

# Swiss Family Robinson - Extended Story Summary

## Shipwrecked

The Robinson family is traveling on a ship in the middle of a storm that has already lasted six days. They are in the hold and cannot see everything happening on deck but know that the storm is bad and that the ship has wrecked on land. The captain shouts that all is lost. Father goes on deck to find that the captain and all the crew are already in lifeboats leaving the boat.

The Robinson family cannot get to land that night but sleep on the ship. They spend the next day searching the ship for supplies and find livestock, tools, and other supplies that will help them on land. They also build a raft out of large barrels and life vests out of smaller barrels before spending another night on the ship.

All aboard the raft and landing on a rocky shore

The Robinson family finishes building the raft made of barrels and gathers all the supplies they can fit into it from the ship along with some poultry before rafting to the land. Two dogs named Turk and Flora that were on board the ship follow them. The family lands on a rocky shore near a river and makes preparations to camp including making a tent out of one of the ship's sails. Fritz, Ernest, and Jack leave camp to explore a little of the island. Jack gets pinched by a lobster which they catch for a later meal. Ernest finds oysters, and Fritz finds an agouti which is a small animal similar to a pig. The family eats soup for their evening meal using oyster shells for spoons before sleeping for the night.

## Analysis

The Robinson family is from Switzerland and is traveling by ship to Australia where they plan to join a colony. Father, Mother, Fritz, Ernest, Jack, and Francis are frightened by the storm and become even more scared when they hear the captain shouting that the ship is lost. The Robinson family has no idea what is happening since they are below deck and cannot see the storm or what damage may have been done to the ship.

Father worries when the captain and crew desert the ship in the lifeboats but sees land nearby and knows that they can get to safety when the storm calms. He is confident in his ability to protect his family as long as the storm subsides and the ship holds through the night.

The Robinson family gives the first indication of how resourceful they are as they search the ship for supplies instead of immediately trying to get to land. They know that the island may not have everything they need and want to make sure they have every possible resource.

The Robinson family's resourcefulness in searching the ship for supplies the previous day pays off. They are able to create a shelter on the island. They can also find and cook food quickly using the supplies they bring from the ship.

Father shows how much knowledge he has of wildlife. He recognizes the oysters and is able to identify the agouti based only on what he has read about exotic animals.

## Exploring the island

Father and Fritz prepare to explore the island further. They take guns and some food with them and find a way to cross the river. The dog Turk follows them. Fritz finds trees that produce a gourd-like fruit that they cut to make bowls, plates, and spoons. They leave the utensils in the sand to dry while they continue to explore.

Father finds sugarcane, and he and Fritz cut several canes to take back to the rest of the family. They drink the syrup from some canes while taking a break but monkeys disturb them from the coconut palms under which they are resting. Father throws stones at the monkeys hoping to make the monkeys imitate him and throw coconuts down at them. Father and Fritz gather coconuts and eat some and have several left to take back to the family.

### **Finding food and survival in the wild**

Father and Fritz begin walking back to camp. The dog Turk runs ahead and kills a mother monkey which leaves its baby monkey orphaned. Fritz asks if he can keep the infant and Father agrees. Fritz makes a leash for Turk and has the baby monkey ride on Turk's back. Father and Fritz return to camp with the coconuts, sugarcane, and dishes they made from the gourds. Mother has a goose roasting over a fire and has found cheese in a barrel from the ship. Father makes cups from the coconut shells while the family eats the coconuts. They go to sleep for the night.

The dogs Turk and Flora begin barking. Father, Mother, and Fritz wake up and find a pack of jackals attacking the dogs. Turk and Flora kill some of the jackals, and Father and Fritz shoot more as the rest run away. Father, Mother, and Fritz go back to sleep for the night.

### **Analysis**

The island appears to have plentiful resources after just a small exploration of the area around where the Robinson family land. Father quickly finds that they will be able to make things they need and find multiple sources of food.

The gourd tree that Father and Fritz find is probably the calabash tree. It grows around the area the family is traveling to and produces fruits with hard shells up to 20 inches in diameter that are known in the area to be useful as containers. The dishes and eating utensils will prove to be useful after the family had to use oyster shells to eat their food the night before.

Sugarcane is a tall grass that produces an edible sweet juice. Manufacturers refine the juice into sugar and molasses in addition to other products. Father and Fritz are drinking pure sugar when they drink from the sugarcane they cut. The sugar provides the energy they need to keep walking.

Fritz is compassionate and kind when he and Father find the infant monkey that Turk inadvertently made an orphan. Fritz makes sure that the infant is safe from Turk and agrees to care for the infant monkey and raise it.

Father is a pastor, and the family has prayed to God for their safety during the shipwreck and landing on the island. The Robinson family's luck in finding resources is a way of showing that the Christian God can provide for his worshippers.

The jackal attack shows some of the real danger of the wilderness. The family has been relatively safe until the jackal attack, and there has been little real danger other than the storm while they were on the ship.

