
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Exploring the Depiction of Death as a Central Theme in Treasure Island Novel

Dr. Afaf Yousuf Abdulgadir Alkhidir

Assistant Professor, Department of Foreign Languages, Faculty of Art and Humanities, AlBaha University, AlBaha Province, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Corresponding Author: Dr. Afaf Yousuf Abdulgadir Alkhidir, **E-mail:** a.yousef@bu.edu.sa

| ABSTRACT

Treasure Island is an adventure story which has attracted attention for long period of time. Death was depicted in different senses. There was natural deaths like that of Jim's father because of sickness, Billy Bones death of apoplexy. Or unnatural death like Painful death of Blind Pew and Tom, and homicide of many pirates. While Jim killed Israel Hands in self-defense. Black spot is a symbolic sign of near death. Most pirates are died by gun shots, stabbing, and physical attack. Deaths of Pirates aren't depicted as sad incident. Death plays a crucial role in shaping the plot of the novel. The story explores the consequences of violence, especially killing. Death was depicted in very interesting details like how features of dead person change after death. Many deaths are shown as tragic incidents caused sadness for departing people, while human feelings toward dead people were shown with many characters in the story. Jim Hawkins is the protagonist of this novel, while Long John Silver shared him the interest of audience as pivotal character. While it is story of adventure, most issues actually related to death or afraid of being dead. Death actually may be the central issue in Treasure Island novel. The methodology that is used in this paper is comprehensive coverage of all deaths incidents on the novel, how it happened, and what are they referring to?. This paper found that most death incidents are used as leverage to develop feeling of adventure, suspense and horror in the novel, While it is used to reflect the criminal side of pirates. This paper contributes in enhancing deep understanding of how death could be substantial part of a novel plot, and this could be reflected in different senses.

| KEYWORDS

Depiction of death, plot device, natural death, homicide, skirmishes

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

ACCEPTED: 25 July 2026

PUBLISHED: 09 September 2026

DOI: 10.32996/ijllt.2026.9.9.10

Introduction

Themes of an story may be interpreted in different perspectives, but certain topics tend to cluster around core themes. In Treasure Island novel, prominent themes include honor, adventure and greed, while other crucial themes, such as death and fear of death, also play a significant role in shaping the narrative.

This paper explores how death is depicted to serve different narrative purposes? By examining depiction of death, this study aims to uncover the significance and meaning that can be extracted from these events. The importance of this research lies in the fact that death is a fundamental, inescapable theme in this novel.

Death is a pervasive theme in literature, frequently employed to explore existential concerns and add depth to narratives. So it is important to investigate death as central theme in Treasure Island. While the novel is often classified as coming-of-age story, Jim Hawkins adventure with noblemen company to find buried Treasure is the main topic, death incidents are essential part of the plot. The novel portrayal of death is multifaceted, While most death incidents are not depicted with emotional sympathy, other death incidents are used to reflect danger in this adventure.

Copyright: © 2026 the Author(s). This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC-BY) 4.0 license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>). Published by Al-Kindi Centre for Research and Development, London, United Kingdom.

Depiction of Death has been presented in literature to serve the author's goals. Authors may have different aims in any section of the novel. The changing aims throughout the novels create different depictions of death. For example, Painful death may be a choice when the author wants to explain feelings of sadness or punishment. Such depiction may be rich of details of how the dying character feels. Brief depictions may be used to accelerate the pace of certain episodes. A somber atmosphere may be used when the dying character is good character, while feelings of divine punishment may be expressed when the character is villainous.

Some authors explored the issue of death in context of loss of loved people, others use novels to convey specific ideas about death. Additionally, Some authors employ death as a symbol for certain themes.

Death is a mysterious, critical incident that has a profound effect on human mindset. It is not simple, passing event. The Depiction of death is a fundamental topic in literature, as it can create plot twists, thrill, suspense, and emotional sympathy. Novels usually use death to explore new themes and ideas. When a character dies, he or she disappears from the scene, allowing new incidents to unfold. Death can serve as turning point in profound narration, while some characters disappear without eliciting any emotional response.

In the case of *Treasure Island*, while death is not the central or pivotal topic, the novel does explore themes of danger and compassion throughout the story.

Literature Review

Jaleha-Jefwa. J (2016) referred to death as major inevitable fact, stressing that people learn from societies how to deal with the sorrow of death. While anthropologist Earnest Becker believes that the idea of death and fear of death haunt human mind, while literary works give people chance to examine this with close proximity. He examined how characters thoughts, words, actions interact with death, and how creative writers examined how people live and die. He stressed on the cultural side affects perceptions about death.

