

Discussion Questions for “Treasure Island” by Robert Louis Stephenson

December 18, 2021

1. Jim is probably around 12 or 13 years of age, a naive and impetuous boy. How does he change during the novel to achieve a level of maturity and perspective? Can you find some examples of how he vacillates between the worlds of childhood and adulthood?
2. Jim Hawkins is the narrator for 31 out of 34 chapters. Why might Stephenson have decided to switch perspectives for these three chapters? How different might the story have been if Jim were the only narrator?
3. With the exception of Jim's mother, who doesn't even get a name, there are no women at all in this novel. Why not? How might *Treasure Island* be different if Jim Hawkins were Jane Hawkins?
4. Many readers have considered Long John Silver “Treasure Island’s” most compelling character. What do you think? Is he thoroughly evil, a stock villain, or more complex? Does he possess any semblance of nobility? Why do you think Stephenson leaves Long John Silver's background and origins a mystery?
5. Both Captain Smollett and Long John Silver lead teams of men. How do their leadership abilities differ from one another? What do their styles suggest about their characters?
6. Jim sees Dr. Livesey as a good man...but not a grand one. Why? How do you see Livesey?
7. Role models are a central theme of the novel. Who do you think is the best example for Jim and who is Jim the most drawn to (Dr. Livesey, Squire Trelawney, Long John Silver, etc.)?
8. Is Ben Gunn stand a cautionary example of someone too long separated from society's civilizing influences?
9. What are is the symbolic significance of flags to the story?
10. Some consider *Treasure Island* a book about unfettered desire. How does greed motivate the different characters and how does *finding* the treasure affect them? At the end of the book, why do the gold coins evoke nightmares rather than pleasurable dreams for Jim? Why does Jim have no desire to return for the silver that was left behind?
11. Why did Stephenson reveal the characters' religious views near the end of the adventure?
12. The ending of *Treasure Island* is intentionally ambiguous without a clear answer on where Long John Silver went. What do you think of Jim's moral reasoning on Silver's escape? Are you glad that Silver gets away with a bag of cash? How might the tone of the novel be different if Silver hadn't escaped punishment?

Sources:

<https://www.litlovers.com/reading-guides/fiction/9285-treasure-island-stevenson?start=3>

<https://www.shmoop.com/treasure-island-book/questions.html>