## **Getting more supplies from the ship and learning to be resourceful**

Father and Mother discuss tasks they need to complete including getting the other animals and supplies from the ship and building a better shelter. They decide that Father and Fritz will go to the ship that day. Mother, Jack, Ernest, and Francis will work on various tasks on the island. Father and Mother wake the children.

Fritz leaves the tent first and stands the jackal he and Father killed the previous night up outside the tent. The dogs and younger children see it when they leave the tent and become frightened. Father explains that it is a jackal. The family eats breakfast and discovers that a cask they found before contains butter.

Father and Fritz row their raft to the ship. They feed the animals and make a sail for the raft. They search the ship for useful items and load the raft with cooking utensils, food, and agricultural tools. Father and Fritz sleep on the ship for the night.

Father and Fritz wake in the morning on board the ship and use a telescope to check on Mother, Jack, Ernest, and Francis on shore. Father and Fritz make life jackets out of small, empty barrels for the cow, goats, sheep, pig, and donkey. They tie ropes to each animal to keep them near the raft and begin to sail to shore with the animals swimming around the raft. Fritz shoots a shark that tries to attack the animals on the way.

Father and Fritz reach shore and begin unloading the raft. Jack helps take the life jackets off the livestock. Jack tells Father and Fritz that he made leather collars for the dogs and a belt for himself from leather made out of the jackal's hide.

Mother explains that she found turtle eggs while Father and Fritz were gone. The family enjoys a meal of ham and cheese from the ship and an omelette from the turtle eggs.

Mother tells Father and Fritz what she, Jack, Ernest, and Francis did during the day. Mother and the younger boys explored part of the island and found a bird's nest in the tall grass and other wildlife during the excursion. They discover a small group of large trees that Mother thinks will make a good place for a treehouse home. Mother and the younger boys found a nest of turtle eggs on the journey back to camp. They saw Father and Fritz returning as they arrived at camp.

## **Analysis**

Father and Mother work as a team to make decisions about how the family will best survive on the island. Father listens to Mother as an equal partner and takes her advice. The trip to the ship may be dangerous because Father does not know whether the ocean has damaged the ship further. He decides that it will be safest to only take the oldest son Fritz and leave the younger boys on shore with Mother. The items that Father and Fritz find on the ship will be useful for their indefinite stay on the island. The food will help as a short-term resource until they are able to ensure that they have reliable food sources on the island using the agricultural tools.

Fritz expands the idea the family used before leaving the ship for shore by suggesting that he and Father make life jackets for the animals. Fritz is good at solving problems and applying knowledge learned to form solutions in different scenarios. Father and Fritz may not have been able to save the animals without Fritz's skill at solving problems.

Mother shows her resourcefulness when Father and Fritz return to the ship for the day. She has knowledge that will help the family's survival just like Father does. She is able to teach Jack how to make items out of the leather of the jackal's skin which may help aid them in the future. Mother is adventurous and willing to explore the island on her own. Her ability to find food and cook it should prove useful to the family during their stay on the island.

Mother knows that she has the ability to explore and defend herself and the younger boys as necessary. Her adventure on the island gives the family hope to be able to find additional animals for hunting, and the discovery of the eggs adds to the variety of food sources. Mother is able to scout and find a location that may give the family a permanent shelter that is better protected than their tent on the shore.

### **Setting up a new site, safe from jackals**

Father and Mother discuss moving to a more permanent location on the island. Mother convinces Father that another location will be better for the family because of the lessened risk of jackals and other wild animals and a greater ability to find fruits and vegetables. Father agrees but wants to build a bridge across the river first.

Father, Fritz, and Ernest take the raft toward the ship to get planks for a bridge. They find the body of the shark that Fritz killed on a small island and cut some meat from it. They also see several planks washed ashore so they take them from the island instead of continuing to the ship.

Father, Fritz, and Ernest return to the camp, eat lunch with the family, and then go to the river and start building the bridge. They lay the supporting planks across the river and return to camp for supper.

Father and Mother pack the belongings the family will need over several days and prepare Fritz, Jack, Ernest, Francis, and the animals to travel to the family's future campsite. A porcupine attacks the dogs Turk and Flora during the journey, and Jack shoots the porcupine.

The family arrives at the grove of large trees Mother found previously when exploring. Fritz wanders away and kills a tiger nearby. The family begins to establish a camp. Francis discovers figs which lets the family know that the large trees in the grove are fig trees. Father makes sewing needles from some of the porcupine's quills. Father and the children examine the trees before eating lunch.

Father, Fritz, and Ernest leave the new camp to find materials they can use to build a new shelter. Fritz shoots two flamingos. One flamingo dies and the other has only a minor injury. Father catches the injured flamingo to add to their poultry. Father devises a way to measure the fig trees so they can build a treehouse. Father, Fritz, and Ernest return to the new camp. Father measures the height of the lowest branches of the fig tree and makes arrows and a ladder. He pulls the ladder to the branch using a rope. Jack and Fritz climb the ladder to the branch. Father follows and attaches a pulley to a branch to use the next day for pulling planks to the branch.

