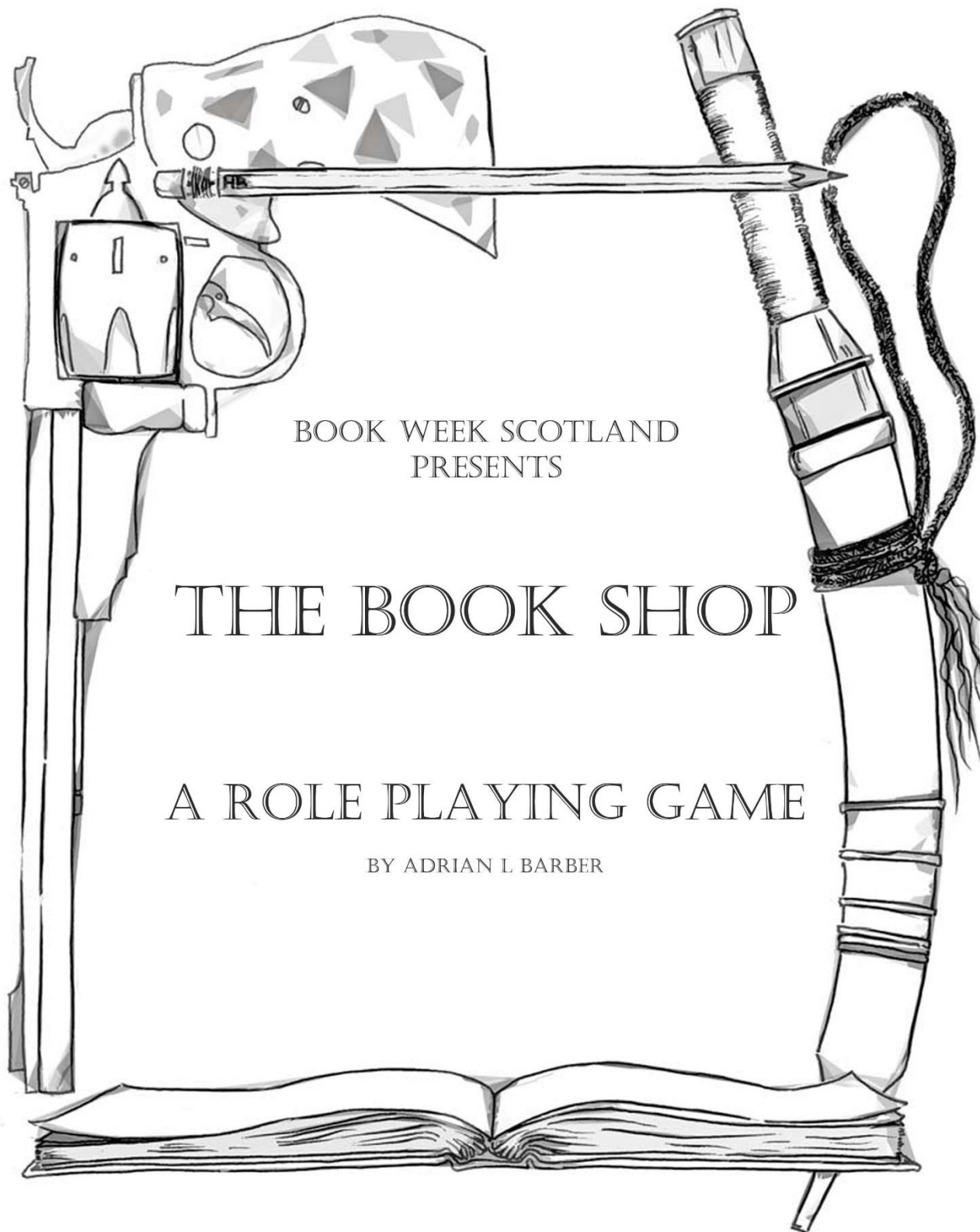


Scottish  
Book Trust



BOOK WEEK SCOTLAND  
PRESENTS

# THE BOOK SHOP

A ROLE PLAYING GAME

BY ADRIAN L BARBER

# Part Two

## The Dragon of Treasure Island

### For the Bibliophile's eyes only!

This section is only for the person running the game (the Bibliophile) to read in advance. They will be describing the events of the story.

