

Reading Defoe Today

Robinson Crusoe: an Inspiring Entrepreneur

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Abstract. Literature reflects the society and culture of its time, but it can also have lasting relevance and meaning beyond its period of origin. Revisiting the way we approach and interpret literature in the light of contemporary society can lead to a deeper appreciation and more relevant discussions. In other words, adapting literary interpretation to contemporary society can add new dimensions to the understanding and appreciation of classic works, while helping us to better understand the issues of our time. This paper suggests how the story of Robinson Crusoe and his shipwreck might be used to understand entrepreneurship and its implications. Explaining entrepreneurship concepts through the story of the shipwrecked hero can offer learners and readers a unique and stimulating perspective on the challenges and opportunities faced by entrepreneurs. It can also contribute to making reading more concrete and memorable.

Key words: *Literature; Entrepreneurship, Criticism, Teaching English literature.*

*A classic is a book that has never finished
saying what it has to say.*

Italo Calvino

Entrepreneurship plays an essential role in today's society at several levels. Entrepreneurs launch new businesses and initiatives, creating jobs for people in society. Entrepreneurs are often behind innovations that change the way we live and work. They introduce new ideas, technologies and business models that stimulate economic growth and improve the quality of life. In addition, new and expanding businesses contribute to economic growth by increasing production, stimulating consumption and contributing to tax revenues. Innovative companies also create new industries and high-growth markets. Such companies have the opportunity to grow and become key players in international markets, strengthening the country's position in the global economy. Furthermore, some entrepreneurs focus on solving social and environmental problems. They may introduce innovations that have a positive impact on society in general, addressing issues such as sustainability, health,

and education, and reducing inequalities. In short, entrepreneurship is a powerful driver of economic development, innovation and social progress. It stimulates growth, fosters innovation and creates opportunities for individuals, while making a significant contribution to the transformation of our society.

However, learning about entrepreneurship is not limited to traditional management courses. Literature, whether in the form of novels, biographies, essays or even fiction, can play an essential role in conveying key management principles and developing entrepreneurial skills. In addition, literature offers a variety of perspectives, experiences and situations that can reflect the reality of entrepreneurship. Fictional or real characters who face challenges, make difficult decisions and innovate can serve as inspiring examples or warnings for aspiring entrepreneurs. Moreover, many novels and stories feature characters who face complex dilemmas and problems. Readers can analyse how these characters approach these situations, make decisions, learn from their failures and succeed in solving the problems.

From another perspective, communication, leadership and team management skills are essential for entrepreneurs. Literature often explores human interactions and group dynamics, providing examples of good relationship management practices. Many works of literature encourage creativity and innovation by presenting new ideas. Exploring imaginary worlds or futuristic scenarios can inspire entrepreneurs to think outside the box and create something

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new. Entrepreneurs often face risks and uncertainties. Literature can present characters who take calculated risks, make bold decisions and deal with the consequences of their choices, offering lessons in risk management. In short, literature can be a powerful tool for learning about entrepreneurship by providing unique perspectives on entrepreneurial challenges and opportunities.

Robinson Crusoe is a novel written by Daniel Defoe and published in 1719. It tells the story of a shipwrecked man, Robinson Crusoe, who finds himself alone on a desert island for many years. Although the story does not explicitly focus on entrepreneurship, it is possible to identify elements of entrepreneurship throughout the events. Robinson's passion for the sea is evident from the very beginning of the story, as he decides to leave his home in England to follow his passion to become a sailor and explore the world. Robinson is also a great leader. He sets goals, makes important decisions, takes responsibility for his actions, and never loses hope. In addition, one of his most striking characteristics is his ability to adapt to his environment. He learns to hunt, farm, and build a shelter to survive. These actions illustrate his ingenuity and ability to create and innovate in order to meet his basic needs. He also carefully manages the limited resources available to him on the island. He uses his time and skills to make tools, make clothes and store food. Crusoe's entrepreneurial skills extend even further. He draws up a strict plan for his survival. He makes a timetable, divides his time between different tasks and follows his routines meticulously. He also develops a sort of calendar to keep track of the weather. He builds sophisticated tools as his skills improve, and finally discovers how to build a boat to leave the island. Moreover, Crusoe is an example of risk management. He is a perceptive and pragmatic character who constantly assesses the risks and takes steps to ensure his survival on the desert island. Finally, Crusoe's perseverance and thirst for knowledge are crucial elements of his character, enabling him to turn a disastrous experience into an opportunity for learning and personal growth.

Right at the start of the novel, Robinson Crusoe tells us that he was born in 1632 in the city of York, England. He is only 18 when he is seized by the urge to embark on a seafaring adventure. This desire to set out on his own at such a young age is a detail that deserves some thought from an entrepreneurial point of view.

Robinson is driven by passion, and passion has been identified as one of the driving forces behind entrepreneurial success. A number of studies are beginning to focus on passion as an essential component of entrepreneurship. In *Passion and Entrepreneurship*, Baraldi states that 'It is hard to picture a real entrepreneur without passion, that is, as a strictly rational individual driven solely by a calculative pursuit of profit' (Baraldi et al., 2020, p. 1).

