

# DANIEL DEFOE

## LIFE (1660 - 1731)

Defoe's father was a London butcher and dissenter, so Defoe was educated at the school of the sons of dissenters. After his education, he choose to go into commerce. In 1688 he took part in the rebellion against James II. After the failure of the uprising, he fled the country and travelled around the world. When he returned to England, he become a government spy. After a short prison term due to a satirical work, Defoe devoted himself to journalism. In 1706 he set up his own newspaper, called **The Review**, and the he become professional novelist.

## ACHIEVEMENT

Defoe is often called the father of English novel. His work differs from that of novelist like Swift or poets like Pope who wrote for cultured people. Defoe wrote for the middle class. In 1719 Defoe published **Robinson Crusoe**, then **Moll Flanders**, **Roxana**, **Captain Singleton**. In most of his works Defoe doesn't appear as the narrator. In fact his novel are presented in form of autobiographies of the central character.

## ROBINSON CRUSOE

The inspiration for *Robinson Crusoe* was provided by the memories of a shipwrecked sailor, Alexander Selkirk. But when Defoe published his novel, people believed that the hero really existed. Robinson Crusoe reflects middle class culture of 18<sup>th</sup> century. In fact the first page of the novel shows Defoe's interest of middle class life. Also Robinson symbolizes a new age that was increasing its knowledge of the world through exploration.

In the novel we can find also two different views of life: Robinson's one, who is a young man dreaming adventures and wealth, and his father's one, who tells Robinson that work and diligence are the only way to maintain his social status. So Defoe sets the wisdom of the age against the impetuosity of youth.

Robinson's first voyage is success, but on his second voyage his ship is attacked by pirates and he in captured. Then he manages to escape. During his voyage the ship is wrecked near a small island off the coast of South Africa. Robinson dominates his island but one day he sees cannibals who bring their victims to the island to kill them. Robinson saves one of them and he names the native **Friday**. Before meeting *Friday*, Robinson has a prophetic dream, in which he sees a savage prisoner escape his abductors, run to him and become his "man". His dream comes true: he saves *Friday* and finally gets his slave. The reason for this rescue his ambiguous. What seems to prevail, in fact, is not so much a humanitarian drive as a selfish one. But in the course of time, Friday becomes a good friend to Robinson and also a good Christian. After 28 years a ship arrives on the island and Robinson comes back home.