If you are planning on being a player in the game, reading on at this stage will spoil the story for you. Stop reading now!

### **REALLY – STOP READING NOW!**

Have they gone? Good, we may continue. . .



## Introduction

Bibliophile, welcome to your role as the teller of the main story.

Some preparation is required before you can run this game. We have tried to make this as quick and easy to set up as we can, but you will need to read through this document at least once before play.

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## Preparation

In your role as the Bibliophile, you will act as the book shop owner, the characters the players meet, and describe the surroundings and events of the adventure.

You can come up with your own book shop or change the setting to a library. You can set it somewhere you know in the real world or a place you have entirely made up. If you happen to work in or own a book shop – job done!

Feel free to call yourself the Librarian instead of the Bibliophile if you prefer. This is your game – run it your way!

Once you have read through the whole document, you can launch the game from the pre-described setup or your own setting. We must emphasise that you will need to read ahead and then create encounters, before beginning the game.

You might want to read *Treasure Island* to re-familiarise yourself with events, but there is a summary of the characters on Page 6. These links may also prove useful:

**<https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/t/treasure-island/book-summary>**

**<https://www.bbc.co.uk/teach/class-clips-video/english-ks2-treasure-island-home/zk2qnrđ>**

If you are playing this via a conference call, there are background illustrations you can use. You can change from the book shop to the other locations as you progress through the game.

The outcome of the game you are aiming for is to get the players and treasure back to Ben Gunn's cave and get the dragon out of the book with as little interaction with the main characters of *Treasure Island* as possible.

You may find that, after you have described the task, the players struggle to concentrate on, or get distracted from, their goal. You can remind them of their goal in a number of ways.

For example, you may have described the waters off Skeleton Island so well, that the players have decided to go for a swim. The plot has moved on and, if they are not careful, Long John Silver will soon turn up looking for the treasure. Start humming the theme from *Jaws* and mention a large shark fin heading in their direction.

Then, they start to make a plot to steal the treasure and take it back with them. Acting as the book shop owner, you can manifest yourself as a parrot who lands nearby and exclaims: *'I can hear you, you know?! Yes, it's me! Did I not tell you that only things that aren't meant to be in the book should be taken out of it?! The whole reason you are here is to fix this mess, not make it worse!'*

Once you have a feel for how you hope things will go (and they probably won't!), you can launch the game. Character creation has been made part of the opening section, but you

may want to do that separately before play. Whichever path you have decided on, just make sure that the main events in this description end up in your version:

- There is a dragon in *Treasure Island*.
- There is a spell to get it out.
- The treasure needs to get back to Ben Gunn's cave to restore the plot.

You can also decide what kind of dragon you want to have taken up residence on the island. If you are running this for younger players, maybe a dragon like Zog would fit the bill. Older players might enjoy one from another fantasy book such as Smaug from *The Hobbit*, as they would have the instinct of hoarding the treasure and be relatively easy to convince that leaving it for the much bigger horde back in their own novel would be a good idea. . .

Whichever way you decide to do it, the players are transported by a spell and find themselves in a rowing boat, just off the island.

The goal is to bring the dragon back from this book to the shop and then back into the book where it belongs. To this end, you will provide them with a dispel spell. They read this to the dragon to get it to leave, but it will only work if the dragon is willing or has been immobilised in some way.

Any interaction with characters from *Treasure Island* risks a change in the novel, so sneaking about is probably the order of the day.

Unless the players interact with main characters, the story will play out much as it does in the original, until the dragon makes an appearance.

You could run it like this:

*The players have crept up on Ben Gunn, he is talking to a coconut. 'I did see a dragon! It was heading for Spyglass Hill. I wonder if those pirates will spot it...'*

They now know they need to get to that location. Will there be a cave there? Will the treasure have been moved from where it was meant to be found? If so, the players need to return it to where it needs to be for the tale to run smoothly.

If the players are familiar with the book, they will know that Ben Gunn has a longing to eat cheese. If they can get some, they may be able to secure his help through this or other means.

Because most of *Treasure Island* is from the point of view of Jim Hawkins, it is possible for the players to interact with Long John or the other characters. But they should be careful – if a character found out they were in a book and other books have vast sums of wealth in them, well, what would stop them stealing the spell and trying to flee to another world to rob it and retire there?



