

## TO THE HESITATING PURCHASER

If sailor tales to sailor tunes,  
    Storm and adventure, heat and cold,  
If schooners, islands, and maroons,  
    And buccaneers, and buried gold,  
And all the old romance, retold  
    Exactly in the ancient way,  
Can please, as me they pleased of old,  
    The wiser youngsters of today:

~So be it, and fall on! If not,  
    If studious youth no longer crave,  
His ancient appetites forgot,  
    Kingston, or Ballantyne the brave,  
Or Cooper of the wood and wave:  
    So be it, also! And may I  
And all my pirates share the grave  
    Where these and their creations lie!

## PART ONE: The Old Buccaneer

### CHAPTER 1

#### The Old Sea-dog at the Admiral Benbow

SQUIRE TRELAWNEY, Dr. Livesey, and the rest of these gentlemen having asked me to write down the whole particulars about Treasure Island, from the beginning to the end, keeping nothing back but the bearings of the island, and that only because there is still treasure not yet lifted, I take up my pen in the year of grace 17\_\_ and go back to the time when my father kept the Admiral Benbow inn and the brown old seaman with the sabre cut first took up his lodging under our roof.

I remember him as if it were yesterday, as he came plodding to the inn door, his sea-chest following behind him in a hand-barrow—a tall, strong, heavy, nut-brown man, his tarry pigtail falling over the shoulder of his soiled blue coat, his hands ragged and scarred,

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**hand-barrow:** n. a rectangular frame with poles at the ends to be carried by two people

with black, broken nails, and the sabre cut across one cheek, a dirty, livid white. I remember him looking round the cover and whistling to himself as he did so, and then breaking out in that old sea-song that he sang so often afterwards:

“Fifteen men on the dead man’s chest—  
Yo-ho-ho, and a bottle of rum!”

in the high, old tottering voice that seemed to have been tuned and broken at the capstan bars. Then he rapped on the door with a bit of stick like a handspike that he carried, and when my father appeared, called roughly for a glass of rum. This, when it was brought to him, he drank slowly, like a connoisseur, lingering on the taste and still looking about him at the cliffs and up at our signboard.

“This is a handy cove,” says he at length; “and a pleasant sittiyated grog-shop. Much company, mate?”

My father told him no, very little company, the more was the pity.

“Well, then,” said he, “this is the berth for me. Here you, matey,” he cried to the man who trundled

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**livid:** adj. a bluish-gray

**capstan:** n. a revolving cylinder for winding rope

**handspike:** n. a wooden rod with an iron tip

the barrow; “bring up alongside and help up my chest. I’ll stay here a bit,” he continued. “I’m a plain man; rum and bacon and eggs is what I want, and that head up there for to watch ships off. What you mought call me? You mought call me captain. Oh, I see what you’re at—there”; and he threw down three or four gold pieces on the threshold. “You can tell me when I’ve worked through that,” says he, looking as fierce as a commander.

...his hands ragged and scarred, with black, broken nails, and the sabre cut across one cheek, a dirty, livid white.

Stevenson paints the roughness of Billy Bones with rough consonants. The vowel of the noun *white* stands out starkly. Notice the assonance of *hands*, *ragged*, and *black*. Page 13-14.

And indeed bad as his clothes were and coarsely as he spoke, he had none of the appearance of a man who sailed before the mast, but seemed like a mate or skipper accustomed to be obeyed or to strike. The

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**mought:** v. a crude version of *might*

man who came with the barrow told us the mail had set him down the morning before at the Royal George, that he had inquired what inns there were along the coast, and hearing ours well spoken of, I suppose, and described as lonely, had chosen it from the others for his place of residence. And that was all we could learn of our guest.

He was a very silent man by custom. All day he hung round the cove or upon the cliffs with a brass telescope; all evening he sat in a corner of the parlour next the fire and drank rum and water very strong. Mostly he would not speak when spoken to, only look up sudden and fierce and blow through his nose like a fog-horn; and we and the people who came about our house soon learned to let him be. Every day when he came back from his stroll he would ask if any seafaring men had gone by along the road. At first we thought it was the want of company of his own kind that made him ask this question, but at last we began to see he was desirous to avoid them. When a seaman did put up at the Admiral Benbow (as now and then some did, making by the coast road for Bristol) he would look in at him through the curtained door before he entered

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**the mail:** n. the carriage carrying the mail and passengers

the parlour; and he was always sure to be as silent as a mouse when any such was present. For me, at least, there was no secret about the matter, for I was, in a way, a sharer in his alarms. He had taken me aside one day and promised me a silver fourpenny on the first of every month if I would only keep my “weather-eye open for a seafaring man with one leg” and let him know the moment he appeared. Often enough when the first of the month came round and I applied to him for my wage, he would only blow through his nose at me and stare me down, but before the week was out he was sure to think better of it, bring me my fourpenny piece, and repeat his orders to look out for “the seafaring man with one leg.”

How that personage haunted my dreams, I need scarcely tell you. On stormy nights, when the wind shook the four corners of the house and the surf roared along the cove and up the cliffs, I would see him in a thousand forms, and with a thousand diabolical expressions. Now the leg would be cut off at the knee, now at the hip; now he was a monstrous kind of a creature who had never had but the one leg, and that in the middle of his body. To see him leap and run

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**diabolical:** adj. devilish

and pursue me over hedge and ditch was the worst of nightmares. And altogether I paid pretty dear for my monthly fourpenny piece, in the shape of these abominable fancies.

On stormy nights, when the wind shook the four corners of the house and the surf roared along the cove and up the cliffs...

Stevenson fills the description of the storm with low storm-vowels and windy consonants, as in *when the wind shook four house*. Hear the bass roar in *shook, house, along, cove, and up*. Page 17.

