure here." Squire Trelawney, a tall, impulsive, well-traveled gentleman of considerable wealth, immediately declared he would fit out a ship in Bristol. Dr. Livesey, cautious and methodical, warned that secrecy was essential, since the surviving buccaneers would stop at nothing to recover the chart.

Act Two: The Voyage and the Island

Jim waited at the hall under the watch of Redruth, the squire's old gamekeeper, while Trelawney purchased a two-hundred-ton schooner named the *Hispaniola* in Bristol. The squire's letter announced he had hired Long John Silver—a one-legged former sailor turned publican, a man of substance and evident ability—as ship's cook, and that Silver had assembled a capable crew. Jim visited his mother at the Admiral Benbow, now repaired and staffed by the squire's generosity, before traveling to Bristol. There he met Silver for the first time at the Spy-glass tavern and was immediately charmed by the big, pale, intelligent man who moved with wonderful dexterity on his crutch. When Black Dog was spotted in the tavern and fled, Silver's apparently righteous response convinced both Jim and the squire that he was entirely trustworthy.

Captain Smollett, the *Hispaniola*'s sharp, exacting master, immediately voiced alarm: the crew already knew the island's latitude and longitude, which was supposed to be secret, and he feared mutiny. He proposed moving arms and powder to the cabin hold and berthing the squire's loyal men near the stern. The squire resented Smollett's bluntness, but Dr. Livesey recognized the captain's honesty and supported his precautions.

The voyage proceeded well until, on the final night before reaching Treasure Island, Jim climbed into an apple barrel for a snack and overheard Silver speaking to a young crewman named Dick and the coxswain Israel Hands. Silver revealed his past as quartermaster under the pirate captains England and Flint, his accumulated fortune safely banked, and his plan: wait until the treasure was found and loaded, then murder the officers and sail away. Jim brought this intelligence to a council of war in the cabin. Captain Smollett, the squire, and the doctor determined they could rely on only seven loyal men—themselves, Redruth, Hunter, Joyce, Gray, and Jim—against nineteen potential mutineers.

At the island, discipline collapsed visibly. Captain Smollett allowed the crew an afternoon ashore to prevent immediate mutiny. Jim impulsively stowed away in one of the boats. Ashore, he witnessed Silver hurl his crutch at an honest sailor named Tom and stab him to

death after another sailor, Alan, was killed off-stage. Fleeing in terror, Jim encountered Ben Gunn, a half-wild, sun-darkened maroon who had been marooned on the island three years earlier by a crew that had failed to find Flint's treasure. Ben Gunn revealed he had been present when Flint buried the treasure using six seamen whom Flint then killed, and hinted cryptically that he had since found it himself. He offered his help in exchange for a passage home and a thousand pounds.

Meanwhile, the loyal crew abandoned the *Hispaniola* and fought their way to a fortified log-house—the stockade—that Flint had built years before. They lost Tom Redruth, the squire's oldest servant, to a sniper's bullet during the retreat. A fierce pirate assault on the stockade the following day cost the defenders Hunter and Joyce but killed five mutineers, leaving nine pirates against seven defenders, with Captain Smollett seriously wounded in the shoulder and calf.

Jim slipped away again that night, finding Ben Gunn's hidden coracle—a tiny goat-skin boat—and using it to cut the *Hispaniola* adrift. Drifting out to sea in the dark, he eventually boarded the unmanned schooner, where he found Israel Hands gravely wounded and the pirate O'Brien dead from their drunken quarrel. Jim struck the *Jolly Roger*, declared himself captain, and struck a bargain with Hands: Jim would tend his wound and Hands would teach him to sail the ship to North Inlet, where Jim planned to beach her safely. As they navigated successfully into the inlet, Hands attempted to murder Jim with a hidden dirk. Jim fled into the mizzen shrouds, reloaded his pistols, and when Hands threw the dirk, pinning Jim's shoulder to the mast, Jim's pistols fired involuntarily, and Hands fell into the water and drowned.

Jim returned to the stockade that night, only to find it occupied by Silver's men. The pirates had taken possession after Dr. Livesey negotiated a treaty, surrendering the stockade, stores, and the treasure chart in exchange for the honest crew's freedom to leave. Jim was captured. Silver, facing deposition by his own crew, protected Jim and proposed an alliance: Jim would save Silver from the gallows; Silver would keep Jim alive. The crew presented Silver with a black spot—cut from Dick's Bible—but Silver produced the treasure chart, instantly restoring his authority. Dr. Livesey arrived the next morning to treat the sick mutineers and privately warned Jim that he had found Ben Gunn and spoken with him, urging Jim to flee. Jim refused to break his word to Silver. Jim revealed to the doctor that he had hidden the *Hispaniola* in North Inlet, which the doctor received with visible relief before departing with a cryptic warning to Silver not to hurry after the treasure.

Act Three: The Treasure and the Resolution

The treasure hunt began with Silver tethering Jim by a rope and leading the armed party across the island. They discovered a human skeleton positioned by Flint as a deliberate compass marker, pointing toward Skeleton Island—a grim joke that deeply unnerved the superstitious crew. As they approached the great pine marked on the chart, a disembodied voice sang "Fifteen Men on the Dead Man's Chest" and called out Flint's last words—"Darby M'Graw! Fetch the rum aft!"—sending the pirates into terror. Silver rallied them by arguing that spirits cast no echoes, and George Merry identified the voice as Ben Gunn's, restoring the crew's nerve.

The party reached the great pine and found only an empty excavation. The treasure had already been removed. Silver instantly armed Jim and positioned them strategically as the furious mutineers turned on him. Before Merry could lead a charge, Dr. Livesey, Gray, and Ben Gunn fired from the thicket, killing Merry and another pirate. Silver shot the wounded Merry himself. The three surviving mutineers fled.

The doctor explained everything: Ben Gunn had found and dug up Flint's treasure two months before the *Hispaniola* arrived, carrying it in many journeys to a cave on the island's two-pointed hill. The doctor had learned this on the afternoon of the stockade attack, after which he gave Ben Gunn the now-useless chart and supplies, evacuated the loyal crew to the cave, and orchestrated the ambush at the pine. The party recovered the *Hispaniola* from North Inlet, where the flood tide had mercifully refloated her, and sailed around to Ben Gunn's cave.

Inside, guarded by Captain Smollett—still recovering from his wounds—lay the treasure itself: great heaps of mixed coin and quadrilaterals of gold bars, the accumulated plunder of Flint's career. The squire confronted Silver, calling him a prodigious villain but stating he had been ordered not to prosecute him. The honest crew shared a celebratory supper in the cave, Silver sitting quietly at the edge of the firelight, obsequious and careful as he had been on the outward voyage.

The loading of the treasure took many days of hard labor. Three surviving mutineers remained loose on the island; one was found delirious with fever near the excavation, and the party left him behind with supplies rather than take him aboard. Silver remained aboard as the ship departed. Somewhere in a South American port, Silver quietly slipped away in the night, taking a bag of coins with him. He was never seen again.

Jim, the squire, the doctor, Gray, and Ben Gunn returned to England. Ben Gunn spent his share of the treasure within three weeks and ended up as a lodge-keeper. Gray used his share wisely, qualified as a mate, and eventually became part-owner of a fine ship. Captain Smollett

retired from the sea. Jim was left with nightmares of the island—the surf, the Spy-glass, the parrot's cry of "Pieces of eight"—and declared he would not return to those accursed shores for any consideration on earth.