## Cast of characters

This is a brief rundown of *Treasure Island*'s main characters. Feel free to refer to the original text for more, or go with a 'random pirate' if you need another NPC to move the story along.

### Jim Hawkins

Narrator of the story and cabin boy.

Jim is resourceful, brave, modest and true. Although young, and rather less powerful than the pirates he finds himself in the company of, his other qualities help him survive.

### Long John Silver

A single-minded pirate posing as the ship's cook.

He's after treasure, make no mistake. He's missing his left leg and uses a crutch to get around.

Long John's dogged determination makes him a force to be reckoned with.

### Dr Livesey

A wise and practical man who will treat the injury of friend or foe.

His skills as a surgeon might come in handy and his open mind to negotiation and fair play could be used to your players' advantage.

### Captain Smollett

Lives by the book. There are pirates and they need hanging.

*'A dragon? Don't be ridiculous!'*

### Ben Gunn

Marooned here by Captain Flint, he is slightly unhinged by his time alone on the island.

He has moved the treasure from where the map says it is to his cave. This is a character you can have a lot of fun with – his desire for ‘real food’, the fun he has pretending to be Captain Flint's ghost and calling out to confuse the pirates.

## **A dragon**

Not meant to be here. They have ended up in the book by magic and the players must try and get them away from the treasure and out of the book, so that the story can go back to normal.

## **Other sailors and pirates**

For the purposes of battles and obstacles.

## **Locations**

Feel free to add locations from the book and make them into possible places for encounters.

The main locations are the stockade, the *Hispaniola* (a ship), and various caves and beaches.

## **Series of events on the island**

The players arrive after Jim Hawkins has met Ben Gunn.

Events are destined to play out as follows, but it is possible (although not desirable) that the players will interfere with this. You might want to condense the action to a specific point or shorten the number of days. A clever player may call out to you to flip a couple of pages if they know which part of the book they want to get to. What could possibly go wrong with that?

### **Day One**

On board the *Hispaniola*, Flint's old crew mutiny and take arms against the more honest sailors.

Captain Smollett and the rest of his trusted aids flee the ship and move into an abandoned stockade.

A battle between Silver's crew and those in the fort goes on overnight, with no one besting the other.

### **Day Two**

Silver approaches for parley. He tries to take control of the stockade under a white flag, but they cannot reach an accord.



Jim heads for the ship to try and cut it adrift and encounters Israel Hands.

A battle for control of the ship ends with Hands accidentally shot after the ship is run aground in the North Inlet.

### Day Three

Silver has taken the stockade by now, after negotiations with the Doctor and his own crew.

A hunt for the treasure starts with Jim in tow.

Following the map brings them to a skeleton pointing the way.

Ben Gunn has got there first and has hidden the treasure in a cave.

The pirates are confronted by the Captain and the Doctor and taken care of with the help of Silver.

The crew set sail with the treasure, stranding the pirates that were not shot down already.

As the Bibliophile, it is up to you what the dragon does and when.





## Playing the game

### Start by reading this to the players:

*You are walking down a high street and the weather is being a bit ridiculous. You decide to head into an alley to shelter [you can choose heat or rain].*

*As your eyes adjust to the change in light, you do a double take. A sign for a book shop, one you didn't notice upon first entering the alleyway, catches your attention. 'Books – New and Second Hand – Special Offers Weekly!' it declares and an arrow points further down the alley.*

*You have time on your hands, so you follow the arrow to a timber-framed, Tudor-style, shop front. The windows are all crown glass – those old diamond shaped panes that look like the bottoms of bottles – so you can't see clearly in. You give the door a shove and a bell announces your entrance.*

*You find yourself in a small, low-beamed shop, littered with bookshelves. It opens into other rooms behind the unmanned desk with an old-fashioned till on it.*

[Here you can make it cool if it was too hot or warm if it was pouring with rain. Also, feel free to describe a bottle of hand sanitiser that smells of the players' favourite ever picnic].

