***Treasure Island***

***Chapter 17:***

***Narrative Continued by the Doctor: The Jolly-Boat's Last Trip***

***Brief Summary:***

* The tiny rowboat is having some trouble with the changing tide and the weight of the men aboard (Doctor Livesey, Squire Trelawney, Captain Smollett, Redruth, and Abraham Gray), so it starts to seem like it's going to sink.
* Captain Smollett suddenly remembers the ship's cannon: could the pirates use it to attack the fort?
* Doctor Livesey says the pirates couldn't possibly get it ashore.
* But he has forgotten the "long nine," a relatively light nine-foot-long cast-iron gun that they accidentally left on board the *Hispaniola*.
* And the little rowboat's course has left it totally exposed and in range of the long nine.
* Abraham Gray comments that Israel Hands (the ringleader of the sailors left aboard) was a gunner for Captain Flint back in the day.
* Squire Trelawney is the best shot of the group on the rowboat, so he starts loading his gun.
* They all brace themselves, and Squire Trelawney fires his shot at Israel Hands aboard the *Hispaniola*.
* Unfortunately, the Squire misses, and one of the other four sailors on board the *Hispaniola* drops.
* Israel Hands quickly continues working to load the long nine, ignoring his injured comrade.
* The group aboard the tiny rowboat can see one of the pirates' two boats in sight.
* They realize the other one must have rowed around to try and cut them off from the shore.
* But the Captain says they can't worry about that now – their biggest concern should be the long nine.
* They decide the safest thing to do would be to overturn their rowboat (and the supplies) because they are so close to the shore. That way they won't be such an easy target for the long nine.
* So they overturn the boat and wade onto the island – with only two of their five guns and none of the supplies they had hoped to bring with them.
* They also hear voices coming upon them, so they hurry up to the stockade to find out what's happened to Hunter and Joyce while they were on board the *Hispaniola*.

***Synopsis:***

The little boat carrying Captain Smollett, Squire Trelawney, Dr. Livesey, Tom Redruth, and Abraham Gray is dangerously overloaded and thus hard to maneuver. The men begin to suspect that the mutineers might be planning an attack, aware that the pirates possess arms and gunpowder, and that Israel Hands was once Flint’s gunman. Trelawney tries to shoot Hands but hits another pirate instead, though the mutineers do not pay any -attention. Hands fires a cannonball at the men’s boat, causing it to founder. No lives are lost, as the water is shallow, but the men are forced to leave half of their provisions behind when they wade ashore.

***Notes:***

For Dr. Livesey and his friends, the second trip to shore is much harder. Five men have to ride in a small boat with a great deal of food and ammunition. The boat is so overloaded that it can hardly stay afloat. To make matters worse, the tide is going out, so it is very hard to make progress toward shore. The doctor, who is controlling the rudder, finds that he has to steer at a right angle to the direction he wants to go; if he did not, the boat would get swamped. As the men struggle with their overloaded boat, they suddenly realize that they have made a serious mistake. They took or destroyed all of the weapons that could easily be moved ashore, but in their hurried preparations, they did not destroy the ammunition for “the long nine”—a big cannon on the Hispaniola. They look back to the ship and see that the mutineers they left on board have noticed the error. They are already loading the cannon to take a shot. Mr. Trelawney is the best at shooting a musket, so the men stop rowing and hold the boat steady while Trelawney takes a shot at the pirates. He aims at Israel Hands, the man his friends know to be the most skilled with heavy 17 weapons. Unfortunately, Hands bends down at the last moment, and Trelawney’s bullet hits someone else. This poor man does not die, but his comrades do not help him. Instead, they continue their hurried preparations with the cannon. As all this is happening, the captain’s men see several of Long John Silver’s mutineers running along the shore. These men climb into one of their small boats and begin to row toward the captain’s men. They are no great threat; they are fighting the tide, so it is clear they will not arrive quickly. However, the cannon is almost ready to fire. The captain tells the doctor to steer straight for shore, even if the boat takes on water. The doctor obeys, and he makes fairly good progress until the cannon fires. The captain’s men dive out of the way, and the cannonball flies over their heads. However, in all the jostling, the boat gets swamped. Only the doctor and the captain have the presence of mind to keep their muskets out of the water; three guns get dunked in the sea, as does the whole boatload of food and ammunition. Now half of the supplies are lost, three of the muskets will not shoot. They run to shore, hoping they will arrive at the stockade before Long John Silver can organize his pirates for an attack.

***Analysis Ch 16:***

In Chapter 17 ("Narrative Continued by the Doctor: The Jolly-Boat's Last Trip") the five men head again for shore with the boat severely overloaded. The tide is ebbing and they are nearly swamped, but they are making their way slowly when they realize that Hands and the other four left on the Hispaniola are now in possession of the ship's "long-nine" — a long-range mounted gun — and its powder and shot. From their boat they can see Hands getting ready to load the gun, and Squire Trelawney, the best shot, aims his musket and fires. He misses Hands but hits one of the others. Then Silver's party comes down to the beach. Some start out toward the squire's group in one of their two boats, while others run along by the shore to head them off. They know it will be a race, but they are close to shore and they try for it, the ebbing tide now working for them and against the pirates' boat. By now, however, Hands has readied the gun on deck and he fires. The shot whistles over their heads, but at their effort to back the boat out of Hands' aim, it sinks, along with their supplies and three of their five muskets.

