***Treasure Island***

***Chapter 24:***

# *The Cruise of the Coracle*

***Brief Summary:***

* Jim wakes up and finds himself about a quarter of a mile offshore of the southwest end of the island.
* He decides to row to shore but can't – there are so many rocks that it's not safe for him to get close.
* He also sees sea lions on the coast, which freaks him out.
* Jim decides to try rowing further north to an easier coastline: the Cape of the Woods. ([**Check out this map**](http://www.kellscraft.com/treasureislandmap.html) to see where the Cape of the Woods lies in relation to Jim's original location, Haulbowline Head.)
* The boat carries Jim quickly along the current.
* He tries to row in a slightly different position and the boat nearly tips over and gets drenched.
* He has to move very carefully to remove the seawater with his cap.
* He figures out a method for steering the boat, but he has to stay propped on his elbows in an uncomfortable position to keep it balanced.
* Jim is relieved that he is approaching the shore because he's getting incredibly thirsty.
* Suddenly he sees the Hispaniola about half a mile away.
* The Hispaniola is sailing, but it doesn't seem to be following a steady course. Jim thinks the guys aboard are still drunk.
* The Hispaniola keeps moving forward and backward, and Jim realizes that no one seems to be steering. Either the men aboard are drunk or have abandoned ship.
* Jim thinks that, if he can get aboard, he could retake control of the Hispaniola for Captain Smollett.
* He decides to try his luck, paddling his tiny boat towards the Hispaniola and eventually managing to catch up.
* The current suddenly brings the Hispaniola around so that it collides with Jim's boat. He only just manages to leap for the ship's [**bowsprit**](http://www.thefreedictionary.com/bowsprit)(the pole sticking out of the front of the ship) just before it runs right over his boat.
* So now Jim is back on board the Hispaniola without any means of rowing to shore.

***Synopsis:***

Upon awakening, Jim discovers that he has drifted to the southwest end of Treasure Island. Paddling toward shore is useless, as he would be dashed to death on the rocks that form this edge of the island. Jim decides to try to make his way toward a friendlier shoreline to the north. After much effort he finally reaches the cove he has aimed for, his throat burning from thirst. He spots the Hispaniola drifting aimlessly and concludes that the crew either is entirely drunk or has deserted the ship.

Jim hatches a plan to try to board the wildly drifting Hispaniola, realizing that he can overtake the ship if he sits up and paddles hard. Though he runs the risk of being spotted, he thinks the idea has an air of adventure about it, so he starts paddling. Finally reaching the ship, Jim climbs on board and searches for water to quench his thirst. He hears the sound of the ship being blown into and destroying the coracle, and knows that escape from the ship is now impossible.

***Critical Study(Ch22-24):***

In these episodes Jim continues to demonstrate his tendency to follow mad whims and private impulses. Jim’s restlessness and discontentment when he is cleaning up the blood from the earlier slaughter are understandable, and we sympathize with his desire to do something more grandiose and heroic. Jim does not simply dream of a heroic act, however, but actually follows through, going off to search for Ben Gunn’s boat. Jim’s decision to go after the boat is a wholly private one, as he does not tell anyone what he is doing. The privacy of this deed is emphasized by the fact that Jim is the only character who appears in all of Chapter XIV. In focusing so exclusively on Jim, Stevenson emphasizes the fact that Treasure Island is truly a coming-of-age story rather than a simple adventure tale. Though the story involves dozens of grown-up, worldly wise men, it is primarily driven—and depends upon—the solitary, private whims of a boy.

The reckless but fascinating character of the pirates also develops further in these chapters. Stevenson portrays the pirates as utterly unable to take care of their own lives in any responsible way. As Jim comes upon the Hispaniola, the ship is drifting madly from side to side, intermittently slowing and accelerating. The ship’s wild course mirrors the chaotic and disorderly lives of the men who have overtaken it. The pirates cannot control or master themselves, and are unable or unwilling to guide their actions according to reason. They fail to notice the drifting of their own ship because they are busy cheering on a wrestling match, another embodiment of violence. Upon seeing the Hispaniola veering, Jim surmises that the men must all be drunk, and though he is incorrect, the pirates’ rum is a clear symbol of their wayward existence. Interestingly, the pirates appear at least partly aware of their own self-destructiveness and the potentially fatal consequences of their mad lives. When they sing, their songs are about dead men’s chests and ships that lose their entire crews; in a way, they sing of their own ruin. It is almost as if the pirates are obeying a sort of innate instinct toward gradual self-destruction.