*To your left, new volumes shine, eager to impress from their displays. To your right, older volumes sit patiently, giving off the historic smells that only old paper can.*

*A thrill of anticipation shivers through you. This might be the day you find the book you somehow managed to lose a copy of years ago, or the missing edition from the set you want to finish.*

*You find yourself wandering into another room, vaguely aware that there are other customers here. You are just about to reach up and pull down a book – did it just whisper to you? – when your reverie is broken by a conversation in the room you just left.*

**Customer (NPC):** *'You know, I don't remember there being a dragon in Treasure Island?!'*

**Book shop owner:** *'Oh! I'm so terribly sorry! That's not for sale. Silly me, I put that down by mistake. It's a joke a friend played on me, totally threw me as well, very amusing. . . Ah! Oh dear! Is that the time? I need to close up! Personal business to take care of, very sorry, off you go. Please call again soon. . . Goodbye!'*

*The customer is ushered from the shop, the door closed and a bolt thrown to secure the door.*

**Book shop owner:** *'Oh dear, oh dear. . . a dragon, how ever am I going to get that out?'*

*The book shop owner looks up as if noticing the players for the first time.*

**Book shop owner:** *'Now, how on earth. . .? Never mind, never mind, you look like just the sort of people who could help me out! Okay you lot, I need your help. Last week I brought in a small crate of books, one turned out to be a book of spells. Not believing that it was real, I read a passage out loud. At first nothing happened, then, as I was taking it to the back room, an eerie hush fell over the place. It suddenly became dark, then a green light began to fill the shop. Books started to swap shelves, some opened up and flew like birds and it looked like words lifted off the page of one book and landed where there was space on the page of another. After looking for a counter spell in the book, I realised that this particular incantation was in the sister volume, not one I have a copy of. So, I was up all night trying to find all the books that had been touched by this magic. I found Alice, of Wonderland fame, having a cup of tea with Dorothy Gale in a Morningside café, I found wizards and witches trying to teach magic to a Scottish Police Inspector. I thought I'd found them all, but I'm going to have to do a stock take. While I'm looking for any other books touched by this spell, I want you to go into this copy of Treasure Island and get that dragon out of there!'*

[Dramatic Pause]



**Book shop owner:** *‘From reading the book of spells, I have found a way to make these magical book plates. You describe a character as you might find in a book, write those details down and slip them into the book at the chapter you need. The person who wrote on the book plate then becomes that character inside the book. I would have loved to try it myself, but someone has to stay here to make sure nothing happens to the book. I can keep an eye on the pages and if the story looks like it has changed back to normal, I can pull you out!’*

[Now run through the character creation system from Part One.

If you have done this in advance, or if the players have already made characters, that's fine. Just make sure everyone knows who is playing who.

Once your players have created or introduced their characters and you are all happy, then they can use the **Character sheet** (or book plate) to record the details on.]

**Book shop owner:** *‘One more thing! Although I don't have a counter spell to correct all the books, I have managed to make one that will take a single character out of a book you are in. When you meet the dragon and when you think everything is back as it should be, and only then, read the spell and I will have the book it came from ready to catch it in. One of you will need to carry the spell that gets the dragon out. It is important that you don't lose it!’*

[Now get the players to choose which of them will carry the spell in their inventory.

The book shop owner will hold the scroll over the chosen **Character sheet**, says some strange words and describe it vanishing from his hand and appearing on the character sheet. Ask the player to write it down on their **Character sheet**.]

*Is everybody ready? Then let the adventure begin. . .*



## Describing their arrival

### Read the following to your players:

*The owner of the book shop gathers you in front of the desk upon which sits the magically altered edition of Treasure Island. He slips your book plate character sheets inside and casts a spell. You find yourselves dissolving into a maelstrom of words. The book opens and you are racing towards the map of the island.*

*Gone is the book shop interior and you find yourselves in a rowboat on the ocean. It is a calm, still, bright day and ahead of you lies a lush island of sandy beaches and tropical greenery. Just as you are thinking that this could turn out to be a wonderful holiday, the sounds of flintlocks discharging draws your attention to a large sailing ship over to your right – or starboard side for non-lubbers.*

*You realise that the clock is ticking and you need to get that dragon out of here before it meets the rest of the characters in the book.*

*A smaller island to the south-east of the map beckons you, by the evidence of a thin trail of smoke rising from it. Where there's smoke, there's fire, and where there's fire, there could be a dragon. . .*

## Over to you

The rest is up to you! Will you have Long John Silver make the players walk the plank? Will the players lose the spell and have an extra quest to contend with? Make a plan and some strong hints for the players to pick up on and point them in the direction that you would like them to go.

