



Josh Lacey on The Island of Thieves

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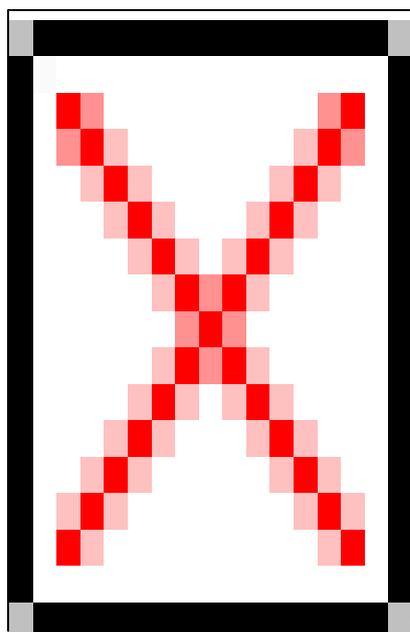
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The Island of Thieves is a great boys' adventure story.

How adventurous were you as a boy?

I wasn't very adventurous at all. In fact, I spent most of my time reading books, so my adventures were confined to my imagination. I always loved adventure stories, and alert readers will notice that I've borrowed my hero's surname from a character in one of the greatest adventure stories ever written, **Treasure Island**.

Did you have an Uncle Harvey, or did you dream of having one?

I didn't have an Uncle Harvey, or any uncles, or aunts, or other relatives, who were anything like him. I wished I did. I would have liked to have someone in my family who plucked me out of my ordinary life and took me on wild, wonderful adventures.

The book is written in lots of short, staccato sentences that give it a sense of urgency and action. How hard was this to write?

If I was searching for influences on this particular book, the main ones would be crime writers like Elmore Leonard, Lawrence Sanders and Robert B Parker. I love the speedy way that they write their plots, their terse descriptions of characters and places, and their quickfire dialogue. I also admire the way that they mix adventure and humour, and I've tried to do the same in **The Island of Thieves**.

The story starts with a real person, John Drake. You've also written historical biographies for children. Do you find particular inspiration in history?

I am very inspired by history, yes. About ten years ago, I was reading about Sir Francis Drake and the voyage of the Golden Hind, the first English ship to sail around the world, when I discovered a fascinating snippet of information: a young boy, Drake's cousin, sailed on the ship, keeping a journal and drawing maps and pictures. When the Golden Hind left Plymouth, he was only ten or twelve years old.

I was immediately smitten. Imagine being that boy! Imagine leaving your home, a farm in leafy Devon, and getting aboard a small, creaky ship, and sailing into the dark seas, making a voyage that no one had ever made before, seeing landscapes and people that you could never even have imagined.

I didn't want to write a straightforward book about that boy; I wanted to find a way to link him to the present, and to a modern boy. It took me a long time to think of a way to do that, which is why it's taken ten years for my original idea to become a book.

Will Tom and Harvey be reunited for another adventure?

I hope so. I wasn't intending to write more than one book about Tom Trelawney, but I've really enjoyed his company, and I'll like to discover what other mischief he and Uncle Harvey get up to.

The Island of Thieves, Andersen, 216pp, 978-1849392457, £5.99 pbk

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