This is not the case for parents, however, who in most cases favour reason over passion. When Robinson first feels the urge to go to sea, his father warns him that the 'middle state' is the 'most suited to human happiness', (Defoe, 2007, p. 6). At first, his father's advice resonates with his adventurous soul, but he is soon overtaken by the eagerness to take risks and begins to think constantly about adventures at sea. Robinson then seeks his mother's help, telling her that his thoughts 'were so entirely bent upon seeing the world' (Defoe, 2007, p. 8), but she shows no compassion. When he is 19, on 1 September 1651, Robinson joins a friend on a ship bound for London, without consulting 'neither father or mother any more, nor so much as sent them word of it' (Defoe, 2007, p. 9).

When Stephen Key states that 'being an entrepreneur is all about being unique' (Key, 2013), he provides us with a theoretical framework for examining Robinson's entrepreneurial character. Indeed, one of Crusoe's most important personality traits is uniqueness. Robinson remains true to his values. He follows his ideas at a time when everyone is against him. There are valuable lessons to be learnt from this decision. If your ideas are in line with your deepest principles and values, it is important to follow them, even if others do not immediately understand them. It is just a matter of doing thorough research and making sure your ideas are well-founded and supported by solid facts. Robinson is also open to listening and learning. He listens to differing opinions. He tries to explain, but his explanations do not resonate with his parents. However, he is prepared to take the risk and assume the consequences of his choice. This attitude characterises the majority of entrepreneurs who have succeeded in establishing themselves and their business ideas. Robinson's story teaches us that if we choose to follow our ideas, we must be prepared to be persistent and patient. Sometimes it takes time for others to accept or understand a new perspective. Ultimately, it is essential for a future entrepreneur to listen to

his intuition and his heart, while demonstrating discernment.

Right from the start of his adventure, Robinson is confronted with a tough situation that destabilises him and makes him question his decision to leave his family to explore the sea. Robinson, who had never been to sea before, is terrified when ‘the wind began to blow, and the sea to rise in a most frightful manner’ (Defoe, 2007, p. 9). Immediately, he establishes a link between the sea’s agitation and the ‘judgement of Heaven’. Robinson is so frightened that he makes the promise: ‘if it would please God here to spare my life in this one voyage, if ever I got once my foot upon dry land again, I would go directly home to my father, and never set it into a ship again while I lived’ (Defoe, 2007, p. 9).

This is a perfectly reasonable reaction. After making an important decision, we become vulnerable. We are afraid we have made a mistake and we are afraid we will regret it. Any unusual situation becomes a real ordeal. This is what happens in the business world when we are beginners. Every difficulty seems insurmountable. We are quickly tempted to step back and resume a normal life, without the risks. This moment of doubt strikes almost every young entrepreneur. Should we go back to where we started as long as the losses are not huge, or should we learn to see risk as an important part of any development? Stephen Key describes this hesitation and its potential danger to a project:

So you start questioning yourself: “Is my idea any good? Do I have what it takes? I don’t even know what a business plan, balance sheet, branding, and intellectual property are! Am I up for this? Is it the right time? Should I quit my day job? Where do I even start? How much will it cost? What are the risks? What if I bite off more than I can chew? What if I fail?” For most people, that’s where the dream ends—in a fantasy extinguished by fear. (Key, 2013)

Of course, it is less costly to go back to the starting point, but we must be aware that we do not learn much by living in our own personal bubbles. Robinson has the right to experience these moments of uncertainty. It is a reaction that any individual, regardless of age, can have in situations of distress. But the most important thing is the attitude we adopt once stability is restored. Reason demands that we take the next step as quickly as possible, without forgetting, of course, to learn from the difficulties we have encountered. Robinson completely forgets his vows and promises

when the wind has died down and the sea is calm again, which is characteristic of courageous entrepreneurs.

As they near Yarmouth Roads, the winds cease to blow. They are stilled for eight days, when all of a sudden they begin to blow once again. A storm much more violent than the earlier one strikes the ship. When the ship starts to leak, Robinson is ordered to go below to help pump out the water. The captain sends out several distress signals. A lighter vessel nearby approaches their boat and is able to take the crew away from the sinking ship. The crew finally get to shore. When the captain hears Robinson’s story, he warns him that if he does not go back to his father’s house, he will ‘meet with nothing but disasters and disappointments’ (Defoe, 2007, p. 9). After the failure of this first experience, Robinson finds himself alone to face his destiny with only a little money in his pocket. Being alone with little money can be a stressful situation, but Robinson stays calm. He knows that panic will not solve the situation and could lead him to make impulsive decisions. He then decides to travel to London, refusing to return to his starting point. This decision is an important life lesson. Entrepreneurs must not give up at the first hurdle. They have to believe in themselves and their abilities.

In London, Robinson becomes increasingly reluctant to return home. There, he has the opportunity to meet the captain of a ship who is planning to sail to the Guinean coast of Africa to trade. The captain offers Crusoe a voyage at no expense and advises him to go into business. Crusoe takes 40 pounds with him and decides to invest the money in toys and trifles to trade. This voyage allows Robinson to reap the rewards of his patience. He is able to exchange his trifles for five pounds and nine ounces of gold dust, earning him three hundred pounds.

