

At the Sign of the “Spy-Glass”

by Robert Louis Stevenson *from* Treasure Island

Robert Louis Stevenson’s Treasure Island is about a boy named Jim Hawkins who discovers a pirate’s treasure map. Jim, along with Squire Trelawney and Dr. Livesey, have decided to buy a ship, hire a crew, and look for the treasure. In this passage, Jim has been sent to an inn to give a note to Long John Silver who will be part of the crew on the ship.

When I had done breakfasting the squire gave me a note addressed to John Silver, at the sign of the Spyglass and told me I should easily find the place by following the line of the docks, and keeping a bright lookout for a little tavern with a large brass telescope for a sign. I set off, overjoyed at this opportunity to see some more of the ships and seamen, and picked my way all long a great crowd of people and carts and bales, for the dock was now at its busiest, until I found the tavern in question.

It was a bright enough little place of entertainment. The sign was newly painted; the windows had neat red curtains; the floor was cleanly sanded. There was a street on each side, and an open door on both, which made the large, low room pretty clear to see in, in spite of clouds of tobacco smoke.

The customers were mostly seafaring men; and they talked so loudly that I hung at the door, almost afraid to enter.

As I was waiting, a man came out of a side room, and at a glance I was sure he must be Long John. His left leg was cut off close by the hip, and under the left shoulder he carried a crutch, which he managed with wonderful dexterity, hopping about upon it like a bird. He was very tall and strong, with a face as big as a ham — plain and pale, but intelligent and smiling. Indeed, he seemed in the most cheerful spirits, whistling as he moved about among the tables, with a merry word or a slap on the shoulder for the more favored of his guests.

Questions

1. What does "dexterity" mean?
2. Describe the tavern: is it a nice place, or is it in poor condition? Would you expect to find a pirate in the Spy-Glass? Explain your answer.
3. Based on this passage, describe Long John Silver in your own words.
4. This is the first time Jim meets Long John. Do you think Jim likes him or dislikes him? Why? Use quotations from the passage to support your opinion.