



Selkirk's Island: The True and Strange Adventures of the Real Robinson Crusoe

By Diana Souhami

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A fascinating account of piracy, betrayal, and raw survival on the high seas and dry land, *Selkirk's Island* rediscovers the amazing tale of an eighteenth-century legend. Born a poor Scotsman, Alexander Selkirk signed with William Dampier, a pirate who was as famous for his self-promotion as for his naval success, on an ill-fated quest to pillage the famous Manila galleon. After a series of scuffles with the captain, Selkirk was put ashore on an island three hundred miles west of South America. Alone and with little more than the clothes on his back, Selkirk spent four long years learning to survive.

Drawing on Selkirk's own testimony, that of his rescuers and fellow crewmen, and petitions from two women who each claimed to be his wife, celebrated biographer Diana Souhami uncovers the truth behind the strangeness and wonder of a forgotten man and his unforgettable experience.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Daniel Defoe based his 1719 novel *Robinson Crusoe* on the trials and tribulations of Scottish seaman Alexander Selkirk. Souhami (*The Trials of Radclyffe Hall*) draws on journals, maritime histories, and ship and parish records to detail his engrossing story. Born the seventh son of a poor cobbler, Selkirk fought violently with his brothers and dreamed about the "adventure, gold and escape" that the sea seemed to promise. In 1703, at the age of 23, he joined a looting expedition led by William Dampier, an experienced pirate who plundered the treasures of French and Spanish ships on the South Seas. But appalling conditions on the journey scurvy, hunger and a leaky ship (worms ate through its wooden hull) led to mutiny against the drunken and belligerent Dampier. After quarreling with a new captain, Selkirk (who was very belligerent himself) was put ashore on Juan Fernandez, an uninhabited island hundreds of miles off the coast of Chile. Souhami provides arresting descriptions of the island and the life Selkirk lived on it for more than four years, when hunger and thirst were "diversions" from his solitude. He survived, in part, by eating goats (with whom he also found sexual release), fish and vegetation. Rescued by another Dampier expedition, at first Selkirk was a wild man who had almost lost the power of speech. He did, however, recover from his ordeal: he took two wives, continued to sail and died at sea in 1721. Complete with detailed comparisons between Defoe's novel and Selkirk's life, Souhami's account is a well-researched investigation of a forgotten antihero.

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From [Booklist](#)

This is an enthralling portrait of the man who was the source for Defoe's most famous novel, *Robinson Crusoe*. Souhami employs a poetic style that instantly transports readers. They are taken back to a time, the heyday of British privateering on the high seas, and to an existential question--could I survive being marooned? Alexander Selkirk's survival story has been popular ever since it was first publicized in 1712 by the ship captain who found him on an island west of Chile. The tale generated the publicity Souhami draws on, but her recounting is quite original. Selkirk was stranded on the desert isle as punishment for mutinous behavior. But as Souhami relates, English readers felt "cheated" by the rescuing captain's spare account of how Selkirk managed to survive alone for four years; so responding to demand for embellishment were, first, pamphleteer Richard Steele, and second, novelist Daniel Defoe. Souhami's wonderful continuation of the story's lineage will satisfy readers' extraordinary appetite for shipwreck sagas. *Gilbert Taylor*
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Review

PRAISE FOR *SELKIRK'S ISLAND*

"Souhami . . . brings a distinctly modern approach to her biography of Selkirk. . . . With great flair, Souhami gives us a portrait of the man who made the place famous. . . . A vivid survival tale." --*New York Times Book Review*

"Souhami brilliantly recreates the feel of the high seas and the brave, money-hungry men who sailed them. . . . Rich and vastly entertaining." --*The Christian Science Monitor*

"Literary history compressed into capsule-size that goes down like a charm."--*Kirkus Reviews*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

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This book untitled Selkirk's Island: The True and Strange Adventures of the Real Robinson Crusoe to be one of several books that best seller in this year, honestly, that is because when you read this e-book you can get a lot of benefit into it. You will easily to buy this book in the book shop or you can order it by way of online. The publisher on this book sells the e-book too. It makes you easier to read this book, as you can read this book in your Mobile phone. So there is no reason to you personally to past this publication from your list.

Amanda Kline:

Your reading 6th sense will not betray you actually, why because this Selkirk's Island: The True and Strange Adventures of the Real Robinson Crusoe reserve written by well-known writer who really knows well how to make book that may be understand by anyone who have read the book. Written inside good manner for you, dripping every ideas and writing skill only for eliminate your own hunger then you still skepticism Selkirk's Island: The True and Strange Adventures of the Real Robinson Crusoe as good book not simply by the cover but also with the content. This is one publication that can break don't evaluate book by its handle, so do you still needing another sixth sense to pick this specific!?! Oh come on your reading sixth sense already alerted you so why you have to listening to an additional sixth sense.

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