



The Swiss Family Robinson: By Johann David Wyss : Illustrated

By Johann David Wyss

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The Swiss Family Robinson (German: *Der Schweizerische Robinson*) is a novel by Johann David Wyss, first published in 1812, about a Swiss family shipwrecked in the East Indies en route to Port Jackson, Australia. Written by Swiss pastor Johann David Wyss and edited by his son Johann Rudolf Wyss and illustrated by his son Johann Emmanuel Wyss, the novel was intended to teach his four sons about family values, good husbandry, the uses of the natural world and self-reliance. Wyss' attitude toward education is in line with the teachings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and many of the episodes have to do with Christian-oriented moral lessons such as frugality, husbandry, acceptance, cooperation, etc. The adventures are presented as a series of lessons in natural history and the physical sciences, and resemble other, similar educational books for children in this period, such as Charlotte Turner Smith's *Rural Walks: in Dialogues intended for the use of Young Persons* (1795), *Rambles Further: A continuation of Rural Walks* (1796), *A Natural History of Birds*, intended chiefly for young persons (1807). But the novel differs in that it is modeled on Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, a

genuine adventure story, and presents a geographically impossible array of large mammals (including tigers, brown bears, leopards, jackals, hyenas, cheetahs, wolves, moose, lions, rhinos, hippos, walruses, elephants, giraffes, monkeys, zebras, and onagers). and plants (including the bamboos, cassavas, cinnamon trees, coconut palm trees, fir trees, flax, *Myrica cerifera*, rice, rubber plant potatoes, sago palms, and an entirely fictitious kind of sugarcane) that probably could never have existed together on a single island for the children's education, nourishment, clothing and convenience.

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