



## Unravelling “Leavers” And “Takers” in Daniel Defoe’s Robinson Crusoe

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### Research Article

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### ABSTRACT

Daniel Defoe's masterpiece, Robinson Crusoe, has never been studied from the point of view of the contrasting beliefs of Leavers and Takers first coined by Daniel Quinn in his novel Ishmael in 1992, which is believed to remain central throughout the story. This research offers a comprehensive analysis of these mindsets, exploring their effects on the protagonist's journey. The Leavers embrace a harmonious existence with nature, valuing sustainability and interdependence with the environment, while the Takers adopt a dominant stance, seeking to exploit nature's resources for human progress. Crusoe's character development portrays a transition from a conventional Taker to a Leaver as he recognizes the importance of sustainable practices and interconnectedness of life. The study also investigates the wider implications of Leaver and Taker concepts in societal and environmental contexts as seen in Robinson Crusoe. It explores Crusoe's intercultural exchange with a native companion on the island, symbolizing the clash between Leaver and Taker mentalities. This encounter challenges the characters' preconceptions and provides insights into cultural diversity's impact on individual perspectives. Robinson Crusoe offers a thought-provoking exploration of Leaver and Taker concepts, prompting readers to ponder their connection with the other societies and the potential for harmonious coexistence. The novel encourages contemplation of humanity's role within the natural world, rendering it a compelling narrative with timeless significance beyond its historical setting.

**Keywords:** Leavers and Takers, Robinson Crusoe, Ishmael, Daniel Quinn

## Robinson Crusoe'da "Bırakanlar" Ve "Alanlar" Kavramlarının Açığa Çıkarılması Denemesi

### Öz

Daniel Defoe'nun şaheser romanı Robinson Crusoe, ilk kez 1992 yılında Daniel Quinn'in İsmail adlı romanında ortaya çıkan Bırakanlar ve Alanlar arasındaki karıştın inançlarından incelemiştir. Bu inançların hikayenin her aşamasında merkezi kaldığına inanıyor. Bu araştırma, bu zihniyetlerin ana karakterler olan Robinson Crusoe ve Cuma'nın yolculuğu ve daha geniş felsefi temalar üzerindeki etkilerini kapsamlı bir şekilde analiz etmektedir. Bırakanlar doğayla uyumlu bir varoluşu benimsenir, sürdürülebilirliği ve çevre ile birbirine bağımlılığı önemserken, Alanlar egemen bir tavır alır ve insan ilerlemesi için doğanın kaynaklarını sömürmeye amaçlar. Crusoe'nun karakter gelişimi, sürdürülebilir uygulamaların ve yaşamın birbirine bağlılığının önemini fark etmesiyle, geleneksel bir Alanlar'dan Bırakanlar'a geçişini gösterir. Çalışma aynı zamanda "Bırakan" ve "Alan" kavramlarının toplumsal ve çevresel bağlamlardaki daha geniş sonuçlarını irdelemektedir. Adada yerli bir arkadaşla yaşadığı kültürel alışverişe inceleyerek, Bırakan ve Alan zihniyetleri arasındaki çatışmayı gösterir. Bu çalışma karakterlerin önyargalarını sorgular ve kültürel çeşitliliğin bireysel perspektiflere olan etkisini anlamamıza yardımcı olur. Robinson Crusoe, Bırakan ve Alan kavramlarının düşündürücü bir keşfini sunar ve okuyucuları diğer toplumlarla olan bağlantılarını ve uyumlu bir birlikte yaşamın potansiyelini düşünmeye teşvik eder. Roman, insanlığın doğal dünya içindeki rolünü düşünmeye yönledirerek, tarihsel bağlamının ötesinde zamanın ötesinde önem taşıyan etkileyici bir anlatı ortaya koyar.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Bırakanlar ve Alanlar, Robinson Crusoe, İsmail, Daniel Quinn

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## Introduction

Daniel Defoe's enduring masterpiece, *Robinson Crusoe*, has captivated audiences for generations, recounting a thrilling story of survival, determination, and exploration. An intriguing approach to analyze this literary gem involves examining Daniel Quinn's thought-provoking novel, *Ishmael* (1992), which presents contrasting concepts of "Leavers" and "Takers."

