

## ROBINSON CRUSOE AND THE IMPERIAL THEME

Robinson Crusoe is an Englishman from York. He is the protagonist and the narrator of the story. He wishes to have an adventurous life at sea and to travel, so he sets out to a journey. Having survived a storm and after being enslaved by a Moorish pirate, he settles down in Brazil and becomes a plantation owner. Eager for slave labour, he embarks on a slave-gathering expedition to West Africa but ends up shipwrecked off the coast of Trinidad.

By learning how to carry out activities that could help him survive, he manages to create a home for himself. The only thing he misses is human contact, the voice and the presence of another person. Years after arriving on the island, he finds a footprint, which in my opinion, scares him, but at the same time gives him hope. The footprint turns out to belong to a Caribbean native and cannibal, whom Robinson calls Friday. The two of them completely change each other's lives. In Robinson's eyes Friday is just a savage who needs to be taught the modern way of life, that is The English way of life. The very fact that he gave him a new name shows that he thinks of Friday as of a newborn, a new person, whom he saved from a primitive and uncivilized way of living. He is eager to teach him everything a civilized person should know, the English language, the manners of the Western world, about the Bible and God. Robinson sees Friday as a desperate person who needs to be saved from the way of life he led before he met him. In his desperate attempt to civilize Friday he does not realize that he is not "uncivilized".

At the very beginning of his life with Friday, Robinson puts himself, his language and in this way also his culture above Friday's. The fact that the first word Friday learned in English was "master", speaks for itself: "I likewise taught him to say "Master, and then let him know that was to be my name". Robinson Crusoe stands for a whole nation, which started conquering new places and subduing people all over the world. He stands for an idea that everything that was not European or Western was savage; that everyone who did not believe in their God was a heretic and that all those non-believers had to be enlightened by them. On the other hand, Friday represents the subdued nations, the people who suffered under the threat of being taken away from their homes in order to be turned into someone's slaves. Robinson Crusoe insists on continuing his religious devotions during his long exile and makes frequent references to a Christian God who determines human destiny and indeed daily life. Robinson Crusoe is very much a product of his society. His brand of Christianity was typical for a man of his class.

It is ironic is that, even though a religious person who judges other people's actions, Robinson never had second thoughts about "owning" another person. This raises a further question: Robinson's religion and his God, who says that it is a sin to be a cannibal, but to have people working hard for you without paying them, is acceptable. Robinson should not be seen as a bad person, because he never did any harm to Friday, at least not physically. I would say that he was blinded by the society he grew up in and that he himself did not understand good and evil thoroughly. He found Friday was a primitive savage, but you may think Robinson to be the primitive one. In many ways Crusoe appears to be the same person at the end of the novel as he was at the beginning. Despite decades of solitude, exile and wars with cannibals, Crusoe hardly seems to have grown or developed. Crusoe's story can be seen as an allegory of colonialism. Friday's subjugation to Crusoe reflects colonial race relations, especially in Crusoe's unquestioning belief that he is helping Friday by making him a servant. At the end of this story, Robinson Crusoe refers to himself as a king.

This may made one like the character of Robinson even less, because as one is approaching the end of the novel one may hope he would become more a friend to Friday than a master. The story can be read as a fable of survival in praise of the human spirit, or as an example of how the new society brought its values, religion and selfish behaviour to any place it colonized. It is a story not just about man finding himself on an deserted island, but about a whole way of living, about the idea of white men and their culture being superior to every other race, religion and society.

Adapted from <<https://freebooksummary.com/robinson-crusoe-and-the-imperial-theme-66636>>

