

Treasure island: the journey of jim hawkins essay



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For the duration of existence, people undergo the physical and mental stages of growing up. During this phase, people establish through their dealings who they actually are in addition to what they are worth. For instance, *Treasure Island* is an adventure tale, but it is also the story of one boy's (Jim Hawkins) coming of age. On the outset of the voyage, Jim was a timid adolescent, but by the closing stages, he had matured incredibly. In his novel, *Treasure Island*, author Robert Louis Stevenson focuses primarily on the journey of main character Jim Hawkins to exemplify the process of growing up and proving oneself.

Jim Hawkins' transformation from a timid, 13-year old boy to a young man began when a sailor by the name of Billy Bones arrived at the Admiral Benbow Inn. Jim wasn't familiar with Bone's reputation at the time, although the meeting of Billy Bones did leave a memorable first impression on him. " I remember him as if it were yesterday, as he came ploddy to the Inn door, his sea chest following behind him in a hand-baron, a tall, strong, heavy, nut-brown man, his pigtail falling over the shoulders of his soiled blue coat; his hands ragged and scarred, with black, broken nails; and the sabre cut across one cheek. I remember him looking ' round the cove and whistling to himself as he did so often afterwards" (Stevenson 1). Soon after his arrival, Bones made the Inn his permanent residence for the time being.

" The story begins with the arrival of a mysterious old sailor named Bill Bones at the Admiral Benbow, a quiet seaside Inn operated by Jim's father. The old sailor establishes himself at the Inn, spending his days watching the sea and his nights singing, drinking, and telling stories in the tavern" (Howes 470). Bone's stay at the Inn was a change of pace for Jim because he hardly

knew anything of the outside world or anybody in it. Little did Bones and the Hawkins family know; trouble was soon to come. Soon after Billy Bones had settled in at the Admiral Benbow, two mysterious seamen made their way to the Inn as well.

At first, it may just have seemed like a coincidence to Jim and his family, but it was clear to see that both pirates were in search for Bones. The captain has two encounters at Admiral Benbow. One is with Black Dog, a former shipmate, in which the captain knifes Black Dog, who eventually runs away. The next encounter, which happens quickly, is with a blind shipmate, Pew.

Pew gives Bones a “black spot”, and once Pew leaves, Bones promptly dies (Stevenson 15, 26-27). It was plain to see that Bones had his enemies, and as a result, he paid the price for it. There was more to the pirates looking for Bones than just executing him. Black Dog and Pew, former pirates, arrive at the Admiral Benbow Inn in search for Billy Bones, knowing Bones stays at the Inn with Flint’s map.

Bones receives a “black spot” and soon after dies (Wright 60-61). This very same map that belonged to Flint would play a key role in inspiring Jim’s journey. After the death of Billy Bones, Jim and his mother snoop around his room and happened to find Bones’ chest. In that sea chest was debts owed to Jim’s parents and also a package containing a map. “I’ll take what I have” she said, jumping to her feet.

“And I’ll take this to square the count” said I, picking up the oil skin packet” (Stevenson 34-35). The finding of this oil skinned package enthused Jim to find out where this map led to, while staying clear of other shipmates of

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Bones in the process. " Jim and his mother search the captain's sea chest for money to settle his debts. In addition to some of the money owed to them, Jim removes an oil skin package from the chest, just managing to escape the return of the blind man and his fellow buccaneers" (Wright 61). However, it was in Jim's best interest to keep a steady watch for other shipmates like Pew and Black Dog if he was serious about finding where the oil skinned package would guide him.

Immediately after the discovery of the map, Jim knew he was destined to go and venture the open sea, even if it meant leaving behind the Inn. He thought it was in his best interest to see what Dr. Livesey thought of this matter. After Jim comes back to Admiral Benbow from staying with Dr. Livesey, he finds that Jim's mother has hired a young boy to be an apprentice in replace of Jim.

Jim finally begins to see that his adventure has forced him to forget about his previous life at the Inn. He realizes he is leaving his normal life, the Inn, and his mother (Stevenson 59-60). Jim may have got the feeling he was being replaced, but he knew that day would come soon enough. " In many respects a typical British boy of his age, Jim has lead a sheltered life at the Admiral Benbow Inn.

The arrival of BillyBones triggers his desire to explore the larger world beyond his home. Although he has grown up on the sea coast, Jim knows little of the seafaring life. His adventures constitute on initiation into adulthood, by means of which he learns survival skills and moral lessons that far eclipse the typical education of a British gentleman" (Beetz, Niemeyer

2007). Although only the age of thirteen, Jim was determined to set sail and wasn't going to let his age define who he was, until tragedy struck.

