CAPITOLO

6

Defoe and the Rise of the Novel

"I was born in the year 1632, in the city of York, of a good family, though not of that country, my father being a foreigner of Bremen, who settled first at Hull." — Daniel Defoe, Robinson Crusoe (1719), opening sentence

OBIETTIVI

1. I can explain how trade, empire, religion and print shaped English society and its readers between 1660 and 1730.
2. I can define the novel, realism and the first-person narrator, and describe Defoe's life and his main novels.
3. I can read and analyse three passages by Defoe and compare his account of the plague with Manzoni's and with Thucydides', the first great plague writer.
4. I can use *it*-clefts, *wh*-clefts, *all*-clefts, emphatic *do* and fronting to give emphasis.
5. I can retell a story from another point of view and write a commentary on a prose extract.

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English 4 · Parte II · Reason and Satire · versione 1.0
Capitolo 6: Defoe and the Rise of the Novel · pagine 201–232 del volume completo · estratto per lo studio

In 1719 a London bookseller published the memoirs of a sailor from York who had lived for twenty-eight years alone on an island off the coast of South America. The title page did not name an author: the book was “Written by Himself”. Readers bought it at once, and they have never stopped. Its real author was Daniel Defoe, a merchant, journalist and political agent nearly sixty years old, and his invented sailor, Robinson Crusoe, became one of the most famous characters in the world.

This chapter asks why a new kind of book — long, in prose, about ordinary people in a world that looks like ours — appeared in England in these years. You will study the trade and the readers that made it possible, and read three passages by Defoe: Crusoe’s balance sheet of his misfortunes, the footprint in the sand, and a street in London during the plague. In Language you learn to build cleft sentences, the structures English uses to put one idea in the spotlight; in Skills the Link Reading Club tries to survive a weekend “like Crusoe”, and you learn to write a commentary on a prose extract.

6.1 History and Society: Trade, Empire and Readers

Daniel Defoe was born in London around 1660, the year Charles II came back to the throne, and he died in 1731, under George II. His life (Figura 6.1) runs across the whole period of this part of the book: the Restoration, the Plague and the Fire (chapter 4), the Glorious Revolution, the Union with Scotland, the coffee houses and the South Sea Bubble (chapter 5). This section looks at three changes in English society in those years that help to explain his novels: the growth of trade, the growth of empire and the growth of a reading public.

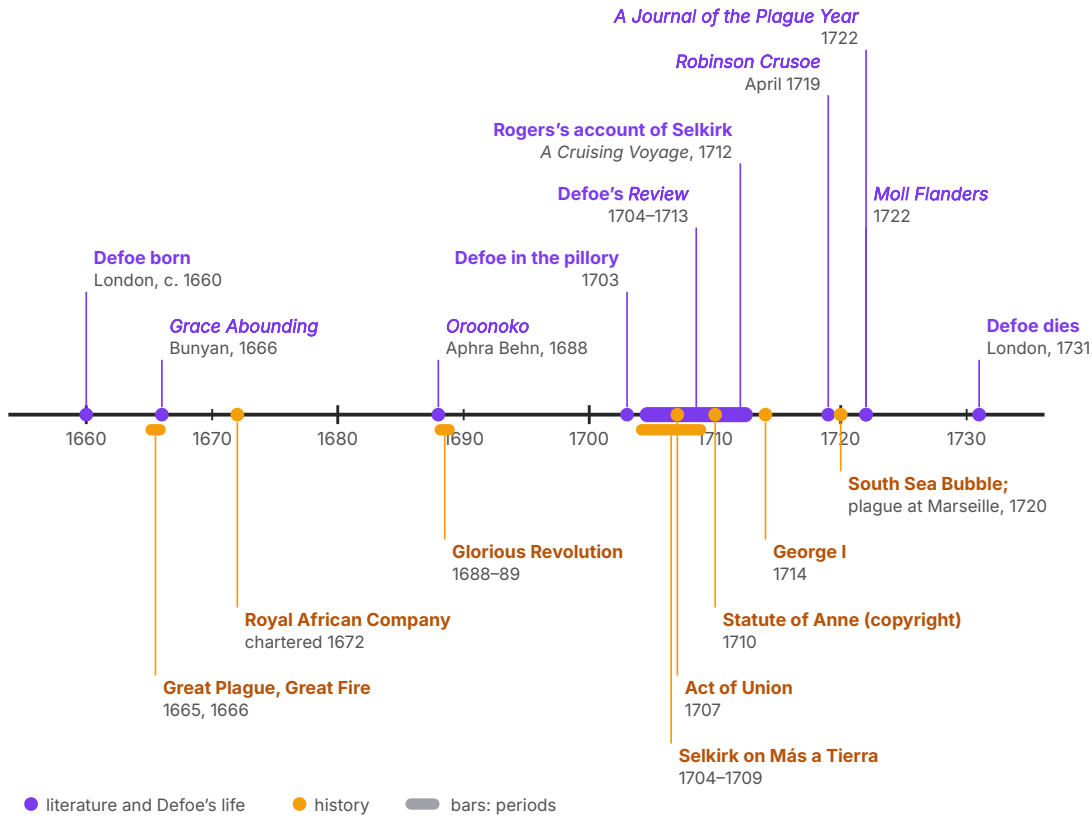


Figura 6.1 Defoe's world, 1660–1731: a proportional timeline (ticks every 10 years). Violet: literature and Defoe's life; amber: history. Bars show periods, dots single events. Defoe's exact date of birth is unknown.

6.1.1 A nation of traders

After 1660 England grew richer, and the new wealth came above all from trade: the port of London handled goods from every continent. Between the landed aristocracy and the labouring poor stood a large and growing middle group of merchants, shopkeepers, master craftsmen, clerks and professional men. Contemporaries called them the **middling sort**: people who lived by trade and by their own work, who kept accounts, and who expected to rise in the world through effort and good management. Defoe himself was one of them. He traded in stockings, wine and tobacco, went bankrupt in 1692, recovered, and later wrote a whole book of advice, *The Complete English Tradesman* (1725–1727).

The middling sort also had its own religion. Many tradesmen were **Dissenters**, Protestants who refused to join the Church of England after 1662; Defoe's family were Presbyterians, and as a Dissenter he could not attend Oxford or Cambridge, so he studied at a Dissenting academy at Newington Green, near London. The Puritan tradition you met in chapter 3 left these families a

set of habits that matter for the novel. They examined their own lives in writing, in diaries and in the **spiritual autobiography**, the story of a soul's journey from sin to conversion told by the person who lived it; John Bunyan's *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* (1666) is the best-known example. They also looked for **providence**, the hand of God guiding events, in every accident of ordinary life: a storm, an illness, an unexpected rescue.

6.1.2 Ships, sugar and slaves

The new wealth depended on an Atlantic economy. English colonies in the Caribbean, such as Barbados and Jamaica, grew sugar; Virginia and Maryland grew tobacco. The Navigation Acts (from 1651 and 1660) required these goods to travel in English ships, so ports such as London, Bristol and Liverpool grew rich on carrying them. The work on the plantations was done more and more by enslaved Africans. In 1672 the Royal African Company received a royal charter and a monopoly of the English trade with West Africa; after 1698 other merchants could join the trade, and the number of people carried across the Atlantic in English ships grew rapidly. Chapter 9 tells this history in full, and the campaign that ended the British slave trade in 1807. Here it is enough to see that the slave trade was not at the edges of this economy but at its centre — and that it is at the centre of *Robinson Crusoe* too: Crusoe owns a plantation in Brazil, and he is shipwrecked on a voyage to buy slaves in Africa.

Ships also carried stories, and travel books sold well. One of these stories belonged to **Alexander Selkirk** (1676–1721), a Scottish sailor from Lower Largo in Fife. In 1704, during a privateering voyage in the Pacific, he quarrelled with his captain about the state of their ship, the *Cinque Ports*, and asked to be put ashore on Más a Tierra, an uninhabited island of the Juan Fernández group, about 670 km off the coast of Chile (Figura 6.2). The ship later sank; Selkirk survived. He hunted wild goats, ate turnips and the shoots of palms, read his Bible, dressed in goatskins when his clothes wore out and tamed cats to keep away the rats. In February 1709 he was rescued by Captain Woodes Rogers, who described the "Man cloth'd in Goat-Skins" in his book *A Cruising Voyage Round the World* (1712); the essayist Richard Steele told his story again in *The Englishman* in 1713. Selkirk was one source of *Robinson Crusoe*, but not the only one, and there is no evidence that Defoe ever met him. Since 1966 Más a Tierra has been officially called Robinson Crusoe Island.