### **Analysis**

Father and Mother are partners in discussions concerning the stay on the island. They are both able to calmly explain their side of a discussion and listen with an open mind. The way that they

work together is a sign that the family can survive better than they would if they argued over what they need to do.

Father knows that the animals may not be able to cross the river as easily as humans and thinks of an easier way for everyone to cross. He knows that survival is important but that providing some comforts and making things easier will help keep the family happy and uninjured. The family hopes to be rescued but knows that there is no guarantee that another ship will happen to find them in the near future. They plan for a permanent stay on the island in case it takes a long time to be rescued.

Fritz and Jack both show that they can help protect the Robinson family in the event of danger when Jack kills the porcupine and Fritz kills the tiger. Both animals can be dangerous and could have seriously injured a family member or animal, but Fritz and Jack are growing into capable young men with survival instincts.

Father's praise of Mother's selection for a new home, shows that he cares about her opinion. Father and Mother continually show the boys how they believe parents should act by respecting each other as husband and wife and both doing their share of the work that needs to be done.

Father is resourceful when he makes new sewing needles from the porcupine quills. He knows that sewing needles will not be readily available on the island and that they will eventually need new clothing.

The Robinson family makes use of everything they can find on the island. Flamingos are not usually kept as poultry, but Father knows that they will need to think creatively in order to expand their livestock and ensure a constant supply of food.

Father is knowledgeable in more areas than animals and basic survival. He uses advanced math in order to measure the height to the tree branch accurately. Father knows a broad range of subjects that help the Robinson family during their isolation on the island. His knowledge is crucial to the family's survival.

### **The Treehouse**

The family wakes in the morning. Mother, Jack, Ernest, and Francis walk to the family's original campsite near the shore to gather planks. Father and Fritz climb to the tree branch and prepare it for building by cutting stray limbs. They then build a floor and railing with the planks Mother and the younger children bring back. Father and Fritz use the sailcloth as a roof for the treehouse. The family eats supper on the ground, decides to celebrate the Sabbath or Christian day of rest and worship the next day, and then spends the night in the new treehouse.

The family celebrates the Sabbath with prayer and reading the Bible. Father tells a parable about a king who sends several of his citizens to a new colony with seeds and equipment. The king asks the colonists to produce crops. He sends ships to retrieve them later. The colonists who work their lands and produce harvests live in the king's castle after their return. The colonists who are idle work in the mines or are otherwise punished.

Father explains that the king is God and the colonists are humans who are rewarded or punished for their lives on earth.

Father shows Fritz, Jack, Ernest, and Francis how to make and use a bow and arrows the next day. He wants to prepare them in case they run out of powder for the guns. Father tells Fritz how to make leather from the tiger skin. Ernest shoots two birds for their supper.

Jack and Francis continue practicing with the bow and arrows while Father makes more arrows. The family names different parts of the island and landmarks during lunch. The family decides to walk to their original campsite near the shore to get additional supplies. They start walking a different route than their usual one.

### **Analysis**

Everyone in the Robinson family has a way to help with almost every task needed for their survival. The younger boys Jack, Ernest, and Francis can help Mother gather planks even though Father believes it is too dangerous for them to climb the tree before he builds a shelter. Father and Fritz are able to build a basic treehouse in only one day. The treehouse will protect the Robinson family from most wild animals and allow them to rest peacefully without fear during the night.

Mother and Father display their devotion to God by observing the Sabbath as Christians usually do. Christians are a religious group who worship one God whom they believe sent his son Jesus to earth to live, die, and be resurrected as a show of love. The Sabbath is a day of rest and worship usually observed on Sundays by Christians. Father is a trained pastor and is able to preach a sermon to Mother, Fritz, Jack, Ernest, and Francis from memory. A parable is a type of story that has a simple plot and teaches a moral or spiritual lesson. The Christian Bible contains many parables, and Christian authorities say that they were told by God's son Jesus while he was living as a man on Earth. The parable Father tells is not directly from the Christian Bible but carries a Christian message. The parable means that Christians are called by God to work hard during their time on Earth. If Christians obey God's commandments and work to provide for themselves, God will bring them to heaven when they die. If people do not obey God's commandments and are lazy in their work, God will send them to hell instead for punishment.

Father knows that many of the supplies the family found on the ship will run out including the gunpowder. He makes other weapons and teaches the children how to use them so that they can practice before they are needed. Jack and Francis are intrigued by the bow and arrows and enjoy learning to shoot with them. The boys know that shooting the bow and arrows is fun for now but may prove useful in the future.

Father wants to name the landmarks on the island because he does not know how long the Robinson family will need to stay on the island. Naming the places will make it easier to describe locations to each other.

### **Using plants and animals for survival**

The family walks to their previous campsite and discovers many useful plants on the way such as Indian fig which is also known as prickly pear, pineapple, and karata which is used as tinder for fires. The karata can provide thread for Mother's sewing projects. Jack finds an insect called the cochineal that can be used for dyeing clothing. The family continues to the campsite and gathers gunpowder and shot, butter, and the geese and ducks. They walk back to the new treehouse.