I arranged my version starting with an encounter with Ben Gunn. The smoke mentioned above is his fire as he cooks a fish on Skeleton Island. He offered the players the use of his telescope in exchange for a favour and the players saw the dragon, treasure glinting in its claws, fly from Ben's cave towards Spyglass Hill. From here, the players avoided various encounters with pirates and sailors and found a cave where Smaug had settled.

*'You enter the cave having eluded the gang of pirates and leaving their 'Avast there' and 'Shiver me timbers' behind you. As your eyes acclimatise to the dark contrast from the bright sun outside, a glittering persists. A large dragon sits upon a relatively small pile of treasure. Don't get me wrong, it's a lot of treasure, but it's a BIG dragon. . .'*

One of the players had to use their silver tongue skill to convince Smaug that their own treasure was far more impressive and if they could help the party bring this horde back to the cave they found it in, they had a way to reunite the dragon with said treasure. They were doing okay, but a more suspicious member of the team felt that there might be a betrayal on the deal. They told Smaug that, back in the shop, they had spotted an *Atlas of Middle-Earth*, and that it would tell them where other treasure was stored in the land

Smaug would be returning to. With a weary demeanour, the deal was struck and the dragon was expelled from *Treasure Island*, and the players had just enough time to leg it round the other side of Ben Gunn's cave and hear the book characters wonder at the treasure. They then found themselves whisked back to the book shop.

## Ending the game

Hopefully your players will bring the story to a satisfying end, or you will have guided them into doing so.

They can pat each other on the back, discover any treasure they brought out of the book turns into letters which flutter back to their original text, and watch as the dragon shrinks down in size to the word 'dragon' and goes back to the book it came from.

If you feel they have meddled with the story a little too much, you can end by having them look at the cover as they were preparing to leave and notice something, perhaps an unusual egg in amongst the treasure. If you want to change the established setup, the spell somehow could have went wrong and sent a pirate out of the book and into the pages of *The Hobbit*.

## Example scenario encounters

Here are some encounters I had ready for a play test.

If you like any of the ideas here, feel free to use or adapt them for your game.

### Ben Gunn

**Bibliophile:** *He appears to be talking to a coconut.*

**Ben Gunn:** *'A dragon? I don't remember seeing one of them before. Nicked all the treasure he has! I'm Ben Gunn, that's who I am, I've not seen a soul for the past three years and now there's a load of you visiting me. I don't suppose you'd have any cheese on you? I dream of cheese, I do, mostly grilled. Oh, what I'd do for some grilled cheese!'*

[In one play test the players offered to get the treasure back for Ben and so he lent them his spyglass.]

## Two Pirates

[The players chose to head down a path that leads through the lush plant life of the island.]

**Bibliophile:** *It seems the island is now awash with pirates and finding a clear path looks to be a challenge. Ahead, you hear two pirates arguing. They are deep in discussion so it might be possible for you to sneak past. . .*

**Pirate 1:** *'No, no no! A Long John is an extra-long glass vessel!'*

**Pirate 2:** *'A glass ship?'*

**Pirate 1:** *'No, you lily-livered fool! A drinking vessel, not a sailing vessel. A glass you use for drinking out of.'*

**Pirate 2:** *'I drink out of a tankard, Pirate Union rules. . . Hang on, 'lily-livered'? How am I a coward for asking etymological questions?'*

**Pirate 1:** *'What?'*

**Pirate 2:** *'Lily-livered comes from the medieval belief that courage comes from the liver, but if it's white, like a lily, you lack blood there and have no courage to speak of.'*

**Pirate 1:** *'You are a right oddball, do you know that?'*

**Pirate 2:** *'Jury's out on whether you can use that one. Some say it's from the twelfth century based on a Scandinavian word, but more people associate it with aviation terms, or even pinball machines, and obviously we are unaware of such progress in historical innovations yet to be. . .'*

[The players chose to join in with the discussion, but they could just as easily have crept past the pirates.]

