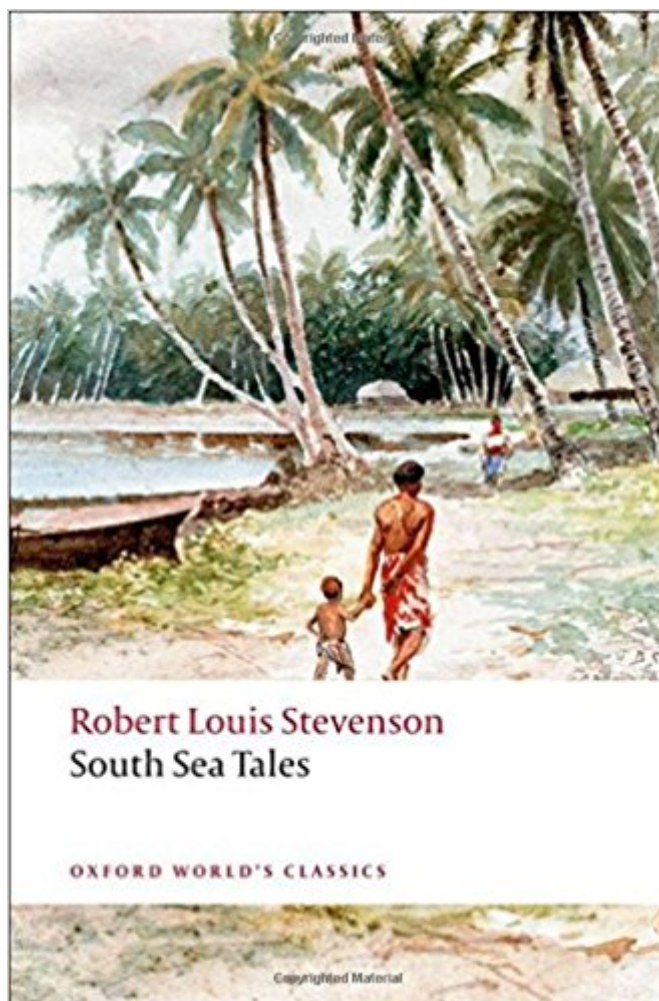


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South Sea Tales (Oxford World's Classics)



Synopsis

In *South Sea Tales* Stevenson shows himself to be a virtuoso of narrative styles. But beyond their generic diversity the stories are linked by their concern with representing the multiracial society of which their author had become a member. In this collection--the first to bring together all his shorter Pacific fiction in one volume--Stevenson emerges as a witness both to the cross-cultural encounters of nineteenth-century imperialism and to the creation of the global culture which characterizes the post-colonial world. About the Series: For over 100 years Oxford World's Classics has made available the broadest spectrum of literature from around the globe. Each affordable volume reflects Oxford's commitment to scholarship, providing the most accurate text plus a wealth of other valuable features, including expert introductions by leading authorities, voluminous notes to clarify the text, up-to-date bibliographies for further study, and much more.

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Customer Reviews

'a real treasure. ... RLS at his most serious and playful.' Daily Telegraph Arts and Books section, 19 July 1997

Roslyn Jolly is Lecturer in English at the University of New South Wales, Australia. She is the author of *Henry James: History, Narrative, Fiction* (OUP, 1993).

Towards the end of Robert Louis Stevenson's life in the late 1880's, he had to move to the Pacific

