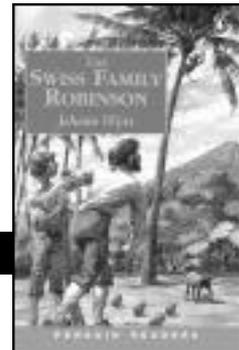


Teacher's notes

The Swiss Family Robinson

by Johann Wyss



SUMMARY

When the Robinson family are shipwrecked on an uninhabited desert island, they find a new world of adventure and knowledge. As they learn to cope with the many problems of life on the island, they become even closer as a family.

First, they must rescue as much from the ship as they can. Here, they make a mistake. They think only of the present and do not take things from the ship that will help them for the future. They do not collect enough salt, evaporated out of the sea water, and, through a long, cold, wet winter, their stored meat goes rotten. They build a tree house in the wrong place and cannot keep warm and dry.

However, they learn this lesson well, and make the necessary changes to their life. They move to a cave house and collect salt, build huts and plant seeds against the privations of the next winter.

They are extremely lucky with their island. It seems to have everything for their needs. Over time, they discover bamboo, plants which make paper and cloth, buffaloes, sweet potatoes and salt for preserving their food. They even find pearl-bearing oysters which they will eventually make them rich.

They only thing they don't discover is another living soul – until, that is, the eldest son goes exploring and finds another shipwrecked person on a small island nearby. Jenny was on her way to meet her father when her ship went down. But she knows her father will be searching for her and, sure enough, a ship eventually appears. Jenny and Fritz leave the island, but the rest of the family decide to stay.

ABOUT JOHANN WYSS

Swiss Family Robinson was published in 1813 and it is sometimes attributed to Johann Rudolph Wyss. In reality, however, he re-wrote and edited the story which had been written originally by his father, Johann David Wyss.

Johann David was a Swiss priest, who had written the story of the shipwrecked family to entertain and instruct his own family. He, like the father in the story, had four sons, and the didactic nature of much of the book, with explicit details on how to use the natural world to improve man's lot, reflects its origins as a self-help survival handbook.

Many years after Johann David had written the story, one of his four sons, Johann Rudolph, persuaded his father to allow him to re-write and publish the book. Johann Rudolph was, by this time, a professor of philosophy at Berne University, which perhaps gives the book its other main slant – the need to live happily together and face, together, whatever hardships life presents us with.

BACKGROUND AND THEMES

The idea for the story was clearly taken from the earlier classic, *Robinson Crusoe* by Daniel Defoe. The author pays tribute to his source in the title of his own book. But the influence of the original goes much deeper than merely the basic plot line. Many of the incidents in the original are exactly mirrored in this story. The visits to the sunken ship at the beginning, the building of various houses, the planting of crops and learning to live with nature. Finally, the meeting with another human being.

With a modern perspective, it is sometimes remarked that the family know a great deal about survival on a tropical desert island, considering that they come from a land-locked temperate country in Europe. But in reality, ordinary people of the age that the writer is describing knew a great deal more about nature than the average person does today, and were considerably better at DIY. While the breadth of flora and fauna on one uninhabited island stretches credibility a little far, the knowledge about how to put nature to good use should not.

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PRE-INTERMEDIATE

THE SWISS FAMILY ROBINSON



Teacher's notes

Communicative activities

The following teacher-led activities cover the same sections of text as the exercises at the back of the Reader and supplement those exercises. For supplementary exercises covering shorter sections of the book, see the photocopiable Student's Activities pages of this Factsheet. These are primarily for use with class readers but, with the exception of the discussion and pair/group work activities, can also be used by students working alone in a self-access centre.

ACTIVITIES BEFORE READING THE BOOK

Ask students to discuss the following questions in small groups.

If you could choose four other people i.e. doctor, lawyer, priest, carpenter, to be shipwrecked on a desert island with, who would they be? Each group must agree on their list and have reasons for choosing each person. Elicit the lists from each group and the reasons and decide which list is the best.

