

Talking about *Kidnapped*

by Robert Louis Stevenson · the free ebook lives at youngreaderguide.org/books/kidnapped/

Warming up

Easy openers. Anyone at the table can answer these, including the youngest.

1. David leaves home with a key, a shilling and a Bible. If you had to walk out tomorrow morning with three things, what are you taking?
2. Alan cuts a silver button off his coat and says that anyone who sees it will help you. Who would you give yours to, and who do you think would give you theirs?
3. Would you rather be stuck on the ship or stuck on the island? Say why before anyone else answers.

The real conversation

Pick two or three, not all of them. Parents answer too, honestly.

1. Alan is brave, generous, a wonderful swordsman, and a show-off who loses all their money at cards. David admires him and laughs at him in the same breath. Do you know somebody whose best quality and most annoying quality turn out to be the same thing? Is that true of anyone at this table?
2. David's uncle tries to kill him. David then spends the last chapters trying to get his inheritance the correct legal way, with a lawyer, instead of simply taking it. Why does doing it properly matter so much to him — and would you have bothered?
3. David watches Colin Campbell get shot and runs, because soldiers are pointing at him. He is completely innocent, and running is exactly what makes him look guilty. Have you ever done the thing that made you look worse? What else could he have done?
4. James of the Glens is arrested for a killing that everybody, including the court, seems to know he did not do — because somebody has to hang for it. Stevenson took that from a real trial. Where do people still do the thing that looks right instead of asking whether it is fair?
5. On the moor David is sick and proud and says nothing all day, and Alan is ashamed and angry, and neither of them will speak first. They fix it eventually without anybody really apologising. How do the people at this table make up after something like that? Does it need saying out loud?

The big *one*

Save it for last.

David is a Lowland Presbyterian who thinks King George is the rightful king. Alan is a Highland Jacobite who would fight for the other one, and has. They argue about it the entire book and it never once stops them going the next mile together. Who do you know who is on the other side of something from you — and what is it that lets the two of you keep walking?

Do it *together*

Draw your own wandering. This edition opens with the map the publisher printed in 1913: 'Sketch of the Cruise of the Brig Covenant and the probable course of David Balfour's Wanderings,' with the whole journey inked across Scotland in red. Make yours. Pick the longest way anybody at the table has ever gone on foot — a hike, a walk home when the car broke, the route to school for a year — and draw it in Stevenson's style: the line in red, the hazards named, and one spot marked where something actually happened. Everyone tells the table what happened at their mark. Then put the maps somewhere you will find them again, because Stevenson drew the map of Treasure Island before he wrote a word of it, and the story came out of the drawing.