
Growth And Treasure: Ways To Show The Growth Of The Main Character

Everyone has always fantasized about adventures that can be found in coming-of-age novels, such as *Treasure Island*. The author of *Treasure Island*, Robert Louis Stevenson, wrote the novel after a treasure map he drew while on vacation and dedicated it to his stepson, a vivid reader with an extensive imagination. In the novel *Treasure Island*, Robert Louis Stevenson develops the character of Jim Hawkins through a universal coming-of-age story, picturesque imagery, and foreshadowing.

A coming-of-age story typically focuses on the personal growth of the main character from youth to adulthood. It also uses emotional responses, dialogue, and morals to show change in the character. In this case, Jim, a boy who worked in his parents' inn at the beginning of the novel, becomes a man through multiple instances at the end of the novel. One instance is the fact that Jim is "somewhat naive, trusting other people's interpretations rather than his own" and an example of this is when Jim "recognizes a pirate in Long John Silver's inn, and he believes Silver when he says he has no idea who the man is" (Stevenson). Jim tends to believe everything that people tell him, but at the end of the novel, he speaks his mind and trusts his instincts. Another of these instances is when Jim first meets Pew, a blind old man who was a former pirate. Pew acts friendly towards Jim and when Jim tries to help him, Pew grabs Jim's hand and "gripped it in a moment like a vise" (Stevenson 28). Pew then tells Jim to take him to Billy Bones and wrenches Jim's arm to make him comply. According to Jim's reactions, he is initially surprised and then scared of Pew more than he was scared of Billy Bones. After this encounter and Bones' death, Jim takes his mother and tries to escape the gang of pirates after them. This shows maturity in Jim for stepping up and taking care of his mother. Another incident is when after Jim departs on the journey, he gets stuck in an apple barrel and unintentionally spies on Long John Silver talking with members of the crew about mutinying and getting the treasure for themselves. Jim realizes that the good-natured sea cook was just a facade for Long John Silver and ends up finding out the difference between right and wrong. Jim also begins to take steps to mature as he tells Dr. Livesey, Captain Smollett, and Squire Trelawney instead of hiding away and not telling anyone. This shows an increase in confidence and an ability to handle himself in any situation. Later on, after the expedition arrives at the island, Jim witnesses Long John Silver murdering a loyal crew member in cold blood. This is the first time he's seen anyone murdered and it leaves a lasting impact on him as he himself kills another man while trying to take the ship back. He receives a "superficial cut, but with it, Hawkins faces his own mortality" (*Treasure Island* 236). Jim faces the fact that he could die at any time, and becomes more cautious, especially after he is captured by the pirates. He does attempt to escape but keeps his word to Long John Silver that he wouldn't run away. Long John Silver later praises Jim for his honor and agrees to help him with the rest of the mutineers. Dr. Livesey, Jim's older brother or father-like figure, also displays honor as he tends to the wounded pirates even after they have tried to kill him. Stevenson depicts the pirates as classic stereotypes: drunk, ferocious, treasure-hungry, and barbaric. Pirates don't typically uphold honor, except for when among thieves. The vivid descriptions of these characters invoke imagery in the reader's mind.

Imagery is paramount to Stevenson establishing the sense of adventure and awe typically found in adventure novels. Stevenson describes the setting in such detail to incite certain images in

the reader's mind such as the island has such a unique shape with harbors and hills with lush jungle among them and the characters, most prominently the pirates, as drunk, bumbling, fearsome, and extremely superstitious. Jim's description of Pew at the beginning of the novel, that Pew was "plainly blind, for he tapped before him with a stick, and wore a great green shade over his eyes and nose; and he was hunched, ... , that made him appear positively deformed.", is a prime example of vivid imagery that Stevenson uses to project Pew's image into the minds of young and old readers alike (Stevenson 28). This imagery allows the imagination of young children to make them feel a part of the adventure while not alienating adult readers. Children may share in the superstitions of pirates as they read along and can feel the suspense rising up after tension-filled scenes such as Jim boarding the *Hispanola* by himself and declaring himself captain or when the mutineers find a skeleton neatly arranged to point in the direction of the treasure. They will jump when the voice of Ben Gunn rings out and causes the pirates to panic, thinking it was the infamous Captain Flint, the original owner of the treasure, haunting the island. The description of Ben Gunn, provided by Jim, states that "from trunk to trunk the creature flitted like a deer, running manlike on two legs, but unlike any man that I had ever seen, stooping almost double as it ran. Yet a man it was, I could no longer be in doubt about that" (Stevenson 100). The imagery of this scene is very detailed, including Jim's thoughts as he confronts this creature before interacting with him, learning his name, and recruiting him to help fight the mutineers. Long John Silver is described as a cunning and opportunistic pirate who was quartermaster under the notorious Captain Flint. Stevenson's portrayal of Silver has greatly influenced the modern image of the pirate, with a wooden leg and a parrot on his shoulder. Silver's parrot, named Captain Flint, sits on Silver's shoulder, and chatters pirate phrases like 'Pieces of Eight', and 'Stand by to go about'. Silver uses the parrot as a means of gaining Jim's trust, by telling the boy exciting stories about the parrot's history. "Now that bird," Silver would say, "is, maybe, two hundred years old, Hawkins... She's been to Madagascar, Malabar, Surinam, Providence, Portobello and was at the boarding of the Viceroy of the Indies out of Goa" (Stevenson 73) This displays the imagery of Captain Flint, leaving the reader wondering what the parrot has gone through on its travels and with Long John Silver, conjuring up an image in the readers' mind. Silver also served in the Royal Navy and lost his leg under 'the immortal Hawke' (Stevenson 73). "[Silver's] left leg was cut off close by the hip, and under the left shoulder, he carried a crutch, ... , hopping about upon it like a bird. He was very tall and strong, with a face as big as a ham but intelligent and smiling." Like many of Stevenson's characters, there is a duality to Silver; Silver is a hardworking and likable man, and it is only as the story unfolds that his twisted nature is revealed. The duality and descriptions of Stevenson's characters leave the reader with a clear picture of the different archetypes present in the story. The pirates are seen as lazy, drunkards, and evil and the honest men are seen as noble. This leads to a sort of foreshadowing where the outcome can be shown as a classic fight between good and evil.

