

Book Discussion Notes –Swiss Family Robinson

1. YLBC – Opening and business
2. Narration – _____
3. Author Review – Johann D. Wyss- _____
4. Discuss Toy, item from home that reminds you of book
5. Each person say “I like ____ because” (each character)

Discussion:

Question	Answer
Title	The Swiss Family Robinson
Author	Johann D. Wyss
Year Written	1812
Setting – Time	Early 1800's ?
Setting – Place	Deserted island - East Indies en route to Port Jackson, Australia

Characters:

Question	Answer
Protagonist(s) – Leading character, hero, or heroine of a drama or other literary work who traditionally, undergoes some sort of change (pushing something forward). –	Father
Adjectives to describe Protagonist(s)	Brave, smart, clever, hard working, wise, skillful, great leader, Godly, protective
Antagonist - An antagonist is one that contents with or opposes another, adversary or opponent, the villain. The antagonist of a story is the character that provides an obstacle for the protagonist.	Nature
Adjectives to describe Antagonist(s)	

Rising Action, Climax, Falling Action, Resolution

Question7	Answer
Conflict (Man vs. Man, Man vs. Nature, Man vs. God, Man vs. Himself, Man vs. Society)	Man vs. Nature
Rising action - During rising action, the basic internal conflict is complicated by the introduction of related secondary conflicts, including various obstacles that frustrate the protagonist's attempt to reach his goal. Secondary conflicts can include adversaries of lesser importance than the story's antagonist, who may work with the antagonist or separately, by and for themselves or actions unknown, and also the conflict	They are shipwrecked or their 10 years on the island
Falling action (Emotional Climax) - The falling action is that part of the story in which the main part (the climax) has finished and you're heading to the resolution.	Colonel Montrose's ship comes onto land
Climax - The third act is that of the climax, or turning point, which marks a change, for the better or the worse, in the protagonist's affairs. If the story is a comedy, things will have gone badly for the protagonist up to this point; now, the tide, so to speak, will turn, and things will begin to go well for him or her. If the story is a tragedy, the opposite state of affairs will ensue, with things going from good to bad for the protagonist. Simply put, this is where the main part happens or the most dramatic part.	They meet Jenny, Fritz brings her to join their family or surviving the shipwreck, or creating Rockburg
Resolution - comprises events between the falling action and the actual ending scene of the drama or narrative and thus serves as the conclusion of the story.	Each decide where they are going and whether or not they are staying (Fritz and Franz leave for Europe). Jack stays on the island
Meaning of the Title	A Swiss Family perseveres like Robinson Crusoe

Major Themes	Team Work, family, 'It will make me happy to think that my simple narrative may lead some [children] to observe how blessed are the results of patient continuance in well-doing, what benefits arise from the thoughtful application of knowledge and science, and how good and pleasant a thing it is when brethren dwell together in unity, under the eye of the parental love.
Minor Themes	Faith, work, perseverance

Other Characters:

Who	Adjectives
Father	intelligent and resourceful, hard working, resilient, smart, virtuous, hard working, stays in New Switzerland
Elizabeth	kind and caring mother, resourceful, brave, hard working
Fritz	15-years-old when the family lands on the island, and he is often tough on his brothers despite his good intentions. 25 at the end, strong, active, muscular and high-spirited. He returns to England with the Montrose's
Ernest	the second oldest, 13 - and he is intelligent and well-formed though indolent and selfish in his youth. 23 at the end – tall and slight, mild, calm, studious, having overcome his faults of indolence and selfishness. Stays on New Switzerland with Mother and Father.
Jack	10, He is bold, but often thoughtless, 20 at the end – resembles Fritz in stature with grace and agility more than muscular strength. He stays on New Switzerland.
Franz	The youngest son, nearly 8-years-old when the family first is stranded. 17 in the end – witty and shrewd. He returns to Europe in hope of good education / study.
Jenny Montrose	An English girl found on Smoking Rock near the end of the novel. She is shy but soon is adopted into the family.
Knips	An orphan monkey adopted by the family after their dogs have killed its mother. The family uses him as a test subject for unfamiliar foods.
Fangs	A jackal that was tamed by the family

All the boys at the end are God-fearing young men, dutiful and affectionate to their mother and father and warmly attached to each other.

The Characters

- Which character do you identify with?
- Which do you *admire or dislike*?
- Who in this book would you most *like* to meet? What would you ask—or say?