This was the only voyage which I may say was successful in all my adventures, and which I owe to the integrity and honesty of my friend the captain, under whom also I got a competent knowledge of the mathematicks and the Rules of navigation, learn’d how to keep an account of the ship’s Course, take an observation; and in short, to understand some things that were needful to be understood by a sailor: For, as he took delight to introduce me, I took delight to learn; and, in a word, this voyage made me both a sailor and a merchant: for I brought home L. 5.9 Ounces of gold dust for my adventure, which yielded me in London at my return, almost 300 l. (Defoe,

2007, p. 17)

Robinson's actions and transactions demonstrate his openness to the opportunities presented to him. This characteristic is the key to success for any aspiring entrepreneur, because even if the opportunity sometimes does not match our initial plan, it may open up new avenues that can lead to unexpected improvements. From another perspective, Crusoe resolves to take advantage of his voyage to develop his skills. He learns mathematics and navigation, which are necessary for his career. There is a wealth of lessons to be learnt from this experience. Sometimes determination alone is not enough. Education becomes essential because it can only help entrepreneurs to make rational and effective decisions. In the words of Eric Ries, 'The only way to win is to learn faster than anyone else' (Ries, 2011, p. 112).

After their return to London, the captain falls ill and dies. Keeping firmly the end goal in sight, Robinson decides to go alone to the Guinean coast. He takes with him one hundred pounds, leaving two hundred pounds with the captain's widow to keep safe. The death of the captain-teacher cannot be a simple matter for Robinson. The captain's knowledge, expertise and human qualities represent most of the capital Robinson counts on to get ahead in life. Nevertheless, his death does not prevent Crusoe from following his path. The fact that he takes only a third of his earnings reflects a risk management principle that most business leaders and traders will advise you to adopt before embarking on any investment.

Once again, this voyage proves to be a tension-filled experience. Crusoe is pursued by Moorish pirates off the coast of Salée. His ship is attacked and Crusoe is captured and enslaved. Robinson becomes the master's personal slave, but after about two years, he sets about planning his escape. One day, Robinson sets off on a fishing expedition with two other slaves, Ismael and Xury. He pushes Ismael into the water and takes Xury with him. Crusoe sees a European ship in the distance and asks for help. The ship's friendly Portuguese captain offers to take them to Brazil. Later, the captain buys Crusoe's ship and Xury. This shows again that even in moments of crisis and tension, Robinson never misses an opportunity to do business. He stays continuously alert and acts quickly, taking advantage of any opportunities that arise.

This harsh experience with its heavy burden does not dissuade Crusoe from exploring other avenues. After travelling for

22 days, Crusoe lands in Brazil. The captain is very generous with him. He does not require him to pay for the voyage, but instead gives him 20 ducats for a leopard skin and 40 for a lion skin. In addition, Crusoe earns about two hundred and 20 pieces of eight by selling all his goods. This sharp commercial sense is often associated with entrepreneurship, where a person uses his or her creativity, skills and limited resources to generate sales and make a profit.

In Brazil, Crusoe chooses to live with an Anglo-Brazilian planter on a sugar plantation. His extraordinary quality remains his constant willingness to learn. He learns how to plant, how to speak the language, and how to trade with the Brazilians. He keeps abreast of market trends, new opportunities and new ways of selling. He does everything he can to adapt to his business environment. Robinson buys as much land as he can afford. For the first two years, he earns just enough to get by, but in the third year, he decides to plant tobacco and prepare the ground for sugar cane. Now that he has so much work to do, he begins to realise that he should not have sold Xury.

Robinson has a talent for finding a product or service that meets a need or demand in any situation. Like an entrepreneur, his good 'market research' enables him to understand customer needs, identify opportunities, assess competitors, create a pricing strategy and make informed decisions. In this respect, Crusoe seems to understand perfectly what Kotler and Armstrong say about marketing when they suggest that marketing is 'all about creating value for customers. So, as the first step in the marketing process, the company must fully understand consumers and the marketplace in which it operates' (Kotler, 2015, p. 34).

After informing the Portuguese captain of the 200 pounds he had left in England for the widow of the English captain, the captain arranges for 100 pounds to be sent to Crusoe in Brazil. Once again, Robinson shows prudence by deciding to start with a small amount of capital to minimise risk. Along with his money, Robinson receives a number of English-made goods. As these goods are particularly valuable and sought-after in the country, he manages to sell them at a very advantageous price, earning four times more money than he received. This has enabled Robinson to become rich, but he does not intend to stop there. His entrepreneurial spirit takes over and leads him to have a head full of projects and ventures:

Had I continued in the station I was now in, I had room for all the happy things to have yet befallen me, for which my father so earnestly recommended a quiet retired life, and of which he had so sensibly describ'd the middle station of life to be full of; but other things attended me. (Defoe, 2007, p. 34)

Crusoe's entrepreneurial spirit drives him to seek out new opportunities and embark on new adventures to develop his business. As a challenge-seeking entrepreneur, he is constantly looking for ways to evolve, innovate and grow. Eager to find local labour for the plantations, some merchants suggest that Robinson accompany them and set off together for Guinea in search of black slaves. He accepts but requests that someone look after his plantations. This condition is part of Crusoe's entrepreneurial nature. His plantations will continue to produce wealth while he is away.