Father and Ernest walk to the shore of the stream to gather wood that they use to make a sledge that the donkey can pull. Father and Ernest return to the treehouse to finish building the sledge. Fritz, Jack, and Francis shoot birds that are eating the figs in the tree until Father and Mother tell them to stop using the gunpowder. Father shows the boys how to make snares for the birds. Father and Ernest plan to go to the previous campsite after lunch to retrieve more supplies.

Father and Ernest harness the donkey and cow to the new sledge and walk to the previous campsite to retrieve additional supplies. Ernest catches a large fish, and Father and Ernest gather salt from the rocks. Ernest kills a kangaroo on the return walk to the treehouse, and Father and Ernest put it on the sledge and take it back to the treehouse.

### **Analysis**

Prickly pear is a type of cactus that grows fruit and Indian fig is a type of prickly pear. Prickly pear is not native to the region where the Robinson family is shipwrecked, but the plants were introduced to Australia by early explorers who prized them for the fruit.

Karata is a plant native to the West Indies and parts of South and Central America and is related to the pineapple. The fruit is edible and has hairs on it. Father demonstrates his knowledge of plant life when he is able to identify the plant and teach the family how to gather the hair in order to use it as thread for sewing.

A sledge is a type of vehicle similar to a sled or sleigh. Sledges are usually made with runners and pulled by an animal. Father and Ernest are able to build one that will help them move supplies from the shore to the treehouse.

Father and Mother know that the gunpowder will eventually run out and tell the boys to stop shooting the birds for fun. The snares provide the boys with a renewable way to continue to catch the small birds that eat the figs. The family uses the birds as a food source.

The family discovered salt dried on the rocks near the shore not long after they landed on the island. Father knows that the salt is a valuable addition to their supplies for its seasoning ability so he gathers more when he and Ernest have an opportunity.

Father and Ernest have never seen a kangaroo before, but they both have extensive knowledge of animals. They discuss the classifications of animals in order to determine that it is a kangaroo. Father and Ernest are both well-studied in biology and classifications.

Father and Fritz walk to the shore and sail to the wrecked ship to salvage anything left on board. They build a new raft of empty casks and spend the night on the ship. They begin gathering supplies the next morning. Father and Fritz find tree seedlings, tools for a variety of tasks, and fishing equipment. They load everything they think would be useful onto the new raft and set out for shore.

Fritz catches a tortoise on the way back to shore with a harpoon he and Father had salvaged from the ship. Father kills the tortoise after it pulls the raft near the shore. Father asks Mother to bring the sledge from the treehouse, and the family begins transporting the new supplies to the treehouse. Father begins cleaning the tortoise shell and Fritz plans to make a water tub with it. Ernest shows Father that he found some roots during the day that Father thinks are manioc that

can be used to make a type of bread. Mother shows Father that she found a cask of wine during the day. Father brings mattresses that he and Fritz found on the ship into the treehouse.

Father, Fritz, and Jack finish unloading the raft and return to the ship to find any additional items they can use. Jack finds a wheelbarrow and Fritz finds an unassembled pinnace which is a small boat. They leave the pinnace behind but find several other useful items during a short search of the ship and return to shore to unload them.

Father shows the family how to make bread with the manioc roots the next morning so that they have additional food for both themselves and the poultry. They feed the manioc bread to the poultry. Father, Fritz, Jack, Ernest, and Francis spend the afternoon transporting the remaining supplies unloaded from the ship from the shore to the treehouse.

### **Analysis**

Father knows that he needs to get everything possible from the ship before it is damaged by another storm and possibly sinks in the ocean. The ship is stable enough to keep from sinking for a while, but the family does not know when that stability may change.

The ship's mission was to form a new colony, so it was loaded with a variety of supplies that are useful in a relatively unknown land that has no modern tools readily available. The Robinson family has luck in finding many tools on the ship and some luxuries as well.

A harpoon Fritz found on the ship proves to be useful immediately for catching the tortoise. Fritz's problem-solving ability is useful when he has the idea to turn the large tortoise shell into a water storage basin so that the family does not need to go far for water.

Manioc is also called cassava. It is a root vegetable native to the tropics and is used to make flour, tapioca, and laundry starch. Manioc contains cyanide (a poison), and has to be prepared in a specific way in order to remove the poison so that it is edible. Father has read the method that consists of grating, pressing, and then heating the root before making bread.

A pinnace is a type of small boat. It usually has sails or oars, and many ships carry one for small excursions. The pinnace could be useful as a replacement for the raft the Robinson family uses, but the pinnace is in pieces and would take time to put together.

### **A pinnace replaces the raft; Crackers from gunpowder**

Father, Fritz, Jack, and Ernest return to the ship to retrieve the pinnace. They cannot fit all the pieces on the raft and decide to assemble it below deck on the ship. Father and the boys return to the ship every morning for a week to work on the pinnace and bring additional supplies to shore each evening. Father makes a cracker of gunpowder with a fuse that will last about two hours in order to make an opening in the ship to get the pinnace out. He lights the fuse before he and the boys take the raft to shore and begin unloading the supplies they had found that day.