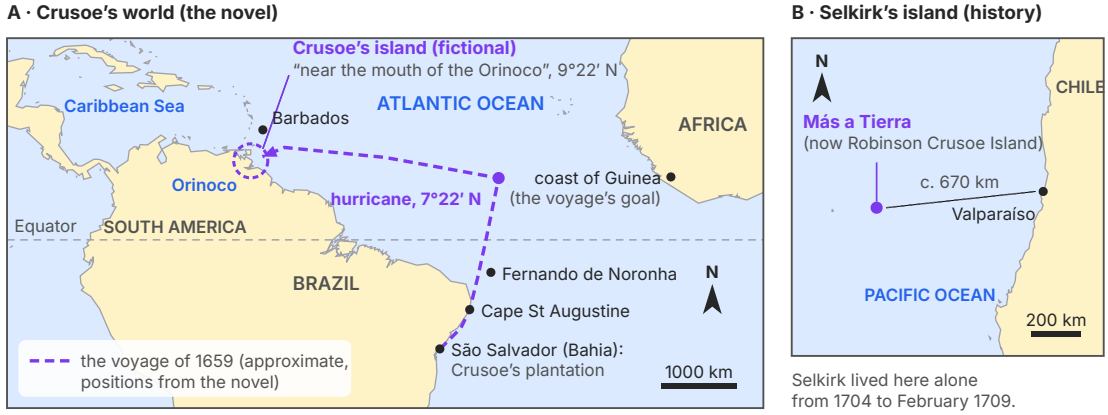


Figura 6.2 Crusoe's world and Selkirk's. A: the voyage of 1659 as the novel describes it, from Brazil towards the coast of Guinea, the hurricane at 7°22′ N and the shipwreck near the mouth of the Orinoco (Crusoe reckons his island at 9°22′ N); positions approximate. B: Más a Tierra, in the Juan Fernández Islands, about 670 km west of Valparaíso, where Selkirk lived alone from 1704 to 1709. The two panels have different scales. Coastlines: Natural Earth.

6.1.3 Printers, booksellers and readers

More readers made the novel possible. We have no exact figures for literacy in this period, and historians warn against precise percentages, but the evidence agrees on the trend: more people could read in 1720 than in 1660, especially in London, among men and among the middling sort. Women of the middling and upper classes, with more free time at home, became important readers too. Two legal changes freed the market. In 1695 Parliament did not renew the Licensing Act, which had limited the number of printers and controlled what they printed; printing presses multiplied, in London and in the provinces. In 1710 the Statute of Anne, often called the first copyright law, gave authors and booksellers the right to print a book for a fixed number of years. London's first daily newspaper, the *Daily Courant*, appeared in 1702, and periodicals, pamphlets and cheap books filled the coffee houses you visited in chapter 5.

Books were still expensive — a new novel could cost several shillings — so readers shared them: they read aloud in families, passed copies from hand to hand and bought cheap abridged editions. From the 1720s the **circulating library** appeared: a shop that lent books to members for a yearly subscription or a small fee per volume. The one opened in Edinburgh by the poet and bookseller Allan Ramsay, usually dated 1725, is often called the first in Britain; by the middle of the century London and the spa towns had many. The novel and the circulating library grew up together.

DA RICORDARE

Defoe's England in four words. *Trade*: the middling sort lives by commerce and keeps accounts. *Empire*: sugar, tobacco and the slave trade in the Atlantic. *Religion*: Dissenters, diaries, spiritual autobiography, providence. *Print*: the Licensing Act lapses (1695), the Statute of Anne (1710), circulating libraries (from the 1720s). **Selkirk**: alone on Más a Tierra, 1704–1709 — about four years and four months, not twenty-eight.

6.2 Literature: the Rise of the Novel and Daniel Defoe

6.2.1 What is a novel?

A **novel** (Italian *romanzo*) is a long fictional story in prose about characters who seem like real people, living in a world the reader recognises. The English word comes from Italian *novella*, "a piece of news, a new story": in English 3 (chapter 12) you saw Shakespeare take his plots from Italian *novelle*. Notice the trap: the Italian *romanzo* comes from the medieval *romance*, but in English a *romance* is a story of knights, wonders and love (English 3, chapter 5), and the eighteenth century used it as the opposite of the new realistic novel.

Long prose fiction was not new: readers already had Sidney's *Arcadia* (1590), Bunyan's allegory *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678, chapter 3), Cervantes's *Don Quixote* in translation and Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko* (1688). What changed in the early eighteenth century was the kind of story and the number of readers. In 1957 the critic Ian Watt called this change "the rise of the novel", in a book with that title. He linked the new form to the middling sort, to Protestant individualism and to the new reading public, and took Defoe, Samuel Richardson and Henry Fielding (chapter 8) as its first great authors. His phrase is a critical idea, not a fact: later scholars have challenged it, pointing to earlier fiction and to the women novelists Watt ignored.

6.2.2 Realism

What makes Defoe's books feel new is **realism**: the representation of ordinary life as it is, with the details of everyday experience. Defoe's characters are not kings or knights but a sailor, a thief, a saddler. They worry about money, food and shelter; they count their days, their goods and their losses. His method is **circumstantial detail**: precise, concrete, often unnecessary particulars — dates, places, quantities, objects — that make a story sound like a true report. Crusoe does not simply save "some food" from the wreck: he lists bread, rice, "three Dutch cheeses" and "five pieces of dried goat's flesh". He gives the date of his landing, 30 September 1659, and his latitude, nine degrees twenty-two minutes north. A list of cheeses is not poetry, but it persuades us that somebody really counted them.

6.2.3 The narrator who says "I"

All of Defoe's novels have a **first-person narrator**: a character inside the story who tells it as "I", as if writing his or her own memoirs. The narrator is not the author. Crusoe is an old man looking back on his life, so the book has two "I"s: the young man who lived the events and was often foolish or terrified, and the older narrator who understands them and comments on them, usually in the language of providence. Moreover, Defoe hid himself completely. His title pages present the books as true histories: Crusoe's life is "Written by Himself", and a short preface in the voice of an anonymous "editor" says that he believes it to be a true account with no sign of fiction in it. Many readers believed it. The claim of truth was partly a selling technique, and partly a defence: serious Protestant readers distrusted invented stories as lies.

> **DA RICORDARE**
>
> **novel** — long prose fiction, realistic characters, a recognisable world · **realism** — ordinary life represented with everyday detail · **circumstantial detail** — dates, places, objects, numbers that make fiction sound like fact · **first-person narrator** — a character who tells the story as "I"; never the author. Defoe: the claim of truth, the "editor", the memoir form.

6.2.4 Daniel Defoe (c. 1660–1731)

Defoe was born Daniel Foe, the son of a London tallow chandler (a maker and seller of candles); around 1695 he began to sign himself "De Foe". He became a merchant, joined the Duke of Monmouth's rebellion against James II in 1685 and was pardoned, and supported William III after 1688. Above all he wrote, about everything: trade, politics, religion, crime, travel. Hundreds of works have been attributed to him, and scholars still dispute how many are really his.

Writing also brought him trouble. In 1702 he published *The Shortest-Way with the Dissenters*, an ironic pamphlet that pretended to be by a fanatical churchman and proposed to suppress the Dissenters by force. Many readers took it literally; when the joke was discovered, Defoe was fined, sent to Newgate prison and in 1703 stood in the pillory. The politician Robert Harley obtained his release and employed him for years as a writer and secret agent, also in Scotland during the negotiations for the Union of 1707. From 1704 to 1713 Defoe wrote, almost alone, a political periodical, the *Review*. His great novels came late, in a burst of five years.

- ***Robinson Crusoe*** (April 1719). Crusoe leaves his father's house in York against his advice and goes to sea. He is captured by pirates and becomes a slave in Morocco, escapes, and becomes a planter in Brazil. In 1659, on a voyage to buy slaves in Africa, he is shipwrecked on an island near the mouth of the Orinoco. There he lives for "eight-and-twenty years, two months, and nineteen days": he saves tools and supplies from the wreck, builds a fortified house, keeps a journal, grows corn, tames goats, makes pots and baskets — and, after an illness, turns to the Bible and accepts his life as a sign of providence. After many years he

finds a footprint; later he saves a prisoner from a group of cannibals and calls him Friday. In 1686 an English ship takes him home. The book was an immediate success and was followed the same year by *The Farther Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*.

- ***Moll Flanders*** (1722). A woman born in Newgate prison tells her life: five husbands, a career as a thief, transportation to Virginia as a convict, and a final repentance. It is a novel about money and survival, told with Defoe's usual circumstantial detail.
- ***A Journal of the Plague Year*** (1722). The "memorials" of a saddler, who signs only "H. F.", who stayed in London during the Great Plague of 1665. Defoe was about five years old in 1665: the book mixes his own childhood memories, published documents such as the weekly **bills of mortality** (printed lists of the burials in each London parish, with the causes of death) and invented episodes, so that critics still argue whether to call it a novel or a history. It appeared at a moment of fear, when the plague of Marseille (1720) threatened to reach England.

6.2.5 Reading Crusoe today

Generations of readers have found different books inside *Robinson Crusoe*. It is an adventure story; a spiritual autobiography in which a sinner discovers providence; and a story of work, in which a man rebuilds civilisation with his own hands and his own accounts — the economist's favourite example of an isolated producer. It is also, in a colonial reading (English 3, chapter 14), a story of possession: Crusoe calls the island his kingdom and himself its king; he sells Xury, the boy who helped him escape from slavery, to a Portuguese captain; he names the man he saves "Friday" and teaches him, among his very first words, to call him "Master". Twentieth-century writers have answered Defoe from the other side, for example J. M. Coetzee in his novel *Foe* (1986). These readings do not cancel one another: a great book can carry the values of its time and make us see them.

ERRORE FREQUENTE

✗ «*Robinson Crusoe* è il primo romanzo inglese.» → ✓ È spesso chiamato *uno dei primi* romanzi inglesi. Prima esistevano già opere in prosa narrativa (Sidney, Bunyan, Aphra Behn); «l'ascesa del romanzo» è un'idea critica di Ian Watt (1957), non un fatto.

✗ «Crusoe è Alexander Selkirk.» → ✓ Selkirk è *una* delle fonti: visse sull'isola circa quattro anni (1704–1709), nel Pacifico; Crusoe è un personaggio inventato che vive ventotto anni su un'isola dell'Atlantico, vicino alla foce dell'Orinoco.

