

# The Swiss Family Robinson



By

Johann David Wyss

A Novel Study  
by Joel Michel Reed

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## Suggestions and Expectations

*This novel study is based on the complete and unabridged version of **The Swiss Family Robinson** printed by Puffin Classics, which consists of a total of Eighteen Chapters.*

This curriculum unit can be used in a variety of ways. Each chapter of the novel study focuses on three chapters of **The Swiss Family Robinson** (the unabridged version) and is comprised of five of the following different activities:

- Before You Read
- Vocabulary Building
- Comprehension Questions
- Language Activities
- Extension Activities

### Links with the Common Core Standards (U.S.)

Many of the activities included in this curriculum unit are supported by the Common Core Standards. For instance the *Reading Standards for Literature, Grade 5*, makes reference to

- a) determining the meaning of words and phrases. . . including figurative language;
- b) explaining how a series of chapters fits together to provide the overall structure;
- c) compare and contrast two characters;
- d) determine how characters ... respond to challenges;
- e) drawing inferences from the text;
- f) determining a theme of a story . . . **and many others.**

A principal expectation of the unit is that students will develop their skills in reading, writing, listening and oral communication, as well as in reasoning and critical thinking. Students will also be expected to provide clear answers to questions and well-constructed explanations. It is critical as well that students be able to relate events and the feelings of characters to their own lives and experiences and describe their own interpretation of a particular passage.

A strength of the unit is that students can work on the activities at their own pace. Every activity need not be completed by all students. A **portfolio cover** is included (p.7) so that students may organize their work and keep it all in one place. A **Student Checklist** is also included (p.6) so that a record of completed work may be recorded.

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## List of Skills

### Vocabulary Development

1. Locating descriptive words/phrases
2. Listing synonyms/homonyms
3. Identifying/creating *alliteration*
4. Use of capitals and punctuation
5. Identifying syllables
6. Identify *anagrams*
7. Identify *personification*
8. Use of singular / plural nouns
9. Listing compound words
10. Identifying parts of speech
11. Determining alphabetical order
12. Identification of root words
13. Identify/create *similes*

### Setting Activities

1. Summarize the details of a setting

### Plot Activities

1. Complete a *time line* of events
2. Identify conflict in the story
3. Complete Five W's Chart
4. Identify *cliffhangers*
5. Identify the climax of the novel.

### Character Activities

1. Determine character traits
2. Relating personal experiences

### Creative and Critical Thinking

1. Research
2. Write a newspaper story
3. Participate in a talk show
4. Conduct an interview
5. Write a description of personal feelings
6. Write a book review
7. Complete an Observation Sheet
8. Writing poetry.

### Art Activities

1. A Storyboard
2. Create a collage
3. Create an Information Card
4. Design a cover for the novel
5. Create a comic strip

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## Synopsis

The Swiss Family Robinson is a story of the happy discovery of the wonders of natural history by a family shipwrecked on a desert island, who remain united through all the adversities that they encounter.

Inspired by Robinson Crusoe, this joyful narrative by a Swiss pastor remains a classic tale of adventure to be enjoyed by all. (The Publisher)

A complete synopsis and other helpful reviews can be found on the following website:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Swiss\\_Family\\_Robinson](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Swiss_Family_Robinson)

(Warning: Website contains plot spoilers)

## Author Biography

*Johann David Wyss*

**Johann David Wyss** (May 28, 1743 – January 11, 1818) is best remembered for his book *The Swiss Family Robinson*. Wyss wanted to write a story from which his own children would learn, as the father in the story taught important lessons to his children. *The Swiss Family Robinson* was first published in 1812, only 6 years before his death, and was translated into English two years later. It has since become one of the most popular books of all time. The book was edited by his son, Johann Rudolf Wyss, a scholar who wrote the Swiss national anthem. Another son, Johann Emmanuel Wyss, illustrated the book.



Courtesy of Wikipedia. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johann\\_David\\_Wyss](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johann_David_Wyss)



# The Swiss Family Robinson



*By Johann David Wyss*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# The Swiss Family Robinson

By Johann David Wyss



## Chapter 1



### Before you read the chapter:

If you were stranded alone on a desert island, what would be your first three priorities and why?




### Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence.

soundly	prowess	reckless	drawing
courage	earnestness	utmost	wetting

1. Instead of \_\_\_\_\_ oaths, the seamen now uttered frantic cries to God for mercy, mingled with strange and ludicrous vows, to be performed should deliverance be granted.
2. We knelt down together, one after another praying with deep \_\_\_\_\_ and emotion.
3. "We must find some food, and take a good supper," said she, "it will never do to grow faint by fasting too long. We shall require our \_\_\_\_\_ strength to-morrow."
4. Fritz, as well as his brothers, now slept \_\_\_\_\_.
5. "I shall never," said she, "muster \_\_\_\_\_ to get into one of these!"



6. "Oh, look here, father!" cried Jack, \_\_\_\_\_ a little spyglass joyfully out of his pocket.
7. "As to that," said Ernest, "I found something very good to eat, as well as Jack, only I could not get at them without \_\_\_\_\_ my feet."
8. "I am glad to see the results of your \_\_\_\_\_, my boy," said I; "but I cannot approve of deceit, even as a joke; stick to the truth in jest and earnest."

## Questions



1. Describe the **setting** of the story as Chapter One begins.


2. What did the members of the ships crew do when they were scared by the rough waters at the beginning of the chapter?


3. Why did the father tie all of the empty flasks and tin canisters together?


4. When the makeshift raft was initially too heavy for the family to lift, what idea did the father come up with in order to launch the craft?


5. What are the first names of all four boys in the Robinson family?


6. What did the two dogs do when they saw the family paddling to shore without them?


### Language Activity



**A.** There are many writers that enjoy using **alliteration** - a literary device is where the author repeats the same sound at the beginning of several words. Here's an example of an alliteration: "grouching, grudging, grumbling, griping about something or other."



Using your imagination, create your own examples of **alliteration** from the following topics. Each example must contain a minimum of three words.

The cry of a baby	
The sound of a thunderstorm	
The sound of nature (think of an appropriate setting)	
Workers hammering a nail	
A child eating a bag of chips	

**B.** A **simile** is a comparison using the words “like” or “as”. Here's an example from Chapter One: *"Every one sprang gladly out of the boat but little Franz, who, lying packed in his tub like a potted shrimp, had to be lifted out by his mother."*



What two things are being compared in this example?

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Invent your own **similes** comparing the following items with something from your own imagination:

a) A man hitting his thumb with a hammer

--

b) An airplane taking off on a runway

--

### C. What Would You Bring?

If you were stranded on a desert island, and you could only bring ten items along in your backpack or suitcase, what would you bring?



1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	

## Extension Activity



### Storyboard

A storyboard is a series of pictures that tell about an important event in a story. A storyboard can tell the story of only one scene – or the entire novel.

Complete the storyboard below illustrating the events described in the first 3 chapters of *The Swiss Family Robinson*. You may wish to practice your drawings on a separate piece of paper.



1	2
3	4
5	6