The Story, the Plot and Your Experience

- Is the *plot well developed*? Is it believable?
- Does the book *remind you of someone*—or something—in your own life?

Title, Themes, Style and Symbolism

- How does the title *relate to the book*? Can you pick out a passage that's profound or interesting—or perhaps sums up the central issue of the book?

The Ending

- Did you *expect the ending* or did it *surprise* you?
- Was the ending *satisfying*? If you could *rewrite the ending*, would you?
- What ending would you have chosen for the story?

Do You Want to Read More?

- What is the *future of the characters' lives*?

Point of interest:

- Although movie and TV adaptations typically name the family "Robinson", it is not a Swiss name; the "Robinson" of the title refers to Robinson Crusoe.

Question for thought:

1. Do you see any similarities between Swiss Family Robinson and Robinson Crusoe?
2. Name a few of the life lessons Mr. Robinson taught his children?
3. How many times were you able to find mention of Robinson Crusoe in the book? See quotations # 13 & 16 below.

Did any quotes that resonate with you?

1. "Several Sundays had passed during our stay at Tehtholm, and the welcome Day of Rest no returned again, to be observed with heartfelt devotion and grateful praise." - Observe the Sabbath – Father
2. "In the evening I desired the boys to let me see their dexterity in athletic exercises, such as running, leaping, wrestling, and climbing, telling them they must keep up the practice of these things, so as to grow strong, active men, powerful to repel and cope with danger, as well as agile and swift-footed to escape from it." - Father
3. "No man can be really courageous and self-reliant without inward consciousness of physical power and capability." Father
4. "I want to see my sons strong, both morally and physically... brave to do what is good and right, and to hate evil, and strong to work, hunt, and provide for themselves and others, and to fight if necessary." Father to little Franz
5. "'Look here, though boys... you are now collecting a good many pets, and I am not going to have your mother troubled with the care of them all. Each must look after his own, and if I find one neglected, whether beast or bird, I will set it at liberty. Mark that and remember it" Father
6. "This task occupied us a whole month, and by the end of that period, so accustomed had we become to having a definite piece of work before us that we begun to consider what other great alteration we should undertake." Father – they knew how to work.
7. "These, and such like employment, afforded us the rest and recreation required while engaged in the laborious task of staircase building." Father
8. "Thus day after day brought its own work, and day after day saw that work completed. We had no time to be idle or lament our separation from our fellow creatures." Father
9. "No prisoners set at liberty could have felt more joy than we did as we stepped forth from our winter abode, refreshed our eyes with the pleasant verdure around us, and our ears with the merry songs of a thousand happy birds, and drank the pure, balmy air of spring." Father after winter
10. "Shortly afterward we joined in family worship and retired to rest." Father
11. "There seemed no end to our requirements, and we often thought of the enormous amount of work necessary to maintain the comforts and conveniences of life which at home we had received as matters of course."
12. "I never ceased contriving fresh improvements, being fully aware of the importance of constant employment as a means of strengthening and maintaining the health of the mind and body. This, indeed, with a consciousness of continual progress toward a desirable end, is found to constitute the main element of happiness."
13. "We were soon ready to return to the boat but Ernest had a fancy for remaining alone on the island till we came back, and asked my permission to do so, that he might experience, for an hour or two, the sensations of **Robinson Crusoe**."

14. "The bones of birds are also hollow, for the same reason, and in all this we see conspicuously the wisdom and goodness of the great Creator."
15. "I... rejoined my little party, which was preparing to garrison our fortress in warlike array, but with considerable trepidation, which my presence served in a measure to allay." Just a GREAT sentence by Father
16. "Certainly, if we could make any use of it. But in our situation it is about as valuable as the lump of gold found by good old **Robinson Crusoe**"
17. "'Patience, my dear fellows!' cried I. 'You are too easily discouraged. Look beyond the toilsome way to those grand mountains, whose spurs are already stretching forward to meet us. Who knows what pleasant surprises await us amid their steep declivities?'" Father shows the virtue of hope, and fortitude.
18. It is my is that our sons should cultivate a habit of bold independence, for well I knew that it might be the will of God to deprive them easily of their parents; when, without an enterprising spirit of self-reliance, their position would be truly miserable."
19. "God speed and bless you, my boys." Father
20. "The shade of sadness cast on my mind by retrospect of this kind, was dispelled by thoughts full of gratitude to God, for the welfare and happiness of my beloved family during so long a period. I had cause especially to rejoice in seeing our sons advance to manhood strengthened by early training for lives of usefulness and activity wherever their lot might fall. And my great wish is that young people who read this record of our lives and adventures, should learn from it how admirably suited is the peaceful, industrious and pious life of a cheerful and united family, to the formation of strong, pure and manly character." Father
21. "God bless and preserve thee, my boy!" Father to Fritz on his first voyage alone in search of the girl

Did you find any foreshadowing?