✗ «Nel romanzo Defoe racconta la sua vita.» → ✓ Il narratore in prima persona è un personaggio, non l'autore: «io» è Crusoe (o Moll, o H. F.), non Defoe.

APPROFONDIMENTO

Who wrote the "first" English novel? The answer depends on how we define a novel. Some scholars choose Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko* (1688), the story of an enslaved African prince in Surinam, told by a narrator who claims to have known him. Others point to women writers of Defoe's own years, such as Eliza Haywood, whose *Love in Excess* (1719–1720) was one of the best-selling fictions of the decade. Watt chose Defoe for his realism and his middle-class heroes; critics who value other qualities choose other books. The lesson is the method: when you read "the first novel", ask who says so, and by which definition.

6.3 Texts: Crusoe's Island and London's Plague

The three passages show Defoe's realism at work in three ways: as accounting (T1), as fear (T2) and as testimony (T3). The texts of *Robinson Crusoe* follow a later edition with modernised spelling and punctuation (Project Gutenberg eBook #521); the first edition of 1719 has no chapters, so the chapter numbers given are those of that edition. The text of *A Journal of the Plague Year* follows Project Gutenberg eBook #376, also with modernised spelling.

6.3.1 T1 · Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*: "Evil" and "Good"

Context. Crusoe has been on the island for some weeks. He has saved what he could from the wreck and built a shelter; now, to calm his despair, he "drew up the state of my affairs in writing". He sets the good against the evil, "like debtor and creditor, the comforts I enjoyed against the miseries I suffered". Chapter IV in the edition used.

Tabella 6.1 T1 — *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), the balance sheet; text of Project Gutenberg eBook #521, spelling modernised by that edition. Defoe prints the two columns side by side, under the headings *Evil* and *Good*.

Evil	*Good*
I am cast upon a horrible, desolate island, void of all hope of recovery.	But I am alive; and not drowned, as all my ship's company were.
I am singled out and separated, as it were, from all the world, to be miserable.	But I am singled out, too, from all the ship's crew, to be spared from death; and He that miraculously saved me from death can deliver me from this condition.
I am divided from mankind—a solitaire; one banished from human society.	But I am not starved, and perishing on a barren place, affording no sustenance.
I have no clothes to cover me.	But I am in a hot climate, where, if I had clothes, I could hardly wear them.
I am without any defence, or means to resist any violence of man or beast.	But I am cast on an island where I see no wild beasts to hurt me, as I saw on the coast of Africa; and what if I had been shipwrecked there?
I have no soul to speak to or relieve me.	But God wonderfully sent the ship in near enough to the shore, that I have got out as many necessary things as will either supply my wants or enable me to supply myself, even as long as I live.

Glosses. *cast upon* = thrown onto (by the sea) · *void of* = completely without · *recovery* = rescue, return to a normal life · *as it were* = so to speak · *a solitaire* = (old) a person who lives alone, a hermit · *affording no sustenance* = giving no food · *relieve* = comfort, help.

Analysis

Form. The passage is a document inside the narrative: two columns, six pairs, each "Evil" answered by a "Good" that begins with *But*. Every pair is built on **parallelism**: the Good repeats the structure and often the words of the Evil (*I am singled out… to be miserable* / *I am singled out, too… to be spared from death*). Figura 6.3 shows the six pairs as a merchant's ledger.

	EVIL		GOOD
1	cast on a desolate island, no hope of rescue	→	alive — the rest of the crew were drowned
2	separated from all the world "to be miserable"	→	separated from the crew "to be spared from death"
3	cut off from human society ("a solitaire")	→	not starving on a barren place
4	no clothes	→	a hot climate: clothes are hardly needed
5	no defence against men or wild beasts	→	no wild beasts on the island (unlike the coast of Africa)
6	no one to speak to	→	the wreck came near the shore: tools and supplies saved

Balance: "something negative or something positive to be thankful for"
— every misery is answered by a comfort, and the account closes on the credit side

Each row pairs one misery with one comfort, as a merchant sets a debt against a credit. Paraphrase of the six pairs in T1; the quoted words are Crusoe's.

Figura 6.3 Crusoe's balance sheet (T1) as a ledger: six miseries in the left-hand column, six comforts in the right. The words are paraphrased except where quoted. The conclusion that follows in the novel — "Upon the whole…" — states the balance.

Language. The vocabulary comes from two worlds. One is commerce: Crusoe states his case "like debtor and creditor", and the conclusion that follows speaks of the "credit side of the account". The other is religion: *He that miraculously saved me*, *God wonderfully sent the ship*. Defoe joins them without any sense of contradiction. For a Puritan tradesman, keeping accounts and examining one's soul were the same kind of honest work.

Themes. The comforts are of three kinds: being alive, practical resources (climate, no wild beasts, the tools from the ship) and providence. Crusoe's conclusion — "Upon the whole, here was an undoubted testimony that there was scarce any condition in the world so miserable but there was something negative or something positive to be thankful for in it" — turns the list into a lesson for the reader. The passage is a small model of the whole novel: a man reduces chaos to order by writing it down.

- Which Evil has no material answer, and what kind of comfort does Crusoe offer instead?
- In which pair does Crusoe compare his situation with a worse one that might have happened?
- Is Crusoe being honest with himself, or is he persuading himself? Give a reason.

6.3.2 T2 · Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*: the footprint

Context. Crusoe has now lived alone for many years, and he feels safe and almost content in his "kingdom". He uses a small boat to explore the coast. Chapter XI in the edition used, whose chapter title is "Finds print of man's foot on the sand".

Tabella 6.2 T2 — *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), the footprint; text of Project Gutenberg eBook #521, spelling modernised by that edition.

> It happened one day, about noon, going towards my boat, I was exceedingly surprised with the print of a man's naked foot on the shore, which was very plain to be seen on the sand. I stood like one thunderstruck, or as if I had seen an apparition. I listened, I looked round me, but I could hear nothing, nor see anything; I went up to a rising ground to look farther; I went up the shore and down the shore, but it was all one; I could see no other impression but that one. I went to it again to see if there were any more, and to observe if it might not be my fancy; but there was no room for that, for there was exactly the print of a foot—toes, heel, and every part of a foot. How it came thither I knew not, nor could I in the least imagine; but after innumerable fluttering thoughts, like a man perfectly confused and out of myself, I came home to my fortification, not feeling, as we say, the ground I went on, but terrified to the last degree, looking behind me at every two or three steps, mistaking every bush and tree, and fancying every stump at a distance to be a man.

Glosses. *thunderstruck* = shocked, unable to move · *apparition* = ghost · *a rising ground* = a small hill · *it was all one* = it made no difference · *impression* = a mark pressed into a surface · *fancy* = imagination · *thither* = there · *out of myself* = out of my mind · *fortification* = his fortified house · *to the last degree* = extremely.

Analysis

Narrator and point of view. The scene is told by the older Crusoe, but we see it with the eyes of the younger one, step by step, with no warning. The first sentence moves from routine (*about noon, going towards my boat*) to shock (*the print of a man's naked foot*) in a single breath.

Style. Defoe's sentences are long, but they are not elegant periods: they are chains of short clauses joined by *and*, *but* and semicolons, as if Crusoe were still out of breath. Verbs of perception pile up (*I listened, I looked round me… I could hear nothing, nor see anything*), and the movement is restless (*up the shore and down the shore*). Two similes describe the shock: *like one thunderstruck*, *as if I had seen an apparition*. The precise anatomy of *toes, heel, and every part of a foot* is circumstantial detail at its most effective: it proves the print is real. At the end, fear transforms the landscape: every bush and every stump becomes a man.

Theme. For years Crusoe has suffered because he is alone; now the proof that he is *not* alone terrifies him. The footprint turns the island from a kingdom into a place where he can be seen, hunted and judged. Notice also the sentence *How it came thither I knew not*: the object of the verb comes first, giving the mystery the place of honour (you will meet this structure, fronting, in the Language section).

- List everything Crusoe does to check that the print is real. What does each action show about him?
- Find the two similes in the second sentence. What do they have in common?
- Why is one footprint more frightening than many?
- How does the last sentence show the power of imagination over reason?

6.3.3 T3 · Daniel Defoe, *A Journal of the Plague Year*: a street in the City

Context. It is the late summer of 1665 and the plague is at its height. The narrator, H. F., has decided to stay in London and to shut his household in; but curiosity sends him out, especially to his brother's empty house in Coleman Street. The passage describes one of these walks, through Tokenhouse Yard and Bell Alley, two narrow places in the City near the Bank of England of today.

Tabella 6.3 T3 — *A Journal of the Plague Year* (1722), from the account of H. F.'s walks in the City; text of Project Gutenberg eBook #376, spelling modernised.

In these walks I had many dismal scenes before my eyes, as particularly of persons falling dead in the streets, terrible shrieks and screechings of women, who, in their agonies, would throw open their chamber windows and cry out in a dismal, surprising manner. It is impossible to describe the variety of postures in which the passions of the poor people would express themselves.

Passing through Tokenhouse Yard, in Lothbury, of a sudden a casement violently opened just over my head, and a woman gave three frightful screeches, and then cried, 'Oh! death, death, death!' in a most inimitable tone, and which struck me with horror and a chillness in my very blood. There was nobody to be seen in the whole street, neither did any other window open, for people had no curiosity now in any case, nor could anybody help one another, so I went on to pass into Bell Alley.

Glosses. *dismal* = very sad, gloomy · *shrieks and screechings* = high, terrible cries · *postures* = (here) ways of behaving · *passions* = strong feelings, suffering · *of a sudden* = suddenly · *casement* = a window that opens on hinges · *inimitable* = impossible to imitate · *chillness* = coldness.

