



Robert Louis
Stevenson

Treasure Island

Read by
Jasper Britton

PART ONE The Old Buccaneer		
1	Chapter 1 The Old Sea-dog at the Admiral Benbow	5:53
2	His stories were what frightened people...	5:28
3	Chapter 2 Black Dog Appears and Disappears	5:28
4	The Captain made a sort of gasp...	6:21
5	Chapter 3 The Black Spot	5:59
6	He got downstairs next morning...	6:15
7	Chapter 4 The Sea-Chest	5:39
8	Overcoming a strong repugnance...	5:21
9	Chapter 5 The Last of the Blind Man	5:16
10	This quarrel was the saving of us...	4:50
11	Chapter 6 The Captain's Papers	5:00
12	The bundle was sewn together...	6:18
 PART TWO The Sea-cook		
13	Chapter 7 I Go to Bristol	6:03
14	You can fancy the excitement...	4:06
15	Chapter 8 At the Sign of the Spy-glass	5:20
16	'That he did, you may be sure...'	4:39

17	Chapter 9 Powder and Arms	5:07
18	'Well, gentlemen,' continued the Captain...	4:22
19	Chapter 10 The Voyage	4:40
20	All the crew respected, and even obeyed him.	5:27
21	Chapter 11 What I Heard in the Apple Barrel	5:35
22	'Dick's square,' said Silver.	6:30
23	Chapter 12 Council of War	4:48
24	'My lads,' said Captain Smollett...	4:49

PART THREE My Shore Adventure

25	Chapter 13 How My Shore Adventure Began	4:06
26	There was not a breath of air moving...	5:19
27	Chapter 14 The First Blow	4:47
28	I had found one of the honest hands...	5:18
29	Chapter 15 The Man of the Island	6:06
30	I now felt sure that the poor fellow had gone	7:18

PART FOUR The Stockade

31	Chapter 16 How the Ship Was Abandoned	3:54
32	Hunter brought the boat round...	4:08
33	Chapter 17 The Jolly-boat's Last Trip	7:28

34	Chapter 18 End of the First Day's Fighting	3:41
35	In the meantime, the Captain...	4:56
36	Chapter 19 The Garrison in the Stockade	5:34
37	Little had been left besides the framework...	5:10
38	Chapter 20 Silver's Embassy	4:48
39	'Right you were, Cap'n Smollett...'	6:07
40	Chapter 21 The Attack	5:20
41	Suddenly, with a loud huzza...	5:04
 PART FIVE My Sea Adventure		
42	Chapter 22 How My Sea Adventure Began	5:03
43	I took my way straight for the east coast...	5:41
44	Chapter 23 The Ebb-tide Runs	3:59
45	At last the breeze came...	4:17
46	Chapter 24 The Cruise of the Coracle	5:26
47	I made sure, of course, that I should be taken...	4:57
48	Chapter 25 I Strike the Jolly Roger	4:50
49	I had sat down already...	4:52
50	Chapter 26 Israel Hands	7:32
51	All told, we had scarce two miles to run...	8:37
52	Chapter 27 Pieces of Eight	5:58
53	I remembered that the most easterly of the rivers...	5:26

	PART SIX Captain Silver	
54	Chapter 28 In the Enemy's Camp	8:16
55	'I'll bear it in mind,' said Silver...	7:28
56	Chapter 29 The Black Spot Again	4:50
57	'Well now, look here...'	8:06
58	Chapter 30 On Parole	6:50
59	Very deliberately, then, did we advance...	6:05
60	Chapter 31 The Treasure Hunt – Flint's Pointer	6:42
61	We pulled easily, by Silver's directions...	6:05
62	Chapter 32 The Treasure Hunt – The Voice Among the Trees	5:41
63	'Sperrit? Well, maybe,' he said.	6:04
64	Chapter 33 The Fall of a Chieftain	5:08
65	The doctor sent back Gray...	6:08
66	Chapter 34 And Last	4:46
67	That was about our last doing on the island	5:48

Total time: 6:13:35

Robert Louis Stevenson

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It is difficult to imagine a pirate at all without bringing to mind something of Stevenson's *Treasure Island*. 'Fifteen men on a dead man's chest / Yo ho-ho and a bottle of rum!'; the squawking parrot on the shoulder; a fearsome one-legged man; the buried treasure; the map with its wonderfully evocative names; the 'X marks the spot'; the terrifying nicknames; the drinking, the double-dealing – every aspect of the life of the seafaring outlaws. The speech and mannerisms of the characters seem to come from a profound well, like the rhythms of the King James Bible or the fairy-tales of childhood. A child brandishing a wooden sabre and roaring 'Aharr!' seems to do so out of an unconscious knowledge of something that must by virtue of its intuitiveness be venerably ancient. But the book was only published in 1883, and almost all the iconic images were Stevenson's invention. There were pirates enough in the world at

the time, to be sure, and plenty of legends about them. But the defining images are all his, bound together in an enthralling and richly exciting tale (perhaps 'yarn' would be a better word for it) that grew from a map drawn by his step-son on a rainy day in the Scottish highlands.

Robert Louis Stevenson was born in Edinburgh in 1850, and for much of his life he suffered ill-health, principally because of his tuberculosis. His father and grandfather were lighthouse engineers, and it was hoped that Robert would follow; but he had developed a taste for the bohemian, perhaps as a reaction to spending much of his sickly childhood in bed being read the lives of Presbyterian martyrs. He wanted to be a writer, but agreed to take a degree to give himself a career if writing should fail him. His academic life did not quench his desire for the more exotic, however – at university, he was known as Velvet Jacket, and seems

to have spent a fair amount of time getting to know the inhabitants of Edinburgh's less salubrious quarters. He also started to write, and if his father was disappointed at his determination to stick to the pen, he might have been comforted by the fact that Robert also wrote a scientific piece on lighthouse lights.

