

## ***“The Solitude of Alexander Selkirk” by William Cowper***

### **Textual Question Answers – *The Solitude of Alexander Selkirk***

#### **1. Who was Alexander Selkirk?**

→ Alexander Selkirk was a Scottish sailor who was marooned on a deserted island in the Pacific Ocean for over four years. His story inspired Daniel Defoe’s novel *Robinson Crusoe*.

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#### **2. What is the main theme of the poem?**

→ The poem explores themes of **loneliness, isolation, human connection**, and **the psychological impact** of being cut off from society.

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#### **3. What does Selkirk long for while in solitude?**

→ He longs for **human companionship**, the **bustle of society**, and the **comforts of civilization**, like hearing a voice or seeing another human face.

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#### **4. What does the speaker mean by “society, friendship, and love”?**

→ These words refer to the **three core human needs** that Selkirk misses the most—being part of a community, forming bonds, and feeling affection.

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#### **5. How does Selkirk describe the natural world around him?**

→ He observes nature's beauty—like the winds, sea, and birds—but these do not comfort him. He finds nature indifferent and longs for **human presence**, not just natural surroundings.

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## 6. How does the poem reflect Cowper's views on human nature?

→ Cowper suggests that **man is a social being** and cannot live in isolation. Even in paradise-like conditions, the absence of human interaction leads to misery.

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## 20 Short and Long Answer Questions with Answers

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### ◆ Short Answer Type (30–50 words)

1. **What inspired the poem “The Solitude of Alexander Selkirk”?**  
→ The poem is based on the real-life story of Alexander Selkirk, a sailor stranded on an uninhabited island, which inspired *Robinson Crusoe*.
2. **What does Selkirk feel about the absence of society?**  
→ He feels deeply lonely and miserable. Though surrounded by natural beauty, the lack of human companionship torments him.
3. **Why is the line “I am monarch of all I survey” ironic?**  
→ Though Selkirk claims dominion over the land, it is **meaningless**, as he has no one to share it with. His power is **empty without people**.
4. **What are Selkirk's greatest sufferings?**  
→ His greatest sufferings are **isolation, loneliness, and longing for human contact**, not physical discomfort.

5. **What does the speaker say about nature in solitude?**  
→ Nature is indifferent and silent. Despite its beauty, it cannot replace the warmth of human relationships.
  6. **What does Selkirk think about man's need for society?**  
→ He believes **man was made for society**, and without it, he becomes miserable and incomplete.
  7. **How does Selkirk's experience reflect on the human condition?**  
→ It shows that humans crave **connection and community** more than material wealth or freedom.
  8. **What emotions dominate the poem?**  
→ Loneliness, despair, regret, and yearning dominate the emotional tone of the poem.
  9. **How does Cowper use imagery in the poem?**  
→ Cowper uses vivid imagery of nature—like the sea, birds, and animals—to contrast it with Selkirk's internal emptiness.
  10. **Why does Selkirk not find joy in ruling the island?**  
→ Because power and dominion are **meaningless without people**. He feels like a king without a kingdom.
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◆ **Long Answer Type (100–150 words)**

11. **What is the message of the poem "The Solitude of Alexander Selkirk"?**  
→ The poem delivers the message that **humans are inherently social beings**. Despite all the freedom and natural beauty around him, Selkirk suffers deeply due to the lack of human companionship. His reflections show that the absence of social interaction can lead to mental anguish and despair. Cowper emphasizes that no amount of independence or dominion can replace the value of **society, friendship, and love**.

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12. **Describe Selkirk's emotional state as shown in the poem.**

→ Selkirk is overwhelmed by **loneliness and sorrow**. Though he appears to rule the land, he feels **empty and disconnected**. He yearns for the simple joys of society, the sound of a voice, and human love. His emotions shift between despair and reflection, revealing his broken spirit.

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13. **How does the poem contrast nature with human society?**

→ Nature is portrayed as **calm, beautiful, and self-sufficient**, but also **silent and indifferent**. Selkirk, surrounded by it, feels **unfulfilled**, missing the joy that only **human interaction** can bring. This contrast deepens the theme of **man's need for connection**.

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14. **Why does the poet call Selkirk a "monarch"? What does it signify?**

→ The word "monarch" signifies Selkirk's **complete control over the island**, but it is ironic. He is a ruler with no subjects, emphasizing the futility of **power without companionship**.

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15. **How does the poem express the theme of alienation?**

→ The poem powerfully illustrates **isolation and alienation**. Despite his surroundings, Selkirk feels separated from humanity. This emotional distance leads him to reflect on life, identity, and the **deep longing for connection**.