P.2

Teodorescu . A (2015) examined in essay if Literature is a slap on the face of death. She stressed on doubts that such studies about death is trustful. She wondered is it moral to represent death in children's literature and what limitations should be imposed. She also examined how do authors represent death in their work, and if they have the same vision.

Hakola & Kivisto (2014) stressed on the reality that we have no information about death, and it is mysterious event. The death of other people fulfill the need of people to know about death. Walter Benjamin claimed that fiction give us the chance to know about death. While Hakola and Kivisto also believe that Literature give us ways of approaching and imagining death. Additionally, elegies and lamentation are in fact are written to response and react to death, while some literary heroes left life in dramatic and sad episodes than other heroes.

Hakola & Kivisto (2014) believe that Literature enable deep look into death in different ways, while they claim that death is useful in literature. They stress that stories use death in their plot to create emotional effect, plot twists, suspense, and obscurity. In literature, death is found in many levels such as narration, imagery, and metaphor. They believe that death can be used to advance the plot, but death can be used, in detective and crime novel, to open the story and the story revolves around finding the murderer.

Narrative closure is used in *Treasure Island* novel when a number of pirates died in the battle with the good people (noblemen) group. Hakola & Kivisto (2014) explained that there is an Aristotelian concept revolves using death to provide a narrative closure or even catharsis. This stress on the reality of using negative events and emotions to advance moral purposes.

Methodology

This study used literary criticism as a type a type qualitative methodology. Literary criticism in this study was mix of descriptive and narratological analysis which includes all examples of death incidents in *Treasure Island* novel and what are the involved meanings. The descriptive analysis examines instances of death in the novel, analyzing the language and narrative techniques that were used to convey death, while narratological analysis includes how death is presented through plot, characters development, and significance of death.

Discussion

Death is central topic in *Treasure Island* novel. As story about adventure and pirates, death was pivotal issue and standing danger throughout the story. Nevertheless death was depicted and examined in different ways. Many Death accidents were depicted as sad incidents, especially those of Jim team, while pirates deaths were portrayed as Divine punishment. Many

characters in Treasure Island Novels died during continuous episodes. Good men and pirates died in the continuous battle. While it were necessary to push the incidents further.

At the beginning of the novel, Jim Hawkins has been fighting to save the life of his sick father at Admiral Benbow Inn, when Billy Bones appeared in his life. The death of the two men affected the life of Jim Hawkins badly. The author here reflected that how the death of people around you could affect your life, and put you in the face of other choices in life. The death of Jim Hawkins's father was the first incident of death in this novel. Robert Louis Stevenson reflected this as peaceful end of good man. The author didn't refer to pain of any sort 'my poor father died quite suddenly that evening' p.24

Billy Bones appeared in the first section of Treasure Island Novel. The author Robert Louis Stevenson used the character Billy Bones to develop new incidents in this novel. While Billy Bones was portrayed as eccentric and alcoholic, Jim Hawkins was a little sympathetic with Billy Bones. The sudden appearance of the former shipmate Black Dog affected badly on Billy's health, because it was an evidence of the near end of Billy's life by his enemies of pirates. As a result of Thirst to alcohol and bad sickness, features of Billy Bones' face 'as of mortal sickness' p.27 After receiving the black spot, Billy became sure that he will not stay a life for long time. Billy's Death was depicted here by Robert Louis Stevenson as terrible end as a result of fear, sickness, and Divine punishment of past crimes. Billy was terrifying and afraid. His death was depicted as painful death. 'He reeled' in refer to his movements because of pain 'put his hand to his throat' which is a sign of pain and 'swaying for a moment,'.

While the author tried to describe Billy Bones' death as a result of 'thundering apoplexy', Stevenson also described Billy falling ' from his whole height foremost to the floor' p.27. Jim described this death as the second death he had known. Dying moments were widely depicted as terrible moments, while dead characters gave space to new characters and incidents to develop throughout the story. Dead people had appeared as phantoms and ghosts. Spirits of dead characters like Captin flint, Billy Bones, or dead pirates were used to develop sense of fear and adventure. Voices of these dead people reflected worry of young Jim Hawkins as young boy who was obliged to face dangers, but the author depicted Jim as courageous boy who is eager to make his dreams true, especially after hearing about Treasure Island.

