

Excerpt from “The Old Seadog and the Black Spot”

Read the excerpt and then answer the questions that follow in complete sentences. Restate the question in your answer whenever possible.

He stayed for several months and never offered us any further payment. Whenever my father mentioned his bill, the captain would raise his voice and stare ominously at him until he retreated. I am sure the terror in which my father lived greatly hastened his death.

One morning, while the captain was out walking and taking in the salty sea air, another seafaring man arrived. I was setting the breakfast table when the door opened and the man stepped in. He was a pale, rascally looking creature, and I noticed he was missing two fingers.

“Is this here table for my mate Bill?” he asked, pointing to a table that had indeed been set for our secretive guest. It was not a straightforward question, and he uttered those words with more than a hint of sarcasm.

I told him the table was for a man who called himself the captain.

“Has he got a nasty scar on one cheek?” he inquired.

“Yes,” I replied.

“Well, that would be my mate Bill. Is he here?” he continued.

“He’s out taking a stroll,” I explained.

The stranger announced that he would wait for his mate to return. Then he stood inside the door, peering out like a hungry cat waiting for a mouse. After a while, the captain strode in.

“Bill!” shouted the stranger.

The captain spun around. He had the look of a man who had seen a ghost.

“Black Dog!” he gasped.

“And who else?” returned the other. “Black Dog’s come to see his old shipmate Billy Bones.”

“Now look here,” hissed the captain. “You’ve managed to run me down. What’s your business?”

“I’ll have a drink,” said Black Dog. “Then we’ll sit down and talk square, like old mates.”

They sat down, and for a long time I could hear nothing but low mumbling. Gradually their voices grew louder until the interaction became a cacophony of unpleasant exchanges. This was followed by an explosion of crashing sounds—the chair and table went over, a clash of steel followed, and then a cry of pain. The next instant I saw Black Dog in full flight, and the captain in hot pursuit, both men with sabres drawn. Blood streamed from Black Dog’s left shoulder. At the door, the captain aimed one last tremendous blow, which would certainly have struck Black Dog had it not been intercepted by the inn’s signboard.

Black Dog, in spite of his wound, disappeared over the hill in half a minute. The captain stood staring like a bewildered man. At last he turned, staggered, gasped for breath, and grabbed the door with one hand.

“Jim!” he croaked. “Water!”

I ran to fetch him water, but as I fumbled with the jug, I heard a loud crash. Running back, I saw the captain lying on the floor. Immediately I heard my mother’s footsteps on the stairs. Moments later she was standing beside me. Together, we gently raised the captain’s head. It was clear that he needed a doctor, so we sent for Dr. Livesey. Then, as carefully as we could, we moved the captain into the parlor.

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Shortly after Dr. Livesey arrived, the captain opened his eyes and looked about.

“Where’s Black Dog?” he mumbled.

“There’s no Black Dog here,” the doctor said. “You’ve had a **stroke**. Now lie back and rest.”

Dr. Livesey drew some blood, and the old sailor fell asleep.

“He needs to rest for at least a week,” said the doctor emphatically. “Another stroke will surely kill him.”

Later, when the captain woke up, his first words were, “Black Dog!”

“Jim,” he moaned, “you know I’ve been good to you. I’m pretty low and deserted by all. You’ll help me, won’t you?”

“But the doctor—” I began.

“Doctors! What do they know?” he growled. “What does that doctor know about seafaring men like me?”

Somewhat reluctantly, I agreed to help him. When I offered him water, he greedily gulped it down.

“Aye,” said he, “that’s better. Now, then, did that doctor say how long I’m supposed to lie here wasting time?”

“A week, at least,” I said.

“Thunder!” he cried. “Out of the question! They’d have the black spot on me by then.”

He attempted to sit up but fell back, weak and helpless on the bed. Then, after further contemplation, he spoke to me again.

“Jim,” he said, “you saw Black Dog? He’s a bad ’un, but there’s worse than him after me. I hope I may get away from them yet. If I can’t, and if they put the black spot on me, it’s my old sea chest they’re after. You go and see that doctor and tell him to send all hands—**magistrates** and such—to the Admiral Benbow. Tell him Captain Flint’s men are here—or all that’s left of the old crew. I was Flint’s first mate, and I’m the only one who knows the place where he hid his **loot**. But don’t tell the doctor unless they get me with the black spot, or you see Black Dog again—”

At that moment, he paused before continuing, “Or a seafaring man with one leg. Keep an eye out for him above all!” he concluded.

“But what is the black spot, Captain?” I asked.

“That’s a summons, mate. **Mutiny!** Keep your wits about you, Jim, and I’ll share with you equals, upon my honor,” he continued.

His voice grew weaker as he said this, and soon he fell into a heavy sleep. I should have told the story to the doctor, but my poor father died quite suddenly that evening, which naturally put all other matters aside.

The day after my father’s funeral, I was standing at the door full of sad thoughts when I saw a blind man slowly walking up the road. He wore a green mask over his eyes, and he tapped the ground with a stick. He was hunched, as if from age, and wore a hooded sea cloak.

As he drew near, he called out, “Will anyone inform a poor blind man who has lost his sight in the defense of England—God bless King George—where he may now be?”

“You are at the Admiral Benbow Inn,” I explained.

“I hear a young voice,” said he. “Will you lend me your hand and lead me in?”

NAME: _____

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1. A simile is a literary device that compares two different things, usually using *like* or *as*. Identify the simile on page 4 of the excerpt. Then explain what is being compared and why.

2. At different points in the excerpt, the captain is described as growling, hissing, and croaking. These are verbs usually used to describe the actions of animals. Why might these words accurately describe the actions of the captain?

3. Why might the captain direct Jim to go to the doctor and tell him to “send all hands” to the inn? What does he want them to do?