Stevenson casts the tale in a new light when Jim faces death in Chapter XIII, inviting us to consider the spiritual dimension of the adventure. When Jim suddenly finds himself in close proximity to the pirates’ campfire, he lies down in his boat and “devoutly recommend[s] [his] spirit to its Maker.” Though Jim has clearly been aware of death before, this is the first time he shows any overt signs of religious awareness, and the first time he prays during the novel. When Jim awakens safely in the following chapter, it is as if his prayers have been answered. Alternatively, Stevenson may mean to imply that God helps those who help themselves. Jim reasons with himself to prevent the onset of panic, and is quick to use his wits and courage to paddle his boat up to the ship and hoist himself on board. Just as he gains self-awareness, courage, and maturity as he develops throughout the novel, Jim appears to be gain awareness of a higher spiritual realm as well.

***Significance:***

In Chapter 24 ("The Cruise of the Coracle") Jim awakens after daylight and sees that he is floating in the little boat a quarter mile west off the southwestern end of Treasure Island, upon whose rocks and cliffs waves are breaking violently. He knows he'll be unable to land there; moreover, he sees "monsters" lying on rocks and dropping into the sea — sea lions, he will later learn. Allowing the current to carry him northward along the shore — his attempts to paddle nearly capsize the boat — he finally discovers that he can slowly guide his "coracle" closer to shore, and he feels that soon he'll be able to land. But, rounding a bend, he sees the Hispaniola a short distance away and is sure he'll be seen and captured.

The ship is under sail but behaving strangely, moving back and forth in the current but getting nowhere, and Jim begins to wonder if the two men aboard are still drunk. Eventually he paddles toward the ship, which he now guesses may be deserted. But as he approaches it he realizes that he is in great danger, for now the schooner moves toward him, bow first. As a wave lifts him in his boat, he grabs the boom of the ship's jib and hauls himself desperately up. A moment later the ship strikes and crushes the boat he has just left.

***Critical Analysis:***

The next chapter begins the next morning, where Jim awakens to find himself at the southern end of Treasure Island, at a point where the cliffs of Spy-glass, the island's tallest hill, fall to the sea. Because of the roughness of the territory where he has landed, Jim decides to let the current take him to the Cape of the Woods, where it will be much safer and easier to land. Still lying at the bottom of the coracle, Jim is amazed the boat's ability to ride the huge waves. Jim also realizes, through trial and error, that he can paddle a little from his prone position and so tries to steer the boat towards land. Finally, the current sweeps him past the point of the Cape of the Woods and he sees the Hispanolia. Jim realizes, because of the way the boat is behaving, that no one is steering the boat. He then decides that he will try to paddle out to the boat in order to try to return the boat to Captain Smollett, if no one is aboard. Finally, when Jim is paddling towards the boat, the boat turns and heads towards him. Jumping up, he hangs on the ship's jib-boom, but he finds that he is not able to tie the coracle to the boat, which leaves Jim stranded on the Hispaniola.

It is interesting to note some characteristics about Jim that you can glean from his voyage around the island. First, Jim is enthusiastic and clearly eager for adventure. His is able to quickly think on his feet and is confident, perhaps over-confident, of his abilities. Although he gets into danger time and time again, this does not dissuade him from doing something that is adventurous and daring again. In short, he is the perfect hero for a boy of 13 and 14.

It is also extremely interesting to note that Robert Louis Stevenson's background is extremely helpful in his ability to depict the way that Jim steers the boat and makes his away across the island. His early experiences with his father, where he learned about ships, summering towards the sea, and his crossing of the Atlantic all help him assist the reader in visualizing this setting and events.