Following the death of his father, Jim took this opportunity to discover himself on the open sea. It was at this time that Jim would embark on a journey he would never forget. " I said good-bye to my mother and the cove where I had lived since I was born, and the dear old Admiral Benbow" (Stevenson 59-60). This was a crucial moment in Jim's life because he had never left home before, and up until this point; home is all he ever knew.

The death of Jim's father frees him to prove adventure and burdens him with the necessity of supporting his widowed mother (Howes 471). Although the death of one's father would deliver enormous amounts of pain, it gave Jim the freedom to become his own man. Leaving his mother by her lonesome at a time like this may not have been in Jim's best interest, but there was no other option. While at sea, Jim had numerous close calls involving mortal danger. Life on the water was a tough chore for Jim, especially when his life was at stake. Two experiences in which Jim encounters danger come in the finding of Silver's plan in the apple barrel, as well as the duel with Israel Hands.

Jim discovers Silver is planning a mutiny. Jim defeats Hands, even after being struck in the shoulder with a knife (Stevenson 216-220). Hawkins had no choice but to use stealthy actions to keep quiet while overhearing Silver's plan. Jim also faced a near death experience due to the scuffle between him and Hands. " By the end of the novel, Jim has been initiated into a brutal world of violence, murder, greed and treachery.

He has certainly matured during the course of his adventures, but whether Jim learns any lasting moral lessons, aside from his loathing of the treasure, is uncertain" (Beetz, Niemeyer 2008). Throughout the journey, Jim was faced with many grueling obstacles to obtain maturity. This wasn't the normal life of a thirteen year old boy, but Jim Hawkins made it work by using his brain more than anything. In order to overcome risky situations during the voyage, Jim used his intelligence as his weapon of choice. After Jim discovers Silver's plans for mutiny, he calmly and honestly shares Silver's plans privately with Smollet, the Squire, and the doctor.

His composure saves the trip for the loyal crew (Stevenson 97). Had Jim not been able to execute this move, he and the rest of the loyal crew members would have been taken over with the ship. One night while Hawkins climbs into a huge apple barrel to retrieve a fruit, he happens to overhear Silver talking to some of the men. It is upon this conversation that the story takes a major turn. Before this point, Silver has been painted as a reliable, intelligent, and fair minded man. But after overhearing Silver, Hawkins has a new perception of this man, who is proven to be dishonest, cunning, and possibly murderous.

Jim tells the members Silver's plans, and they travel to the island (Milne, Sisler 232). Hardly anyone, especially at such a ripe age, would have had the integrity to do such a thing, but it was clear to see that age wasn't going to stop Jim from maturing. During the journey, Hawkins also found himself spending time by his lonesome. He took it upon himself to search various islands and numerous places unaccompanied to come across as more of an adult, and to also find himself at the same time.

I now felt for the first time the joy of exploration. The isle was inhabited; my shipmates I had left behind and nothing lived in front of me but dumb brutes and fowls" (Stevenson 112). This proves Jim showed signs of growing up, not to mention he enjoyed venturing on his own. " Occasionally lonely and fearful, Jim is susceptible to be impressed by such a dashing character like Long John Silver and to impulsiveness or even foolishness, as evidence to his bragging to his pirate captors about his success in fighting Hands.

Nevertheless, Jim displays considerable bravery in such actions as stowing away with Silver's gang when they land on Treasure Island and leave the stockade alone to set the Hispanola adrift" (Howes 472). This was a bold move on Jim's part because had he been captured; Jim would have expected the worst to occur. These same daring actions were major reasons why Hawkins and his faithful crew received such a handsome reward when the journey came to a closing. Once the journey was all said and done, Jim and his loyal crew did, in fact, get a hold of the treasure they had been searching for.

It was solely each member's choice as to how their treasure would be handled. " All of us had an ample share of the treasure, and used it wisely or foolishly, according to our natures" (Stevenson 296). Unlike Long John Silver, who would, in all likelihood, spend their treasure recklessly, Jim and the other loyal crew members were bound to use their shares sensibly. " What Silver does not know is that Ben Gunn, the lone resident of the island, has already found the treasure and moved it to his headquarters.

When the pirates find no treasure, they turn on Jim and Silver, but Gunn and Jim's friends arrive in time to rescue them. The ship is floated by the tide, and Jim, his friends, and Silver leave the island. Silver jumps ship with only a bag of coins for his efforts, but the rest of the group divide the treasure" (Magill 2547). Silver showed what kind of man he was by jumping ship, while Jim once again proved that although thirteen years of age; he contained just as much wisdom as all the adults who ventured on this journey as well and those same adults provided Jim with guidance all through the voyage. As soon as the death of his father took place, Jim was on a mission to find a role model that was suitable for him. It's imperative that a boy of that age should have a father figure in his life.