Before leaving, Crusoe writes a will in which he specifies that if he dies during this voyage, half of his possessions will go to the Portuguese captain, while the other half will go to England. He sets sail for Guinea 'in an evil hour, the 1st of September, 1659, being the same day eight years that (he) went from (his) father and mother at Hull' (Defoe, 2007, p. 36). Sailing up the South American coast, the ship is caught in a storm and two men are lost. Crusoe fears for his safety. On reaching the Caribbean, the ship is battered by another storm, which drives the ship onto the sand and breaks the rudder. The ship is doomed and Crusoe loses sight of his companions as they are all swept away by a huge wave. Eventually Crusoe manages to reach the shore, where he immediately prays to God in gratitude. After drinking some fresh water and finding a tree to sleep under, Crusoe spends his first night on the island.

The next morning, Crusoe hurries to explore the remains of the ship. He constructs a raft out of broken timbers, on which he loads provisions of bread, rice, meat, cheese and other food. He also finds clothes, weapons and fresh water. Crusoe returns to the ship 12 times over the next 13 days. On one of the later trips, he finds 36 pounds, and sadly ponders on how worthless money is to him. After a strong wind that night, he wakes the next morning to find that the remains of the ship have disappeared. This is an important lesson for the business world. Entrepreneurs need to be aware that the resources at their disposal, whether financial, human or material, are not inexhaustible. Therefore, it is essential

for them to manage these resources carefully and plan accordingly. In his Contemporary Strategy Analysis, Grant emphasises that 'the greater the rate of change in a firm's external environment, the more likely it is that internal resources and capabilities rather than external market focus will provide a secure foundation for long-term strategy' (Grant, 2010, p. 124).

Wary of savages, Crusoe resolves to build a dwelling. He chooses a strategic place with a view of the sea, protected from animals and the heat of the sun, and close to fresh water. He plants wooden stakes in the ground and uses them to form a frame for the walls. Crusoe sleeps safely in the shelter that night. The next day, he carries all his food and supplies inside and hangs a hammock on which he sleeps. He also builds a cellar for storing things necessary for his survival. During a storm, he suddenly starts to worry about his supply of gunpowder, which he separates from the other supplies and stores in the cellar. Crusoe discovers wild goats on the island. On about his twelfth day on the island, he erects a large cross on which he inscribes the date of his arrival, 30 September 1659. He decides to cut a notch in the cross to mark each day that passes.

In a business context, challenges may take different forms, such as financial problems, internal conflicts, poor management, communication problems, rapid technological change, fierce competition and many other factors. Like a sinking ship, a company is also liable to 'sink' if its problems are not resolved quickly and effectively. Therefore, companies need to take rational measures to deal with their difficulties. As a first step, they need to analyse and diagnose their problems in order to clearly identify their root causes. Managers must also carry out strategic planning, drawing up an action plan to overcome the difficulties and defining short and long-term objectives. They also need to be highly flexible and ready to adapt to changes in the market.

The way Crusoe copes with his shipwreck provides lessons in crisis management. Rather than giving up, he shows resilience by learning to adapt to his new environment. He starts by building a rudimentary shelter, and then gradually develops a more advanced infrastructure. He immediately sets priorities and makes a list of the things he needs to survive. Moreover, managing a crisis often requires thinking outside the box. Crusoe recognises the need to be creative and innovative. Therefore, he invents tools and develops hunting and

fishing techniques. Finally, Crusoe has to deal with the loneliness and stress inherent in his situation. His ability to stay mentally strong and manage his stress is an important aspect of crisis management. Leaders must be able to cope with isolation and pressure while remaining calm and clear-headed enough to make informed decisions.

Robinson's perseverance pays off. He manages to cultivate a second field and is expecting a good harvest. Now he can afford to think about utensils for cooking, eating and drinking. He therefore decides to make 'some earthen vessels'. His first attempts are not successful, but they are functional. Wanting the containers to contain liquid, he uses his campfire to harden the pots. Expecting a large grain harvest, he designs a mortar and pestle made of hardwood to grind the grain. He also manages to use the materials recovered from the boat to make sieves for the ground flour. These measures come at just the right time, as his supply of biscuits from the ship is running low.

After four years on the island, it is time to make some new clothes. Using the clothes he found on the boat and some goatskins, Robinson makes himself a waistcoat and pants. Clothes protect the body from heat and cold, but they may also be seen as an asset. Money or products that he would have exchanged for clothes will always be part of his wealth. Moreover, to protect himself from the sun's rays and sunburn, he makes an umbrella from the skins. Like the clothes, the umbrella has the practical function of protecting him from the rain and the sun. It also enables him to preserve his health so that he can carry out the daily tasks to increase his fortune. Ultimately, the fact that Robinson Crusoe tries to bake his own bread testifies to his independence and his desire to prosper.

