



New WORLDS



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These texts describe first impressions – of a fictional island with buried treasure, and the Moon. As you read, think about the different reactions people may have to an adventure in an unexplored place.





About the book

Treasure Island, written by Robert Louis Stevenson, was first published in 1883 as a serial in a children's magazine. It has an exciting plot with many twists and turns, originally designed to encourage readers to buy the next issue of the magazine.

We had made a great deal of way during the night, and were now lying becalmed about half a mile to the south-east of Treasure Island. Grey-coloured woods covered a large part of the surface. This even tint was broken up by streaks of yellow sand in the lower lands, and by many tall trees of the pine family, out-topping the others – some singly, some in clumps; but the general colouring was uniform and sad. The hills ran up clear above the vegetation in spires of naked rock. All were strangely shaped, and the Spy-glass, which was the tallest rock on the island, was likewise the strangest in shape, running up sheer from almost every side, and then suddenly cut off at the top like a pedestal to put a statue on.

The *Hispaniola* was rolling under in the ocean swell. The mast was creaking, the rudder was banging to and fro, and the whole ship moaning, groaning and jumping like a factory. I had to cling tight to the ropes, and the world turned giddily before my eyes; for though I was a good enough sailor when there was way on, this standing still and being rolled about like a bottle was a thing I never learned to bear, without a qualm or two, on an empty stomach.

Perhaps it was this; perhaps it was the look of the island with its grey, melancholy woods, and wild stone spires and the surf that we could both see and hear foaming and thundering on the steep beach – and you would have thought anyone would have been glad to get to land after being so long at sea – but my heart sank into my boots; and from that first look onward, I hated the very thought of Treasure Island.

Treasure Island is referred to in another well-known children's book, *Swallows and Amazons* (published in 1930) and also in the film, *Pirates of the Caribbean* (2003). In 2012 *Silver*, a sequel to *Treasure Island* written by the poet Andrew Motion, was published.

There are more film versions of *Treasure Island* than any other classic novel. There have also been television and radio productions and even, in 2009, a computer game.

The story of *Treasure Island* starts with a young boy, named Jim Hawkins, finding a map showing the location of buried treasure on a remote island. He tells Trelawney, who buys a ship (the *Hispaniola*), and they set sail in search of the treasure, with Jim on board as ship's boy. During the voyage, they discover that some of the crew are also secretly after the treasure. In this extract, Jim describes his first impressions of Treasure Island.

We had a dreary morning's work before us, for there was no sign of any wind, and the rowing boats had to be got out and the ship towed three or four miles up a narrow passage to the haven behind the island. I volunteered for one of the boats. The heat was sweltering, and the crew grumbled fiercely over their work. I thought this was a very bad sign; for up to that day, the men had gone willingly and briskly about their business; but the very sight of the island had relaxed the cords of discipline.

We brought up about a third of a mile from either shore, Treasure Island on one side, and Skeleton Island on the other. The bottom was clean sand. The plunge of our anchor sent up clouds of birds wheeling and crying over the woods; but in less than a minute they were down again, and all was once more silent.

The place seemed entirely land locked, buried in woods, the trees coming right down to high-water mark, the shores mostly flat, and the hill tops standing round at a distance in a sort of amphitheatre, one here, one there. Two little rivers, or, rather two swamps, emptied out into this pond, as you might call it; and the foliage round that part of the shore had a kind of poisonous brightness.

There was not a breath of air moving, nor a sound but that of the surf booming half a mile away along the beaches and against the rocks outside. A peculiar stagnant smell hung over the anchorage – a smell of sodden leaves and rotting tree trunks. I observed the doctor sniffing and sniffing like someone tasting a bad egg.

'I don't know about treasure,' he said, 'but I'll stake my wig there's fever here.'



Moon dust

On 20th July 1969, Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin became the first men to walk on the Moon. They landed on the surface in the Lunar Module called the Eagle. In this text, the narrator is remembering watching the Moon landings on television as a small child.