Father's cracker explodes and he and the boys take the raft back to the ship. They lower the pinnace in the water from the new hole in the ship and spend the next two days loading more supplies from the ship into the pinnace. They return to shore to show Mother and Francis the pinnace. Mother shows Father, Fritz, Jack, and Ernest a garden that she and Francis planted while they were working on the pinnace.

Father teaches the boys how to use a Patagonian weapon that is made of two iron balls tied with a long rope. Father, Fritz, Jack, and Ernest plant fruit trees. The family sets out to gather gourds for storing food and liquids. They discover a bustard on the way, and Fritz captures it alive.

The family gathers gourds, and Ernest finds the sow that ran away shortly after the shipwreck. Father, Fritz, Jack, and Ernest discover a fruit under the trees that they decide to gather and examine later. Jack finds an iguana, which Father kills for a later meal. Father, Fritz, Jack, and Ernest return to Mother and Francis. They find that the fruit is guava and have supper under the gourd trees. They leave the sledge and return to the treehouse for the night.

### **Analysis**

Father knows that the pinnace can be a useful addition to the Robinson family's equipment. A cracker is an explosive or a bomb. Father has the scientific knowledge that allows him to find a place on the ship to light the cracker so that they can move the pinnace to the water without harming the pinnace or sinking the ship. The pinnace is larger than the raft and allows Father, Fritz, Jack, and Ernest to salvage more supplies from the ship than they could with the raft.

Mother and Francis were able to plant a garden and have vegetables starting to grow in the days it took Father, Fritz, Jack, and Ernest to assemble the pinnace and transport more supplies from the ship. She is capable of contributing to the food supply and surprising the rest of the family with her resourcefulness.

Patagonia is a part of South America that covers most of southern Argentina. The original inhabitants were the Tehuelche tribe. Historians do not know much about the Tehuelche. One of their weapons was a bola or a hunting tool made of weights attached to cords. The Tehuelche threw the bola to entangle an animal's legs or wings. Father knows about the weapon and displays that he has studied history as well as other subjects.

A bustard is a large bird that prefers running to flying. The largest bustard species can get up to 4 feet long. Iguanas are large South American lizards. They mostly eat plants but can be territorial and are capable of defense. Humans have eaten iguanas for thousands of years.

The Robinson family constantly finds new and exciting animals on the island. These animals add to the excitement in *The Swiss Family Robinson* and provide Fritz, Jack, Ernest, and Francis with the opportunity for first-hand knowledge of a variety of wildlife and techniques for animal care.

### **The candleberry tree**

Father and Fritz walk to retrieve the sledge. The gourds the family gathered the day before are in good condition. Father and Fritz leave the sledge and continue into the island to explore further. They find a tree that resembles the candleberry tree and a flock of birds. Fritz captures a green parrot that he wants to give the younger boys as a pet. Fritz finds some rubber trees, and Father and Fritz gather sugarcanes before returning to the sledge and then home to the treehouse.

Father and Mother make candles from the wax of the candleberry berries. Father devises a way to make butter using a hollow gourd. Father, Fritz, Jack, and Ernest spend several days searching the wrecked ship for anything else that may be useful and then blow up the remainder of the wreck using a cask of gunpowder.

### **Analysis**

The candleberry tree is also called a bayberry tree. It is common in North America but can be found in other regions. The berries are covered in a wax that can be used for making candles though it is not used for modern candles.

A tuiete bird is a small parrot. Fritz determines to keep the tuiete as a pet for his brothers. Father is happy that Fritz finds a rubber tree because the rubber sap of this tree can be used to provide protection against water.

Father thinks that it will be easier to shake cream into butter than to make a traditional churn. His method not only proves effective but is something fun for the children to do. Father, Fritz, Jack, and Ernest blow up the ship rather than leave it because planks from the ship will probably wash up on shore. They plan to use every part of the ship that they can.

### **Lost donkey**

The family decides to stake the fruit trees and explore more of the island. They gather supplies for camping overnight if needed and walk to the bamboo and sugarcane groves. Father finds a field in the middle of the two groves and decides that they will make camp by building a rough hut out of branches. The donkey runs away and they cannot catch him.

Father and Jack go in the morning to look for the donkey. They follow the donkey's tracks and find a large plain with buffaloes. The dogs Turk and Flora frighten the buffaloes by capturing a calf. Father and Jack shoot their guns and frighten most of the herd of buffaloes away but have to shoot the calf's mother. Father finds a way to tie the buffalo so they can attempt to tame it, and Jack cuts some rushes. Jack and Father lead the buffalo to the field where Mother, Fritz, Ernest, and Francis remained. The family camps in the field for a second night.

### **Piglets and the eagle**

Mother shows Father that Fritz, Ernest, and Francis cut down a sago palm the day before. Fritz shows Father a young Malabar eagle that he captured the previous day with plans to tame it. Father and the boys begin work to gather pith from the palm tree and make water troughs from the trunk to use in irrigating the garden and fruit trees. The work takes most of the day and the family camps in the hut for a third night.