Daniel Defoe's enduring masterpiece, *Robinson Crusoe*, has captivated audiences for generations, recounting a thrilling story of survival, determination, and exploration. Beyond its engaging plot, the novel provides a fascinating glimpse into the prevalent cultural beliefs and ecological ideals of the early 18th century during which rapid technological progress, the expansion of empires, and the growth of colonialism led to a prevailing belief of European exceptionalism (Engerman, 2004). Western societies considered themselves superior and justified in exploiting the natural environment for economic interests. Robinson Crusoe's character in the novel reflects this historical context, embodying the colonial mindset focused on exploration, conquest, and the extraction of resources, giving rise to the concept of "Western colonialism, a political-economic phenomenon whereby various European nations explored, conquered, settled, and exploited large areas of the world" (Magdoff, Webster, & Nowell, 1998).

An intriguing approach to analyzing this literary gem involves examining Daniel Quinn's thought-provoking novel, *Ishmael* (1992), which presents contrasting concepts of "Leavers" and "Takers." In Daniel Quinn's novel *Ishmael*, the central exploration of humanity's relationship with the natural world revolves around these two core concepts. These concepts illustrate contrasting cultural paradigms and belief systems regarding the role and influence of humans on the Earth.

Quinn explores the consequences of the different worldviews on human cultural development and their impact on the environment. Crusoe's feeling of being the King and ruler of the island on which he lives reflects the Taker mindset which refers to a particular way of thinking and living that characterizes modern human societies. Quinn uses this term to describe a mindset that sees humans as separate from and superior to the rest of the natural world. The "Taker mindset" often involves perceiving the Earth and its resources as something to be dominated, exploited, and used for human benefit without considering the long-term consequences or the interconnectedness of life.

Quinn contrasts the "Taker mindset" with what he calls the "Leaver mindset," which represents a more sustainable and harmonious way of living with the Earth. The "Leaver mindset" acknowledges the inherent value and rights of all living beings and strives to live in harmony with nature, recognizing humanity as part of a larger ecological community rather than the ruler of it.

In an interview with Chris Martenson in 2020, thirty-one years after the first publication of the novel, Daniel Quinn defines the concepts of Leavers and Takers as follow:

Anyway, now after 20 years, I can answer the question more easily. The original meaning was this. Leavers are those who leave the rule of the world in the hands of the gods. Takers are those who take the rule of the world into their own more competent hands. Those are, of course, us. We are the takers of the world (Quinn, Daniel Quinn: Pursuing A Better Path, 2020).

"*The Taker mindset is exemplified by the perspective that man must conquer the world to become its ruler,*" states Quinn (Quinn, 1995, p. 44). He asserts that merely imposing laws or regulations to control their actions won't lead to a profound transformation in this mindset. To effect real change, Quinn advocates for a shift in people's fundamental beliefs and cultural narratives, aiming to challenge the deep-rooted notion of human supremacy and the right to conquer and rule nature. By addressing the underlying beliefs and cultural paradigms, it becomes possible to foster a more sustainable and harmonious relationship with the natural world.

On the other hand, the "Leavers" represent indigenous cultures and societies that historically lived in harmony with nature, acknowledging their interconnectedness and reliance on the environment. They follow sustainable practices, prioritize ecological balance, and view themselves as essential components of the broader interconnected web of life (Joseph, 2017).

According to Quinn's ideas in the novel *Ishmael*, the term "Takers" refers to modern industrial societies, particularly Western civilization, which emerged after the development of agriculture around 10,000 years ago. The individuals referred to as "Takers" are those who have become part of the system, gradually losing their individuality within the gears of the system. They are unaware of what they serve or why they exist, and they continue to exist in the shadow of the deception created by human culture and science, contributing to the rapid destruction of the world (Bay, 2023, p. 256).

