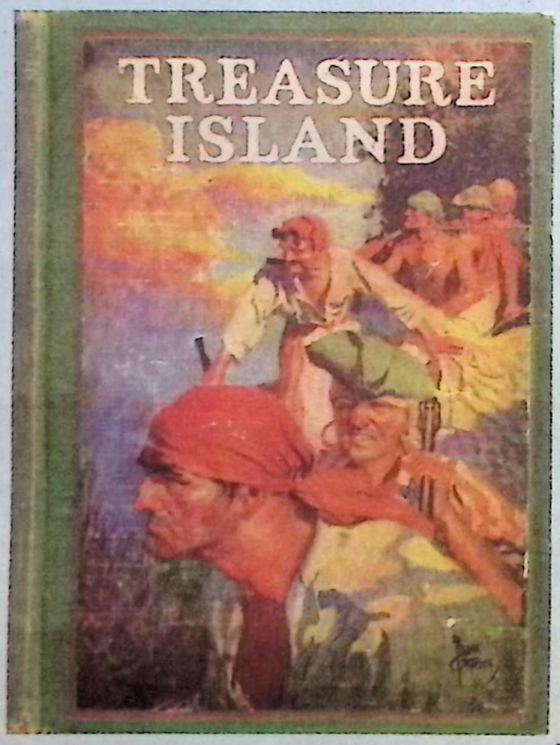
Treasure Island

Robert Louis Stevenson

It is said that once the eminent writer Robert L. Stevenson had been ringing for the porter in a hotel for quite a long time, but to no response. Exasperated and angry beyond measure, the writer walked out to get hold of the porter himself. Just as Stevenson was about to chastise the man, though, he saw the book the porter was so engrossed in that he forgot his duties. Smiling, the writer withdrew, saying, "I won't bother you. I enjoyed writing it just as much."



What book are we talking about here? It is none other than the classic adolescent adventure "Treasure Island", the yardstick against which all subsequent work for adolescent has been measured. Often the first book to be read by a kid in his early years, Treasure Island can also boast of being the one book that may have enchanted more minds into the realm of reading than several other books combined. I sometimes wonder how many others like me got into the habit of reading simply to find one more book as fun as this one, and then got completely hooked in the process.

First published in 1883, Treasure Island talks of dangerous pirates, buried gold and an almost rite of initiation for the young protagonist as he comes of age during the span of the story. The tale starts with the arrival of a mysterious captain in the seaside inn managed by parents of the young Jim Hawkins. Jim's father soon dies, and within the next few days the captain also dies of a stroke, but not before being approached by a blind pirate. Jim and his mother find a map in the dead captain's chest, and what follow soon are a treasure hunt and a race against the pirates.

Treasure Island was the first successful novel by Stevenson, written when he was 30 years old. The idea of the story was planted in his head while assisting his son in drawing an imaginary map one lazy afternoon. Within three days of working on the map, Stevenson had completed the first three chapters and elicited suggestions from his family. Although he had never encountered any pirates in his life, the writer's descriptions of sea life seem very convincing. Stevenson was paid 100 pounds for the book. In later years, more than 50 movie and TV versions have been adapted based on the novel.