## Meeting Robert Louis Stevenson

**Bibliophile:** *On a beach. You see a pale young man in clothes not entirely fitting with the setting, his prominent nose and facial hair make him somewhat familiar. He is paddling in the surf playing with a paper boat.*

**Robert Louis Stevenson:** *'Oh! Hello! You've caught me playing pirates again. What brings you to these shores? You're not characters I wrote or authors that I recognise.'*



*As the author of this book, I am invested with certain holidaying privileges within its pages. Also, I like to pop in and check on things from time-to-time and make sure no one is modernising the text. It's a privilege of being a member of the – now what did that fellow, Conan Doyle, call it? – 'litra-sphere' or 'author-verse', something like that.*

*A dragon in Treasure Island? Oh! I like that! This sounds like the time that fellow Dickens told me about, when someone went into A Christmas Carol with a ghost trap and caused havoc. Well, it all got sorted in the end. Speaking of which, here you go.'*

[He hands the players a ghost trap]

**Robert Louis Stevenson:** *'This might come in handy. Charles let me have it, but I think you might need it. Let's just say, some of my minor characters have taken on an afterlife of their own and, boy, do they like to talk about it. I'd better go, there seem to be a few too many extras in the pages today. Good luck!'*

**Bibliophile:** *And with this, he disappears.*

## **The Ghost of Captain Flint**

**Bibliophile:** *You enter a clearing. It is suddenly eerily still and a chill is creeping into the air. A pale blue spectre materialises before you. His classic pirate garb leaves little question of his occupation when he was alive.*

**Captain Flint:** *'Ah! More writers, no doubt! Come to pick the bones of Captain Flint! You are not the first and you shan't be the last, I'd wager. Why, it seems like only yesterday that Howden Smith fellah was bothering my grave side to ask about my life. Then there was that Russian chap, he made a very popular version of my tale, that was quite the hit I'm told! John Drake came along, and once, I swear, I saw a talking frog. Now was that before or after the Black Sails bunch. . . ?'*

[The players start to feel the life drain out of them. They are starting to fade as the Captain seems to be becoming more corporeal by the moment. If they had the ghost trap, they could use it. In one play test they did not, and had to come up with a promise and a trade to get past him.]

## Long John Silver

[Before entering the dragon's cave, the players hear Silver's parrot.]

**Parrot:** *'Pieces of eight, stand by to go about.'*

**Bibliophile:** *You are about to enter the cave when the formidable wooden crutch of Long John Silver bars your way.*

**Long John Silver:** *'Avast there, you swabs! Let me tell you a story. I was wandering away from the stockade when I spy your merry band and I think to myself, 'that's new', and that stops me in my tracks. This nagging sense of déjà vu I've had for a while now starts to itch some more, so I follow you. Then I hear you talking to that Stevenson chap and it all becomes clear. I want out of this book and I think that thing you have what looks like a map [the spell given to them by the book shop owner] is what's going to get me out! Now be so kind as to hand it over.'*

**Bibliophile:** *He levels a pistol at you.*

## Dragon

**Bibliophile:** *You enter the cave. Despite the gloom compared to the bright skies outside, your eyes are still dazzled. Gold lies in piles ahead of you and sat atop that gold is a fearsome dragon.*

**Smaug:** *'I am Smaug! My armour is like tenfold shields. My teeth are swords and my claws are spears. The shock of my tail is like a thunderbolt, my wings like a hurricane and my breath like death! Tell me why I should not eat you now.'*

[A bit of fast-talking and Smaug agreed to leave the book in this play through, but the treasure was still in the wrong cave and the players had to come up with a way to resolve the situation, which they did.]

## The End

With *Treasure Island* back to normal, the players were rewarded with any rare book they wanted and all agreed that they would like to return to fix one of the other books affected by the spell. It was there we finished up the game.

## Experience

Most game systems allow players to level up or improve skills they used or learn new ones they encountered. You may wish to allow your players an additional **Luck** skill based on their performance or change/add an extra description line. For example, if a player who described themselves as *'timid as a mouse'* had to be brave when under pressure to save their friends, they could now be *'a mouse who has found their teeth, but is still cautious about when to use them'*.

If you have enjoyed the experience (and we sincerely hope you have), there are some ideas for further adventures you could make into scenarios and play on Page 19.