The rise of Western Europe, which led to the dominance of Takers mind over others, depended largely on natural resources and labor forcibly appropriated from the global South during the colonial period (Hickel, et al., 2022). Spain extracted gold and silver from the Andes, Portugal extracted sugar from Brazil, France extracted fossil fuels, minerals, and agricultural products from West Africa, Belgium extracted rubber from the Congo, and Britain extracted cotton, opium, grain, timber, tea, and countless other commodities from its colonies around the world – all of which entailed the exploitation of Southern labor on coercive terms, including mass enslavement and indenture.

In the context of the novel *Robinson Crusoe*, the concept of European exceptionalism aligns with the Taker mindset's belief in the superiority of Western civilizations. This belief system is rooted in the prevailing notion during the early 18th century that European societies, particularly the British, considered themselves superior and justified in exploiting the natural environment for their economic interests. Robinson Crusoe, the central character of the novel, embodies this colonial mindset focused on exploration, conquest, and the extraction of resources. His actions, such as building structures and cultivating the land, demonstrate the Taker belief in human dominion over nature.

Crusoe's individualistic approach to survival and resource extraction further aligns with the Taker mindset. He focuses on his own needs and personal gain, reflecting the Taker's emphasis on individual progress and prosperity.

"I had the biggest magazine of all kinds now that ever was laid up, I believe, for one man: but I was not satisfied still, for while the ship sat upright in that posture, I thought I ought to get everything out of her that I could; so every day at low water I went on board, and brought away something or other; ..." (Defoe, 2007, p. 48)

This study provides an engaging exploration of *Robinson Crusoe* where the ideas of 'Leavers' and 'Takers' intersect, offering deeper insights into the timeless struggle for dominance, harmony, and ecological consciousness. Through a critical examination of these cultural paradigms in the context of this literary classic, we aim to deepen our understanding of the complex connection between humanity and the natural world, promoting a more mindful and sustainable approach to our shared planet. By juxtaposing the contrasting worldviews of *Robinson Crusoe* and *Ishmael* through the lenses of 'Takers' and 'Leavers,' this analysis sheds light on and underscores the pressing need for adopting a more sustainable and harmonious approach towards our shared planet."

#### **Unravelling the Concepts of Leavers and Takers in *Robinson Crusoe***

In Daniel Quinn's novel *Ishmael*, the central concepts of "Takers" and "Leavers" play a significant role in the narrative and can indeed be applied to Defoe's characters, Robinson Crusoe, and Friday as the representatives of Taker and Leaver Mindsets.

*Ishmael* employs the terms "Takers" and "Leavers" to describe two contrasting cultural paradigms that represent human societies and their relationships with the environment. The term "Taker" is often used to describe civilization, where modern individuals tend to believe that the world was created exclusively for their advantage. Conversely, "Leavers" are viewed as more primitive, leading a simpler existence and striving for equality and fairness based on fundamental necessities.

Daniel Defoe's protagonist Crusoe can personify the Taker mentality. As an individualistic Western man, he perceives the island solely as a resource to be exploited and dominated. Utilizing the knowledge and tools from his past life, Crusoe strives to assert control over the island and mould it according to his own needs and desires. The following quote shows how Crusoe immediately assesses the island's resources in terms of their utility for him, focusing on the absence of wild beasts and fruit-bearing trees, which he considers valuable for his survival. He does not express any appreciation for the natural beauty of the island or acknowledge the presence of other forms of life:

"I saw no wild beasts, nor any sign of inhabitants; only a few birds, such as sea-fowl, etc. I saw also abundance of trees, but they were not fruit-trees, and I saw nothing that could serve me for food, but plenty of wood for fuel." (Defoe, 2007, p. 58)

Crusoe's efforts to assert control over the island also show his Taker mindset when he begins to take action to shape the island according to his needs, seeking a location to construct his dwelling and fortifying it to ensure his safety and control. He uses technology (the axe) to alter the landscape and extract resources from the island, viewing it as a means to satisfy his needs and wants. He does not consider the potential impact of his actions on the ecosystem or demonstrate concern for preserving the island's natural state.