Analysis

Testimony. H. F. writes as an eyewitness. He gives real place names and places himself exactly in the scene: the window opens *just over my head*. He even admits what words cannot do: *It is impossible to describe the variety of postures…* — an admission that makes the description more believable. This is how Defoe, a child in 1665, makes a reconstructed past sound remembered.

Sound and silence. The passage is built on a contrast. On one side, three *frightful screeches* and the woman's cry, *Oh! death, death, death!*, repeated three times; on the other, an empty street where no other window opens. The plague has destroyed not only bodies but community: *people had no curiosity now in any case, nor could anybody help one another*. The narrator himself does nothing; he simply walks on into the next alley. His calm, almost flat tone after such a cry is perhaps the most disturbing thing in the passage.

- Why does the narrator give the exact names of the streets?
- What does the empty street tell us about the city during the plague?
- How does H. F. react to the cry? What does his reaction suggest?

ESEMPIO SVOLTO

From an observation to a paragraph. Task: write a short analytical paragraph on the narrator in T3.

1. **Observe** what is unusual. The narrator hears a woman scream "death" three times, but he walks on.
2. **Collect evidence**: two short quotations. *"struck me with horror and a chillness in my very blood"*; *"so I went on to pass into Bell Alley"*.
3. **Name the technique**: first-person eyewitness narration; contrast between feeling and action; understatement.
4. **Interpret**: the gap between his horror and his inaction shows how normal such scenes had become — and how the plague isolated people.
5. **Write** it as Point, Evidence, Explanation (English 3, chapter 6): *In T3 Defoe's narrator reacts to horror with almost no action. The woman's cry "struck me with horror and a chillness in my very blood", yet his next words are simply "so I went on to pass into Bell Alley". The flat, matter-of-fact sentence after such a strong reaction suggests that, at the height of the plague, horror had become part of ordinary life: nobody opens a window, and nobody, not even the narrator, can help.*

LEARNING TO LEARN

Reading a whole novel. This year the Link Reading Club reads four complete novels. A novel of 300 pages is not a long homework: it is a project, and it needs a plan.

1. **Make a reading plan.** Divide the pages by the weeks you have, and add one "catch-up" week. Twenty pages a day is a novel in a fortnight.
2. **Keep a character list** on the first page of your notebook: name, one-line description, relation to the others. Add to it as you read.
3. **Write a one-line summary of every chapter** as soon as you finish it, with the page number. At the end you will have the whole plot on one page.
4. **Mark five passages** you could quote in an essay or an oral exam (a quotation bank, English 3, chapter 11).
5. **Do not stop at every unknown word.** Guess from the context; look up only words that come back, or that the meaning depends on.

The same method works for *I promessi sposi*, which you read in your second year and meet again in Italian literature this year, and for a long Latin or Greek text — a book of the *Aeneid*, a tragedy by Sophocles, a book of Thucydides: a character list and chapter summaries in Italian save you hours before an exam.

6.4 Language: Cleft Sentences and Emphasis

In speech we can show what matters most with our voice: *CRUSOE saw a footprint* (not Friday), *Crusoe saw a FOOTPRINT* (not a boat). In writing there is no voice, so English moves the important information into a special position. A **cleft sentence** (Italian *frase scissa*) divides one simple sentence into two parts in order to put one element in focus. In this section you learn the main types, and two other ways of adding emphasis: emphatic *do* and fronting.

6.4.1 It-clefts

An **it-cleft** has the pattern ***It* + *be* + FOCUS + *that / who* + the rest of the sentence**. The focus is usually new or contrasting information; the rest is information the listener already knows or can take for granted. Compare the neutral sentence with two clefts in Figura 6.4.

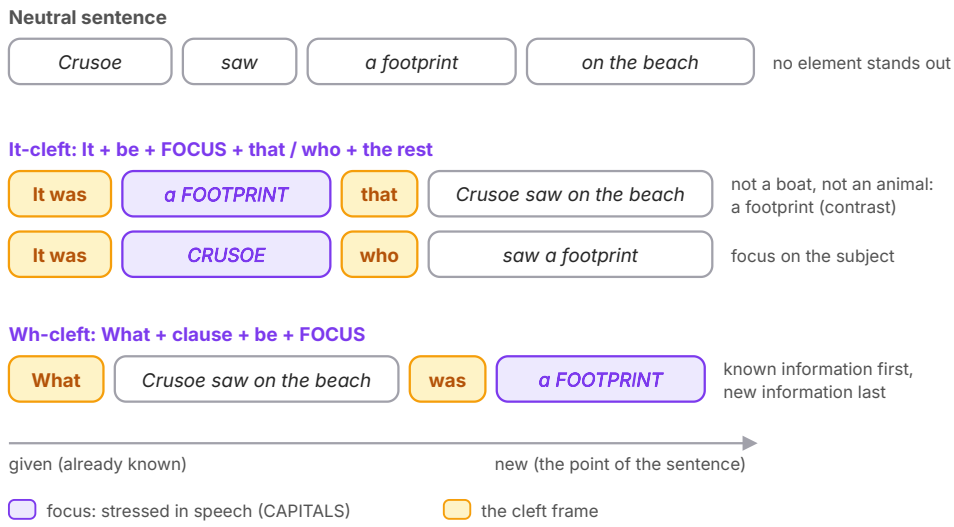


Figura 6.4 Cleft sentences. One neutral sentence can be "cleft" in different ways. The it-cleft places the focus near the beginning, after *It was*; the wh-cleft places it at the end, where English naturally puts new information. In speech the focus carries the main stress.

Tabella 6.4 It-clefts: what can be in focus

Focus	Example
subject (*who* for people, or *that*)	*It was Alexander Selkirk, not Defoe, who lived alone on Más a Tierra.*
object	*It was a footprint that terrified him.*
time	*It was in 1719 that Defoe published* Robinson Crusoe.
place	*It was in Brazil that Crusoe became a planter.*
reason	*It was because of the plague at Marseille that Londoners feared a new epidemic in 1720.*
not until	*It was not until 1957 that Ian Watt spoke of "the rise of the novel".*

Points of form. The verb *be* is always singular after *it*, even when the focus is plural: *It was the sailors who drowned*. The tense of *be* usually matches the rest of the sentence (*It is… that* for the present, *It was… that* for the past). After a time or a place in focus we use *that*, not *when* or *where*. With a pronoun in focus, everyday English uses the object form (*It was him who found it*); formal written English prefers the subject form (*It was he who found it*). Both are correct; choose by register.

GRAMMAR IN ITALIANO

La frase scissa con *it*. Forma: *It* + *be* + elemento in focus + *that / who* + resto della frase. Serve a mettere in evidenza un elemento, spesso in contrasto con un altro: *It was Selkirk who lived on the island* = «Fu Selkirk a vivere sull'isola» / «È stato Selkirk che...».

Confronto con l'italiano. L'italiano ha la stessa struttura (*È stato lui a trovarla, È nel 1719 che esce il romanzo*), ma con il soggetto in focus usa spesso *a* + infinito; l'inglese usa sempre una frase con verbo finito: ✓ *It was Crusoe who found it*, mai ✗ *It was Crusoe to find it*. Inoltre in inglese *it* è obbligatorio (✗ *Was Crusoe who...*) e *be* resta al singolare (✓ *It was the sailors who...*; in italiano invece «Furono i marinai a...»).

6.4.2 Wh-clefts, all-clefts and reversed clefts

A **wh-cleft** (also called a pseudo-cleft) begins with a clause introduced by *what*: ***What* + clause + *be* + FOCUS**. The *what*-clause contains the known information, and the focus comes at the end, where English places the most important new information. Wh-clefts are very common in speech and in essays, because they announce the point before making it.

- *What Crusoe saw on the shore was the print of a man's naked foot.*
- *What he needed most was a boat.*
- To put an action in focus, use *do* in the *what*-clause and the infinitive (with or without *to*) after *be*: *What Defoe did was (to) present fiction as fact.* · *What I'm going to do is read the whole novel in two weeks.*
- Other words can begin the clause: *The thing (that) I like about Crusoe is his patience.* · *The reason (why) he kept a journal was that he was afraid of losing track of time.* · *The place where he landed was a sandy beach.* · *The person who rescued Selkirk was Woodes Rogers.*

An **all-cleft** puts *all* (= the only thing) in place of *what*, and gives the sentence the meaning of "only": *All he wanted was to see another human face.* · *All Selkirk had at first was a gun, a few tools and a Bible.* A **reversed wh-cleft** puts the focus first: *A boat was what he needed.* · *That's what I meant.* · *This is where Selkirk lived.* Reversed clefts with *that's / this is* are frequent in conversation, to sum up or to point at something.

GRAMMAR IN ITALIANO

La frase pseudoscissa con *what*. Forma: *What* + frase + *be* + elemento in focus. Corrisponde a «Quello che / Ciò che… è…»: *What he needed was a boat* = «Quello di cui aveva bisogno era una barca». Con *all* il significato è «l'unica cosa»: *All he wanted was to go home* = «Voleva solo tornare a casa».

Confronto con l'italiano. Non tradurre il pronome dell'italiano parlato: ✗ *What I need it is a boat* («quello che mi serve, è una barca») → ✓ *What I need is a boat*. Per mettere in focus un'azione l'inglese usa *do*: *What he did was build a raft* = «Quello che fece fu costruire una zattera». Attenzione anche a *all*: *All I want is…* non significa «tutto quello che voglio…» ma «voglio soltanto…».

