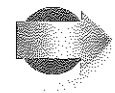


The arrival of a rugged seaman



Robert Louis Stevenson was a Scottish novelist, poet and travel writer. In his novel *Treasure Island* the main character, Jim Hawkins, describes his search for the treasure buried by a wicked pirate, Captain Flint. This extract is taken from the beginning of the story. Jim remembers the arrival of a rugged seaman, who came to lodge at his father's inn ...

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, 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 sittytated 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 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.

From *Treasure Island*
Robert Louis Stevenson (1850–1894)

Glossary

capstan a revolving barrel, used to raise or lower a ship's sails

connoisseur an expert who has wide knowledge or experience of a particular thing; a judge of quality

handspike a wooden pole or rod used as a lever, usually on board a ship

sabre a soldier's sword with a curved blade

- 1 Give two examples from the description of the seaman's appearance that suggest he had lived a rough life.

2 marks

- 2 The seaman's voice seemed to have been 'tuned and broken at the capstan bars'. What does that suggest about the age of the man when he first went to sea?

1 mark

- 3 Some words spoken by the seaman are spelt strangely. What do these words mean?

a) 'sittytated': _____

1 mark

b) 'mought': _____

1 mark

- 4 Why do you think the author spelt 'sittytated' and 'mought' the way he did?

1 mark

- 5 What does the seaman refer to as a 'grog-shop'?

1 mark

- 6 In the last paragraph, what two things does the landlord want to know about the seaman?

2 marks

- 7 What does the seaman want to eat and drink?

1 mark