Any interesting phrases?

- 'Oh yes, father!' he replied. 'Once you told me about a strong man, I think his name was Milo, and he had a tiny calf, and he used to carry it about everywhere. It grew bigger and bigger, but still he carried it often, till at last he grew so strong that when it was quite a great big ox, he could lift it as easily as ever. And so you see, if I take care of our wee calf and teach it to do what I like, perhaps when it grows big I shall still be able to manage it, and then—oh, papa—do you think I might ride upon it?'

I smiled at the child's simplicity, and his funny application of the story of Milo of Crotona.

Milo of Crotona –

Modern fitness training for improving health and physical appearance originated in ancient Greece (2500 - 200 B.C.) where the beauty of the body and the importance of health and fitness were appreciated to an extent unparalleled in history. [INDEED, THE OLYMPICS SPORTS COMPETITION AS WE KNOW IT TODAY ORIGINATED IN ANCIENT GREECE.]

With this background it shouldn't come as a surprise that an ancient Greek athlete is regarded as the forefather of modern fitness training. Milo of Crotona lived in the sixth century B.C. and was an accomplished wrestler well known for his extraordinary feats of strength. Preparing for his participation in the Olympic Games, he inadvertently discovered one of the most important principles of modern fitness training, the so called "Overload Principle".

The legend tells us that Milo of Crotona used to build strength and endurance by lifting a young bull calf on his shoulders. Every day he went out in the field and picked up the calf, placed it across the back

of his shoulders and walked around the field. As the calf grew over a period of time Milo would gradually grow in strength. By the time the Olympics began, Milo made a big entrance into the arena with a full-grown bull around his neck. Milo was applying the "Overload Principle" which states that a person will function better and grow in **strength** beyond their normal level of strength as they progressively apply higher levels of resistance. In Milo 's case the increasing weight of the growing calf was providing the **added resistance** . Milo 's discovery and application of the Overload Principle made him so fit and strong that he won the Olympics for 6 consecutive times over a 24-year period and also won numerous victories in other athletic events. 5

GREAT WORDS –

I LOVE these words. Break off into groups of 2 or 3 and write a paragraph describing an event, food item, or adventure using at least 5 words from the below list of cool words from the book:

- **Capital** (adj) - excellent or first-rate: *a capital hotel; a capital fellow.*
- **Contrivance** (noun) - something contrived; a device, especially a mechanical one
- **forage** (verb) the act of foraging : search for provisions
- **precipitous** (adj)- very steep, perpendicular, or overhanging in rise or fall <a *precipitous* slope>
- **promontory** (Noun)- a high point of land or rock projecting into a body of water
- **stratagem** (noun) - a cleverly contrived trick or scheme for gaining an end
- **Damask** (noun) - firm lustrous fabric (as of linen, cotton, silk, or rayon) made with flat patterns in a satin weave on a plain-woven ground on jacquard looms
- **Phlegmatic** (adj) - having or showing a slow and stolid (not easily aroused or excited) temperament
- **approbation** (noun)- an act of approving formally or officially
- **vociferous** (adj) - marked by or given to vehement insistent outcry
- **prudence** (noun) - the ability to govern and discipline oneself by the use of reason
- **allegory** (noun) - the expression by means of symbolic fictional figures and actions of truths or generalizations about human existence; *also*: an instance (as in a story or painting) of such expression
- **insuperable** (adj) -_incapable of being surmounted, overcome, passed over, or solved <*insuperable* difficulties>
- **cicatrise** (trasative verb) - scar formation at the site of a healing wound OR
- **cicatrix** (Noun) - a scar resulting from formation and contraction of fibrous tissue in a wound
- **gourmand** (noun) - one who is excessively fond of eating and drinking
- **conjecture** (noun) - a conclusion deduced by surmise or guesswork (no **conjecture** could be formed as to our whereabouts)
- **superfluous** (adj) - exceeding what is sufficient or necessary : EXTRA
- **verdure** (noun) – **pronounced ver-jer** - the greenness of growing vegetation; *also*: such vegetation itself (the verdure of midsummer)
- **impregnable** (adj) - incapable of being taken by assault : UNCONQUERABLE <an *impregnable* fortress>
- **phenomenon** (noun) - a rare or significant fact or event ...had discovered the cause of the **phenomenon**
- **rectilinear** (adj) - moving in or forming a straight line <*rectilinear* motion>
- **pliable** (adj) - supple enough to bend freely or repeatedly without breaking
- **allusion** (noun) - an implied or indirect reference especially in literature; *also*: the use of such references (The lyrics contain biblical *allusions*)
- **impetuous** (adj) - marked by impulsive vehemence or passion <an *impetuous* temperament> (He's always been an *impetuous* young man)
- **labyrinth** (noun) - a place constructed of or full of intricate passageways and blind alleys (a complex *labyrinth* of tunnels and chambers)
- **cudgel** (noun) - a short heavy club (a farmer armed with a *cudgel* drove us off his land)
- **putrefying** (verb) – **to make a foul odor** (we traced the bad smell to a dead skunk *putrefying* under the house>)
- **circumspect** (adj) - careful to consider all circumstances and possible consequences : PRUDENT <diplomacy required a *circumspect* response> <she has a reputation for being quiet and *circumspect* in investigating charges of child abuse>
- **epitaph** (noun) - an inscription on or at a tomb or a grave in memory of the one buried there
- **patriarchal** (adj) – of, related to, or being a man who is father or founder
- **refractory** (adj) - resisting control or authority : STUBBORN, UNMANAGEABLE (*refractory* players will be ejected from the game)
- **equanimity** (noun) - evenness of mind especially under stress <nothing could disturb his *equanimity*>
- **inanimate** (adj) - not endowed with life or spirit <an *inanimate* object>
- **reconnaissance** (noun) - a preliminary survey to gain information; *especially*: an exploratory military survey of enemy territory 3

Johann D. Wyss

Johann David Wyss (May 28, 1743 – January 11, 1818) A pastor with four sons, is best remembered for his book *The Swiss Family Robinson*. It is said that he was inspired by Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, but wanted to write a story from which his own children would learn, as the father in the story taught important lessons to his children. *The Swiss Family Robinson* was first published in 1812 and translated into English two years later. It has since become one of the most popular books of all time. The book was edited by his son, Johann Rudolf Wyss, a scholar who wrote the Swiss national anthem. Another son, Johann Emmanuel Wyss, illustrated the book. [1]

Written by Swiss pastor Johann David Wyss and edited by his son Johann Rudolf Wyss, the novel was intended to teach his four sons about family values, good husbandry, the uses of the natural world and self-reliance. Wyss's attitude toward education is in line with the teachings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and many of the episodes have to do with Christian-oriented moral lessons such as frugality, husbandry, acceptance, cooperation, etc.[1] The adventures are presented as a series of lessons in natural history and the physical sciences, and resemble other, similar educational books for children in this period, such as Charlotte Turner Smith's *Rural Walks: in Dialogues intended for the use of Young Persons* (1795), *Rambles Further: A continuation of Rural Walks* (1796), *A Natural History of Birds*, intended chiefly for young persons (1807). But the novel differs in that it is modeled on Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, a genuine adventure story,[1] and presents a geographically impossible array of mammals, birds, reptiles, and plants (including the Bamboos, Cassavas, Cinnamon Trees, Coconut Palm Trees, Fir Trees, Flax, Myrica cerifera, Rice, Rubber Plant Potatoes, Sago Palms[disambiguation needed], and an entirely fictitious kind of Sugarcane) that probably could never have existed together on a single island for the children's edification, nourishment, clothing and convenience.

If his main objective for writing the book was to teach his children important life lessons, would you consider Johann a success?

1. Faith
2. Work
3. Charity
4. Survival / Perseverance
5. Resourcefulness
6. Virtue
7. Character
8. Exercise

Sources:

1. Wikipedia
2. www.childrensnursery.org.uk/swiss-family-robinson/swiss-family-robinson.html
3. Miriam Webster.com
4. <http://www.easyfunschool.com/SwissFamRobIndex.html>
5. Milo of Crotona - Ultimate Fitness Thailand.com (http://www.ultimatefitnessthailand.com/a_milo.html)