ACTIVITIES AFTER READING A SECTION

The writer of this book wrote the story partly from educative tales he told his own children. Point out to students that they learn real life skills in the book and ask, after each section, what real life skills they have learnt in that section.

Chapters 1–5

- Remind students that the narrator had problems bringing the animals from the ship. Ask students if they have ever heard the story of the wolf, the goat and the cabbage. If they have not
 - Read out the problem situation.
You are on a ship which is wrecked on some rocks. There is a wolf, a goat and a cabbage – don't ask me why! There is a boat which can take you to the beach, but it is very small. In fact, it will only take you and one of the animals or the vegetable. Now you know that wolves like to eat goats and goats like to eat cabbages so you decide not to leave the wolf with the goat or the goat with the cabbage. This means you must take the goat first. At least you know the wolf won't eat the cabbage. Have you solved the problem?
 - Ask students to discuss the problem in groups.
 - Read out the next part of the problem.
You have taken the goat to the beach, and returned to the wolf and the cabbage. But you still have a problem. If you take the wolf to the other side now, and come back for the cabbage, the wolf will eat the goat. If you take the cabbage to the other side now, and come back for the wolf, the goat will eat the cabbage.
Is there any solution? There is, if you can work it out!
 - Ask students to solve the problem.
- The narrator says that they made silly mistakes when they brought things from the boat. They brought things they needed for the present but they didn't bring things they would need for the future. Work as a whole class and compile a list of things that might be on a ship which shipwrecked people would need later rather than now.

Chapters 6–12

Ask students to work in pairs and discuss these questions.

- How did they make the rope ladder and get it into the tree? (Chapter 6)? Use these words in your answer.
Clue: They didn't use one of these things!

bamboo nails sticks thick rope thin rope wood

- How did they make the sledge and move it. (Chapter 9)? Use these words in your answer

bamboo nails sticks light rope wood donkey

Elicit ideas from the pairs and decide which is the best explanation/description in each case.

Chapters 13–17

Put students into pairs to discuss these questions:

- Why did the father think they were ready for winter?
- In what ways was he wrong?
- How did they find answers to some of their problems?
- How did they prepare for the following winter?

ACTIVITIES AFTER READING THE BOOK

Ask students which practical skills from the book they can still remember from the book.

Glossary

It will be useful for your students to know the following new words. They are practised in the 'Before You Read' sections of exercises at the back of the book. (Definitions are based on those in the Longman Active Study Dictionary.)

Chapters 1–5

- barrel** (n) a large container for liquids such as beer
branch (n) a part of a tree that grows out from the trunk
coconut (n) a large brown nut with white flesh, which is filled with a liquid
corn (n) the grain or seeds of crops such as wheat
gourd (n) a large fruit with a hard shell that is sometimes used as a container
gunpowder (n) an explosive powder
nail (n) a thin pointed piece of metal with a flat end that you hit with a hammer
rope (n) very strong thick string, made by twisting together many threads
shell (n) the hard outside part that covers some animals for example snails and crabs

Chapters 6–12

- arrow** (n) a thin straight weapon with a point at one end that you shoot from a bow
bamboo (n) a tall plant with a hard hollow stem
bow (n) a weapon used for shooting arrows
paddle (n) a short pole with a wide flat end, used for moving a small boat along
plough (n) a large piece of equipment used on farms to turn over the surface of the land so that seeds can be planted
seed (n) a small hard thing produced by plants that a new plant will grow from

Chapters 13–17

- bark** (n) the material that forms the surface of the wood of a tree
canoe (n) a long light narrow boat that is pointed at both ends
cave (n) a large natural hole in the side of a hill or under the ground
pearl (n) a valuable small white or black round object that forms inside an oyster and is used in jewellery



Student's activities

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PRE-INTERMEDIATE

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Photocopiable

Students can do these exercises alone or with one or more other students. Pair/group-only exercises are marked.

Activities before reading the book

Look through the pictures in the book. Find 10 things that you do not know the word for in English. Check those words in a dictionary. Then work in pairs and test your partner.

