*SAMPLE ESSAY OF A LITERARY ANALYSIS elaborated by the second year students English, University of Tlemcen, Algeria, February 2021.*

This excerpt is taken from the realist adventure novel entitled The Life and Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, written by Daniel Defoe in 1719, Chapter 3, “Wrecked on a Desert Island”. The novel is about a young man who goes on an adventure overseas to discover the world and become rich. Unfortunately he is lost at sea then finds himself struggling for survival in a desert island.

The first and second paragraphs speak about Robinson and his companions that are wrestling against the waves for their survival. It reflects his fear and confusion as he thought that he was dying. The waves were furious so that each time Crusoe thought he reached the shore the waves sent him back and took him deeper in the water. The power of nature that sparked the fear upon him but he did not stand back, in fact it urged him to fight for survival. Even between life and death Crusoe managed to get through the water by climbing the rock, and helping himself after the waves abated, then swam towards the shore, until he found himself out of danger.

In paragraph five, Crusoe speaks of his excitement and ecstasy due to his survival, comparing himself to someone who almost lost life under execution and who was saved at the last minute, saying “for sudden joys, like grieves, confound at first”. In the next paragraph Crusoe mentions his over-excitement saying that he was making thousands of gestures and motions about knowing that his friends were lost and that he was he only survivors.

In the two final paragraphs Crusoe feels anxious about his situation, as he thinks that he will die of hunger or eaten by beasts. He thought that everything was wrong and started giving up to hopelessness. After he found water to drink, and took tobacco as food, then found shelter on a tree he started to feel more hopeful and had a good night sleep. There are two opposing situations in these paragraphs, in the first one he was ready to save himself, but later he sustained himself into finding provisions.

The targeted audience of the novel is the eighteenth century English middle class, because they called for a literature that represents them. The themes that are discussed in this excerpt are merely those of survival, because Robinson was struggling against the stormy sea, and the theme of isolation because he found himself the sole survivor on the shore and had to save his life. There is also the theme of individualism when Robinson was fighting the severe waves and he was depending on his skills for his survival, as well as the natural instinct which sustains his resistance. One more theme is that of the power of nature against man, in this excerpt Robinson is entirely helpless and unable to control his body in front of the power of nature and the waves. Once in the desert island, he feels lost in the beginning but survives thanks to the natural resources on the island, which again proves that nature has the power to either kill or save man, man is very weak in front of nature.

The events of the excerpt happened in the sea where the ship was wrecked and Robinson fought for his life, and the Island in which Robinson first felt excited for his survival, then scared for fear of being eaten by the beasts or dying of hunger. The time settings are the day-time and the night-time. During the day-time Robinson was fighting the high waves, during the night-time he was scared of creatures that might be hiding in the desert island. The next morning Robinson was feeling more optimistic about his survival.

The plot begins when the boat is overthrown by the high waves, which is the exposition of the conflict, the action rises as the protagonist Robinson is fighting the waves which keep disempowering him. The action rises into a climax when Robinson was thrown against a rock and could hardly breathe or feel his body. The falling action started when the waves abated and led him to the shore where things started to become brighter, in the beginning on the shore he felt anxious and confused without food but he soon felt safe when he found food, water, and shelter.

Robinson is depicted as a young, persistent, brave man who kept fighting for his life, skillful, and emotional. He is the protagonist of the novel, he is round because he life-like, he has self-awareness, he is multi-dimensional because we see him in different emotional states in the text. The antagonist is the sea, which is an important character in this excerpt, because it almost killed Robinson.

The text is narrated in a first person point of view because the incidents happened directly to the speaker and affected him. The point of view is central because the narrator is the protagonist himself.

The register of this excerpt is formal and at times religious because of the different references to God. The diction is Latin-origin. There are different figures of speech in the text, like a simile in “mountain-like” in the first paragraph, which means that the wave was very high, almost as high as a mountain. There is an apostrophe in “Oh God” which shows the panic. There is a hyperbole in “thousand gestures and motions’’, in which the speaker exaggerated in portraying the gestures which followed his ecstasy about his survival. There is a personification in the “the wave that came upon me, again buried me all at once” the wave is given a human quality to show its strength in beating Robinson. A simile in “the sea as a great hill… as furious as an enemy’’ in which the speaker compares the size and intensity and violence of the wave to hills and enemies.

The tone of the author is somehow harsh towards the main character in the beginning of the excerpt because he put his life in danger, but his made him survive all these troubles which shows that Defoe feels some pity and mercy for his character. The atmosphere is full of danger which surrounds the protagonist both in the water and in the island. There is optimism at the end of the excerpt when Robinson starts to find solutions for his difficult situation.

Overall, Crusoe is a story of a man who ends up the sole survivor after a shipwreck on an isolated island. From my perspective, Crusoe is such a courageous man, and its story is very inspiring about how man should survive when he finds himself individual facing hardship, so that the message from his story is well-conveyed by Defoe

It is a fable of sin and punishment, in which Daniel defoe's talent of the art of writting is noticed in the representations of the events and the development of situations .