6.4.3 Emphatic do and fronting

Emphatic *do*: in an affirmative sentence in the present simple or past simple, *do / does / did* + the base form, stressed in speech, insists that something is true, often against a doubt: *Crusoe DID build a boat — but it was too heavy to bring to the sea.* · *I DO like Defoe; I just find the lists boring.* It is also used in polite or warm imperatives: *Do sit down.* · *Do come to the meeting.*

Fronting means moving an object or a complement to the beginning of the sentence, without changing the word order of subject and verb. It is typical of literary and emotional language: *How it came thither I knew not* (T2). · *This I cannot believe.* · *Strange as it may seem, the book was a best-seller.* Do not confuse fronting with inversion after negative adverbials (chapter 3): with fronting, the subject still comes before the verb (*This I cannot believe*, not ✗ *This cannot I believe*).

Tabella 6.5 Structures for emphasis at a glance

Structure	Pattern	Example
it-cleft	*It* + *be* + FOCUS + *that / who…*	*It was a footprint that terrified him.*
wh-cleft	*What* + clause + *be* + FOCUS	*What terrified him was a footprint.*
all-cleft	*All* + clause + *be* + FOCUS	*All he saw was one print.*
reversed wh-cleft	FOCUS + *be* + *what* + clause	*A footprint was what terrified him.*
emphatic *do*	*do / does / did* + base form	*He did see it — it wasn't a dream.*
fronting	object / complement + subject + verb	*That night he did not sleep. Sleep he could not.*

GRAMMAR IN ITALIANO

***Do* enfatico e anteposizione.** *He did build a boat* = «La barca, la costruì davvero / sì che la costruì». L'italiano esprime l'enfasi con avverbi (*davvero, proprio, eccome*) o con la dislocazione a sinistra (*La barca, l'ha costruita*); l'inglese usa l'ausiliare *do* accentato, oppure anticipa il complemento senza ripeterlo con un pronome: ✓ *This I cannot believe*, mai ✗ *This I cannot believe it* (calco di «Questo non lo posso credere»).

ERRORE FREQUENTE

✗ *It were the sailors who drowned.* → ✓ *It was the sailors who drowned.* (dopo *it* il verbo *be* è sempre singolare)

✗ *It was in 1719 when Defoe published it.* → ✓ *It was in 1719 that Defoe published it.* (con tempo e luogo in focus si usa *that*)

✗ *What I like it is the ending.* → ✓ *What I like is the ending.*

✗ *It was Selkirk to inspire Defoe.* → ✓ *It was Selkirk who inspired Defoe.*

✗ *He did built a boat.* → ✓ *He did build a boat.* (dopo *did* la forma base)

Stress and intonation. In speech the focus of a cleft carries the main stress, and the rest is said more quickly and quietly: *It was a FOOTprint that he saw*; *What he NEEDed was a BOAT*. If you stress the wrong word, the listener hears the wrong contrast. Read the examples in this section aloud, stressing only the word in focus.

6.5 Skills: Survival Stories

6.5.1 Vocabulary: survival and trade

Crusoe's story is told in two vocabularies: the language of survival and the language of trade (Tabella 6.6).

Tabella 6.6 Survival and trade: key words

Word	Meaning	Example
shipwreck (n., v.)	the destruction of a ship at sea; *be shipwrecked*	*He was shipwrecked on the coast of South America.*
castaway	a person left alone in a wild place after a shipwreck	*A castaway must find water first.*
maroon (v.)	leave someone on an island or a wild place as a punishment or by force	*Selkirk was not marooned: he asked to be left.*
shelter	a place that protects from weather or danger	*He built a shelter against the rock.*
supplies	food and other things needed for a period (plural)	*We ran out of supplies on the second day.*
raft	a flat floating platform of logs or planks	*He carried the goods ashore on a raft.*
goods	things that are bought and sold (plural)	*The ship carried goods for the African trade.*
profit / loss	money gained / money lost in a business	*The voyage was expected to make a large profit.*
account	a written record of money, or a report of events	*Crusoe kept an account of his days.*

Collocations: *run out of* supplies, *make / suffer a loss*, *make a profit*, *keep an account* (of), *give an account* (of) = describe, *take stock* (of) = consider a situation carefully, *come ashore / go ashore*, *be cast away*.

Collocations: binomials

A **binomial** is a fixed pair of words joined by *and* (sometimes *or*). The order never changes: we say *safe and sound*, never ✗ *sound and safe*. Defoe's prose is full of them (*debtor and creditor*, *man or beast*, *up the shore and down the shore*). Many binomials have a meaning that is not the sum of the two words.

Tabella 6.7 Common binomials

Binomial	Meaning	Example
safe and sound	unhurt, without damage	*Selkirk came home safe and sound.*
odds and ends	small objects of different kinds	*He saved nails, rope and other odds and ends.*
ups and downs	good and bad periods	*Defoe's career had many ups and downs.*
by and large	in general, on the whole	*By and large, the challenge was a success.*
trial and error	trying different methods until one works	*He learnt to make pots by trial and error.*
sink or swim	fail or succeed by your own efforts	*On the island it was sink or swim.*
sick and tired	annoyed after too much of something	*We were sick and tired of the rain.*

6.5.2 Reading: Twenty-eight years or one weekend?

The Link Reading Club — Sam, Callum and their friends at Hillside Academy in Bristol and Giulia's class in Turin — began the year with *Robinson Crusoe*. Callum wrote this report for the club's shared blog.

Tabella 6.8 Reading text — Callum's report for the Link Reading Club blog

Twenty-eight years or one weekend? The Bristol Crusoe Challenge
It was Sam who had the idea, so it is Sam you should blame. "We can't really understand Crusoe," he said at our first meeting, "unless we try to live like him." Mrs Hill pointed out that Crusoe had twenty-eight years and an island, while we had one weekend and a farm on a hill in the Black Mountains in Wales, which belongs to a friend of my dad's. She agreed to come, on one condition: safety first. So our phones went into a sealed bag in her car, for emergencies only, and the farmer knew exactly where we were.
The rules were simple. We could take only what Crusoe saved from the wreck — or the nearest thing we could find in Bristol. That meant a tarpaulin and some rope instead of a ship's sails, bread instead of ship's biscuits, rice, oats and, as in the novel, three cheeses. (They were not Dutch. Priya insisted on cheddar.) No tents, no stoves, no chocolate.
What nobody had considered was the Welsh weather. It rained from the moment we arrived until Sunday lunchtime. We spent the whole of Saturday morning building a shelter between two trees, by trial and error: our first roof collected water like a bath and emptied it on Priya's head. By the afternoon, though, we did have a shelter, and it did keep us dry, more or less. Sam, of course, kept a journal. His first entry read: "I, poor miserable Sam Taylor, came on shore at 10.15 a.m."
On Saturday evening Sam drew up a balance sheet, like Crusoe's. Evil: *We are wet to the bone.* Good: *But we are not on a desert island, and the farmhouse has a kettle.* Evil: *We have no fire.* Good: *But Mrs Hill has a thermos.* I am not sure Defoe would have approved, but it cheered us up.
The best moment came on Sunday morning. I went down to the stream to fetch water and there, in the mud, was the print of a large foot. I stood there like one thunderstruck, as Crusoe would say. I looked round; I listened; I went up the bank and down the bank. Then I noticed the second print, and the third, and the hole in the hedge, and the farmer's dog looking very pleased with itself. The cannibals of the Black Mountains turned out to be a sheepdog called Bryn.
Was it worth it? By and large, yes. What I learnt was not how to survive — we were never in danger — but how much of Crusoe's story is about work and about time. Everything takes hours when you have no tools: we used up almost all our energy just staying dry. Now I understand why Crusoe counts every nail and every day. And it was only on Sunday night, back home safe and sound, that I realised the thing I had missed most was not my phone or my bed: it was other people. Crusoe waited more than twenty years for his Friday. We waited less than a day for a dog.
Meanwhile in Turin: Giulia tells us her class did a "Crusoe afternoon" in the school garden and tried to make a clay pot by hand. It cracked. "Exactly like Crusoe's first pots," she wrote. "So it was a success."

Answer the questions in the Towards B2 exercises. Then find in the text: two cleft sentences, two examples of emphatic *do*, three binomials and one sentence that echoes T2.

6.5.3 Speaking: retelling a story from another point of view

Crusoe tells us how he saved Friday, named him and taught him; Friday never tells us anything. To retell a story from another point of view, keep the **facts** but change the **perspective**: what the new narrator knew and did not know, saw and felt, and what they think now, looking back.

Use past narrative tenses (English 3, chapter 1), and use clefts to correct or contrast the other version: *It wasn't fear that made me kneel; it was gratitude.*

Tabella 6.9 Useful language — retelling from another point of view

Function	Phrases
Setting the scene	*It all started when… · I remember the day when… · At that time I was…*
Your perspective	*From where I stood, … · To me, he looked like… · I had no idea that…*
Correcting the other version	*He says…, but what really happened was… · It wasn't…; it was… · That's not how I remember it.*
Feelings then	*I was terrified / puzzled / grateful. · I couldn't understand why…*
Looking back	*What I didn't know then was… · It was only later that I realised… · Looking back, …*
Ending	*And that is how… · Since that day…*

1. **Pair work: Friday tells the meeting.** Student A is Friday, now old, telling his grandchildren how he met the stranger on the island; Student B is a grandchild who asks at least three questions. Keep the facts of the novel (his escape from his captors, the shot, the name, the lessons) and give Friday his own feelings and his own judgement. Speak for two minutes.
2. **Group work: the other side.** In groups of three, choose a famous story (a fairy tale, a myth, a film) and retell a key scene from the point of view of a minor character or of the "villain". Each student tells one part; the group then explains to the class what changes when the point of view changes.

