

Talking about *Treasure Island*

by Robert Louis Stevenson · the free ebook lives at youngreaderguide.org/books/treasure-island/

Warming *up*

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

1. A treasure map turns up in a dead sailor's sea chest in your house. Do you tell your mother, the doctor, or nobody? Would you actually go?
2. Which is scarier: Blind Pew's stick tapping down the frozen road, or Long John Silver being friendly to you?

The real *conversation*

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

1. Long John Silver is a liar and a murderer, and the most likable man on the ship. Even Jim can't help liking him. How does the book pull that off? Have you ever liked someone you knew you shouldn't trust?
2. Jim keeps leaving his post (sneaking ashore, abandoning the blockhouse, cutting the ship adrift) and every time it ends up saving everyone. Is Jim making good decisions, or having good luck? How would he know the difference?
3. The squire and the doctor want the same thing the pirates want: another man's buried gold. What actually makes the gentlemen different from the pirates, and is it more than good table manners?
4. Ben Gunn spent three years alone on the island with all that treasure, dreaming about toasted cheese. What does his story say about what the gold is actually worth?
5. Silver escapes with a sack of coins, and Jim hopes he's living comfortably somewhere with his parrot. Are you glad he got away? Should you be?

The big *one*

Save it for last.

At the end Jim says wild horses couldn't drag him back to that island; the adventure every kid dreams of gave him nightmares for life. Would you still go? Is an adventure worth having if you'd never, ever repeat it?

Do it *together*

Draw the map first. Stevenson drew the map of Treasure Island before he wrote a single word; the story grew out of the drawing. Each of you draws a map of a place that doesn't exist: name the coves, mark the hazards, and put one X on it. Then tell the table what happened at the X. Keep the maps in the book club box; any of them is allowed to become a story later.