"I went up the hill again, and looked out, if possible, for a place to build my house. I found a little plain, about halfway down the hill, and bordered by a small rivulet. It was there that I resolved to build my castle, and to make it as strong as I could." (Defoe, 2007, p. 140)

When Crusoe meets the indigenous people on the island, he looks down on them with contempt and disinterest, regarding them as barbaric and of lower status compared to himself. He prioritizes his own well-being and goals above all else, giving little thought to the viewpoints or struggles of those who inhabit the same land as him:

When these Thoughts were over, my Head was for some time taken up in considering the Nature of these wretched Creatures; I mean, the Savages; and how it came to pass in the World, that the wise Governour of all Things should give up any of his Creatures to such Inhumanity much less to have any dealings with them." (Defoe, 2007, p. 166)

On the other hand, Friday, the Indigenous character whom Crusoe encounters on the island, embodies the Leaver mindset. Hailing from a culture rooted in harmony with nature, Friday views the environment not as something to conquer but as a provider of sustenance and spiritual connection. His profound respect for the island's ecosystem and his willingness to work within the natural order contrast sharply with Crusoe's Taker mentality. Friday's approach to living in harmony with the environment exemplifies the essence of the Leaver ideology (Defoe, 2007).

In the novel, Robinson Crusoe, as a European castaway, assumes a dominant role over Friday, portrayed

as a native island inhabitant. Crusoe becomes Friday's mentor, protector, and provider, moulding him to conform to European customs, language, and religion. Friday's actual name remains undisclosed in the story, with his identity seemingly validated only through assimilation into European civilization, as desired by Robinson. This representation highlights colonial attitudes of the time, suggesting European superiority and the need for non-European cultures to adopt European ways to be regarded as fully human or "civilized." The novel's exploration of this master-slave relationship delves into themes of power, dominance, and cultural influence during colonial encounters. Causative sentence structure that Robinson uses addressing to Friday shows his dominance over him. "*I caused Friday to gather all the Skulls, Bones, Flesh, and whatever remained...*" (Defoe, 2007, p. 175)

The master-slave relationship between Crusoe and Friday in the novel is largely shaped by the historical and colonial context in which the story was written. The novel was published in 1719, a time when European colonialism was dominant, and there was a prevailing belief in the superiority of European cultures over non-European ones, just like the superiority of the Takers over the Leavers. These beliefs influenced the portrayal of interactions between characters of different cultural backgrounds, such as Crusoe, a European colonizer, and Friday, a native individual. Though there were no concepts as Leavers and Takers in that period of time, this notion is very appropriate to the Taker and Leaver mindsets as reflected by Daniel Quinn in his novel, *Ishmael*.

After Crusoe establishes his dominance over the island's nature and animals, he also becomes successful in exerting control over fellow human being. Crusoe's act of giving the slave he rescued a new name instead of asking for his real name symbolizes his power and dominance over his newfound servant as a Taker. The repeated use of "my Man Friday" emphasizes Crusoe's ownership and control over Friday throughout the novel.

"I made him know his Name should be Friday, which was the Day I sav'd his Life; I call'd him so for the Memory of the Time; I likewise taught him to say Master, and then let him know, that was to be my Name; I likewise taught him to say, Yes, and No, and to know the Meaning of them; ..." (Defoe, 2007, p. 174)

The portrayal of Friday's character as subservient to Crusoe reflects the prevailing attitudes of Takers against the Leavers, according to which native inhabitants of colonized lands were often treated as subjects or servants by Takers. This master-slave relationship aligns with the power dynamics that characterized colonial encounters, where the colonizers asserted control and dominance over the colonized populations. Carolin Amasia Magnusson (2023), for example, gives the description of the European colonizers in Africa as the following:

"European colonizers are described as cold-hearted, egoistic, and power-seeking. They are blamed for being

cruel; for seeing themselves as superior, civilized, and advanced; for their need to teach Africans the Western way of life; and for forcing Africans to grow crops due to eagerness for money." (Magnusson, 2023)

Friday exhibits unwavering loyalty and acts as a devoted servant and follower to Crusoe, assisting him with various tasks and relying on him for survival and protection. However, this portrayal of a master-slave dynamic has faced criticism for perpetuating colonial attitudes and stereotypes prevalent during the time of the novel's writing. Crusoe shows his satisfaction with his services saying "... never Man had a more faithful, loving, sincere Servant, than Friday was to me; without Passions, Sullenness or Designs, perfectly oblig'd and engag'd; his very Affections were ty'd to me, like those of a Child to a Father; ..." (Defoe, 2007, p. 176).

According to *Ishmael*, "One of the most striking features of Taker culture is its passionate and unwavering dependence on prophets. The influence of people like Moses, Gautama Buddha, Confucius, Jesus, and Muhammad in Taker history is simply enormous..." (Quinn, 1995, p. 49). This notion shows the significance of the religion and religious doctrines that regard human beings as the supreme creatures on earth as reflected in Crusoe's diary.

"September the thirtieth, I was now come to the unhappy Anniversary of my Landing. I cast up the Notches on my Post and found I had been on Shore three hundred and sixty-five Days. I kept this Day as a Solemn Fast, setting it apart to Religious Exercise, prostrating myself on the Ground with the most serious Humiliation, confessing my Sins to God, acknowledging his Righteous Judgments upon me, and praying to him to have Mercy on me, through Jesus Christ; ..." (Defoe, 2007, pp. 88-89)

Quinn suggests in *Ishmael* that what sets the Takers and Leavers apart is the absence of prophets among the Leavers, except in cases where they encounter significant contact with Taker culture. Unlike the Takers, who have experienced the rise of prophetic figures in response to their destructive ways, Leaver cultures traditionally do not have such leaders who offer new sets of laws or principles for their societies. This difference underscores the more sustainable and harmonious relationship the Leavers have with nature compared to the Takers, as the latter's actions often lead to the emergence of prophets trying to address the consequences of their destructive behavior (Quinn, 1995, p. 49). However as it can easily be seen in *Robinson Crusoe*, when Takers encounter with the Leavers, they try to impose their religious views on them as the only right path to follow:

From these Things, I began to instruct him in the Knowledge of the true God: I told him that the great Maker of all Things liv'd up there, pointing up towards Heaven: That he governs the World by the same Power and Providence by which he had made it: That he was omnipotent, could do every Thing for us, give every Thing to us, take every Thing from us; and thus by Degrees I open'd his Eyes. barbarous Savages. (Defoe, 2007, p. 185)

In this appealing citation, we witness Crusoe embarking on a profound journey of intercultural exchange with a native companion simply referred to as "him."

Crusoe begins imposing western views on religion by acquainting the native with the idea of Jesus Christ, who was sent to redeem humanity, who is repeatedly called as the saviour (Defoe, 2007, pp. 83,185,186,268) in the novel, and he explains the way prayers are made to God, emphasizing that God can hear their supplications from heaven. Intrigued by this concept, the native compares their God, Benamuckee, to the true God (Defoe, 2007, p. 183), realizing that the true God must be more powerful since He can hear prayers from beyond the sun. With gentle persuasion, Crusoe reveals more about the figure of Jesus Christ and His role in redeeming humanity (Defoe, 2007, p. 184). The art of prayer becomes a central point of their conversation, as Crusoe assures the native that their prayers can indeed reach God's ears, transcending the celestial spheres from which He reigns.

The native is intrigued and captivated as he contemplates these newfound revelations, drawing comparisons between their familiar deity, Benamuckee, and the unfamiliar true God introduced by Crusoe. It becomes evident to him that the true God possesses greater power, as His ability to hear prayers transcends even the boundaries of the scorching sun. This is another victory of the Taker mind over the Leaver mind.