Robinson's actions are evidence that he is a forward-thinking person with a high degree of anticipation. This quality is highly valued in the business world. Bill Aulet believes that 'One way to gain a competitive advantage is to anticipate the key elements of your solution' (Aulet, 2013, p. 126). To illustrate, anticipation plays an essential role in the success and sustainability of a business. By anticipating changes, opportunities and risks, a company is more likely to prepare for the future, make informed decisions and position itself advantageously in the market. Anticipation also enables potential risks to be identified and managed proactively. These include financial, operational and legal risks.

By taking steps to mitigate these risks before they become problematic, a business can avoid significant losses. In addition, by anticipating customers' future needs, companies can develop innovative products and services. Finally, anticipation is at the heart of strategic planning. It enables the company to define long-term objectives, identify the necessary resources and put in place strategies to achieve them. By anticipating cash flows, future investments and possible economic fluctuations, a company can make more enlightened financial decisions and better manage its financial resources.

Crusoe also teaches us a valuable lesson about the use of resources. In the business world, the efficient use of resources is crucial to the success and sustainability of a company. In this sense, Grant adds that 'Establishing competitive advantage involves formulating and implementing a strategy that exploits a firm's unique strengths' (Grant, 2010, p. 125). In other words, by using resources efficiently, a company can create a sustainable competitive advantage. This means that it can provide products or services of better quality, at lower cost or in a more innovative way than its competitors. Prudent resource management also enables a company to cope better with difficult times, such as economic crises or supply disruptions. On the other hand, responsible use of resources enables a company to meet its sustainability and social responsibility commitments. Ultimately, efficient use of resources enables a company to manage its growth in a sustainable way. It may avoid unnecessary waste and financial imbalances that could undermine its long-term expansion.

Robinson keeps thinking about the land he saw from the island. Travelling there would be an adventure that is not without risks, but at the same time one that could open doors, allowing him to rescue himself and leave the island. He builds a canoe from a single giant tree that he has felled for the purpose. It takes him months to complete it, and then he discovers that he simply cannot carry it to the water and that his work has been in vain. But Robinson is like Hemmingway's Santiago, who believes that '(a) man is not made for defeat (...) A man can be destroyed but not defeated' (Hemingway, p. 61, Kindle). Failure is an integral part of learning and personal development. Making mistakes is an inevitable part of life. What really matters is how we respond to our mistakes and learn from them. By understanding what went wrong, we have

the opportunity to identify ways to improve our skills, thinking and approaches. Dealing with failure also strengthens our emotional and mental resilience. It helps us to cope better with setbacks and to bounce back more quickly. Finally, learning from our failures helps us to accept our own imperfections and those of others.

Learning from the previous experience, Robinson Crusoe builds a new canoe and digs a canal to launch it. Once again, he is victim to the vagaries of the weather. Robinson is trapped between two currents and risks being swept out to sea. He manages to return home at nightfall. After experiencing the risk involved in this adventure, he has learnt to moderate his ambitions. 'I had now had enough of rambling to sea for some time, and had enough to do for many days to sit still, and reflect upon the danger I had been in' (Defoe, 2007, p. 121). Moderating ambitions is also essential in business for several reasons. Over-ambitious goals may lead to unrealistic and unattainable objectives. A balanced perspective allows a focus on realistic, achievable and measurable goals, which increases the chances of success. Excessively high ambitions can also lead to reckless risk-taking. Moderation allows the assessment and management of risks in a more balanced way, minimising potential losses. From another point of view, in the world of entrepreneurship, excessive and uncontrolled growth may result in significant financial pressure on the business. Moderate targets help to maintain financial stability, enabling the company to get through difficult phases without the threat of bankruptcy. In addition, moderate ambitions allow resources to be focused more effectively on key initiatives and achievable projects, rather than being spread thinly over multiple, disproportionate objectives. Finally, by focusing on gradual, sustainable growth, the company is better prepared to deal with market fluctuations and adapt to economic change.

The day after this bad experience at sea, Robinson's parrot turns to his master: 'Robin, Robin, Robin Crusoe, poor Robin Crusoe, where are you Robin Crusoe? Where are you? Where have you been?' (Defoe, 2007, p. 121). Robinson is saddened by these words. His attitude underlines the need for relationships and the social dimension in everyone's life. The same is true in the business world. Warm, caring human relationships help to create a positive working environment. This translates into more motivated and committed employees, which in turn translates into

greater productivity and a generally pleasant atmosphere within the company. Strong social relationships can also help reduce stress at work. Positive social interactions provide emotional support for employees, which can reduce the risk of burnout and stress-related health problems.

Robinson has now spent 11 years on this island. He finally comes up with a plan to domesticate goats, as he has run out of gunpowder and can no longer hunt. Robinson has to innovate to survive. He traps three baby goats in a pit and feeds them. The number of goats multiplies to reach 'three and forty'. Now Robinson no longer has to worry about milk and meat. He learns how to make butter and cheese. Once again, he demonstrates his passion for learning and his conviction that the only way to progress is to learn. The same holds true for business. According to Grant, 'long-living companies are those that build strong communities, have a strong sense of identity, commit to learning and are sensitive to the world around them' (Grant, 2010, p. 57).