6.5.4 Writing: a commentary on a prose extract

A **prose commentary** is a short, organised analysis of a passage of prose: where it comes from, who tells it and how, what its style is, and what it means. It is the prose companion of the poem commentary you wrote in English 3. Here is a model on T3.

Tabella 6.10 Model text — a commentary on a prose extract (T3)

This passage comes from Daniel Defoe's *A Journal of the Plague Year* (1722), the fictional memoir of a London saddler, H. F., during the Great Plague of 1665. In it the narrator walks through the City at the height of the epidemic and hears a woman cry out from a window.
The story is told by a first-person narrator who presents himself as an eyewitness. He names real places — Tokenhouse Yard, Lothbury, Bell Alley — and places himself precisely in the scene: the window opens "just over my head". These circumstantial details make an imagined episode sound like a memory.
The style is simple but carefully built on contrast. The first paragraph accumulates sounds ("shrieks and screechings", "cry out"), and the woman's triple cry, "Oh! death, death, death!", is the climax. It is followed by silence: "There was nobody to be seen in the whole street." The narrator admits that "it is impossible to describe" what he saw, a device that makes the description more convincing.
The main theme is the breakdown of community. Nobody opens a window, because people "had no curiosity now in any case, nor could anybody help one another", and even the narrator simply walks on. In a few lines Defoe shows that the plague destroyed not only lives but human bonds — which is what makes the passage still disturbing today.

Structure. Paragraph 1, **context**: author, title, date, where the passage comes in the book, what happens (two sentences, no more). Paragraph 2, **narrator and point of view**: who tells the story, in which person, from what distance. Paragraph 3, **style**: sentence structure, vocabulary, devices — each point supported by a short quotation. Paragraph 4, **themes and conclusion**: what the passage means and why it matters. Notice the present simple for describing a text (*the narrator walks*, *Defoe shows*), and the short quotations built into the writer's own sentences.

- Have I placed the passage in its work and its context?
- Have I identified the narrator and the point of view?
- Does every point have a short quotation as evidence, followed by an explanation?
- Have I named at least two techniques (e.g. circumstantial detail, simile, contrast, repetition) and said what effect they have?
- Is my commentary between 220 and 260 words?

Task. Write a commentary (220–260 words) on T2, the footprint. Follow the structure and the checklist above.

6.6 Connections: Two Plagues, London and Milan

A century after Defoe, another novelist reconstructed another plague. In *I promessi sposi* (1827, revised 1840–1842) Alessandro Manzoni describes the plague of Milan of 1630 in chapters XXXI and XXXII, where the story of Renzo and Lucia gives way to history. Neither writer witnessed the plague he describes: Defoe was a child of about five in 1665, and Manzoni wrote two centuries after 1630. Both worked from documents: Defoe from the Bills of Mortality and published

accounts, Manzoni from the chronicler Giuseppe Ripamonti, the physician Alessandro Tadino and the official records, which he quotes and discusses openly.

COLLEGAMENTI

Economics and mathematics: double-entry bookkeeping. Crusoe's "debtor and creditor" is the language of a method of accounting that Genoese and Florentine merchants were already using in the fourteenth century and that the Franciscan mathematician Luca Pacioli described in print in his *Summa de arithmetica, geometria, proportioni et proportionalita* (Venice, 1494).

In **double-entry bookkeeping** every transaction is written twice: once as a **debit** in one account and once as a **credit** in another, for the same amount. So the total of all debits always equals the total of all credits, and any error shows at once. A simplified example: a Bristol merchant buys tobacco for £40 in cash and sells it to a shopkeeper for £55, to be paid later. (1) *Debit* Tobacco £40, *credit* Cash £40. (2) *Debit* Shopkeeper (who now owes him) £55; *credit* Tobacco £40 and Profit £15. Debits: 40 + 55 = £95; credits: 40 + 40 + 15 = £95. The books balance, and the profit is £15.

Both writers are interested less in the disease than in what fear does to people. In Defoe's London rumours and quack doctors multiply and neighbours stop helping one another (T3). In Manzoni's Milan fear takes a more terrible form: the belief in the *untori*, people supposed to spread the plague on purpose by smearing poison on walls and doors. Anyone could be accused:

> *Con una tal persuasione che ci fossero untori, se ne doveva scoprire, quasi infallibilmente: tutti gli occhi stavano all'erta; ogni atto poteva dar gelosia. E la gelosia diveniva facilmente certezza, la certezza furore.*
>
> — Alessandro Manzoni, *I promessi sposi* (1840), cap. XXXII (text from it.wikisource, checked against Project Gutenberg eBook #45334)

Gloss: "With such a conviction that there were untori*, some were bound to be discovered, almost infallibly: every eye was on the watch; any action could arouse suspicion* (gelosia *here means "suspicion"). And suspicion easily became certainty, certainty fury." (Translation by the editors.)*

The differences are as revealing as the similarities. Defoe's narrator is an ordinary citizen inside the story, practical and at times almost flat. Manzoni's narrator stands above events as a historian and a moralist: he analyses the collective madness, criticises the authorities who acted too late and condemns the cruelty of the crowd. Defoe gives us the street; Manzoni gives us the street and a judgement on it. Both ask a question every epidemic has asked since: how does a society behave when it is afraid?

Defoe and Manzoni had a great ancestor, whom you read in Greek this year. **Thucydides** describes the plague of Athens of 430 BC (II.47–54) not from documents but as a survivor: he writes, he says, αὐτός τε νοσήσας καὶ αὐτὸς ἰδὼν ἄλλους πάσχοντας (*autos te nosēsas kai autos idōn*

allous paschontas: “having had the disease myself and seen others suffering from it”, II.48.3; translation by the editors). The Roman poet **Lucretius** retold his account in Latin hexameters, and *De rerum natura* ends, perhaps unfinished, with that plague (VI.1138–1286).

COLLEGAMENTI

Greek tragedy: an ancient castaway. In Sophocles’ *Philoctetes* (409 BC) the archer Philoctetes, his foot poisoned by a snake bite on the way to Troy, has been marooned by the Greeks on Lemnos, an island that Sophocles makes “untrodden by mortals and uninhabited” (βροτοῖς ἄστιπτος οὐδ᾽ οἰκουμένη, l. 2; translation by the editors). It is now the tenth year he has lived there (l. 312), shooting birds with the bow of Heracles. Like Crusoe he survives alone thanks to a weapon and his own work; unlike Crusoe he was abandoned by his own companions, and he wants only to go home, not to rule an island.

SINTESI

- After 1660 England grew rich on trade; the middling sort — merchants, tradesmen, shopkeepers — kept accounts and expected to rise by their own efforts.
- Many tradesmen were Dissenters; the Puritan tradition left diaries, spiritual autobiography and the search for providence in everyday events.
- The Atlantic economy rested on sugar, tobacco and the slave trade; Crusoe himself is a planter shipwrecked on a slaving voyage.
- Alexander Selkirk lived alone on Más a Tierra (1704–1709); his story, told by Woodes Rogers and Steele, was one source of *Robinson Crusoe*.
- More readers, the end of the Licensing Act (1695), the Statute of Anne (1710) and circulating libraries (from the 1720s) created a market for long fiction.
- A novel is a long prose fiction with realistic characters in a recognisable world; "the rise of the novel" is Ian Watt's critical phrase (1957).
- Defoe's realism rests on circumstantial detail and on first-person narrators who claim to tell a true history.
- Defoe (c. 1660–1731): merchant, journalist, pamphleteer, secret agent; *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), *Moll Flanders* and *A Journal of the Plague Year* (1722).
- T1 turns misfortune into a balance sheet of Evil and Good; T2 shows terror through action and detail; T3 is an eyewitness account of a city where nobody can help anybody.
- Cleft sentences put one element in focus: *It was… that / who…*; *What… is / was…*; *All… is…*; reversed *A boat was what…*.
- Emphatic *do* insists that something is true; fronting moves an object or complement to the start (*This I cannot believe*).
- Defoe and Manzoni both reconstructed a plague they had not witnessed, from documents; Manzoni adds the historian's judgement on the *untori*. Their great ancestor is Thucydides, who survived the plague of Athens (430 BC); Sophocles' Philoctetes, abandoned on Lemnos, is an ancient castaway beside Crusoe.

ESERCIZI

History and Literature

1. ● Who was Alexander Selkirk?

   A. A Scottish sailor who lived alone on an island off Chile for over four years.

   B. The captain who rescued Robinson Crusoe in 1686.

   C. The London bookseller who published *Robinson Crusoe*.

   D. A Dissenting minister who wrote a spiritual autobiography.

2. ● The phrase “the rise of the novel”…

   A. appears in Defoe’s preface to *Robinson Crusoe*.

   B. is the title of a book by the critic Ian Watt (1957).

   C. was coined by the first circulating libraries.

   D. is used in the Statute of Anne (1710).

3. ● Why does Crusoe sail from Brazil in 1659?

   A. To return to his father in York.

   B. To look for the island of Más a Tierra.

   C. To sell sugar and tobacco in London.

   D. To buy enslaved Africans on the coast of Guinea.

4. ● True or false? Correct the false statements. a Defoe’s exact date of birth is unknown. b Defoe studied at Oxford. c The Royal African Company received its charter in 1672. d *Robinson Crusoe* first appeared under Defoe’s name. e Defoe witnessed the Great Plague as an adult. f The Statute of Anne is often called the first copyright law.

