

# Castaway

WORKSHEET A

1. Quickly read through the story narrated by Alexander Selkirk. Then answer the questions on Worksheet B.

“I was born in Largo, Scotland, in 1676. My father was a tanner – he made clothes and other items from leather – and a cobbler (a shoemaker). Many people said that I was a difficult person. Maybe they were right, I never had much patience with fools.

In 1695 I became a sailor. I was a good seaman and worked my way up to the position of sailing master quickly. In 1705, I was appointed Master of the ship *Cinque Ports*, one of two vessels under the overall command of William Dampier. We were privateers, pirates who had the blessing of our government to attack Spanish ships off the South American coast and steal gold, silk and jewels. We weren't paid a wage - whatever we stole, we kept.

Although Dampier was a good navigator and mapmaker, he clearly had no idea how to run a privateering expedition. By the time we had crossed the Atlantic and reached Brazil, many men were hungry and sick. Worse still, we already had cases of scurvy (the fatal illness caused by lack of vitamins) aboard. Despite the condition of the men, we were ordered to make our way around Cape Horn, a most treacherous stretch of water, south of Chile.

We finally made it, although the ship was badly damaged. When we put in at Mas a Tierra, an island in the Juan Fernandez chain, four hundred miles off the coast of Chile, I had a big argument with the captain of my ship, Thomas Stradling. He wanted to continue and I insisted we stay and repair our ship. I told him I would not leave and so he unloaded my trunk and personal belongings and left me alone on the island.

At first, the feeling of being marooned was frightening, but I soon learned to look after myself. I built a hut from trees I cut down and made a roof from the leaves. There was plenty of food on the island - fruit and vegetables, goats provided me with milk and meat, and there were many fresh water springs. I dressed myself and lined the inside of my hut with goatskins (I had learned a lot from my father about making things out of leather) and made the island my home. I lit a fire and waited for another ship to come along and rescue me. I waited and waited.

After four years, an English ship, the *Duke*, arrived. After this much time I had changed. I was athletic like an animal and my beard was so long I looked like an animal. I had also forgotten how to speak English. Nevertheless, I was rescued and given the job of Master aboard the *Duke*. Two years later we reached England and news of my life alone on the desert island had attracted interest. A man called Defoe wrote a story based on my experiences. I tried settling down in Britain but I couldn't. I missed my island.

I went to sea again, this time for the navy, aboard *HMS Weymouth*. Off the coast of Africa, I drank some bad water and it killed me. I was only 45 years old. My story lasted longer than I did. The Chilean government later renamed two islands after me. They renamed the island Mas Afuera *Isla Alexander Selkirk* (even though I had never even been there) and they renamed my island (Mas a Tierra) after my fictional character, whose name was.... ”

# Castaway crossword

2. Answer the questions. Write the answers in the crossword to reveal the name which the Chilean government gave to the island Mas a Tierra. It's known as 'Isla...'

1. My father's job (6)
2. Where I came from (8)
3. A person who makes shoes (7)
4. The incompetent leader of our expedition (7)
5. The name of our ship (6,5)
6. The sickness which killed many a sailor (6)
7. I was \_\_\_\_\_ on this island for 4 years (8)
8. I lined the inside of my hut with \_\_\_\_\_ (9)
9. The nearest country to my island (5)
10. Another name for 'legal pirate' (9)
11. The name of the ship which rescued me (4)
12. My position aboard this ship (6)
13. The man who wrote about my experiences (5)
14. The last ship I served on was the HMS \_\_\_\_\_ (8)