As time passes on the desert island, Robinson is faced with more and more difficult situations. One day, he discovers a footprint in the sand. Fear grips him, as he has no way of understanding the intentions of those who have come dangerously close to him. He now fears for his flock, his boat, and his life. Overcome by panic, Crusoe considers destroying everything to avoid being discovered. Finally, he concludes that these visitors are only occasional. However, this does not stop him from doing everything he can to protect himself. He decides to fortify his settlements by building an extra wall. He also sets up a defence system in case someone attacks him.

In *The Lean Startup*, Eric Ries writes that 'Sooner or later, a successful startup will face competition from fast followers' (Ries, 2011, p. 112). So far, Robinson has worked alone on the island. He has had access to all the resources without being bothered by any competitors. However, the appearance of human traces on the beach represents a threat. Robinson risks losing everything or at least sharing the resources with others. Using Michael Porter's five forces framework, the footprint is to be considered under 'threats of new entrants'. This teaches us something very important about entrepreneurship. A company is always threatened by new entrants. Its market share can be divided and reduced at any time. In business, competition

is a constant and inevitable reality. Businesses are constantly faced with competitors offering similar products or services in the market.

To deal with competition, companies need to regularly monitor the actions and strategies of their competitors. This enables them to identify their competitors' strengths and weaknesses and to anticipate market developments. They also need to be able to adapt quickly to changes in the market and react effectively to their competitors' initiatives. In short, a competitive advantage may disappear at any time, because competitors' innovative ideas are constantly developing. Believing in the long-term viability of a business without taking permanent measures puts companies in real difficulty, and can even lead to a sudden and unexpected demise.

To keep a close eye on his competitors, our shipwrecked hero makes several visits to the territory of the natives in order to obtain any information that might help him establish a defence strategy that would enable him to maintain his position on the island. Unable to obtain the information he needs to ensure his safety, and still concerned about being discovered by the natives, Robinson Crusoe divides his herd of goats and places them in different enclosures hidden around the island. This is a meticulous application of risk management. Crusoe seems to have understood what Paul Hopkin and Clive Thompson say in *Fundamentals of Risk Management*, namely that the consequences of failure to adequately manage risk can be disastrous and may result in ineffective and/or inefficient operations, projects that are not completed on time and strategies that are not delivered, or were incorrect in the first place. (Hopkin and Thompson, 2022, p. 5)

Risk management is essential for any business, regardless of size or sector. It is a process designed to identify, assess and control the risks to which a company is exposed. Companies that implement good risk management can gain a competitive advantage. They are better prepared to deal with the unexpected, enabling them to exploit opportunities and meet challenges more effectively than their less well-prepared competitors. Finally, by identifying and preparing plans to mitigate business continuity risks, an organisation can reduce operational disruption and maintain a degree of stability.

After 24 years on the island, Robinson Crusoe's herd has grown. On the sixteenth of May, he spots a Spanish ship in distress because of a terrible storm. He runs to the

wreck, but finds no survivors. Robinson knows that 'what is one man's safety, is another man's destruction' (Defoe, 2007, p. 121). He explores the wreck exhaustively to take advantage of this extraordinary opportunity. Robinson finds new supplies of gunpowder, as well as cooking utensils, clothes, shoes and a considerable sum of money. Robinson does not hesitate to keep the money in his cave. He is aware that the money is of no use to him in the short term, but his entrepreneurial spirit tells him that in the long term he will be saved and will be able to use it.

The shipwreck of this boat could be compared to the demise of a company. In a competitive market, the bankruptcy or difficulties of some companies may provide opportunities for others to grow, develop and gain new market share. Regular monitoring of the market and trends can therefore help to identify companies in difficulty or sectors in decline, and, thus make it possible to seize opportunities for investment or expansion in more promising areas. From another perspective, if a company in difficulty is forced to close or sell its assets, other competing companies may be able to acquire these assets at advantageous prices.

Robinson becomes increasingly concerned about the danger he faces from the natives. He begins to think seriously about how to escape. However, he realises that he will need help to make a successful escape and that the best option will be to capture a native and use him as an assistant and guide. One day, a group of natives arrive on the shore with two captives. They brutally kill one, but the other manages to escape. Crusoe witnesses the whole scene. He decides to intervene to help the man in trouble, killing one of the pursuers with his gun. He also gives the lucky fugitive a sword to use against the other cannibal. After rescuing the captive, Crusoe takes him on as a servant and names him Friday. He begins to teach him English, gives him clothes and introduces him to civilisation.

Robinson's strategy is worth thinking about because it is exactly how a company should operate. For a company to prosper and sustain itself in a constantly changing competitive environment, it is essential that it be aware of its needs and develop a sound strategy to achieve its goals. Put differently, the company needs to carry out a thorough assessment of its current and future needs. These may include needs in terms of human, financial and logistical resources. Once the needs have been identified, the company

needs to develop an overall strategy. This strategy must define the long-term and short-term objectives, the means to achieve them and the measures of success. It must also take account of market trends, opportunities and challenges. Once the strategy has been defined, it is important to allocate resources appropriately. This means investing in the key areas that will make the greatest contribution to achieving the company's objectives. Finally, the company needs to closely monitor progress against objectives set. If adjustments are needed, the managing directors must be prepared to make them.