Crusoe's keen observations extend beyond matters of belief, delving into the enigmatic domain of religious leadership among the native people. He astutely recognizes the existence of priestcraft, even within the most obscure and mysterious pagan societies. In a moment of insightful reflection, Crusoe recognizes that the intricate network of secrecy and religious manipulation is not limited to a single faith but rather permeates the very fabric of diverse religions worldwide, even among the most primitive and uncivilized tribes. These observations shed light on Crusoe's determined efforts to enlighten his companion with Christian doctrines while offering profound contemplations on the intersections of culture, religion, and power dynamics that shape the relationship between 'Takers' and 'Leavers', ultimately leading to this conclusive remark.

In the novel *Robinson Crusoe* agriculture plays a pivotal role in the protagonist's survival and transformation during his prolonged isolation on a deserted island. As a shipwrecked sailor, Crusoe initially faces immense challenges in merely staying alive. However, as he gradually establishes himself on the island, agriculture becomes a lifeline that sustains him not only physically but also mentally and emotionally.

Crusoe, as a member of Taker mindset, is primarily concerned with securing food. Although he salvages supplies from the shipwreck, he realizes that these

resources are limited and won't sustain him indefinitely. Recognizing the necessity of a sustainable food source, he decides to cultivate the land, leading to his own Agricultural Revolution. This transformation represents his shift from being a Leaver, a passive observer of the island's resources, to a Taker, an active cultivator of its soil, symbolizing his evolution from a helpless victim to a resourceful survivor.

Agriculture not only provides Crusoe with a reliable food but it also ensures the organization of his daily life as well. The routines of planting, having crops, and harvesting instil in him a sense of purpose and control. As he becomes more adept at farming, he gains a newfound sense of command over his environment, alleviating the loneliness and hopelessness that initially consumed him.

Moreover, agriculture becomes an outlet for Crusoe's creativity and ingenuity. He experiments with various crops, irrigation techniques, and cultivation methods, adapting his European knowledge to suit the island's unique conditions. This process of experimentation and adaptation showcases his resilience and resourcefulness as he learns to work harmoniously with the land's natural features and limitations.

"The rainy Season, and the dry Season, began now to appear regular to me, and I learn'd to divide them so, as to provide for them accordingly. But I bought all my Experience before I had it; and this I am going to relate, was one of the most discouraging Experiments that I made at all: I have mention'd that I had sav'd the few Ears of Barley and Rice, which I had so surprisingly found spring up, as I thought, of themselves, and believe there was about thirty Stalks of Rice, and about twenty of Barley; and now I thought it a proper Time to sow it after the Rains, the Sun being in its Southern Position going from me". (Defoe, 2007, p. 89)

As the years pass, Crusoe's agricultural efforts expand beyond mere subsistence. He establishes a modest farming enterprise, raising goats and growing various crops. This evolution not only allows him to thrive on the island but also mirrors the development of a small-scale civilization, where he takes on roles akin to both a farmer and a ruler of his domain. Through agriculture, Crusoe also comes to appreciate the cyclical nature of life and the interconnectedness of all living things. He witnesses first-hand the growth, decay, and renewal that govern the natural world, deepening his understanding of life's intricacies and mysteries.

The cultivation of the land and nurturing of crops mark a pivotal moment in Crusoe's evolution, prompting him to adopt a more harmonious and sustainable lifestyle. Through these agricultural endeavors, he begins to perceive himself as an integral part of the natural world, rather than a mere conqueror of it. This transformation aligns with the values of the "Leavers," as he learns to exercise restraint, taking only what is necessary, and endeavors to preserve the delicate balance of life on the island. In this manner, Crusoe's agricultural endeavors can also be interpreted as a symbolic representation of his

transition from a "Taker" perspective to a "Leaver" mindset, signifying his journey toward a more balanced and respectful interaction with the natural world. It is important to note that this shift in Crusoe's attitude, embracing the "Leaver" mentality through his agricultural activities on the island, is largely shaped by the absence of his original societal influences, commonly referred to as his "Mother culture." Cut off from his familiar society while stranded on the deserted island, Crusoe becomes liberated from the immediate impact of its "Taker" principles. This isolation grants him the opportunity to reevaluate his connection with nature and adopt a more harmonious approach to ensure his survival.