5. ●● Match the authors (1–5) with the works (a–e) and the dates (i–v). 1 John Bunyan · 2 Aphra Behn · 3 Woodes Rogers · 4 Daniel Defoe · 5 Ian Watt — a *A Cruising Voyage Round the World* · b *The Rise of the Novel* · c *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* · d *Moll Flanders* · e *Oroonoko* — i 1666 · ii 1688 · iii 1712 · iv 1722 · v 1957

6. ●● Explain each term in one or two sentences in your own words, with an example from this chapter: a novel · b realism · c circumstantial detail · d first-person narrator · e spiritual autobiography.

7. ●●● Answer in 50–70 words each. a Give two reasons why the novel developed in England in the early eighteenth century. b Why can *Robinson Crusoe* be read as a colonial text? Give two examples from the novel. c How is Thucydides’ account of the plague of Athens different from Defoe’s *Journal* and Manzoni’s chapters, and what do all three have in common?

Text Analysis

8. ● In T2, what does Crusoe do immediately after he sees the print?

   A. He runs back to his boat.

   B. He follows the footprints to the sea.

   C. He stands still, then listens and looks round.

   D. He calls out to find the stranger.

9. ● T1. Answer briefly. a Which “Good” is a comfort of religion rather than a practical one? b In which pair does Crusoe imagine a worse situation? c Which phrase in the first pair shows that Crusoe has lost hope of rescue? d Which misery does Crusoe answer with the climate?

10. ●● T1. Paraphrase the third and the sixth pair in modern English, beginning each pair with *On the negative side…* and *On the positive side…*.

11. ●● T2. Find in the passage: a two similes · b a hyperbole · c a pair of opposite movements · d an example of fronting · e a list of three things Crusoe mistakes for a man.

12. ●● T3. Answer. a Where exactly is the narrator when the window opens? b How many times does the woman cry "death"? c Why does no other window open? d Find the sentence in which the narrator admits that words are not enough. e What does he do after the cry?

13. ●●● Compare T2 and T3 (80–100 words). How do the two first-person narrators describe fear? Consider what they see or hear, how they react and the effect on the reader.

14. ●●● Write a PEE paragraph (Point, Evidence, Explanation; 80–100 words) on this point: "In T1 Crusoe uses the language of trade to make sense of his misfortune."

Language

15. ● Rewrite each sentence as an *it*-cleft, putting the words in brackets in focus. a Defoe published *Robinson Crusoe* in 1719. (in 1719) b Woodes Rogers rescued Selkirk. (Woodes Rogers) c Crusoe found a footprint on the shore. (a footprint) d Manzoni read Ripamonti's chronicle. (Ripamonti's chronicle) e Crusoe became a planter in Brazil. (in Brazil)

16. ● Rewrite as *wh*-clefts beginning with *What*. a Crusoe needed a boat. b The plague destroyed community. c Defoe wanted readers to believe the story. d Friday learnt English quickly. (focus on the action: *What Friday did…*) e I enjoyed the footprint scene.

17. ●● Complete with ONE word. a _____ he wanted was to see a ship. b The reason _____ he kept a journal was that he feared losing count of the days. c It was the farmer's dog _____ left the print. d It was in York _____ Crusoe was born. e _____ I didn't know then was that he was the cannibals' prisoner. f The place _____ Selkirk landed is now called Robinson Crusoe Island.

18. ●● Reply with emphatic *do / does / did*, as in the example. Example: *You didn't read the book! → I did read it — I just didn't finish it.* a Crusoe never built a boat. b Sam doesn't like Defoe. c You didn't send the commentary. d Giulia's class doesn't read novels in English.

19. ●● Find and correct the mistake in each sentence (✗). a ✗ It were the sailors who drowned. b ✗ What I need it is a dictionary. c ✗ It was in 1665 when the plague struck London. d ✗ It was Selkirk to inspire Defoe. e ✗ He did built a raft. f ✗ All what he wanted was rescue.

20. ●● Rewrite using *It was not until… that…* a Crusoe did not find the footprint until he had lived on the island for many years. b Readers did not learn Defoe was the author until after the book had appeared. c Pepys's diary was not published until 1825. d Selkirk did not see a friendly ship until February 1709.

21. ●● Rewrite with the focus first (reversed *wh*-cleft or fronting). a What he needed was a boat. → *A boat…* b What she said was exactly that. → *That's…* c I cannot forgive this. → *This…* d Crusoe built his house here. → *This is…*

22. ●●● Read each sentence aloud and write the word that carries the main stress in CAPITALS. Then explain the contrast it implies. a It was Sam who had the idea (not Callum). b What he lost was his ship, not his courage. c It wasn't fear that kept him awake; it was hope. d I did read it!

23. ●●● Translate into English, using a cleft sentence or emphatic *do*. a È stato Defoe a scrivere il romanzo, non Crusoe. b Quello che mi ha colpito di più è il silenzio della strada. c La lettura l'ho finita davvero, ma non ho scritto il commento.

Vocabulary

24. ● Complete with the words in the box: *account · castaway · goods · loss · raft · shelter · supplies · survived*. The ship was carrying _____ to sell in Africa when the storm struck. Only one man _____. The _____ built a _____ to bring tools and _____ from the wreck, and a _____ against the rock. He kept a careful _____ of everything he saved, and he counted the ship as a _____ he could never make good.

25. ●● Complete the binomials and use four of them in sentences of your own. a safe and _____ · b odds and _____ · c ups and _____ · d by and _____ · e trial and _____ · f sink or _____ · g peace and _____

26. ●● Choose the correct verb. a The club *ran / went* out of bread on Sunday. b Did the voyage *do / make* a profit? c Crusoe *kept / held* an account of his days. d H. F. *gives / tells* an account of the plague. e Before deciding, let's *take / make* stock of the situation.

Writing and Speaking

27. ●● Write a commentary (220–260 words) on T2, the footprint. Follow the structure and the checklist in the Writing section.

28. ●● Speaking. Do the pair work "Friday tells the meeting" in the Speaking section. Prepare for three minutes with the useful language, then speak for two minutes; your partner asks three questions.

Towards B2

29. ●● Multiple matching. Read "Twenty-eight years or one weekend?" again. Who (Sam, Callum, Priya, Mrs Hill, Giulia, Bryn) … a suggested the challenge? b chose the cheese? c kept the phones safe? d left the print? e kept a journal? f made something that broke? g found the print? h got wet because of a badly built roof?

30. ●● Multiple-choice cloze. Choose the correct answer (A, B, C or D) for each gap.
Alexander Selkirk was not shipwrecked: it was he (1) _____ asked to be left on Más a Tierra. At first he (2) _____ the sea every day, hoping for a ship. What saved him in the end (3) _____ not luck but work. He learnt to catch goats, and (4) _____ trial and error he found which plants he could eat. When Woodes Rogers arrived in 1709, Selkirk had almost forgotten how to speak, but he was safe and (5) _____ . It was (6) _____ his return that his story became famous.
1 A which B who C whom D what · 2 A looked B watched C saw D regarded · 3 A were B was C had D did · 4 A with B for C by D from · 5 A sound B healthy C strong D whole · 6 A after B since C until D when

31. ●● Open cloze. Write ONE word in each gap.
Many of Defoe's first readers believed that *Robinson Crusoe* was a true story, and (1) _____ was not until later that they learnt the truth. What Defoe (2) _____ was write fiction that looked like a document. He gave dates, numbers and lists, and (3) _____ he did not give was any sign of an author. The narrator (4) _____ tells the story is Crusoe himself. Defoe (5) _____ write it, of course — but he never put (6) _____ name on the title page.

32. ●●● Key-word transformation. Complete the second sentence so that it has a similar meaning to the first, using the word in capitals. Use between two and five words, including the word given. a Crusoe needed a boat more than anything. WHAT → _____ was a boat. b Selkirk asked to be left on the island; the captain did not decide it. WHO → It _____ asked to be left on the island. c Readers only learnt the author's name years later. UNTIL → It _____ years later that readers learnt the author's name. d The only thing he wanted was a human voice. ALL → _____ was a human voice. e I really enjoyed the novel. DID → I _____ the novel. f The footprint frightened him, not the storm. THAT → It was _____ frightened him, not the storm.

PER APPROFONDIRE

- [WAT] I. Watt, *The Rise of the Novel*: chapter 1 on realism and the novel form, and chapter 3 on *Robinson Crusoe*, individualism and the novel.
- [NOR] S. Greenblatt (ed.), *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*: the introduction to the Restoration and the eighteenth century, and the pages on Defoe.
- [SAN] A. Sanders, *The Short Oxford History of English Literature*: the chapter on the early eighteenth century and the beginnings of the novel.
- [POR] R. Porter, *Enlightenment*: the chapters on print, readers and commercial society.
- [SWA] M. Swan, *Practical English Usage*: the entries on cleft sentences, emphasis and emphatic *do*.
- [HEW] M. Hewings, *Advanced Grammar in Use*: the units on *it*-clefts and *wh*-clefts.

Glossario del capitolo

Bill of mortality
bollettino dei morti — a weekly printed list of burials and causes of death in the London parishes.

Binomial
binomio (espressione fissa) — a fixed pair of words joined by *and* or *or*, in an order that never changes: *safe and sound*.

Castaway
naufrago — a person left alone in a wild place after a shipwreck.

Circulating library
biblioteca circolante (a pagamento) — a shop that lent books to members for a subscription or a fee.