In order to delegate some of the routine tasks to Friday, Crusoe teaches him the know-how he has acquired on the island. He also teaches him English and introduces him to Christianity. This learning process enables them both to broaden the scope of their discussions and to enjoy an ordinary social life. English enables them to share their experiences and stories. Friday describes how he was taken prisoner by a rival tribe and brought here to be killed, and Crusoe details how he ended up on the island. Their conversation is an opportunity for Friday to tell Robinson that his tribe is well organised and lives on the mainland. He also tells him about the Spanish sailors who survived the shipwreck and now live with his tribe.

'I was greatly delighted with him, and made it my business to teach him every thing, that was proper to make him useful, handy, and helpful' (Defoe, 2007, p. 177). Robinson invests heavily in Friday's training because he is well aware that he will not be able to return to England single-handed. In the business world, firms are becoming increasingly aware that they need to consider 'human resources as part of the resources' (Grant, 2010, p. 130). Employee training is one of the most valuable investments a business owner can make. By providing training for your employees, you help them acquire new skills and develop their expertise. This generally translates into improved productivity, as qualified employees are more efficient in carrying out their tasks. They are also less likely to make costly mistakes, which can help reduce financial losses. In addition, investing in training shows employees that you care about their development, which can reduce staff turnover by improving job satisfaction. Finally, training increases employees' sense of belonging and motivation. When employees see that you are investing in their development, they are more likely to invest more in their work

and contribute to a positive organisational climate. From another point of view, the new relationship between Robinson and Friday teaches us that by communicating with his employees, an entrepreneur can obtain a variety of perspectives on a given problem, which can lead to more creative and innovative solutions.

Crusoe and Friday continue to cultivate the land and gather supplies for their voyage, but their activities are disrupted when natives arrive on the island with three captives. After assessing the danger, Crusoe and Friday attack and kill most of the natives and rescue the man, who turns out to be a Spanish survivor of a shipwreck. They also find a second man, a native, tied up in a canoe. This man turns out to be Friday's father. The fact that Crusoe's activities are interrupted by the unexpected arrival of the natives brings us back to the world of business. When new companies enter an established market, they can upset the balance by bringing new ideas, technologies, strategies or business models. Using Porter's words, 'new entrants to an industry bring new capacity and a desire to gain market share that puts pressure on prices, costs, and the rate of investment necessary to compete' (Porter, 2008, p. 80). To address this threat, companies will often need to draw on their experience and expertise to maintain a competitive edge. Like Crusoe, they need to take step back and analyse the situation to better define the problem and target the objective. The lesson to be learnt from the elements that sometimes shake the ground beneath Crusoe's feet is that stability is not a permanent given. The same is true for businesses, which need to be alert to changes in the market and remain agile in the face of threats.

Robinson informs the Spaniard of his intention to leave the island. Like the merging strategy of two companies, the two men want to join forces with the other Spaniards who live with Friday's tribe. Crusoe and the Spaniard think it would be a good idea to build a large boat to leave the island and reach Europe. The men start to implement the plan. The Spaniard and Friday's father take charge of rescuing the other Spaniards. After eight days, an English ship appears near the island. Crusoe prefers to wait rather than rush to the ship. He has learnt to be alert and to analyse every situation before making a decision. His suspicions about the English sailors turn out to be correct. He discovers that some of the crew have mutinied against the captain. Crusoe manages to talk to the captives. One of them

is the ship's captain, the victim of the mutiny. Crusoe offers to help them on condition that the English captain agrees to take them back to England when things are back to normal. With Friday's help, Crusoe succeeds in restoring order and quelling the mutiny. After 28 years on the island, Crusoe sets sail for England on December 19, 1686.

We note that Crusoe strives to turn any difficult situation into a positive experience by building relationships with those around him. In the business world, building win-win relationships with partners, suppliers, competitors and other industry players can have many benefits for a company. For example, by collaborating with partners, a company may gain access to resources, skills and knowledge that it may not have in-house. As a result, it may improve the quality of its products or services. In addition, working with partners can save money by allowing the cost of research and development, production and logistics to be shared. Finally, by working with colleagues, a company can gain access to new markets, customer segments or distribution channels, which can increase its reach and sales. From another point of view, sharing responsibilities with other companies reduces the risks associated with projects or investments.

On 11 June 1687, Robinson Crusoe returns home to England. He had been away for 'thirty and five' years. He comes home with the money he found in the two ships. He also has the money he left with the widow. He decides to go to Lisbon to check on his plantation in Brazil. In Lisbon, he meets the Portuguese captain who rescued him years ago, and who knows of Crusoe's business in Brazil. Crusoe discovers that the income from the plantation is excellent. He decides then to reward the captain and the widow for their loyalty. Back in London, Crusoe considers returning to his plantation in Brazil, but his religious convictions prevent him from doing so. He decides to sell the plantation and becomes wealthy.

