

Captains Courageous: Rescued!

by Rudyard Kipling *from Captains Courageous*

Captains Courageous is the story of Harvey Cheyne, a wealthy and spoiled 15-year-old American boy, who falls overboard on the way to Europe with his parents. Harvey is rescued by the crew of a fishing boat from Gloucester, Massachusetts. Disko Troop is the captain.

In this passage, Harvey has just awoken on the fishing boat after the rescue. Dan Troop, Disko's son, is with him. Dan is about the same age as Harvey. Dan speaks first.

"There was a little common swell yes'day an' last night," said the boy. "But ef that's your notion of a gale ——" He whistled. "You'll know more 'fore you're through. Hurry! Dad's waitin'."

Like many other unfortunate young people, Harvey had never in all his life received a direct order—never, at least, without long, and sometimes tearful, explanations of the advantages of obedience and the reasons for the request. Mrs. Cheyne lived in fear of breaking his spirit, which, perhaps, was the reason that she herself walked on the edge of nervous prostration. He could not see why he should be expected to hurry for any man's pleasure, and said so. "Your dad can come down here if he's so anxious to talk to me. I want him to take me to New York right away. It'll pay him."

Dan opened his eyes, as the size and beauty of this joke dawned on him. "Say, dad!" he shouted up the fo'c'sle hatch, "he says you kin slip down an' see him ef you're anxious that way. 'Hear, dad?"

The answer came back in the deepest voice Harvey had ever heard from a human chest: "Quit foolin', Dan, and send him to me."

Dan sniggered, and threw Harvey his warped bicycle shoes. There was something in the tones on the deck that made the boy dissemble his extreme rage and console himself with the thought of gradually unfolding the tale of his own and his father's wealth on the voyage home. This rescue would certainly make him a hero among his friends for life. He hoisted himself on deck up a perpendicular ladder, and stumbled aft, over a score of obstructions, to where a small, thick-set, clean-shaven man with grey eyebrows sat on a step that led up to the quarter-deck. The swell had passed in the night, leaving a long, oily sea, dotted round the horizon with the sails of a dozen fishing-boats. Between them lay little black specks, showing where the dories were out fishing. The schooner, with a triangular riding-sail on the mainmast, played easily at anchor, and except for the man by the cabin-roof—"house" they call it—she was deserted.

"Mornin'—good afternoon, I should say. You've nigh slep' the clock around, young feller," was the greeting.

"Mornin'," said Harvey. He did not like being called "young feller"; and, as one rescued from drowning,

expected sympathy. His mother suffered agonies whenever he got his feet wet; but this mariner did not seem excited.

“Naow let’s hear all abaout it. It’s quite providential, first an’ last, fer all concerned. What might be your name? Where from (we mistrust it’s Noo York), an’ where baound (we mistrust it’s Europe)?”

Harvey gave his name, the name of the steamer, and a short history of the accident, winding up with a demand to be taken back immediately to New York, where his father would pay anything any one chose to name.

“H’m,” said the shaven man, quite unmoved by the end of Harvey’s speech. “I can’t say we think special of any man, or boy even, that falls overboard from that kind o’ packet in a flat ca’am. Least of all when his excuse is thet he’s seasick.”

Excuse!” cried Harvey. “D’you suppose I’d fall overboard into your dirty little boat for fun?”

“Not knowin’ what your notions o’ fun may be, I can’t rightly say, young feller. But if I was you, I wouldn’t call the boat which, under Providence, was the means o’ savin’ ye, names. In the first place, it’s blame irreligious. In the second, it’s annoyin’ to my feelin’s—an’ I’m Disko Troop o’ the “We’re Here” o’ Gloucester, which you don’t seem rightly to know.”

Questions

1. Why did Harvey fall overboard?
2. Why did Harvey think Disko would take him back to land?
3. What was Harvey's mother like?
4. What did Dan and Disko think of the storm?

Vocabulary List

Each of the vocabulary words below are used in the reading passage. As you read the passage, pay attention to context clues that suggest the word's meaning.

1. swell
2. prostration
3. fo'c'sle
4. sniggered
5. warped
6. dissemble
7. score
8. dories
9. mariner
10. providential

Context Clues

Using context clues from the sentences in the passage, underline the correct meaning of the word in boldface.

1) "There was a little common **swell** yes'day an' last night"

- a. very good; excellent b. rainstorm c. unusual wind d. slow rolling waves; surge

2) "she herself walked on the edge of nervous **prostration**"

- a. deceit; falsehood b. collapse; exhaustion c. energy; activity d. wall; barrier

3) "he shouted up the **fo'c'sle** hatch"

- a. crew's quarters; bunkroom b. roof or covering c. kitchen; galley d. microphone

4) "Dan **sniggered**, and threw Harvey his warped bicycle shoes"

- a. scowled; frowned b. snickered; laughed meanly c. bowed respectfully d. danced

5) "Dan sniggered, and threw Harvey his **warped** bicycle shoes"

- a. wet or damp b. expensive c. misshapen; twisted out of shape d. made of cloth

6) "made the boy **dissemble** his extreme rage and console himself"

- a. disguise; hide b. announce; expose c. forget; ignore d. repeat again

7) "and stumbled aft, over a **score** of obstructions"

- a. musical composition b. ship's deck c. points in a game d. about twenty; many

8) "where the **dories** were out fishing"

- a. small fish b. small sea birds c. small boats d. new sailors

9) but this **mariner** did not seem excited

- a. wise old man b. sailor or seaman c. puppet or doll d. uncle or cousin

10) "It's quite **providential**, first an' last, fer all concerned"

- a. heaven-sent; lucky b. unfortunate; sad c. profitable; successful d. amusing or funny