



Robinson Crusoe

Daniel DeFoe (1660 - 1731)

Read by:	Mark F. Smith	Format:	MP3 CD in DVD case
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Robinson Crusoe by Daniel Defoe appeared in April, 1719 and was the first novel to appear in English. It is a fictional autobiography that tells the story of an English plantation owner in Brazil who is shipwrecked in a storm off the coast of South America near the Orinoco River and marooned on an island for 28 years. He manages to salvage tools and supplies sufficient to build a dwelling and slowly becomes religious as he reads the Bible. He encounters native cannibals that visit the island for sacrificial rituals and manages to free and adopt one of the captives as a companion, dubbed Friday for the day of the week of the event. He and Friday eventually defeat the natives, and Crusoe returns to England by way of Portugal and Spain.

Robinson Crusoe was based in part on a memoir by Alexander Selkirk, a Scottish seaman who had been marooned for a number of years. The first edition named Robinson Crusoe as its author, which led readers to believe it was a true story. Defoe used the plot as a framework and added fantastic and humorous events that give the story much of its appeal. Told in a straightforward journalistic style laced with wit and irony, it dug deep into the mind of the character, which was highly original at the time. The book became an instant hit, going through four editions in the first year, and has remained a bestseller ever since, and has become one of the most widely published books in history, spawning numerous sequels and adaptations for stage, film, and television.

Daniel Defoe (1660 – 1731) was an English novelist, journalist and spy known for his wit and keen sense of irony. Prolific and versatile, he wrote more than 500 books, pamphlets and journals on various topics and was a pioneer of economic journalism. Born Daniel Foe in London of Presbyterian Dissenter parents, he was educated at Dissenting Academy. Forsaking the ministry, he first became a merchant dealing in various goods, married, fathered a family, and had a variety of colorful experiences before beginning to publish in the early 1700's. He added "de" to his surname to give it an aristocratic flourish.

In 1703 he was convicted of seditious libel for his pamphlet "The Shortest Way With Dissenters", which comically argued for the extermination of all dissenters from the Church of England. He secured his release by becoming a spy for the Crown. He established his periodical *The Review* in 1704, at first publishing political propaganda but soon including articles on religion, fashion, society and the arts, publishing three times a week until 1713. Addison and Steele cited *The Review* as an influence for the *Tatler* and *Spectator* decades later. He turned to fiction in 1719 with *Robinson Crusoe*, the bestseller and masterpiece which put him at the top of the literary world. He wrote several more novels, including the two more classics written in 1722, *Moll Flanders* and *A Journal of the Plague Year*. After *Roxane* in 1724 he returned to writing essays and journalism until his death 1731.