The diversification of Crusoe's products has enabled him to regain his equilibrium in a society he had left behind for many years. Similarly, diversification can play an essential role in a company's success and in achieving its financial objectives. It can also, in Grant's words, 'help avoid cyclical fluctuations of profits that can push it into insolvency' (Grant, 2010, p. 407). By diversifying its activities, a company spreads the risks associated with a specific market, product or sector. In this way,

if one of the activities experiences difficulties, the others can contribute to maintaining the company's overall profitability. In addition, by offering a variety of products or services, a company can generate more stable income streams throughout the year. For example, if a business is heavily dependent on a particular season, diversification can mitigate the effects of seasonal fluctuations. In some sectors, however, competition can become intense and lead to market saturation. Diversification can help a company broaden its customer base and avoid direct competition. Finally, the different parts of a diversified business can sometimes complement each other, creating synergies that improve operational efficiency and overall profitability.

Although entrepreneurship in the modern sense may not be directly applicable to the time and context of Robinson Crusoe, the story of this fantastic novel has much to teach us about some of the basic principles of entrepreneurship, such as passion, leadership, opportunity identification, adaptability, creativity and innovation, planning, resource acquisition, managing competition, financial management, risk management, and continuous learning.

Throughout the story, Robinson Crusoe's actions constantly parallel the characteristics of modern entrepreneurship. Robinson demonstrates a remarkable entrepreneurial spirit by embarking on a sea voyage at a young age to pursue his dreams of becoming a sailor and making his fortune. When stranded on a desert island, he does not resign himself to his fate. Instead, he shows a strong sense of initiative in looking for ways to survive and improve his situation. Not only does he demonstrate great initiative, Robinson is also a great leader. On the island, he is alone and must take responsibility for all decisions. He makes his decisions autonomously, which is similar to the leadership role that many entrepreneurs need to take in their businesses. Furthermore, after being shipwrecked, Robinson shows great adaptability and creativity in order to survive. He uses his skills to build a shelter, hunt, farm, and make tools. All these actions are examples of how an entrepreneur must be creative and adapt to changing situations. Robinson also succeeds in managing the island's limited resources efficiently and strategically to ensure his long-term survival.

In addition, Crusoe must learn to survive on the hostile island by managing his financial resources efficiently. The

tools, weapons and food salvaged from the shipwreck are his lifeline. A wise and prudent allocation of resources is therefore imperative. Crusoe also needs to draw up a budget. He must plan how many resources he can use on a daily basis to avoid running out of supplies. He must also think about long-term strategies, such as planting crops, securing his property, and teaching his servant to speak and work.

From another point of view, Robinson faces many challenges and risks during his stay on the desert island. From the outset, he assesses the potential dangers of his environment, such as storms, wild animals and hostile natives. He stores provisions for times of famine and prepares tools and weapons for his defence. He knows that preparation is essential to deal with unforeseen risks. When he decides to build a boat to explore the neighbouring island, Crusoe takes a certain amount of risk, but he does so in a calculated way to improve his situation in the long term. This willingness to take calculated risks is a key characteristic of successful entrepreneurs. Finally, throughout his stay on the island, Crusoe continues to learn new skills and strives to improve. He learns to cultivate the land and grow crops. He also learns to tame and domesticate the island's animals. He decides to familiarise himself with the geography, flora and fauna of the island, so that he will know where to find the various resources. This ability to learn enables him to manage risks better over time. Of course, continuous learning is an important characteristic of an entrepreneur who has to adapt to a constantly changing business environment.

The story of Robinson Crusoe has shown us that the study of literature can certainly help to cultivate an entrepreneurial mindset. Although it may not seem obvious at first glance, literature influences and supports the development of an entrepreneurial spirit in a number of ways. Firstly, literature exposes readers to a variety of ideas, worlds and perspectives. This exposure to the diversity of human experience can stimulate creativity and imagination, two essential qualities for entrepreneurs who are constantly looking for innovative solutions and unique approaches to solving problems. From another point of view, literature improves communication skills by exposing readers to a variety of writing styles, discourses and narratives. Entrepreneurs also need to communicate effectively with different stakeholders, whether they are pitching their idea to investors, negotiating with partners or interacting with customers.

Many literary characters face challenges and trials, and their stories can inspire entrepreneurs to persevere in the face of obstacles. Stories of resilience and success after failure can provide valuable lessons in perseverance. In other words, many novels and stories feature characters who take on leadership roles and deal with complex situations. Studying these characters can provide insights into leadership, team management and decision-making, all of which are crucial for entrepreneurs.

From another perspective, literary stories often deal with themes such as success, failure, morality and ethics. These themes can help entrepreneurs better understand business issues and decision-making. Literature also encourages critical analysis and in-depth understanding of texts. These skills are essential for evaluating business opportunities, market strategies and competitive scenarios. In short, literature offers a range of intellectual and emotional benefits that can help forge a strong entrepreneurial spirit. By fostering creativity, communication, perseverance and other key skills, reading literature can play an important role in the training and development of entrepreneurs.

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