The family takes the new trough, pith, candleberries, and rubber sap to the treehouse. They discover on the way that the sow has given birth to a litter of piglets. They reach the treehouse. Fritz's new eagle kills the pet parrot, and Ernest tells Fritz how to tame the eagle as falconers tame their raptors. Father investigates a hollow in the tree that contains the treehouse and finds that it is a beehive.

### **Analysis**

The runaway donkey is a major loss for the Robinson family. The family needs to use the sledge to transport supplies easily around the island. They could carry many items by hand, but it would take longer and require more work. They could not carry large items without the donkey pulling the sledge. Father and Jack do not find the donkey, but luck allows them to find another animal that can be used for pulling the sledge. Buffaloes are stronger and related to the cow that they also use to pull the sledge. A buffalo calf can be trained more easily than an adult buffalo. Buffaloes have been used as draft animals for centuries. Water buffaloes in particular are an

important draft animal in tropical Asia because they are strong, require little maintenance, and their primary source of food is grass which is readily available.

The sago palm can be a valuable source of food and has been used in Eastern Asia as an important part of people's diet. The pith or spongy center is removed and washed to separate the cellulose resulting in a starch that makes a good carbohydrate source. The pith can be used as food for both humans and livestock. Mother shows her knowledge of plants by having Fritz, Ernest, and Francis cut down the tree and telling Father that she does not want to return to the treehouse without the pith, "Ernest assures me it is a sago-tree; if so, the pith would be an excellent ingredient for our soups." The sago palm grows almost 50 feet tall. The height makes the tree valuable for a long trough that the family can use for irrigation. The tree can serve two uses in this way. The pith can be easy to remove and leaves the trunk hollow for use in irrigation.

Ernest shows his knowledge of falconry by telling Fritz how to tame the young eagle. Fritz's eagle can be valuable in helping the family hunt small game for food.

### **Puppies, kids and other animals**

The dogs and goats give birth to puppies and kids. Father removes the bees from the hollow in the tree. He moves the hive to a large gourd and gathers the honey and beeswax for the family to use later. Father finds that the tree is completely hollow. He cuts doors at the bottom of the tree and in the treehouse and attaches planks inside to build a staircase.

Father trains the buffalo for riding with the help of the infant monkey, Francis, Jack, Ernest, and Fritz. Father makes boots out of the sap of the rubber tree and helps the children make shoes for themselves. Father uses the troughs made from the trunk of the sago tree and the tortoise shell that Fritz obtained to make a fountain so that the family can have fresh water near the treehouse.

### **Donkey returns with a mate**

The family wakes to find the donkey that ran away earlier is near the treehouse with an onagra which is a type of wild donkey as a mate. Fritz uses a method Father describes to capture the onagra. Father trains the onagra for riding and names it Lightfoot. The chickens hatch chicks, and the family moves some of them to other locations on the island to breed wild flocks for food.

The Robinson family builds a roof above the high roots of the tree to form a shelter on the ground for keeping supplies in the rainy season. The family then begins stocking the new shelter with food. Father, Fritz, and Ernest find leaves that look like swords and a pair of heath-fowl with their eggs while gathering acorns. They capture the heath-fowl and bring them back to the treehouse.

### **The rainy season**

Francis plays with the sword-leaves the family found earlier until they are dry. Fritz helps Francis make whips from the dry leaves so that Francis can more easily help herd the livestock. Father determines that the leaves are flax that the family can use to make new clothing. Fritz and Jack gather flax leaves, and Father shows the family how to prepare them for weaving. The family builds a store of prepared flax to weave during the rainy season.

The rainy season begins, and the Robinson family moves from the treehouse into the shelter under the tree's roots. The new shelter is crowded with the animals, so the Robinson family releases some of the animals to provide for themselves on the island. The family decides to find a new shelter before the next rainy season. Fritz has a copy of *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) by Daniel Defoe (1660–1731). The family reads the book to model a new shelter based on the book.

### **Analysis**

Father has read about beekeeping methods and knows that blowing smoke into a hive calms the bees. He describes calming the bees saying, "I then smoked as much as was requisite to stupefy, without killing, the little warlike creatures." He can then move the bees away from the tree that holds the treehouse and gather the honey for the family's use.

Father uses a method similar to breaking a horse so that the family can ride the buffalo. He slowly lets the buffalo adjust to carrying weight on his back until Father and the children can ride the buffalo safely. Father is able to use some of the resources the family found earlier to provide a source of running water. The family constantly works toward making their lives on the island easier.

An onagra or onager is a type of wild donkey that is native to eastern and central Asia. People domesticated the onager in ancient times for use as a draft animal and for riding. The heath-fowl is a black grouse which is a bird similar to a chicken. The family can keep the heath-fowl for eggs and food with their other poultry. The heath-fowl adjusts to domestication easily, and Father tells that "they daily accompanied our feathered stock in search of food, and regularly came back at night to the roost I had prepared for them."

