

Mystery of the real Robinson Crusoe solved

After nearly 300 years the mystery of the whereabouts of a campsite of a marooned Scottish sailor who is said to have inspired the fictional castaway Robinson Crusoe has now been solved. Archaeologists have finally found the campsite of Alexander Selkirk whose real life experiences stuck on a desert island inspired Daniel Defoe to create his imaginary experiences in the famous masterpiece novel *Robinson Crusoe*. In 1704 Selkirk became marooned on a small tropical Argentinean island in the Pacific Ocean 470 miles west of Chile for more than four years. He was finally rescued in 1709. The island that used to be known as Aguas Buenas was renamed Robinson Crusoe Island after the character created by Defoe in his 18th Century classic. During an archaeological dig on the island archaeologists discovered evidence of an early European occupant. They uncovered compelling evidence including the discovery of a pair of navigational dividers, which could only have belonged to a ship's master or navigator, which historical evidence suggests Selkirk must have been.

The captain of the ship that rescued Selkirk, a Captain Woodes Rogers referred to some mathematical instruments in his possession. Dr David Caldwell from the National Museums Scotland who helped lead the dig said, "The find finally confirmed the whereabouts of the camp. The evidence uncovered at Aguas Buenas corroborates the stories of Alexander Selkirk's stay on the island and proved a fascinating insight into his existence there." He added, "I never thought we had a chance of finding the campsite. The discovery of the divider was crucial." Postholes suggest he built two shelters near a freshwater stream. He had a look-out point over the harbour from where he would be able to watch for approaching ships and ascertain whether they were friend or foe. Accounts written shortly after his rescue describe him shooting goats with a gun rescued from the ship. Eventually he learned to outrun them, eating their meat and using their skins as clothing. Rats used to gnaw his feet sometimes when he slept so he befriended cats to solve this problem. He passed his time reading the Bible and singing psalms. It appears he seemed to have enjoyed a more peaceful and devout existence than in any other time of his life.

Category: Lifestyle / Mystery / Desert Island
Level: Intermediate / Upper Intermediate

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Born in the small seaside town of Lower Largo, Fife, Scotland in 1676 Alexander Selkirk was drawn to life at sea from an early age. In 1704 during a privateering voyage on the Cinque Ports he fell out with the commander over the ship's seaworthiness. Selkirk decided to remain behind on the island where they had landed to overhaul the worm-infested vessel. Little did he know it would be five years before he was rescued by an English ship visiting the island. *Robinson Crusoe* by Daniel Defoe was published in 1719. Defoe would certainly have heard the stories about Selkirk's adventures, which he used as the basis for his novel. It is unclear however whether the two men actually met.

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EXERCISES

1. Robinson Crusoe: Who was Robinson Crusoe? Was he real? From what period of time did he supposedly exist? Did he have any friends? Have you read the book? Who wrote it? Go round the room swapping details.

2. Geography: Robinson Crusoe Island: Where is Robinson Crusoe Island? What ocean surrounds it? Draw a map on the board then look on Google maps to help you.

3. Dictation: The teacher will read four to six lines of the article slowly and clearly. Students will write down what they hear. The teacher will repeat the passage slowly again. Self-correct your work from page one - filling in spaces and correcting mistakes. Be honest with yourself on the number of errors. Advise the teacher of your total number of errors. Less than five is very good. Ten is acceptable. Any more is room for improvement! More than twenty - you need to do some work!

4. Reading: The students should now read the article aloud, swapping readers every paragraph.

5. Vocabulary: Students should now look through the article and underline any vocabulary they do not know. Look in dictionaries. Discuss and help each other out. The teacher will go through and explain any unknown words or phrases.

6. The article: Students should look through the article with the teacher.

- a) What is the article about?
- b) What do you think about the article?
- c) What do we mean by privateering?
- d) Would you like to be a privateer?

7. Let's think! Desert Island castaway: You and your fellow students are going to be living on a desert island for six weeks. Think of five things you will take with you to help you live as castaways. Then add five things you might do on the island. Write them below. Discuss together.

| Five things you will take with you | Five things you will do on the island |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1 | 1 |
| 2 | 2 |
| 3 | 3 |
| 4 | 4 |
| 5 | 5 |

The teacher will choose some pairs to discuss their findings in front of the class.

8. Living on a desert island: Think of two advantages and disadvantages of living as a castaway on a desert island. Discuss with your partner.

The teacher will choose some pairs to discuss their findings in front of the class.

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9. Quick debate: In groups or in pairs. Student A thinks living on a desert island will be fun. Student B doesn't agree. Explain why.

