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| English Reading Assessment |

Practice Test – *Treasure Island*

Name:

Teacher:

This extract is from the opening of the novel *Treasure Island* by R. L. Stevenson.

The story is about a young boy, Jim Hawkins, who gets caught up with pirates in their search for treasure.

In this extract, Jim meets a pirate, Billy Bones, who is hiding from other pirates.

An Extract from *Treasure Island* by R. L. Stevenson

Read Part 1.

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| I remember him [Billy Bones] as if it were yesterday, as he came plodding to the inn door, his sea-chest following behind him in a **hand-barrow**—a tall, strong, heavy, nut-brown man, his **tarry** pigtail falling over the shoulder of his soiled blue coat, his hands ragged and scarred, with black, broken nails, and the sabre cut across one cheek, a dirty, livid white. I remember him looking round the **cove** and whistling to himself as he did so, and then breaking out in that old sea-song that he sang so often afterwards:  *‘Fifteen men on the dead man’s chest— Yo-ho-ho, and a bottle of rum!’* | 1. |
| in the high, old tottering voice that seemed to have been tuned and broken at the capstan bars. Then he rapped on the door with a bit of stick like a handspike that he carried, and when my father appeared, called roughly for a glass of rum. This, when it was brought to him, he drank slowly, like a connoisseur, lingering on the taste and still looking about him at the cliffs and up at our signboard. |  |
| ‘This is a handy cove,’ says he at length; ‘and a pleasant sittyated grog-shop. Much company, mate?’ | 2. |
| My father told him no, very little company, the more was the pity. | 3. |
| ‘Well, then,’ said he, ‘this is the berth for me. Here you, matey,’ he cried to the man who trundled the barrow; ‘bring up alongside and help up my chest. I’ll stay here a bit,’ he continued. ‘I’m a plain man; rum and bacon and eggs is what I want, and that head up there for to watch ships off. What you mought call me? You mought call me captain. Oh, I see what you’re at—there’; and he threw down three or four gold pieces on the **threshold**. ‘You can tell me when I’ve worked through that,’ says he, looking as fierce as a commander. | 4. |
| And indeed bad as his clothes were and coarsely as he spoke, he had none of the appearance of a man who sailed before the mast, but seemed like a mate or **skipper** accustomed to be obeyed or to strike. The man who came with the barrow told us the mail had set him down the morning before at the Royal George, that he had inquired what inns there were along the coast, and hearing ours well spoken of, I suppose, and described as lonely, had chosen it from the others for his place of residence. And that was all we could learn of our guest. | 5. |
| He was a very silent man by custom. All day he hung round the cove or upon the cliffs with a brass telescope; all evening he sat in a corner of the parlour next the fire and drank rum and water very strong. Mostly he would not speak when spoken to, only look up sudden and fierce and blow through his nose like a fog-horn; and we and the people who came about our house soon learned to let him be. Every day when he came back from his stroll he would ask if any seafaring men had gone by along the road. At first we thought it was the want of company of his own kind that made him ask this question, but at last we began to see he was desirous to avoid them. When a seaman did put up at the Admiral Benbow (as now and then some did, making by the coast road for Bristol) he would look in at him through the curtained door before he entered the parlour; and he was always sure to be as silent as a mouse when any such was present. For me, at least, there was no secret about the matter, for I was, in a way, a sharer in his alarms. He had taken me aside one day and promised me a silver fourpenny on the first of every month if I would only keep my ‘weather-eye open for a sea-faring man with one leg’ and let him know the moment he appeared. Often enough when the first of the month came round and I applied to him for my wage, he would only blow through his nose at me and stare me down, but before the week was out he was sure to think better of it, bring me my fourpenny piece, and repeat his orders to look out for ‘the seafaring man with one leg’. | 6. |

***Glossary***

**hand-barrow** wheelbarrow

**tarry** looks a bit like tar

**cove** a small sheltered bay

**threshold** entrance

**skipper** a captain of a ship

Now answer the questions on the next page.

**[1]** Find three quotations that show us something about Billy Bone’s appearance. [Paragraph 1]

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2 ........................................................................................................................................

3 ........................................................................................................................................

**[2]**  Find a clue that suggests that the man is a pirate.

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**[3]** What does the word ‘lingering’ mean in the following sentence?

This, when it was brought to him, he drank slowly, like a connoisseur, **lingering** on the taste and still looking about him at the cliffs and up at our signboard.

It means............................................................................................................................

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**[4]**  What can we infer from the phrase highlighted in Billy Bone’s speech?

I’m **a plain man**; rum and bacon and eggs is what I want, and that head up there for to watch ships off.

We can infer that ...............................................................................................................

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**[5]**  What clue does the writer give that Billy Bones is a good man, even though he is occasionally rude to people? ...........................................................................................................................................

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**[6]**  How does the writer create a sense that Billy Bones is a scared man? You can refer to quotations or techniques in your answer.

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Read Part 2.

