



Robert Louis Stevenson was born on 13 November 1850 in Edinburgh, Scotland. His full name was Robert Lewis (he later changed this to 'Louis') Balfour Stevenson. The name Balfour, the same as our hero David in *Kidnapped*, comes from his mother's side of the family. His mother, Margaret Isabella Balfour, came from a family of lawyers and church ministers. His father, Thomas Stevenson, came from a family of engineers; they built lighthouses around the coast of Scotland.

Stevenson had an interesting life. At the age of seventeen, he started studying engineering at Edinburgh University. He later chose to study law instead. But Stevenson never worked as a lawyer because he decided that he wanted to be a writer.

After university, Stevenson went to France to be with other young artists of the time, both writers and painters. His first books were travel books. He met his future wife, Fanny, in France. He was 25 and she was 36. Fanny was an independent, 'modern' American woman: she was separated from her husband and had two children. Two years after meeting Stevenson, Fanny got a divorce and in 1880 she and Stevenson got married. They spent their honeymoon at an abandoned silver mine in California. Stevenson wrote about it in *The Silverado Squatters*, published in 1883.

After his travel writings, Stevenson began writing short stories. Some people think that his collections of short stories are the first real short story. He published a collection of four short stories entitled *Nezv Arabian Nights* in 1882.

Stevenson's novel *Treasure Island* was published in 1883 and brought him great success. This famous adventure story was followed by the equally successful *The Strange Case of Doctor Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, published in 1886. It tells the story

of a man with two personalities, one good, the other bad. Stevenson said that he got the idea for this story from a dream.

He then went on to write other successful books, including the collection of poetry *A Child's Garden of Verses* (1885) and the novels *Kidnapped* (1886) and *The Black Arrow* (1888). *Kidnapped* is important not just as an adventure story, but also as a novel which tells us about the history of Scotland in the eighteenth century.

In 1888, Stevenson decided to sail around the Pacific Ocean with his family, living on different islands for short periods of time. In 1889, he and his family arrived at the port of Apia in the Samoan islands.

They decided to build a house and stay there.

Stevenson died in 1894 and was buried at the top of Mount Vaea above his home on Samoa. His own short poem, 'Requiem', was written on his tomb: 'Under the wide and starry sky, dig the grave and let me lie...'.