***Critical Study:***

Unfortunately, the men have a very difficult journey ahead of them and struggle returning to land because the small boat was overloaded and it was going against the tide. Even more dangerous, the current pushed them to come ashore precisely between Silver's two boats. Added to these problems, the captain spots the biggest dilemma of all: Silver's men are removing the tarp from the cannon and they realize they did not destroy the ammunition of the cannon.

Trelawney, who claims he is the best shot in the boat, attempts to pick off Hands, but the man moves just as he shoots and another mutineer is wounded. The men barely make it to shore, when their boat is swamped and they are forced to abandon their supplies and all but two of the muskets. As the squire's men race to dry land, they hear voices of the pirates coming closer and fear that Joyce and Hunter, the men who have been left behind in the stockade, will not be able to hold it from the pirates without any support.

This chapter continues Stevenson's fast-paced trend. Throughout the whole chapter, there is not much time for content as the "good guys" face one challenge after another. Again, at the end, Stevenson makes the book more suspenseful, providing one of the greatest page turners in the history of literature, by ending the chapter at a point where the reader is forced to continue reading the book in order to be assured of what happens next.

Again, this chapter fits into the thematic narrative mould as seeing the book Treasure Island in the mode of a romantic quest. Throughout all the evil, the basic drive that keeps both the pirates fighting and the "good guys" from simply turning around is the search for a treasure. The "quest" is only heightened by the fact that there is resistance in the way - otherwise there would be no quest or excitement in the opposition.

The character of Mr. Trelawney and Dr. Livesy are further developed in this chapter, as the two are forced to demonstrate skills in order to save the day. Dr. Livesy proves to be a methodical, science-centered man whose approach to the situation before them helps save the crew and takes them to safety. Unfortunately, there were too many obstacles in his way. Mr. Trelawney is a man who is a "sure shot," and although to this point has not proved helpful in the treasure expedition, he assures that there was a reason besides gold that he set out on this quest through his heroics in this chapter.

***Critical Analysis:***

For the final journey to shore, the jolly-boat is dangerously overloaded with goods and five men. In addition the boat is fighting the changing current, which threatens to drive it to where the pirates' boats are beached. To make matters worse, the mutineers aboard the *Hispaniola* are preparing to fire the ship's cannon at them.

The captain requests that Mr. Trelawney, who is the best shot, pick off one of the mutineers near the cannon—"Hands, if possible." Unfortunately, Hands stoops down at the last second, and another man is hit. On land the sound brings pirates pouring out of the woods, and there's no time to waste getting the jolly-boat around a protective spit of land and to shore. As they turn to avoid a cannon shot, the small boat sinks in three feet of water, taking the provisions down with it.

As with the previous chapter, the full title of this one includes the explanation: *Narrative Continued by the Doctor.* Once again, the ever-steady and reliable [Captain Smollett](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Treasure-Island/character-analysis/#Captain_Smollett) shows he's a good man in a crisis. His quick-thinking strategy to save the jolly-boat from cannon fire saves everyone's life. The sinking of the boat is unavoidable.

Given the chance to redeem himself, [Squire Trelawney](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Treasure-Island/character-analysis/#Squire_Trelawney) grabs it: he never balks at the assignment to take a shot at the mutineers and is cool and calm as he takes aim at Israel Hands from the jolly-boat.

Like every chapter, this ends in a cliff-hanger—a reminder that the story was originally printed as a serial in *Young Folks* magazine.

***Summary and Analysis Part by Part:***

***Summary Part 1:***

This time, the small jolly-boat is overloaded, and begins to list to and fro. Terrified, they all keep still, but [Dr. Livesey](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters/doctor-livesey) can’t manage to keep the boat going straight towards the stockade (the log-house). [Smollett](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters/captain-smollett) tells the doctor they must continue upstream, otherwise they can’t know where they’ll end up. Looking back to the Hispaniola, they realize that the long-gun (a cannon) has been left on the ship with [Hands](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters), who’s a great shot. Dr. Livesey can hear Hands preparing the gun on deck.

***Analysis Part 1:***

As the captain and his men make their escape, the hastiness of their plan becomes evident, as they’ve left behind a powerful and lethal weapon that their enemies will now be able to use. On a rickety boat heading ashore, it’s difficult to know how they’ll avoid any shots fired by Israel Hands.

***Summary part 2:***

[Smollett](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters/captain-smollett) asks [Trelawney](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters/squire-trelawney) to pick off [Hands](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters): he shoots, but just at that moment Hands stoops down, and the bullet hits another one of the men, who screams—causing some of the pirates ashore to run out and climb back into their small boats. The captain cries that now they must get ashore however possible. They all duck just as the men on the ship shoot a cannon at them: it misses them, but the boat begins to sink. They all wade ashore, leaving the jolly-boat with all its loaded provisions and powder behind.

***Analysis Part 2:***

The captain hopes that by killing or wounding Hands immediately, they’ll be able to buy some time without them all being killed themselves. But the plan backfires out of pure bad fortune, and, even worse, they’ve now called attention to themselves. Although the jolly boat was stocked with provisions, such preparation turns out to be mostly useless.