But though I was so terrified by the idea of the seafaring man with one leg, I was far less afraid of the captain himself than anybody else who knew him. There were nights when he took a deal more rum and water than his head would carry; and then he would

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**abominable:** adj. morally repulsive  
**fancies:** n. likes, preferences

his breath hanging like smoke in his wake as he strode off, and the last sound I heard of him as he turned the big rock was a loud snort of indignation, as though his mind was still running upon Dr. Livesey.

...the ripp / le lapp / ing soft / ly on /  
the stones...

Stevenson evokes the steady lapping of waves on the shore below the inn with a steady iambic meter. Page 25.

Well, mother was upstairs with father and I was laying the breakfast-table against the captain's return when the parlour door opened and a man stepped in on whom I had never set my eyes before. He was a pale, tallowy creature, wanting two fingers of the left hand, and though he wore a cutlass, he did not look much like a fighter. I had always my eye open for seafaring men, with one leg or two, and I remember this one puzzled me. He was not sailorly, and yet he had a smack of the sea about him too.

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I asked him what was for his service, and he said he would take rum; but as I was going out of the room to fetch it, he sat down upon a table and motioned me to draw near. I paused where I was, with my napkin in my hand.

“Come here, sonny,” says he. “Come nearer here.”

I took a step nearer.

“Is this here table for my mate Bill?” he asked with a kind of leer.

I told him I did not know his mate Bill, and this was for a person who stayed in our house whom we called the captain.

Notice Stevenson’s paragraphs—from long, detailed paragraphs to short, one-sentence paragraphs that mimic Jim’s nervousness and hesitancy: “I took a step nearer.” The paragraphs follow the forms of the plot.

“Well,” said he, “my mate Bill would be called the captain, as like as not. He has a cut on one cheek and

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full flight, and the captain hotly pursuing, both with drawn cutlasses, and the former streaming blood from the left shoulder. Just at the door the captain aimed at the fugitive one last tremendous cut, which would certainly have split him to the chine had it not been intercepted by our big signboard of Admiral Benbow. You may see the notch on the lower side of the frame to this day.

...if it comes / to swing /  
ing swing all / say I...

Stevenson captures the swing of the noose with an anapest-iamb-anapest-iamb sweep, with hissing *s*'s expressing the swish. Page 31.

That blow was the last of the battle. Once out upon the road, Black Dog, in spite of his wound, showed a wonderful clean pair of heels and disappeared over the edge of the hill in half a minute. The captain, for his part, stood staring at the signboard like a bewildered man. Then he passed his hand over his eyes several

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**chine:** n. backbone

is singing. Lay me back.”

Before I could do much to help him he had fallen back again to his former place, where he lay for a while silent.

“Jim,” he said at length, “you saw that seafaring man today?”

“Black Dog?” I asked.

...where he lay for a while silent.

Stevenson amplifies the effect of the word *silent* by following it with silence. *Silent* comes at the end of a sentence and at the end of a paragraph.

“Ah! Black Dog,” says he. “HE’S a bad un; but there’s worse that put him on. Now, if I can’t get away nohow, and they tip me the black spot, mind you, it’s my old sea-chest they’re after; you get on a horse—you can, can’t you? Well, then, you get on a horse, and go to—well, yes, I will!—to that eternal doctor swab, and tell him to pipe all hands—magistrates and sich—and he’ll

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**pipe all hands:** summon all seamen

“Now, Bill, sit where you are,” said the beggar. “If I can’t see, I can hear a finger stirring. Business is business. Hold out your left hand. Boy, take his left hand by the wrist and bring it near to my right.”

We both obeyed him to the letter, and I saw him pass something from the hollow of the hand that held his stick into the palm of the captain’s, which closed upon it instantly.

“And now that’s done,” said the blind man; and at the words he suddenly left hold of me, and with incredible accuracy and nimbleness, skipped out of the parlour and into the road, where, as I still stood motionless, I could hear his stick go tap-tap-tapping into the distance.

It was some time before either I or the captain seemed to gather our senses, but at length, and about at the same moment, I released his wrist, which I was still holding, and he drew in his hand and looked sharply into the palm.

“Ten o’clock!” he cried. “Six hours. We’ll do them yet,” and he sprang to his feet.

Even as he did so, he reeled, put his hand to his throat, stood swaying for a moment, and then, with

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a peculiar sound, fell from his whole height face foremost to the floor.

I ran to him at once, calling to my mother. But haste was all in vain. The captain had been struck dead by thundering apoplexy. It is a curious thing to understand, for I had certainly never liked the man, though of late I had begun to pity him, but as soon as I saw that he was dead, I burst into a flood of tears. It was the second death I had known, and the sorrow of the first was still fresh in my heart.

...as I still stood motionless, I could hear his stick go tap-tap-tapping into the distance.

Stevenson reinforces the horrid tapping of Blind Pew with a combination of *st* and *ih* sounds: *still, stood, stick, distance*. Page 46.

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apoplexy: n. a stroke

Even as he did so, he reeled, put his hand to his throat, stood swaying for a moment, and then, with a peculiar sound, fell from his whole height face foremost to the floor.

Notice how Stevenson captures the dizziness and unsteadiness with irregular bursts of words and punctuation—a stagger at each comma. The paragraph is organized chronologically in a grammatical dance with the character’s movement, from the first motion of Bones’s lurching collapse until the final fall, which is expressed with the whoosh of *f*s and other airy sibilants: *fell*, *from*, *his*, *whole*, *height*, *face*, *foremost*, and *floor*. The paragraph begins with seven short stutters, followed by a ten-word fall, ending in a stressed syllable. Pages 46-47.