



Class: VIII

QUESTION BANK 2021-22

Sub: ENGLISH

Lesson: *The Black Spot*

By R.L. Stevenson

BACKGROUND OF THE STORY

The **Black Spot** is a literary device invented by [Robert Louis Stevenson](#) for his novel [Treasure Island](#) (serialized 1881–82, published as a book in 1883). In the book, pirates are presented with a "black spot" to officially pronounce a verdict of guilt or judgement. It consists of a circular piece of paper or card, with one side blackened while the other side bears a message and placed in the hand of the accused. It was a source of much fear because it meant the pirate was to be deposed as leader, by force if necessary—or else killed outright.

Summary of the excerpt

In spite of the doctor's orders, Billy Bones eventually persuades Jim to bring him a glass of rum. He then confides to Jim his history, begging Jim to keep an eye out for any of Billy's former mates.

That evening, Jim's father dies, and for several days, Jim has no time to think about Billy Bones. Then on the afternoon following the funeral, he sees a blind beggar coming to the inn, tapping with his stick down the frozen road. Calling out for assistance, he asks Jim to guide him into the inn. To Jim's surprise, when he offers his hand, the old beggar grips it like a vise and demands to be taken to the captain or he will break Jim's arm.

Billy Bones is in the parlor, drunk. The sight of the blind beggar terrifies him. Then the beggar presses a square of paper into the captain's hand. On it is a black spot—a kind of summons from his old shipmates. When the beggar is gone, the old pirate springs to his feet, planning to flee. Instead, he reels, collapses, and dies.

Main Characters

- **James Hawkins / Jim:** A fictional character in R.L. Stevenson's novel *Treasure Island*. He is the protagonist and the main narrator of the story. Jim is the son of an innkeeper and is probably in his mid-teens. He is eager and enthusiastic to go to sea and hunt for treasure. He is a modest narrator, never boasting of the remarkable courage and heroism he consistently displays. Jim is impulsive, but he exhibits increasing sensitivity and wisdom. Mr. and Mrs. Hawkins are the parents of Jim Hawkins. Mr. Hawkins dies shortly after the beginning of the story.
- **Billy Bones / captain:** The old seaman who resides at Jim's parents' inn. Billy is rude and refuses to pay his inn bills, symbolizes the pirates' general opposition to law, order, and civilization. He hires Jim to be on the lookout for a one-legged man, thus involving the young Jim in the pirate life. Billy's sea chest and treasure map set the whole adventure in motion. His illness and his fondness for rum symbolize the weak and self-destructive aspects of the pirate lifestyle. He dies of a stroke.
- **David Pew / Blind Pew:** A vicious, deadly, and sinister blind beggar who served as a member of Flint's crew. Despite his blindness, he proves to be a dangerous fighter and can even be considered a ringleader amongst his fellow crewmen. He is the second messenger to approach Billy Bones and the one to deliver the Black Spot.