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| How that personage haunted my dreams, I need scarcely tell you. On stormy nights, when the wind shook the four corners of the house and the surf roared along the cove and up the cliffs, I would see him in a thousand forms, and with a thousand **diabolical** expressions. Now the leg would be cut off at the knee, now at the hip; now he was a monstrous kind of a creature who had never had but the one leg, and that in the middle of his body. To see him leap and run and pursue me over hedge and ditch was the worst of nightmares. And altogether I paid pretty dear for my monthly fourpenny piece, in the shape of these abominable fancies. | 1. |
| But though I was so terrified by the idea of the seafaring man with one leg, I was far less afraid of the captain himself than anybody else who knew him. There were nights when he took a deal more rum and water than his head would carry; and then he would sometimes sit and sing his wicked, old, wild sea-songs, minding nobody; but sometimes he would call for glasses round and force all the trembling company to listen to his stories or bear a chorus to his singing. Often I have heard the house shaking with ‘Yo-ho-ho, and a bottle of rum’, all the neighbours joining in for dear life, with the fear of death upon them, and each singing louder than the other to avoid remark. For in these fits he was the most overriding companion ever known; he would slap his hand on the table for silence all round; he would fly up in a passion of anger at a question, or sometimes because none was put, and so he judged the company was not following his story. Nor would he allow anyone to leave the inn till he had drunk himself sleepy and reeled off to bed. | 2. |
| His stories were what frightened people worst of all. Dreadful stories they were—about hanging, and walking the plank, and storms at sea, and the Dry Tortugas, and wild deeds and places on the Spanish Main. By his own account he must have lived his life among some of the wickedest men that God ever allowed upon the sea, and the language in which he told these stories shocked our plain country people almost as much as the crimes that he described. My father was always saying the inn would be ruined, for people would soon cease coming there to be tyrannized over and put down, and sent shivering to their beds; but I really believe his presence did us good. People were frightened at the time, but on looking back they rather liked it; it was a fine excitement in a quiet country life, and there was even a party of the younger men who pretended to admire him, calling him a ‘true sea-dog’ and a ‘real old salt’ and such like names, and saying there was the sort of man that made England terrible at sea. | 3. |
| In one way, indeed, he **bade fair** to ruin us, for he kept on staying week after week, and at last month after month, so that all the money had been long exhausted, and still my father never plucked up the heart to insist on having more. If ever he mentioned it, the captain blew through his nose so loudly that you might say he roared, and stared my poor father out of the room. I have seen him wringing his hands after such a **rebuff**, and I am sure the annoyance and the terror he lived in must have greatly hastened his early and unhappy death. | 4. |
| All the time he lived with us the captain made no change whatever in his dress but to buy some stockings from a **hawker**. One of the cocks of his hat having fallen down, he let it hang from that day forth, though it was a great annoyance when it blew. I remember the appearance of his coat, which he patched himself upstairs in his room, and which, before the end, was nothing but patches. He never wrote or received a letter, and he never spoke with any but the neighbours, and with these, for the most part, only when drunk on rum. The great sea-chest none of us had ever seen open. | 5. |

***Glossary***

**diabolical** evil

**bade fair** seemedlikely

**rebuff** refusal

**hawker** a person who moves from place to place selling goods

Now answer the questions on the next page.

**[7]** Find three phrases from the first paragraph which show that Jim is scared or worried about the man with one leg.

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**[8]** Why do you think Billy Bones would not let people leave the inn? Offer two possible reasons for this.

Nor would he allow anyone to leave the inn till he had drunk himself sleepy and reeled off to bed.

1 ........................................................................................................................................

2 ........................................................................................................................................

**[9]** What does the word ‘cease’ mean in the following line?

My father was always saying the inn would be ruined, for people would soon **cease** coming there to be tyrannized over and put down, and sent shivering to their beds.

It means...........................................................................................................................

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**[10]** Find three phrases that show how Billy Bones was liked by other people and not just Jim.

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2 ........................................................................................................................................

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**[11]** Who do you think has an ‘unhappy death’? [Paragraph 4]

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**[12]** What two clues, in this section, does the writer give us that something bad is going to happen next in the story?

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**Looking at both extracts, find an example of each of the following techniques used by the writer.**

**[13]**  simile .................................................................................................................................

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**[14]**  weather imagery ...............................................................................................................

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**[15]** colours ..............................................................................................................................

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**[16]** sound effects .....................................................................................................................

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**[17]** A teacher read both extracts and said the following:

‘I really like the character of Billy Bones. He’s such a mystery and I like how the writer builds up the mystery around the character.’

Pick one of the statements and explain why you agree or disagree with the teacher.

**Tick the statement you agree or disagree with.**

I really like the character.

He’s such a mystery.

I like how the writer builds up the mystery around the character.

**Why do you agree / disagree?**

Explain why you agree or disagree with the statement. In your answer, refer to one technique used / one choice made by the writer.

I agree / disagree because...............................................................................................

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