

Excerpt from “My Life Hangs in the Balance”

Read the following excerpt and complete the activity that follows.

You all know what my plan was, and if we had stuck to it, we'd a been aboard the *Hispaniola* this night, every man of us alive, and the treasure stowed safely in the hold. Now you have the **insolence** to stand for cap'n over me—you, that sank the lot of us!”

Silver paused, and I could see by the other men's faces that these words had not been said in vain.

“You say this cruise is ruined,” Silver continued. “By gum, you're right about that. We're close to being locked up, but there's one thing that may save us yet and that's this boy. You **scurvy** dogs want to kill him? What sort of a fool plan is that? Much better to keep him alive. Maybe you didn't know that there's a rescue boat coming to get these gentlemen, but there is, and when that boat arrives, you'll be glad we have a **hostage** to bargain with.”

Silver spat on the ground and went on, “And as for why I made a bargain with the squire, well, look here!” As he spoke, he pulled the map out of his pocket. “Right here's why I done it!”

I looked and saw that it was the map with the three red crosses, the one I had found in the captain's sea chest. Dr. Livesey really had given it to Silver! But why? I could not imagine.

The other mutineers were stunned, too. They leaped on the map like ravenous beasts. It was passed from hand to hand, one tearing it from another, and by the oaths and the cries and the childish laughter with which they accompanied their examination, you would have thought they were fingering the gold itself, already loaded safely on the ship.

“Yes,” said one, “it's Flint's writing, sure enough!”

“Then there's hope in it yet!” exclaimed another.



“Mighty pretty!” said George Merry. “But how are we to get away with the treasure now that the ship’s gone?”

“How are we supposed to get away?” Silver barked angrily. “You ought to tell me—you and the rest that lost me my schooner! But no, you can’t! You haven’t got the invention of a cockroach. You lost the ship; I found the treasure. Who’s the better man? By thunder, I resign! You can elect a new cap’n if you fancy. I’m done with it!”

By this point, the men had changed their minds. It was the map that convinced them.

“Silver!” they cried. “Silver for cap’n! John Silver forever!”

“So that’s the tune, is it?” said Silver. “Well, George, I reckon you’ll have to wait another turn. Here, Jim—here’s a curiosity for you.”

He handed me the paper the men had given him. I saw that one side had been blackened with wood ash, while the other displayed the word *deposed*.

After this, Silver tied me up, and we all went to sleep. Well, all except me, that is. I had trouble sleeping. As I lay in the darkness, I thought of the man I had fought that afternoon and my perilous

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

The following words were used in “My Life Hangs in the Balance.” For each word, pick an activity and complete the chart below.

bargain	Vocabulary Activities 1. Type a definition in your own words. 2. Provide a synonym (similar meaning). 3. Provide an antonym (opposite meaning). 4. Use the word in a sentence. 5. Provide another word that the word makes you think of and explain why. (Apple makes me think of <i>bananas</i> because they are both fruits.) 6. Think of an example of the word and type about it. (An example of <i>fruit</i> is cantaloupe. It is a melon that is white on the outside and orange on the inside. They are really tasty in the summer.)
ravenous	
hostage	
convince	
depose	

Word	Activity	Activity Response