Example:

Question: In which picture is there a coconut?

Answer: In the picture on page 7.

Activities while reading the book

Chapters 1-5

- Name the four children in the story, in order of age.
- Find in the Wordsearch 10 things that they took from the ship in Chapter 1. You can read →←↑↓↗↘

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| b | q | z | a | d | s | f | s | p | b |
| g | a | c | d | o | h | n | e | f | s |
| u | p | r | b | n | e | w | g | g | s |
| n | o | o | r | k | e | z | o | t | s |
| s | a | g | c | e | p | d | a | o | d |
| s | s | i | p | y | l | o | k | o | d |
| l | h | p | l | p | g | s | o | l | e |
| c | l | q | p | s | a | c | d | s | h |
| p | g | u | n | p | o | w | d | e | r |
| j | k | k | n | i | v | e | s | x | z |

- These verbs and nouns are all in Chapter 2. Match each verb with a noun.

| | |
|-----------|----------------|
| (a) feed | (i) boat |
| (b) sail | (ii) shellfish |
| (c) cut | (iii) corn |
| (d) make | (iv) fire |
| (e) cook | (v) meal |
| (f) open | (vi) wood |
| (g) find | (vii) shells |
| (h) plant | (viii) animals |
- Use the phrases in Exercise 3 to tell the story of Chapter 2.
- These anagrams are things they found in Chapter 3. Can you solve them?
 - a g r s u
 - e k m n o s y
 - d g o r s u
 - c c e e n o o r s t t u (two words)
- Work in threes.

Student A: Explain how to use gourds for cooking.

Student B: Explain how they got the coconuts.

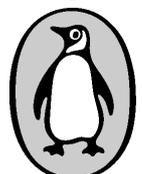
Student C: Explain how Fritz became a monkey's

father.

- Complete each of these sentences about the information in Chapter 4 with a preposition or adverb.
 - The next morning my wife said ... me
 - 'You must bring the animals ... the ship.'
 - Go ... Fritz.'
 - The rest of us will look ... a place to build a home.'
 - I said, 'We'll have to stay ... the ship all night.'
 - The animals on the ship were ... good shape.
 - We found useful things ... our life on the island.
 - I said, 'We must think ... the present.'
 - 'I've seen a barrel ... butter.'said Fritz. 'But it will soon go bad.'
 - 'We'll think ... the future later.'I said.
 - But it's always good to prepare ... the future.
 - We didn't know that ... the time.
 - The next morning we had to take the animals ... the land.
 - We couldn't put them ... the boat – they were too heavy.
 - So we made a boat ... each animal.
 - We tied barrels ... the animals.
 - The barrels held them up ... the water.
- In Chapter 5, the family has many problems but they think of good answers. How do they answer each of these problems? Discuss in pairs.
 - How can they get up the tree?
 - How can they get the donkey across the river?
 - What can they build a bridge with?
 - How can they carry everything to their new home?
 - How can they catch the chickens?
 - How can the pig get across the river? (It refuses to use the bridge.)

Chapters 6-12

- Who said these in Chapter 8 things. Why?
 - That was a god shot.
 - It wasn't good.
 - Where are Ernest and Jack?
 - I'm very pleased about that.
 - That's what I wanted for our lunch.
 - You found sugar and coconuts.
 - We were stupid not to take more than that.
- Complete these words – they are all things they brought from the boat.
 - ... n ... m ... ls
 - b ... tt ... r
 - s ... lt m t
 - b ... dcl ... th ... s
 - g ... np ... wd ... r