Blind Pew death was depicted as just punishment for his evil. Blind Pew was threat to Jim and his mother. His death as blind man was horrifying and terrible. Death of blind man actually seems awful, and the most terrible as his death was under feet of horses. This tragic death was used to enhance the idea of danger that is revolved in seaman life, especially pirate as this death could be seen as punishment for bad deeds and crimes. 'Down went Pew with a cry that rang high into the night'. P.41 To die under hoofs seems terrible accident 'the four hoofs trampled and spurned him and passed by.' P.41

When Hispaniola reached Treasure Island, Danger was great as the crew of the ship was consisted of former pirates, who were hoping to find Captain Flint's Treasure. Jim Hawkins learned about the mutiny when he was hiding in 'apple barrel'. There was no Death accidents on the ship during the journey to Island.

One violent death incident is that of poor Tom Redruth when Long John silver killed Tom dreadfully for challenging him. After talking angerlily to Silver and defying him. Death was depicted here as a punishment against a man who opposed Silver authoritarin power. The crime was described as awful crime 'with a cry John seized the branch of a tree'. P.108 Another Side of Long John Silver character was shown strong pirate '

whipped the cruch out of his armpit' p.108. The focus here is not on the sadness and grief of this death, like the case of Jim's father or Pirate Billy Bones. This killing was depicted as one of the crimes that were committed by Long John Silver in his life a pirate. This episode was used to portray Long John Silver as authorian character, not just good man treats Jim and his friends in the ship in good manner, this episode was used to explain the cruel of John Silver.

The episode of Tom Redruth's death was used to reflect cruelty of Long John silver. That violent killing of Tom described in details to show the sinister side of Silver. The deadly blow was described in details ' ... right between the shoulders in the middle of his back' p. 108. This fall was described to raise the horror 'His hands flew up, he gave a sort of gasp, and fell'. P. 108 . Then Silver used a knife to end the life of Tom Redruth 'and had twice buried his knife up to the hilt in that defenseless body'.p.108 Redruth's death was depicted as a death of good seaman.

George Merry attempted to turn the crew against Long John Silver and to be the Captain. This mutiny ended when Silver showed that he own the map. However when they found that the Treasure has been taken, he rises up against Long John Silver again, and he was killed by gun shot. This was depicted as the end of pirates power on the island, and then every thing later became in the hands of good guys. '... crack! Crack! Crack! Three musketshots flashed out of the thicket'.ps 253-254 George Merry Death wasn't depicted as painful incident, but the beginning of the end of sinister power on the Island. 'Merry tumbled

head foremost into the excavation.' P. 254 While another pirates also fell dead by these shots'. On the other hand, the end of this adventure. Ben Gunn was portrayed as a man who survived from death, and also he was the man who found the treasure.

The battle that occurred in the stockade caused the most number of deaths in this novel. Five pirates are killed, while Joyce from Jim's group died. The number of pirates was reduced greatly because of the fight. Deaths incidents were mentioned in context of developing fight. 'In three seconds, nothing remained of the attacking party, but the five who had fallen'. P.160 These deaths were referred to as a result of gun shots. Deaths were referred to in context of gun shot battle 'Squire and Gray fired again and yet again' p.158. No inclusion of specific feelings of Joy or Sadness. It is just a battle 'three men fell, one forwards into the enclosure, two back on the outside.' P. 158. The deaths here were mentioned here in context of win and loss. 'five against three leaves us four to nine. P 161

Israel Hands was Captain Flint's gunner. Jim succeeded in defeating Israel Hands after long fight. This could be seen as triumph of honest boy in the face of evil man. This was depicted as a death of strong man who has been fighting in the sea for long years. This could be seen as natural end of sinister man. Israel Hands died by a shot. Stevenson used Israel Hands as evidence of Jim Hawkins's development as young boy who is able to fight experienced pirate and defeat him.

The fall of Long John silver was described as a fall of chieftain, while the Death of George was depicted as the end of pirates' influence on the episodes. George who was threatening Long John silver after finding out the the Treasure was taken by someone. George became very angry and tried to kill Long John Silver, but a gun shot by Dr. Livesey injured him badly, before being killed by another shot by Long John silver.

Conclusion

Death in Treasure Island Novel is depicted in details in many incidents to reflect the brutal and harsh nature of pirates world. Death episodes in this story is used also to reflect characters development, plot progression, and thematic purposes. As story of adventure, Treasure Island involves a lot of death incidents among pirates and the good men.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Publisher's Note: All claims expressed in this article are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of their affiliated organizations, or those of the publisher, the editors and the reviewers.

References

- [1]. Hakola & Kivisto (2014), Death in Literature, Cambridge Scholars Publishings
- [2]. Jaleha-Jefwa. J (2016) Perception of dying and death in selected literary works,
- [3]. Teodorescu . A (2015), Death Representation in Literature, Forms and
- [4]. Theories, Cambridge Scholars Publishing