10. Alexander Selkirk: Discuss briefly with your partner the article on Alexander Selkirk. Consider the following questions...

Student A

- 1) What do you think of Selkirk's exploits?
- 2) Should he have stayed on the ship?
- 3) Do you think life was hard living on the island?

Student B

- 1) Was Selkirk lucky to be rescued?
- 2) What dangers could he have encountered?
- 3) Do you think he was bored?

11. Let's talk! *In pairs.* You are at the BBC World Service on a programme called 'Desert Island Castaway'. One of you is the presenter. The other student has just returned from Robinson Crusoe Island where you have been living as a castaway for six months. Describe how you survived etc... *5-minutes.*

12. Let's do 'The Article Quiz': Have the students quiz each other in pairs. They score a point for each correct answer and half a point each time they have to look at the article for help. See who can get the highest score!

Student A

- 1) Who wrote *Robinson Crusoe*?
- 2) Name the person who was the inspiration of *Robinson Crusoe*?
- 3) What year was *Robinson Crusoe* published?
- 4) What year did the original castaway become marooned?
- 5) What year was the original castaway rescued?

Student B

- 1) Why did the castaway end up on the island?
- 2) Name the original name of the island the castaway found himself on?
- 3) How did the castaway survive?
- 4) What did he do in his leisure time?
- 5) Who was looking for the castaway's camp?

13. Let's write an e-mail: Write and send a 200 word e-mail to your teacher about: *Robinson Crusoe*. Your e-mail can be read out in class.

14. Robinson Crusoe: What is the story of *Robinson Crusoe*? In pairs briefly try to retell it. (You might need to look at the internet for this)

15. Sentence starters: Finish these sentence starters. Correct your mistakes. Compare what other people have written.

- a) Robinson Crusoe _____
- b) The island _____
- c) Alexander Selkirk _____

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DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS

Should you find yourself on a desert island;

- 1) How would you cook a meal?
- 2) What devices would you use to hunt for food?
- 3) What worries might you have?
- 4) What would happen if you decided to leave your desert island early and it wasn't possible? What would you do?
- 5) What skills might you learn from living on it?
- 6) Do you think they might send out a search party to find you?
- 7) What sort of creepy crawlies might you encounter?
- 8) What three creature comforts might you have with you?
- 9) What sort of desert island would you like to be stranded on?
- 10) What sort of weather conditions might you prefer?

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS

Should you find yourself on a desert island;

- 1) What famous person would you like to be stranded with?
- 2) Where would you get your food from?
- 3) How would you cook your food?
- 4) What modern devices might you use there?
- 5) What essentials might you need?
- 6) Who wouldn't you miss whilst stranded there?
- 7) What dangers might you face?
- 8) What three essential things would you have brought with you?
- 9) Do you think you might be lonely?
- 10) Do you think you might meet any cannibals?

SPEAKING

Castaway on a desert island

Allow 10-15 minutes – As a class / small groups / pairs / 1 to 1

You are going to be stranded on a tropical desert island for a month. You are either:
a) on your own b) the two of you c) your group

Decide how you will survive (together!) etc...

- | | |
|--|-----------------------|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) What you will eat? Where will you find this food? How will you cook?2) Where you will sleep/stay?3) What you will do all day? – sports / living / survival / other4) What will you learn?5) What you will wear?6) Problems you might encounter | add your own ideas... |
|--|-----------------------|

The teacher may select some groups to present their findings to the rest of the class.

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GAP FILL: READING

Put the words into the gaps in the text.

After nearly 300 years the mystery of the whereabouts of a campsite of a (1)_____ Scottish (2)_____ who is said to have inspired the fictional castaway Robinson Crusoe has now been solved. Archaeologists have finally found the campsite of Alexander Selkirk whose real life experiences stuck on a desert (3)_____ inspired Daniel Defoe to create his imaginary experiences in the famous (4)_____ (5)_____ *Robinson Crusoe*. In 1704 Selkirk became marooned on a small (6)_____ Argentinean island in the Pacific Ocean 470 miles west of Chile for more than four years. He was finally rescued in 1709. The island that used to be known as Aguas Buenas was renamed Robinson Crusoe Island after the character created by Defoe in his 18th Century (7)_____. During an archaeological (8)_____ on the island archaeologists discovered evidence of an early European occupant. They uncovered compelling evidence including the discovery of a pair of navigational dividers, which could only have belonged to a ship's master or navigator, which historical evidence suggests Selkirk must have been.