It's coming up to 7:30 PM and dusk is falling. I can hear crickets and birds in the back garden, and the burble of the creek. The Moon's in the sky, a big silver full Moon, and I've been on the porch in my pyjamas, which have little blue space-ships on them, just drinking the sight in. They're up there. Up there. *There*. We've been watching the screen for an hour, because Neil Armstrong was due out at 7:00 PM, after he told NASA that he couldn't bear to hang around until midnight, much less sleep. The TV anchor* and various experts have been assuring us that everything is fine, though. It takes a while to get those big suits on.

Armstrong is late because stowing the dishes after dinner was never part of the practice routine and it's taken longer than anyone expected. The first men on the Moon are being delayed by dirty dishes: there's something wonderful about that. The Eagle is on a bright, rolling, crater-pocked plain. When they had a chance to take the scene in through the Lunar Module's (LM) tiny, triangular portholes, Aldrin exulted at the unreal clarity in this atmosphereless environment, with features on the distant horizon appearing close by, contrasting beautifully against the boundless black backdrop of infinity. Armstrong wondered at the peculiar play of light and colour on the tan surface. He thought it looked more inviting than hostile. He knows this will be his home for only twenty-one hours.

* presenter



Now, what do you say as you become the first human being to set foot on the Moon? Neil Armstrong is an astronaut, not a poet. The pressure is on. It's irritating, because, for him, the landing was the poetry and the taking off again his next major work. Still, as he thinks about it, he considers the paradox that it is such a small step, and yet... the laconic career pilot comes up with one of the most memorable lines ever offered in the English language.

The door won't budge and they don't want to force it, because you could poke a hole through Eagle at almost any point. The air pressure inside the cabin is holding it closed, so Armstrong peels the corner back gently and the last of the craft's oxygen screams into space as a rainbow of ice crystals. Aldrin holds the hatch open as the other man sinks to his knees and crawls through, until he is standing on Eagle's porch, surrounded only by Moon and space and the Earth which hangs above him.

He pulls a ring and a small TV camera lowers on a tray from the undercarriage and begins transmitting pictures home. A voice from Earth exclaims, "We're getting pictures on the TV!" And so we are: grainy and unearthly. Upside down at first, then flipped over. Wow. Armstrong tests his weight in one-sixth gravity and launches himself onto the LM's giant landing pad. He describes the surface as "very, very fine-grained as you get close to it...almost like a powder." Then:

"Okay, I'm going to step off the LM now."

There's still time for the rapacious Moon-bugs to grab him, but they don't. He tests the ground to make sure it will take his weight, then steps off the LM.



"That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind..."

Neil Armstrong



"That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind..."

He bounces, paws at the dust once more with his boot and finally lets go of Eagle, to be free of the Earth and all its creations. He walks hesitantly, unsteadily at first, like a toddler searching for the secrets of balance. He feels his way into the rolling gait that Moonwalking demands and takes some photos, until Mission Control reminds him about the "contingency" soil sample he's supposed to get in case of an emergency takeoff. At that moment, Aldrin chips in, too, and the commander snaps, "Right," as the press room back in Houston erupts with laughter, because it seems that nagging is nagging, even on the Moon. Fourteen minutes later, Aldrin joins him, cracking a joke about being careful not to lock the hatch on the way out – but all the same, he's covered in goose bumps as he steps away from the Eagle. He likes the reduced gravity, is glad of its attention after the weightlessness of space, which feels lonesome to him, as though he's nowhere. He looks up at the half-dark Earth and can make out the slowly rotating shapes of North Africa and the Middle East, then returns his eyes to the Moon and realizes that the soil next to his boots has lain untroubled by life since before those continents existed.

I run out into the garden to bathe in the silky Moonlight and the blood seems to rush to my head. They're standing there now. They're walking on the Moon. I go back inside and President Nixon is on the phone to the astronauts.

"Hello, Neil and Buzz, I'm talking to you by telephone from the Oval Room at the White House. And this certainly has to be the most historic telephone call ever made from the White House..."



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'Moondust' adapted from *Moondust: In Search of the Men Who Fell to Earth* by Andrew Smith, Bloomsbury 2005. Images used courtesy of NASA.

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