Foreshadowing is the author's use of giving hints for events that occur later in the plot. Stevenson uses foreshadowing heavily in *Treasure Island* to create the suspense and thrilling nature of the novel. For example, during the beginning of the voyage Captain Smollett states that "[he doesn't] like this cruise;... the men; and [he doesn't] like [his] officer" (Stevenson 64). Stevenson is using Smollett's sixth sense of leading a voyage to foreshadow the mutiny of Silver's undercover Pirate crew. Another instance of foreshadowing occurs after Jim overhears the conversation between Silver and his men about mutinying, Jim realizes that 'the lives of all the honest men aboard depended upon [him] alone' (Stevenson 99). Here Stevenson foreshadows the importance of Jim's role in later events of the story. This also foreshadows Silver's dark intentions for the 'good guys' on board the *Hispaniola* once they reach the island.

After eavesdropping on Silver and his crew Jim explained his being in danger was a miracle 'for if it had not been for that, [the 'good guys'] should have had no note of warning and might all have perished by the hand of treachery' (Stevenson 97-8). Jim is foreshadowing the mutiny that takes place on the island and Silver's plan to kill them all after they reach the treasure. Without Jim being in the barrel, they would have never known and would have been killed. When describing the circumstances that led to Billy Bones to stay in Jim's father's inn, Jim foreshadows Bill's death as "the annoyance and the terror [Bill] lived in must have greatly hastened his early and unhappy death" (Stevenson 15). This foreshadows Billy Bone's death, the audience immediately understands that the pirate characters of the story aren't going to continue long in the story's progression. These hints from the narrator keep the audience involved and build the suspenseful tone of the novel. Billy Bones' death is foreshadowed when he receives a piece of paper with the black spot and he states, "Ten o'clock! Six hours. We'll do them yet", referring to the amount of time that Bones has and what he is planning to do to his enemies (Stevenson 30). Billy Bones dies instantly from a stroke after being panicked by the note. When assessing their situation of taking on the journey to Treasure Island Doctor Livesey states that they "are not the only men who know of this paper. These fellows who attacked the inn tonight— bold, desperate blades, for sure—and the rest who stayed aboard that lugger, and more, I dare say, not far off" (Stevenson 48). Doctor Livesey's words foreshadow the mutiny that occurs further on in the novel by his assumption that more pirates will be after them for Flint's treasure. There is some foreshadowing with Ben Gunn, as he tells Jim his story about being marooned on the island for three years, he says "And, Jim I'm rich"(Stevenson 105). Jim just blows him off because he thinks Ben is crazy, but this is foreshadowing for a major turning point in the end. Jim is captured by the pirates and made to join along in the pirates' trip to find the treasure but when they arrive, they find out that it has already been dug up. But they don't know who dug it up, but the reader can infer that it was Ben Gunn before the novel tells you that he dug it up. Foreshadowing is useful for the author to drop hints in the story that children would most likely pass over, but older readers will catch it.

Coming of age, imagery, and foreshadowing are some of the many literary elements that are present in *Treasure Island*. Coming of age is shown when Jim Hawkins goes on a once-in-a-lifetime journey and meets many people along the way with lessons to teach him. Imagery shows the reader the world and the people around him and how they interact. Finally, foreshadowing is demonstrated when Jim overhears the conversation that Long John Silver was having with some of the crew that will eventually have a mutiny on the island. *Treasure Island* is a story filled with imagination for all ages and is easy to pick up and to be entertained.