The Robinson family finds new and unusual animals throughout *The Swiss Family Robinson*. Some of these animals are native to the South Pacific where the Robinson family is stranded, but some of them are native to other regions and would not have been found in that location in real life. The Robinson family finds luck in being stranded on an island with diverse plant and animal life because they are able to find plentiful food and resources for their new home.

Flax is a plant used to make linen fabric. The seeds are edible so the plant can be used for both food and clothing. Flax is one of the oldest fibers used to make fabric. Historians have found evidence of it being used in prehistoric Switzerland, Egypt, and several other countries. Father knows how to make fabric from it both from reading and from its use in Switzerland.

The Robinson family finds that they were not as prepared for the rainy season as they had hoped. They do not have enough room in the shelter under the tree roots. Father states, "Our little sheds between the roots, constructed for the poultry and the cattle, could scarcely contain us all; and the first days we passed in this manner were painfully embarrassing, crowded all together." The family underestimated the space and the amount of food the animals would need. The family realizes that they have not "provided sufficient hay and leaves for our European cattle" and have to use some of the food stored for the family to feed the animals. The first rainy season is a learning experience for the family that helps them learn how they need to prepare for the next rainy season.

*Robinson Crusoe* (1719) is a book by Daniel Defoe (1660–1731) that tells a story of a man deserted on an island. The character Crusoe keeps a journal of his experiences on the island and

describes his survival in detail. Johann David Wyss and his sons read Robinson Crusoe together and enjoyed it so much that they told the stories which eventually became The Swiss Family Robinson. Wyss incorporates elements of Robinson Crusoe into The Swiss Family Robinson such as the family's shipwreck, survival, and Father's journal of the family's experiences on the island.

### **Building a farmhouse**

Father, Fritz, Jack, and Ernest begin building a farmhouse near their crops. Father underestimates how long it will take to build the farmhouse and sends Fritz and Jack to the treehouse to replenish their food supply. Father and Ernest explore more of the island and find a small lake, strawberries, rice, and black swans. Father decides to build a second home near the lake. The family builds the house and a boat. Father and the boys complete construction in the cavern before the rainy season.

The family celebrates the second anniversary of the shipwreck with competitions in marksmanship, archery, racing, riding, and swimming. The family ends the holiday with a ceremony where Father awards prizes to the winners in each competition.

The family hunts the birds that feed on the figs annually around the treehouse. They collect more sap from the rubber trees. Mother shows Father the gourds she planted from the seeds of the last gourds they collected, and Mother and Father make additional containers from the ripe gourds. Jack finds anise and turpentine, and Fritz finds ginseng.

Father makes a trap for the birds from the rubber sap that makes hunting easier. Father and the boys preserve the birds to store food for the rainy season.

### **Analysis**

The Robinson family continues to build on the island and make it a permanent home. No one in the family has mentioned rescue, and they plan to stay until a ship happens to find them. They continue to explore new areas of the island. Father sees the view of the lake and states, "No one who is not a native of Switzerland can conceive of the emotion which trembled at my heart, as I contemplated this limpid, azure, undulating body of water, the faithful miniature of so many grand originals, which I had probably lost sight of for ever." He has not thought of home much because of the work and adventures of the island, but the sight reminds him of home. He misses Switzerland and the family and friends he had there.

Father has kept up with the days well enough that he can calculate the anniversary of their arrival on the island. He wants to celebrate each year the day that God delivered the family from drowning on the wrecked ship. The family enjoys the celebration and feels that they have earned a day off from work.

The Robinson family consistently replenishes their supplies with the plentiful resources on the island and continues to find additional items they can use. Anise and ginseng are plants used as an herb and medicine. Turpentine is a resin of certain pine trees that can be used as a paint thinner and rubber solvent. Father is innovative and uses some of the rubber sap as a glue. The birds flock on the fig trees and are caught in the glue. Father and the boys can then gather the birds easily and use them for meat.

## **End of the rainy season and a beached whale**

The Robinson family prepares for the rainy season by storing food in the rock cavern home and planting crops that should grow during the rains. The family levels the floor in the cavern and hangs a lantern in the roof for light. Father and Fritz outfit the workroom, and the family makes a library from books that they had saved from the shipwreck. The boys study languages during the rainy season. They name the cavern home Felsenheim which means 'dwelling in the rock'.

The rainy season ends and the family walks the island for exercise. Fritz finds a whale beached on a smaller island. The boys find coral washed up on the beach.

The Robinson family returns to the island and begins to cut up the whale. They return to the shore with fat and whale bone. Father, Fritz, Jack, and Ernest go to butcher the whale further the next day and get whale fat and part of the intestines so that Father can store the oil in the intestines.

## **Analysis**

The Robinson family learned a valuable lesson during the previous rainy season. They have enough experience now to know how much food and supplies they will need to last through the weeks of rain that keep them inside. The cavern home is large enough to keep the family from feeling crowded with the animals and to store everything they need. They can now use books that were found on the ship since they have a shelter from the weather and the space to organize them. The family uses the time they cannot spend outside working on learning. The books are a good resource for the children to have an education other than survival.

