

# Role of fate in treasure island book

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Treasure Island by Robert Louis Stevenson: An ostentatiously ‘ boys’ adventure book, this story holds within it much greater depth than might be expected at first glance, containing a veritable treasure trove of wisdom, mostly to do with the free will and fate encountered by the characters in the book. The main focus is on Jim and his group, as well as a crew of pirates, who are all seeking treasure for their own ends and attempt to combat fate for their own gain. The attempt of the treasure-hunters to control their own destiny could not succeed while fate existed, because their destiny always overpowered their free will.

Everything has a reason for occurring, because every event is fated. This is shown most clearly by the following quote found within the later half of the text, when Jim and some of his friends are attempting to trace a path to the island with treasure. “ Even the ripples were a danger to our overloaded craft; but the worst of it was that we were swept out of our true course, and away from our proper landing-place behind the point” (112). It was fated that their boat should be swept away rather than strictly controlled- contrary to what Jim thought, they were not swept out of their ‘ true course’, but rather set upon it. The course that they meant to take was the wrong one for their fates, and so the sea forced them along the path that was fated for them. This shows that nothing happens without being fated, and there must be major reasons for all things that occur in the lives of people. The ‘ ripples’ seem kin to the ripples of destiny that stem from everyday and unusual occurrences, shifting fate slightly- even though it is impossible to change fate in a way that one can be certain of, one can still make ripples that have affects on one’s own fate. This reveals the contrast between fate and free

will; on one hand, someone has iron control over what happens to them, while on the other hand, people are set adrift on the ripples of the sea with no hope.

The fated course is by definition going to occur no matter what, making struggle against destiny futile. In this next quote, Jim is shown to give way to his fate at last, allowing it to take him where destiny wills. “ It was plain she [the coracle] was not to be interfered with, and at any rate, since I could in no way influence her course, what hope had I left of reaching land?” (153). The coracle moves with the waves and the sea, and symbolizes the fact that Jim could not struggle against his own fate and it is ‘ not to be interfered with’, as he is unable to ‘ influence her course’, which is similar to the course of destiny. Such influencing is similar to what many people in life try to do with their own lives, making changes that they hope will direct them towards greater fortune. He is hopeless, but at the same time, the coracle guides him eventually to his good fortune. Although fate cannot be changed in this story, his thoughts are his own- people are fated to reach wherever they end up, so nothing people do can change their destiny. Although this maxim may not be true in life, in the story it holds true for each character, directing them towards their fates no matter what they do. This juxtaposed opposition between attempts to change and the solid, unchangeable aspects of fate reveals a hardness of destiny that does not allow for even the most minute of changes, like a single stray wave forced from its path.

Trying to struggle against your fate will only get you closer to your eventual destiny. This is shown by Ben Gunn’s experience at the end of the book,

when after finally receiving the wealth he had been seeking, he loses it. “ As for Ben Gunn, he got a thousand pounds, which he spent or lost in three weeks, or, to be exact, in nineteen days, for he was back begging on the twentieth” (222). Benn Gunn went from poverty to riches and back to poverty; his attempt to lessen his poverty did nothing but make him go back to being poor after nineteen days. This occurred because of the futility of trying to change your own fate; he is destined to be poor, so he can do nothing to get out of it, no matter how hard he tries. And indeed he does try hard, from digging up an entire trove of treasure with limited tools and no knowledge of how to leave, to waiting the years it took until someone arrived on the remote island that could help him leave. Economic status is fated in his life even though it may not be considered ‘ fair’, and his life goes in the direction of poverty. This shows the contrast between the rich and poor of the times, revealing the helplessness of man in the face of fate.

All in all, fate is shown to be the inevitable winner of any battles within the lives of mankind in the book *Treasure Island*. Everything conspired to force things along the way of destiny, from the seas to boats and to other people as well, all working together to achieve a not-always-visible end. The hardships of their lives were changed on a whim of destiny, proving that although everything is planned, nothing can be known for certain by anyone. Fate was shown to be the ultimate victor, and the attempts of people to combat fate in the story were met solely by failure.