Student's activities

- (f) b ks
- 3 Match each sentence (a–j) from Chapter 10 with a reply (i–x).
- (a) We'll go now, and then we'll spend another night on the ship.
- (b) Now, Fritz, what do we really need?
- (c) I want something to catch big fish.
- (d) You find a fishing line.
- (e) Shall I take the plough to the island?
- (f) There! That's all.
- (g) You must make a hut for the tools and other large things.
- (h) We won't need many huts.
- (i) We must build a wall round the garden.
- (j) Is this a sweet potato?
- (i) I can only think of one very small thing.
- (ii) No, No! Let's see if the fish is still with us.'
- (iii) Oh, that's a lot of work.
- (iv) Oh? Let's see. I think we'll have more animals soon.
- (v) We'll meet you with the sledge when you come back.
- (vi) What will pull it?
- (vii) Yes, and we must also make some huts for the animals.
- (viii) Yes, but we can't eat fish and meat every day.
- (ix) Yes, I remember watching one of the officers when he was fishing over the side of the boat.
- (x) Yes, it is.
- 4 Discuss in pairs these questions about the information in Chapters 11 and 12
- (a) What new animals came to the family?
- (b) How did the new animals arrive?
- (c) How could the new animals help the family in the future?

Chapters 13–17

- 1 Complete these sentences about the information in Chapter 14 with words from the box.

| | | | | | | |
|--------|-------|-------|---------|------|------|-----------|
| air | cave | caves | clothes | end | fire | gunpowder |
| head | hole | mouth | rock | room | salt | smoke |
| storms | tools | trees | winter | | | |

- (a) We were very pleased when the ... ended.
- (b) We came out of our dark, smelly
- (c) 'I can't live through another ... like that.' said my wife.
- (d) 'I'm sure that the first men didn't live in ... like monkeys.'
- (e) 'They lived in ... and we must find one too.'
- (f) I couldn't find a ... that was big enough.
- (g) I said, 'We can try to make one bigger but the ... is very hard.'
- (h) 'Bring the ... and we'll try.'
- (i) One day Jack said, 'I've made a ... right through.'
- (j) We made the hole bigger and I put my ... in.
- (k) The ... was really bad.
- (l) We used some of our ... and the bad air came out.

- (m) We lit a ... and it burned brightly.
- (n) We made the ... of the cave bigger.
- (o) The walls of the cave were covered in
- (p) We made another hole at the other ... of the cave and a hole for the fire.
- (q) We lit a fire and the ... went out of the cave.
- (r) 'Now I can cook and dry your ... in winter,' my wife said.
- 2 Find words which go together from the events in Chapter 15.
- | | |
|---------------|----------------|
| (a) sea air | (i) baby |
| (b) buffaloes | (ii) canoe |
| (c) donkey | (iii) monkeys |
| (d) dogs | (iv) paddles |
| (e) plants | (v) paper |
| (f) bark | (vi) plough |
| (g) juice | (vii) sunlight |
| (h) wood | (viii) trees |
- 3 Work in groups. Tell the story of Chapter 15 using the pairs of words from Exercise 3.
- 4 Put these events from Fritz's story (Chapter 16) in order.
- (a) 'Help!' it said. 'Sailor on smoking island.'
- (b) A big bird flew over me and I shot it.
- (c) A piece of cloth was tied around its leg.
- (d) I brought some shellfish up onto the beach and opened them.
- (e) I came home today.
- (f) I came to a place where we found shellfish for the first time.
- (g) I climbed up a hill on our island and saw the smoking island.
- (h) I found Jenny.
- (i) I listened to Jenny's story.
- (j) I looked at the writing.
- (k) I sailed to the west of the island.
- (l) I slept on the beach.
- (in) I took my gun and some gunpowder, a fishing line and my knife.
- (n) I went for a swim and found a lot more shellfish.
- (o) I went on farther to the west.
- (p) I went out to the smoking island and climbed up to the top.
- (q) In the evening, I sat on the beach and had a meal.
- (r) Inside one shellfish I found a large pearl.
- 5 Work in pairs. Discuss these questions about the end of the story (Chapters 16 and 17)
- (a) In what way was Jenny important in the end of the story?
- (b) Who stayed on the island?
- (c) Who left the island?

Activities after reading the book

Can you name all the things in the pictures in this book? Work in pairs and check.