islands for his health. He managed to visit many of the most famous locales while there, including Hawaii, Tahiti, Samoa, the Gilberts, the Marshalls, and many besides these. He listened to and recorded both native legends and sailors' stories, besides creating a few original stories of his own. The book contains the following stories: The Beach of Falesa, The Bottle Imp, The Isle of Voices, The Ebb-Tide: A Trio and Quartette, and two very short stories. The book also contains a very lengthy literary overview and critique of Stevenson's work, which I would recommend skipping until after you've read the book. Thankfully, it also contains a map, which you will repeatedly refer to. The Beach of Falesa is about a European trader (Wiltshire) who takes up residence in the fictitious island of Falesa, whereupon he is hoodwinked by a fellow European (Case) into buying a worthless business and marrying an untouchable girl. Wiltshire then determines to unseat Case from his position of dominance among the natives, so he (Wiltshire) can make good on his business and restore his wife Uma to respectability. This story like the others that follow are true character studies of both human weakness and resolve. The Bottle Imp is the story of a native Hawaiian who gets his genie in a bottle to grant him his wishes. But though his wishes are made true and he wins the heart of the girl of his dreams, he becomes both arrogant and cursed with leprosy. He is believed to be a devil by his neighbors. Forced into exile with a wife who believes that he doesn't love her, he desperately seeks out the genie once more to cure his illness. Then he can be with her again, but at the price of external damnation. Or is there still a way out? The Isle of Voices is also a story about greed and lust. One young Hawaiian man (Keola) yearns for a native girl, but lacks the material wealth for a comfortable marriage. So his girlfriend's father magically takes him to the mysterious and frightful Isle of Voices where treasure lies at his feet simply waiting to be picked up. Not sated with slight and trivial wealth, Keola determines to treacherously seize a vast fortune despite being ominously forbidden by the father. However, Keola's plan is overturned, and he is doomed to learn the secret of the Isle of Voices. The Ebb-Tide is about three washed up derelict sailors of varying criminal aptitudes who take up the job of delivering an abandoned cargo ship to Australia. However, the ship's European company have all died of smallpox, and everyone believes the ship to be cursed. So, Herrick, Davis, and Huish let sail - but to sell the cargo themselves and then take up as pirates. As the trio complete their dangerous moral and legal fall into piracy and murder, they come upon a queer island loaded with wealth. But will they survive what lies ahead? Overall, I enjoyed the book, but I wasn't engrossed in it. Skip the introduction, or you won't continue reading the book. Go straight to the stories. All the stories are good, but the Ebb-Tide is probably the best.

I've read "Treasure Island" at my childhood, when I was eight years old. As I'm writing a book named "Real and imaginary islands", focusing on 20 famous islands mentioned in universal literature, the island of Stevenson is the first commented in my book. A new reading gave me the chance to meet again Long John Silver with his parrot "Captain Flint" and Jim Hawkins. The mature man and the child were once more next, and I had a great pleasure to read again this novel. Sighting the chronology of Robert Louis Stevenson, I see that there is 120 years from his departure from San Francisco, California, aboard the "Casco", for the South Seas. And I can affirm that "In the South Seas" is a marvellous description of this part of the world. The "South Sea Tales", assembling "The Beach of Falesa", "The Bottle IMP", "The Isle of Voices" and "The Ebb-Tide" is a beautiful book and in it, the author has denounced the actions of Europeans and North Americans at the South Seas as a disastrous interfering on the culture of the native peoples of the islands of the Pacific Ocean, with the goal to dominate them and to take their lands. The courageous words of Robert Louis Stevenson denouncing the merchants and the missionaries as factors to serve the economic interests of Europe and North America shows that R.L. Stevenson was capable to see the real motifs of their presence at that region. The reading of "South Sea Tales" gives us the chance to understand the right history of the Pacific. It's a pleasure to read "South Sea Tales".

I don't know why no one has reviewed this volume before. It is a good readable edition of several of Stevenson's South Sea stories, including the rarely encountered novel *The Ebb Tide*. The introduction is interesting enough, and the footnotes are very helpful for expressions in the Beach-la-Mar pidgin dialect and nautical terms. This is Stevenson's most mature fiction and is a far cry from *Kidnapped* and *The Child's Garden of Verses*.

I agree with Mr. Coppedge. RLS's "island literature" is uneven, as a read of this book will reveal. For a real treat, read his "In the South Seas". Now that is a treasure.

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