The other theme that is apparent in this part of Treasure Island is the moral ambiguity that pervades this work. Having Jim get on the boat is merely a tactically issue - in reality, he was the one who has defied authority and is doing the "wrong" thing. Instead, the reader roots for Jim because his is merely a game, which is reinforced when death seems arbitrary and is not full of remorse.

***Notes:***It is broad daylight when Jim awakens to find he and the coracle are bobbing along the southwest end of Treasure Island. Knowing the best chance he has of beaching his boat lies to the north, he lets the current carry the craft.

As the craft draws near a promontory where Jim might safely get ashore, he spots the *Hispaniola* not half a mile away. The schooner seems to be sailing unmanned on a wild, erratic course. Jim is struck by the idea that he might overtake her. Carefully paddling the coracle, Jim chases the unguided *Hispaniola*. As soon as he is in reach of the schooner's jib boom, he leaps and clings to it, as the coracle disappears beneath the ship's bow.

Fate seems to have intervened yet again. Instead of being broken to bits by heavy sea waves, the coracle is bobbing nicely along the coast, and Jim is safe. Even so, he cannot resist giving in to another impulse. This time, he is driven in part by self-interest (thirst), but also by the nobler thought of returning the *Hispaniola* to her captain. He is making another self-directed decision and trying to do the right thing.

It is interesting to note that Jim thinks of returning the ship to [Captain Smollett](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Treasure-Island/character-analysis/#Captain_Smollett), and not to [Squire Trelawney](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Treasure-Island/character-analysis/#Squire_Trelawney), the rightful owner, reflecting his altered view of the captain and respect for his authority.

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

***Summary Part 1:***

There’s daylight when [Jim](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters/jim-hawkins) awakens and the boat has drifted to the southwest part of Treasure Island. Jim wonders if he should paddle ashore, but rocks crowd the shoreline and he sees it’s too dangerous—plus there are huge slimy monsters atop them (although later he’ll learn that they’re just sea lions). He decides to steer the coracle towards the northward current, to what [Silver](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters/long-john-silver) had told him is the Cape of the Woods.

***Analysis Part 1:***

Now Jim is both too wary of the danger to board the ship, and well aware that it would be impossible to paddle ashore now without the risk of bashing himself against the rocks. The appearance of the sea lions reminds us that Jim has learned a great deal in some ways, but there’s still much he hasn’t seen in the world.

***Summary part 2:***

[Jim](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters/jim-hawkins) begins to float towards shore on his coracle, though every time he tries to paddle the boat rocks violently. He begins to be frightened that he’ll never reach land, but decides to lie on his elbows, only giving one weak stroke every once in awhile to keep the bow pointed towards shore. Then he catches sight of the Hispaniola straight ahead of him—he realizes he’ll be taken, but is so thirsty he almost doesn’t care.

***Analysis Part 2:***

Now the coracle seems almost as erratic as the ship, and requires Jim’s constant vigilance in order to make sure that he survives. Once again, however, his plans must change as a result of changing circumstances, and he must deal with the reality that he’s running right into his enemies.

***Summary Part 3:***

[Jim](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters/jim-hawkins) assumes the ship, directed northwest, is heading back towards the anchorage, but then it halts against the wind: Jim assumes the sailors must still be drunk, but then realizes no one is steering. He uses all his strength to paddle after the ship. As he approaches, the breeze falls and the ship stands still. Then it picks up again, but the Hispaniola’s side swings towards Jim: he leaps to his feat, catches the jib-boom (the part of the spar reaching beyond the ship), and hangs from it, the coracle sinking below him.

***Analysis Part 3:***

Since Jim can no longer avoid the ship, he decides to position himself as best he can in order to ensure he has the best chance for survival aboard it. His ability to notice details and strategize comes in handy here, as he is able to recognize that no one’s steering, and as he can use the specific parts of the ship to his advantage in navigating aboard—again displaying the resourcefulness of a more typical adventure “hero.”