Livesey", said the Squire, " you will give up this wretched practice at once. To-morrow I start for Bristol. In three weeks time - three weeks! - two weeks - ten days - we'll have the best ship, sir, and the choicest crew in England" (Stevenson 51-52). This showed the adventurous influence Squire Trelawney had on Jim. It was Trelawney who Jim came to for advice on what should be done when the finding of the oil skinned package occurred.

" Jim gave the packet to Dr. Livesey and Squire Trelawney. The three discovered that it contained a map locating the hidden treasure of the bloody buccaneer, Captain Flint. Trelawney was intrigued and decided to outfit a ship in which to sail after the treasure" (Magill 879).

In a way, Trelawney took the role of a best friend towards Jim. Still, Jim was not satisfied and needed something more. It was during the journey that

Hawkins obtained his great leadership qualities through Captain Smollett. For example, it was Smollett who made the right calls for him and his crew.

“ Well Sir” said the Captain, “ better speak plain, I believe, even at the risk of offence. I don’t like this cruise; I don’t like the men; and I don’t like my officer. That’s short and sweet” (Stevenson 71). The captain was hard-nosed and was a strong leader for his men, which rubbed off on young Jim.

“ Captain Smollet, the officer in charge of Hispanola is hardworking, and understands the power of rank, not for the power but rather the discipline. He demonstrates his intelligence and understanding of human nature by recognizing Long John Silver’s power over the pirates on his ship. He is wounded during a battle on the island, but Dr. Livesey says Smollet is patriotic and often makes great statements about his country” (Milne, Sisler 235). It was apparent that Jim was influence by Smollett because he too became a leader towards the end of Treasure Island, yet he was still missing a father figure.

Dr. Livesey was the one who played the fatherly role for Jim in the absence of his biological father while on board the Hispanola. For example, Livesey did look towards Jim as the son he never had. “ Squire” said he, “ when dance had his ale he must, of course, be off on his majesty’s service; but I mean to keep Jim Hawkins here to sleep at my house and with your permission, I propose we should have up the cold pie, and let him sup” (Stevenson 47). The Doctor appointed himself as the one to care for Jim’s father, and eventually took care of Jim as well. Dr.

Livesey, a benevolent physician who treats Jim's dying father and later he wounded mutineers. He is a paternal influence of stability, maturity, and moral responsibility for the fatherless young Jim (Howes 473). This was a prime example of how playing the roles of father and son don't necessarily have to involve being blood. It must also be the father's duty to protect his son from being manipulated by the wrong crowd.

Along with good morals, and great leadership; Jim also was influenced by rebellion. Long John Silver and his mutineers also portrayed as role models to Jim. " When! By the powers! " cried Silver. " Well now, if you want to know, I'll tell you when.

Here's a first-rate seaman, Cap'n Smollet, sails the blessed ship for us. Here's this Squire and doctor with a map and such - I don't know where it is, do I? No more do you, says you. Well, then, I mean this Squire and doctor shall find the stuff, and help us to get it aboard, by the powers" (Stevenson 90). Silver almost nearly had Hawkins fooled until Jim finally figured out what Silver really was about. Silver comes across as a model of good cheer, showing unfailing kindness to Jim...yet beneath the veneer of sociability, Silver is actually the ringleader of the pirates, ruthlessly plotting to seize the ship (Beetz, Niemeyer 2006-2007).

Jim was rarely off his guard and although, at one point, did trust Silver; he made adult decisions by not following in his footsteps. When it was all said and done, it was Jim, himself, who he looked to for guidance. At such a time in life when there needed to be a father-figure present; Jim was his own role model. Jim relies on himself throughout the novel, as seen through his trips

alone on Treasure Island. His battle with Israel Hands, and his discovery of Long John Silver's plot (Stevenson 91, 216-220, and 120-137). There were several times on the voyage where Jim relied solely on himself and at one time or another, developed a loner mentality.

Jim Hawkins is affected by the treasure hunt. At first, he is filled with romantic notions of adventure and excitement. By the time he returns, he is a lot older and wiser. He knows now that people aren't always what they seem to be, having taken Silver into his trust, only to discover he is a villain and an imposter (Wright 63). In-between the hours spent working at the Admiral Benbow Inn, to venturing the open sea and Treasure Island; Jim Hawkins became the oldest thirteen year old boy of his time.

From the beginning of Stevenson's novel towards the end, it was certain that Jim Hawkins did, in fact, mature incredibly during the journey. He reached manhood more rapidly than most thirteen year olds would due to the sudden death of his father. Additionally, Jim was involved in a few battles with mutineers, one in which left him but no choice to eliminate Israel Hands. Also, throughout the adventure, Jim was in search for the ideal role model to look up to. Whether it was Captain Smollett's leadership or Silver's risk-taking; in the end, it was Jim, himself, who showed him the way. In reality, the art of growing up can only occur from within oneself, and Jim Hawkins in Treasure Island is a prime example of this theory.

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