

Lecture 5:
Early Novels and Novelists – Robinson Crusoe 2

Reception

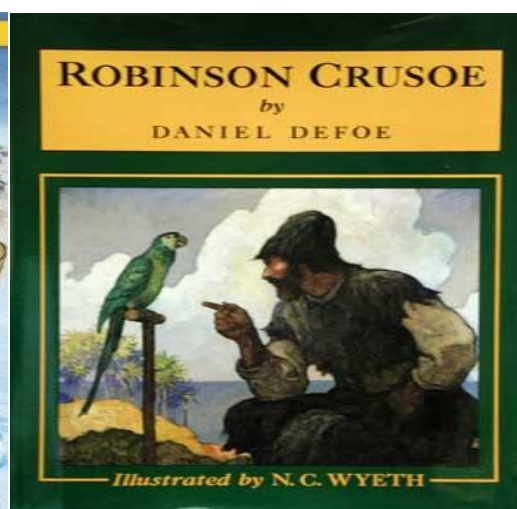
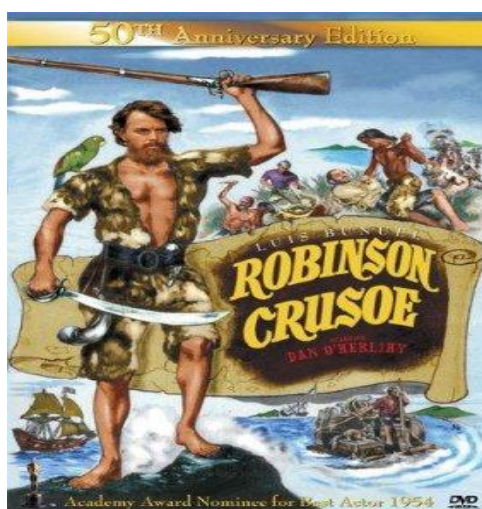
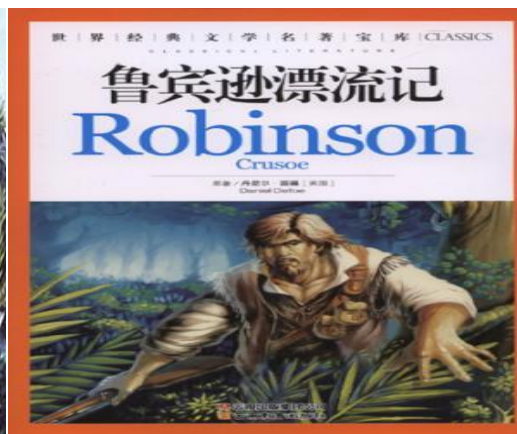
published on April 25, 1719 ❖

Before the end of the year, this first volume had run through four editions. ❖

Within years, it had reached an audience as wide as any book ever written in English. ❖

By the end of the 19th century, no book in the history of Western literature had had more editions, spin-offs and translations than *Robinson Crusoe*, with more than 700 such alternative versions, including children's versions with mainly pictures and no text. ❖

versions



The term "[Robinsonade](#)" was coined to describe the genre of stories similar to *Robinson Crusoe*. ❖

Defoe went on to write a lesser-known sequel, *The Farther Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*. ❖

It was intended to be the last part of his stories, according to the original title-page of its first edition but a third part, *Serious Reflections of Robinson Crusoe* was written; it is a mostly forgotten series of moral essays with Crusoe's name attached to give interest. ❖

Themes: colonialism

Robinson Crusoe is the true symbol of the British conquest: The whole Anglo-Saxon spirit is in Crusoe. ❖

Crusoe attempts to replicate his own society on the island: application of European technology, agriculture, and even a rudimentary political hierarchy. ❖

The idealized master-servant relationship between Crusoe and Friday. ❖

Crusoe represents the "enlightened European." Friday is the "savage" who can only be redeemed from his supposedly barbarous way of life through the assimilation into Crusoe's culture. ❖

Nevertheless, within the novel Defoe also takes the opportunity to criticize the historic Spanish conquest of South America. ❖

Themes: Religion

Robinson is not a hero, but an everyman--a wanderer to become a pilgrim, building a promised land on a desolate island. ❖

Robinson becomes closer to God, not through listening to sermons in a church but through spending time alone amongst nature with only a Bible to read. ❖

Defoe's central concern is the Christian notion of Providence. ❖