

1 Robinson Crusoe

Presenter: Hello everybody, welcome to *Great Books*. With us in the studio today is Professor Schwartz from East London University. Today we are going to talk about Robinson Crusoe. Professor Schwartz, what can you tell us about Robinson Crusoe?

Professor: Robinson Crusoe is not real person. He is a character in a book from 1719. Daniel Defoe wrote the book and he became very famous. His story about Robinson Crusoe was read by people all over the world. It really was a bestseller.

Presenter: Is it a real story? Did these things really happen?

Professor: No, not really. But Defoe read about the adventures of a man called Alexander Selkirk, a man from Scotland who lived on a lonely island for four years. Selkirk thought he was going to die, but then he learned how to fish and built a house for himself. Selkirk had a big problem with rats. When he fell asleep, they bit him. But he found some wild cats. The cats lived with him and the rats left.

Presenter: That was clever. Do you know any more about Selkirk?

Professor: Well, he was very lonely. There was nobody he could talk to. One thing helped him ... he liked reading books. But life on the island wasn't easy for him. Eventually he was rescued though. When he returned to Britain he wrote about his adventures in a newspaper. Daniel Defoe read the stories and wrote about some of Selkirk's adventures in his own book. Most of Robinson Crusoe is Defoe's own ideas, like the story when Man Friday is taken to the island by the cannibals – and brave Robinson Crusoe rescues him.

Presenter: Which makes Robinson Crusoe a real hero.

Professor: Oh yes, it does. He fights all by himself against a group of horrible cannibals, and later in the story, he also helps Man Friday to free his father. This makes Robinson Crusoe a very friendly, helpful, strong and clever man. A bit of a superhero. And that's why the story of Robinson Crusoe has become so popular – especially with children. They love it, even today.