The family needs to walk around after being shut up in the cavern for two months. They walk around the shore and assess any damage done to the island. Mother knows the difference between necessity and luxury and only wants to search for items that are useful. Father observes that she "admired the beauty of our coral, but observed that it was of no use in the household affairs."

The Robinson family tries to find a use for almost everything they find on the island. The whale that washed up on the smaller island can provide them with food. Whale fat can be made into oil that was used as a lamp fuel and in making soap as well as a lubrication for machinery. Father knows the value of whale oil. Mother objects to washing his clothes after butchering the whale, but he "consoled her by promising miracles from the rich treasures of whale oil."

Father and the boys extract whale oil from the whale fat. Father makes a propeller with a manual motor that the family can use in a canoe they made. The family takes the canoe with a new propeller on an excursion to another shore on the island and gathers coconuts and sugarcane. They pull some of the sugarcane from the roots to add to the garden.

The family goes to the small island by canoe to prepare it for some of the poultry. Jack finds the whale bones, and Fritz and Ernest find and capture a large turtle. Father ties the turtle to the boat and lets it loose, steering it so that the turtle pulls the family back to the shore. Father and the boys preserve the turtle meat for soup.

## **Boa constrictor**

Father makes a machine for weaving and leather out of kangaroo and sea-dog skin. He uses the leather to make saddles and other items they can use for riding their animals. The family learns to make baskets and makes a litter for Mother to ride in.

A boa attacks the family while they are outside the cavern. Father, Fritz, Ernest, Jack, and Francis scare the boa away by shooting. The family stays inside for three days because they are afraid of the boa. They leave the cavern with the animals so that the animals can find food, and the boa attacks again. The boa kills the donkey. Father, Fritz, Jack, and Ernest kill the boa while it is resting.

### **Analysis**

Father has learned from his studies how to make whale oil out of the fat. The whale oil will provide the family with fuel and potentially other uses and is a valuable resource.

The whale bones could be useful. Fritz asks, "Can we not draw from this mountain of bones some utility?" The children have learned to think of potential resources and try to find out whether everything they find can be put to use either for the family's survival or to make their lives easier on the island.

Father wanted to use the sea-dogs or seals for leather when the family saw them earlier on the shore. The family has been storing the skins of the sea-dogs and other animals they hunt for food. Father is able to use these skins to make leather. Fritz, Jack, Ernest, and Francis have asked for better riding equipment so they do not have to ride their animals bareback, and Father provides these.

A boa or boa constrictor is a large snake that can grow up to 13 feet long. Father notes that the snake's skin is tough and that it is possible that "the scales of his skin were impenetrable to balls" or bullets. The family is frightened of the snake enough to stay indoors for days until they are forced to leave because there is no food left for the animals.

### **Years later**

Fritz tells Father quietly that he found an English girl who has been living on a nearby island for three years. The Robinson family sails to the island and meets the survivor who pretends to be a male sailor. Fritz introduces her as Sir Edward Montrose. Mother takes the survivor to the boat to sleep for the night. Fritz tells Jack, Ernest, and Francis the story of how he found the survivor and accidentally speaks the name Emily.

Fritz tells Emily's story in the morning. She is English and was born in India. Her mother died when she was young. Emily's father is an English commandant and raised her with a varied education that included defensive as well as domestic skills. Her father was promoted to colonel and had to return to England. Emily and her father sailed on separate ships. Emily's ship was wrecked in a storm, and she survived on the island using the skills that her father taught her as a child until Fritz found her.

The Robinson family and Emily sail toward the Robinsons' home. Father stops to look at the farmhouse and then to gather wool from the rabbits. Fritz and Francis go home instead of stopping with the others. Fritz and Francis watch for the rest of the family and Emily to land and greet them with cannon fire, a feast, and decorations.

Emily admires the home and everything the Robinson family has accomplished on the island. The rainy season starts, and Emily impresses the Robinson family with her knowledge and skills. Emily shows the Robinson family how to weave straw hats.

### **Analysis**

The Robinson family is finally rescued after 10 years, and Emily Montrose is rescued after three. Father is cautious because he is not sure whether the ship they hear is from Europeans or from pirates that he knows sail the ocean in their area. The Robinson family and Emily take every precaution they can before making contact with the ship. They want to ensure that they and their home are safe from anyone who may want to do them harm. Their caution is unnecessary since the ship is English.

Emily is the reason the Robinson family is rescued. Her father knows that the ship she was on was destroyed. He hopes that she was able to survive the shipwreck and find a way to live in the islands and is able to send a search party because he is an important military leader. Captain Littleton would have sailed directly to his destination and not looked for survivors around the islands if not for Emily.

The Robinson family is happy to see other people but part of the family chooses to stay on the island rather than returning to Switzerland. Father and Mother are attached to their home on the island and decide to stay so they can live out the rest of their lives there. Jack and Ernest grew up on the island and consider it home. They stay on the island with their parents. Father, Mother, Jack, and Ernest have grown too fond of their home and accomplishments there to leave.