If this has been your first time playing an RPG and you enjoyed it, there are almost limitless systems and settings out there for you to explore. Many book shops now stock games like *Dungeons & Dragons* and many companies have free basic versions of the rules online for you to download.

Scottish literature and folklore are full of exciting adventure ideas: selkies, kelpies, the Loch Ness Monster, the science fiction of Iain M Banks, crime novels, Lari Don's fantasy book series – the list goes on and on!



## Younger players

This game can be run with much younger age groups through a simple format change. Setting the adventure in a library and calling the GM a Librarian, may be slightly easier.

The Librarian has found a spell book in an old stock room at the back of the library. They decided to have a go at casting a spell, which turned out to be a bad idea.

The game plays the same, but you can turn down the peril and maybe have Bookbug turn up to help if they are struggling.

You can make character creation very simple by suggesting you need someone strong, someone sneaky, someone who's good at solving problems and so on. Hopefully you have volunteers for all roles, but if anyone is feeling left out, reflecting on how useful each skill is usually works.

Sometimes you reach loggerheads – perhaps two people are determined to be a fighter type of character. This works fine. You point out that, together, they can use their strength and suggest a secondary skill.

*'So you use your strength to toss a caber, but there's no point going to the Highland Games if you can't dance, or at least be willing to give it a go, for the honour of your clan.'*

You also don't need lots of characters. You could simply go with a cabin boy, soldier, doctor and pirates.

Or you can just choose two themes and have them mix up.

*'Oh no! The book called The Angry Dragon has lost its dragon. It has gone into this book called Pirate's Treasure Hunt! I need some brave adventurers who I can send in with a spell to convince that dragon to come back home!'*



## Campaigns

It is unlikely you will ever run out of ideas for crossing over books.

- What chaos could you bring to the tranquil Isle of Struay?
- Quint from *Jaws* really would clash with the wholesome Katie Morag.
- Rebus heads to the Marcia Blaine School for Girls where there has been a murder! The suspect has come from the Rue Morgue.

However, you might want to come up with your own stories. Feel free to have a new novel being launched at the book shop – perhaps the author is there to read from it and sign copies. What is it about and what would best derail it? How does the author react when they read their own work featuring characters or events they did not write? Only the author knows what is meant to happen, so you are going to have to take them into their own creation, where the characters therein might have some questions for their creator.

If you want a classic story arc to a campaign, you will need a villain. So, what if Mr Hyde became aware that he was a character in a book? What havoc could he wreak going from a novel to a comic book, gathering a team of villainous literary fiends, manufacturing vast quantities of his formula and polluting even the most innocent of characters?



## **Bibliophile checklist**

Here is a list of things to have to hand to assist with a smooth game that is all about a fun experience for all:

### **A map or list of possible encounters**

Some events have to happen, such as encountering the dragon. Some only happen if the players make certain choices.

### **A list of players, their character names and skills**

This is helpful to judge whether a player's character has what it takes to succeed at a certain task.

### **Props**

Not essential, but fun and useful props could include: a copy of *Treasure Island* to wave around, a book of spells (there is a printable cover you can use), a scroll to represent the spell to take the dragon out of the book, and a pirate hat.

### **A timer (not essential)**

If there is no time limit to your game, you don't need to worry, but sometimes you will want to get everything done in one session. Having a timer running gives you an idea of how quickly the players are progressing, and as such if you need to move them along or slow them down.

### **Remember to enjoy yourself**

This is meant to be fun for everyone involved, so relax and trust in your players to tell a story. Nudge them in the right direction if you have to, but let them surprise you with ways of doing things you probably will not have thought of and enjoy that.



## About the Author

Adrian L Barber has been playing, writing and illustrating games since the 1980s. He is a freelance artist, storyteller and model maker.

He was delighted when Scottish Book Trust's Philippa Cochrane and Nyla Ahmad asked him to create this game for Book Week Scotland.

He had the privilege to be the main carer for his two children as they made their way up to high school. This game is dedicated to them, his wife and to everyone who finds pure joy in entering the worlds we find inside books.

**Book Week Scotland is an annual celebration of books and reading that takes place across the country. Book Week Scotland 2021 will take place 15–21 November and is supported by Creative Scotland and SLIC.**