After university, which he left with a degree in law, Stevenson started writing in earnest. He has described his attempts to mimic the styles of those he admired as being the work of a 'sedulous ape', but even in his early work, derivative as it may be, there is a wit; whimsy, lively intelligence and a profoundly compassionate nature that characterised all his later, more self-assured work. He was also travelling in earnest, an activity that would form a crucial part of much of the rest of his life. As a boy, he had been taken by his father to visit some of the lighthouses; but for Robert it was not the engineering that inspired him – it was the sea, and all the adventure it implied. And for a man with an extremely delicate constitution, any escape from the damp

and cold Scottish winter was a boon.

During his travels in Europe in the 1870s, he met and fell in love with Fanny Van de Grift Osbourne, a married (though separated) mother. This independent woman was ten years older than him, but when she returned to America, he followed her in a journey that nearly killed him; and after her divorce, they married in 1880. During his time in Europe and America, he had been publishing travel articles and short stories, as well as making friends with as many literary folk as he could, and once re-established in Scotland (if established isn't too strong a word – he was forever moving about, trying to find somewhere comfortable to live while not abandoning his parents), he started on *Treasure Island*. Lloyd Osbourne, his stepson, was painting a map; Stevenson immediately took an interest, and soon Spyglass Hill and Treasure Island itself were named. The boy naturally wanted a story to go with it; and Stevenson began to tell him one. The first three chapters were written in days, with family members offering ideas as Stevenson read the story

aloud. It was serialised, and eventually published in 1883.

It is a coming-of-age tale, in which the young hero starts off as an honest serving boy and develops into a young man of moral strength and intuitive bravery. There is intrigue and drama, plot and counter plot, ambushes, battles and suspense. And throughout, Stevenson explores the romance as well as the villainy of the pirate in characters that continue to be the archetypes of the form – the rum-sodden Billy Bones, the sly Black Pew, feckless Israel Hands, the brilliantly maddened Ben Gunn; and of course Long John Silver

One of the great villains in literature, Long John Silver was inspired by a friend of Stevenson called William Henley, a writer who had lost the lower part of one leg. He was a huge, hearty figure with a massive beard and the ability to govern through the power of his voice alone. But despite the expectations that a pirate will be evil to his very marrow, Silver is an ambivalent figure. He convinces Jim that he is trustworthy, and manages to change sides on several occasions without entirely

alienating either Jim or the reader. For all his plotting and self-interest, he is a compelling creation, and his significance in the book gives it a rare complexity in what is essentially a children's adventure story.

This duality of a man's nature was to be explored in another tale of Stevenson's that has become archetypal, *The Strange Tale of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, and he continued to write adventure stories – most notably *Kidnapped*. He wrote prodigiously during the 1880s, including essays, articles, plays, travelogues and more novels such as *The Master of Ballantrae*. He continued to travel extensively, too, eventually settling in Samoa where he died in 1894, leaving his last, and possibly greatest novel, *Weir of Hermiston*, unfinished.

Since his death, he has been accorded the usual fate of the popular writer, of being largely ignored by literary critics. This was to some extent to be expected, since his greatest successes were romances and adventures. But the likes of Joseph Conrad and Gerard Manly Hopkins recognised his skill; and he continues to be rehabilitated

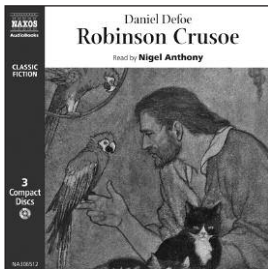
as his stylistic ideas and concerns about form are recognised. Beyond the narrow concerns of the literati, however, is a writer who longed to be doing; to be living. His great works are triumphs of an active, optimistic imagination and a belief in a fundamental goodness of humanity. His eager compassion, however, is never

expressed in simple, dull morality tales; but in the swirling vigour of stories that immediately engage the reader with their vivid life. '*Pieces of eight! Pieces of eight!*' – it is not just Jim Hawkins for whom that phrase resonates long after the final page.

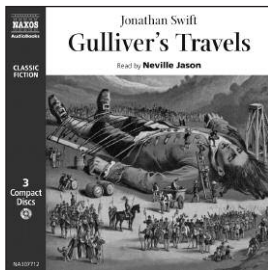
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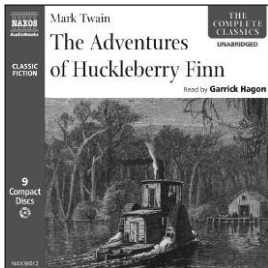
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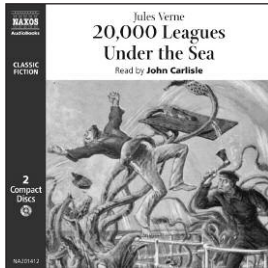
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Robert Louis Stevenson

Treasure Island

Read by **Jasper Britton**

One of the greatest children's books ever written, *Treasure Island* is a tale of maps, battles, ambushes, plots, treasure – and pirates!

Jim Hawkins sets sail on the *Hispaniola* after discovering a map showing hidden treasure on a distant island. But the crewmates are not as honest as they first appear; among them are a group of desperate men who want that treasure for themselves, and will stop at nothing to get it.

With the likes of Long John Silver, Billy Bones, Blind Pew and Ben Gunn – and not forgetting the parrot – *Treasure Island* is a thrilling adventure, fully deserving its place as a classic piece of fiction.

Jasper Britton took the lead in the Regents Park Open Air Theatre production of *Richard III* and has also worked for the Royal National Theatre and the RSC. His television appearances include *The Bill* and *Peak Practice*. He also reads *Poets of the Great War* for Naxos AudioBooks.

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