tropical

novel

masterpiece

sailor

dig

classic

island

marooned

The (1)_____ of the (2)_____ that rescued Selkirk, a Captain Woodes Rogers referred to some mathematical instruments in his (3)_____. Dr David Caldwell from the National Museums Scotland who helped lead the dig said, "The find finally confirmed the whereabouts of the camp. The evidence uncovered at Aguas Buenas corroborates the stories of Alexander Selkirk's stay on the island and proved a fascinating (4)_____ into his existence there." He added, "I never thought we had a chance of finding the (5)_____. The discovery of the divider was crucial." Postholes suggest he built two shelters near a freshwater stream. He had a look-out point over the (6)_____ from where he would be able to watch for approaching ships and ascertain whether they were friend or (7)_____. Accounts written shortly after his rescue describe him shooting goats with a gun rescued from the ship. Eventually he learned to outrun them, eating their meat and using their skins as clothing. He passed his time reading the (8)_____ and singing psalms.

campsite

harbour

possession

ship

foe

Bible

insight

captain

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GRAMMAR

Put the words into the gaps in the text.

(1)___ nearly 300 years the mystery of the whereabouts of a campsite of a marooned Scottish sailor who is said to have inspired the fictional castaway Robinson Crusoe has now been solved. Archaeologists have finally found the campsite of Alexander Selkirk (2)___ real life experiences stuck on a desert island inspired Daniel Defoe to create his imaginary experiences in the famous masterpiece novel *Robinson Crusoe*. In 1704 Selkirk became marooned on a small tropical Argentinean island in the Pacific Ocean 470 miles west of Chile for more than four years. He was finally rescued in 1709. The island (3)___ used to be known as Aguas Buenas was renamed Robinson Crusoe Island after the character created by Defoe in his 18th Century classic. During an archaeological dig on the island archaeologists discovered evidence of an early European occupant. (4)___ uncovered compelling evidence including the discovery of a pair of navigational dividers, (5)___ (6)___ (7)___ have belonged to a ship's master or navigator, which historical evidence suggests Selkirk must have been. The captain of the ship that rescued Selkirk, a Captain Woodes Rogers referred to (8)___ mathematical instruments in his possession.

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after

Dr David Caldwell from the National Museums Scotland (1)___ helped lead the dig said, "The find finally confirmed the whereabouts of the camp. The evidence uncovered at Aguas Buenas corroborates the stories of Alexander Selkirk's stay on the island and proved (2)___ fascinating insight into his existence there." He added, "I never thought we had a chance of finding the campsite. The discovery of the divider was crucial." Postholes suggest (3)___ built two shelters near a freshwater stream. He had a look-out point over (4)___ harbour from where he would be able to watch for approaching ships and ascertain whether they were friend (5)___ foe. Accounts written shortly after his rescue describe him shooting goats with a gun rescued from the ship. Eventually he learned to outrun them, eating their meat and using their skins (6)___ clothing. He passed his time reading the Bible and singing psalms. It appears he seemed to have enjoyed a more peaceful and devout existence than at (7)___ other time in (8)___ life.

or

who

his

a

any

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as

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SPELLING TEST

The teacher will ask the class individually to spell the following words that are in the article. Afterwards, check your answers with your teacher, using the following ratings: **Pass = 12, Good = 15, Very good = 18, Excellent = 20**

| | | | |
|----|--------------|----|----------------|
| 1 | posthole | 11 | mystery |
| 2 | navigational | 12 | divider |
| 3 | possession | 13 | seaworthiness |
| 4 | foe | 14 | occupant |
| 5 | ascertain | 15 | psalms |
| 6 | masterpiece | 16 | mathematical |
| 7 | navigator | 17 | devout |
| 8 | insight | 18 | commander |
| 9 | character | 19 | archaeological |
| 10 | overhaul | 20 | privateering |

LINKS

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robinson_Crusoe

http://www.google.co.uk/images?hl=en&q=robinson+crusoe&um=1&ie=UTF-8&source=univ&ei=seNmTL23AYXqOPG16LkF&sa=X&oi=image_result_group&ct=title&resnum=4&ved=0CD4QsAQwAw&biw=1909&bih=826

http://www.google.co.uk/#q=robinson+crusoe&hl=en&prmd=ivnb&source=univ&bs=vid:1&tbo=u&ei=seNmTL23AYXqOPG16LkF&sa=X&oi=video_result_group&ct=title&resnum=11&ved=0CEYQwQwCg&fp=a53e9ae07f1cc2a8

<http://www.deadmentellnotes.com/onlinetexts/robinson/crusoe.shtml>

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