Circumstantial detail
dettaglio circostanziato — precise dates, places, numbers and objects that make fiction sound like fact.

Cleft sentence
frase scissa — a sentence divided into two parts to put one element in focus: *It was a footprint that…*, *What he saw was…*.

Double-entry bookkeeping
partita doppia — a method of accounting in which every transaction is recorded as a debit in one account and a credit in another.

Emphatic do
do enfatico — stressed *do / does / did* + base form, used to insist that something is true: *He did build a boat.*

First-person narrator
narratore in prima persona — a character inside the story who tells it as "I"; not the author.

Fronting
anteposizione — moving an object or complement to the beginning of a sentence for emphasis: *This I cannot believe.*

Maroon
abbandonare (su un'isola deserta) — to leave someone alone on an island or in a wild place, as a punishment or by force.

Middling sort
ceto medio — the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century name for merchants, tradesmen and shopkeepers, between the gentry and the poor.

Novel
romanzo — a long fictional story in prose about realistic characters in a recognisable world.

Prose commentary
commento di un testo in prosa — a short, organised analysis of a prose passage: context, narrator, style, themes.

Providence
provvidenza — the guidance of God, seen at work in the events of everyday life.

Realism
realismo — the representation of ordinary life as it is, with everyday detail.

Spiritual autobiography
autobiografia spirituale — the story of a person's journey from sin to conversion, told by that person.

Wh-cleft
frase pseudoscissa — a cleft sentence beginning with a *what*-clause: *What he needed was a boat.*

Soluzioni

1. A.

2. B.

3. D. (He had planned to bring enslaved Africans back to the Brazilian plantations.)

4. a T · b F — as a Dissenter he could not attend Oxford or Cambridge; he studied at a Dissenting academy at Newington Green · c T · d F — the title page presented it as "Written by Himself", without Defoe's name · e F — he was about five years old · f T.

5. 1 c i · 2 e ii · 3 a iii · 4 d iv · 5 b v.

6. Model answers. a A long fictional prose story about realistic characters in a recognisable world, e.g. *Robinson Crusoe*. b The representation of ordinary life with everyday detail, e.g. Crusoe worrying about food, tools and time. c Precise dates, places, numbers and objects that make fiction sound like fact, e.g. the "three Dutch cheeses" or the date 30 September 1659. d A character inside the story who tells it as "I", e.g. Crusoe or H. F.; not the author. e The story of a person's spiritual journey from sin to conversion, told by that person, e.g. Bunyan's *Grace Abounding*.

7. Model answers. a There were more readers, especially among the middling sort and women, and books became easier to print and borrow after the Licensing Act lapsed (1695) and circulating libraries spread. These readers wanted stories about people like themselves, told with realistic detail, and the Puritan habit of self-examination in diaries and autobiographies gave writers a model for first-person narration. b Crusoe treats the island as his property and calls himself its king; he sells Xury, the boy who helped him escape, to a Portuguese captain; he names Friday instead of asking his name, and among his first lessons teaches him to call him "Master". His fortune also comes from a plantation in Brazil, and the voyage that wrecks him was a slaving voyage. c Thucydides was an eyewitness and a survivor: he caught the disease himself and saw others suffer it (II.48), and he wrote as a historian so that the disease could be recognised if it returned. Defoe (a child of five in 1665) and Manzoni (two centuries after 1630) were not witnesses: they reconstructed their plagues from documents, inside works of fiction. All three describe not only the disease but what fear does to a community — law, religion and solidarity break down.

8. C.

9. a "He that miraculously saved me from death can deliver me from this condition" (second pair; also the last pair: "God wonderfully sent the ship") · b the fifth: no wild beasts "as I saw on the coast of Africa; and what if I had been shipwrecked there?" · c *void of all hope of recovery* ("horrible, desolate" also accepted as supporting words) · d the lack of clothes (fourth pair).

10. Model answer. Third pair — On the negative side, I am cut off from other people and live alone like a hermit. On the positive side, I am not starving on a barren place with no food. Sixth pair — On the negative side, I have nobody to talk to or to comfort me. On the positive side, God brought the ship close enough to the shore for me to take from it everything I need to survive, perhaps for the rest of my life.

11. a "like one thunderstruck"; "as if I had seen an apparition" (also "like a man perfectly confused") · b "terrified to the last degree" (also "innumerable fluttering thoughts") · c "up the shore and down the shore" · d "How it came thither I knew not" · e every bush, every tree, every stump ("mistaking every bush and tree, and fancying every stump… to be a man").

12. a In Tokenhouse Yard, in Lothbury, directly under the window ("just over my head"). b Three

times. c Because people "had no curiosity now in any case", and nobody could help anybody. d "It is impossible to describe the variety of postures in which the passions of the poor people would express themselves." e He walks on into Bell Alley.

13. Model answer. Both narrators face something terrible alone and describe it through their senses: Crusoe sees a single print, H. F. hears a cry. Crusoe's fear is active and physical — he listens, looks, runs "up the shore and down the shore" and finally flees home, "terrified to the last degree". H. F. feels "a chillness in my very blood" but does nothing; he walks on. Crusoe's long, breathless sentences make us share his panic, while H. F.'s flat tone after the cry shocks us more than a description of panic would.

14. Model answer. Point: In T1 Crusoe makes sense of his misfortune by treating it as a business account. Evidence: he states his case "very impartially, like debtor and creditor", in two columns, and every misery is balanced by a comfort introduced by "But". Explanation: the merchant's method gives order to chaos and turns despair into a calculation he can control; the lesson he draws sets everything "on the credit side of the account", so the balance sheet becomes both practical self-help and an act of faith in providence.

15. a It was in 1719 that Defoe published *Robinson Crusoe*. b It was Woodes Rogers who (that) rescued Selkirk. c It was a footprint that Crusoe found on the shore. d It was Ripamonti's chronicle that Manzoni read. e It was in Brazil that Crusoe became a planter.

16. a What Crusoe needed was a boat. b What the plague destroyed was community. c What Defoe wanted was for readers to believe the story (also: What Defoe wanted readers to do was (to) believe the story). d What Friday did was (to) learn English quickly. e What I enjoyed was the footprint scene.

17. a All (*What* is also correct, without the sense of "only") · b why (that) · c that (which; *who* is also possible for a pet) · d that · e What · f where.

18. Model answers. a He did build a boat — but it was too heavy to launch. b He does like Defoe — he just finds the lists long. c I did send it — check your inbox. d They do read novels in English — they read *Robinson Crusoe* this year.

19. a It was the sailors who drowned. b What I need is a dictionary. c It was in 1665 that the plague struck London. d It was Selkirk who inspired Defoe. e He did build a raft. f All (that) he wanted was rescue. / What he wanted was rescue.

20. a It was not until he had lived on the island for many years that Crusoe found the footprint. b It was not until after the book had appeared that readers learnt Defoe was the author. c It was not until 1825 that Pepys's diary was published. d It was not until February 1709 that Selkirk saw a friendly ship.

21. a A boat was what he needed. b That's exactly what she said. c This I cannot forgive. d This is where Crusoe built his house.

22. a SAM — it was Sam, not someone else. b SHIP (and COURage) — the contrast is between the two things lost / not lost. c FEAR … HOPE — the cause was hope, not fear. d DID — insists that the reading really happened, against a doubt.

23. Model answers. a It was Defoe who wrote the novel, not Crusoe. b What struck me most was (is) the silence of the street. c I did finish the reading, but I didn't write the commentary.

24. goods · survived · castaway · raft · supplies · shelter · account · loss.

25. a sound (*safe and well* also exists, but the binomial taught here is *safe and sound*) · b ends · c downs · d large · e error · f swim · g quiet. Sentences: open; check the fixed order (e.g. ✗ *sound and safe*).

26. a ran · b make · c kept · d gives · e take.

27. Model answer (about 240 words). This passage comes from Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719). After many years alone, Crusoe discovers a single human footprint on the shore. It is told by the older Crusoe, but we experience the scene through the eyes of his younger self, with no warning… (continue: the narrator's point of view; style — the long chains of clauses, verbs of perception, the similes "like one thunderstruck" and "as if I had seen an apparition", the circumstantial detail "toes, heel, and every part of a

foot", the hyperbole "terrified to the last degree"; themes — the fear of being found after the pain of being alone, the island turned from kingdom into trap, imagination defeating reason in the last sentence). Marking: context, point of view, style with quoted evidence, themes and conclusion; present simple; analysis rather than retelling; accuracy; 220–260 words.

28. Model answer (Friday, as an old man): "It all started when my enemies took me to that island to kill me. I ran, and three of them chased me. Then I heard a sound like thunder and one of them fell — I had no idea what a gun was. To me, the stranger looked like a spirit: a white face, a hat of skins. He says I knelt because I was afraid, but what really happened was different: I knelt because he had saved my life. He called me Friday. It was only later that I learnt my own name meant nothing to him…" (Grandchild: "Why didn't you run away? What did he teach you first? Did you miss your people?") Assess: facts consistent with the novel, a clear new perspective, past narrative tenses, at least two clefts, fluency and interaction.

29. a Sam · b Priya · c Mrs Hill · d Bryn · e Sam · f Giulia (her class) · g Callum · h Priya.

30. 1 B · 2 B · 3 B · 4 C · 5 A · 6 A.

31. 1 it · 2 did · 3 what · 4 who (that) · 5 did · 6 his.

32. a What Crusoe needed most · b was Selkirk who · c was not until (wasn't until) · d All he wanted · e did enjoy · f the footprint that (which).