Quinn explains what mother culture means for him in his interview with Chris Martenson as follows:

**Daniel Quinn:** Every culture has a mother culture whose function is to assure continuity, to repeat the wisdom of the culture and to see that it remains in place. In our case, our mother culture happens to be insane. So she is unique. She is constantly teaching us things that in the real world are destructive and insane. For example, that the world was made for man and man was made to conquer and rule it, which is what mother culture teaches us. We alone have that belief, and it has led us to take the world into our own hands and to put the world and ourselves at great risk because of that.

**Chris Martenson:** For instance, be fruitful and multiply was maybe a good idea with a few tens of millions of people on the planet, maybe not a useful idea today.

**Daniel Quinn:** Yes, that's true." (Quinn, Daniel Quinn: Pursuing A Better Path, 2020)

Covetousness, a characteristic of the Taker mindset, entails an excessive desire to acquire and possess more material wealth, resources, or power. In *Ishmael*, Takers are depicted as a culture focused on constant growth, expansion, and accumulation of resources, often disregarding the long-term consequences on the environment and other species. Robinson's covetousness, evident in his pursuit of personal gain and comfort, plays a significant role in environmental and social issues such as overconsumption, resource exploitation, and wealth inequality. Robinson's unrelenting pursuit for more wealth and possessions, or covetousness, can be understood as a driving force in the novel.

"You are to understand, that now I had, as I may call it, two Plantations in the Island; one my little Fortification or Tent, with the Wall about it under the Rock, with the Cave behind me, which by this Time I had enlarg'd into several Apartments or Caves, one within another. One of these, which was the driest, and largest, and had a Door out beyond my Wall or Fortification; that is to say, beyond where my Wall joyn'd to the Rock, was all fill'd up with the large Earthen Pots, of which I have given an Account, and with fourteen or fifteen great Baskets, which would hold five or six Bushels each, where I laid up my Stores of Provision, especially my Corn." (Defoe, 2007, p. 128)

The quest for more wealth and possessions as reflected above comes from his mother culture, in other words western way of thinking. For Quinn, Mother culture's main purpose is to ensure the transmission of a

culture's wisdom for continuity. However, in current western societies, this mother culture is deemed "insane" due to its promotion of destructive and unsustainable beliefs. One such belief is the notion that humans should dominate the world, which leads to excessive control and jeopardizes both us and the planet. The traditional idea of population growth, symbolized by the phrase "be fruitful and multiply," may have been relevant in the past when the population was smaller. However, in today's context, it raises concerns about its practicality and sustainability. Quinn's perspective calls for a re-evaluation of this mindset and advocates for a more responsible and balanced approach to ensure the well-being of both humanity and the Earth.

During his time on the island, Crusoe's connection to his "Mother culture" weakens, allowing him to adopt more sustainable and respectful practices in agriculture and in his overall interaction with the environment. As he gains self-sufficiency and understanding of the island's resources, he learns to coexist in a balanced way with nature, demonstrating characteristics of a "Leaver."

However, when his island is peopled again, his "Mother culture," and the influences and values of it begin to reassert themselves. The "Taker" side of his mindset becomes dominant again, as he is reintegrated into a society that still promotes the idea of human dominance over nature and the pursuit of material gain.

"My Island was now peopled, and I thought my self very rich in Subjects; and it was a merry Reflection which I frequently made, How like a King I look'd. First of all, the whole Country was my own meer Property;\* so that I had an undoubted Right of Dominion. 2dly, My People were perfectly subjected: I was absolute Lord and Law-giver; they all owed their Lives to me, and were ready to lay down their Lives, ..." (Defoe, 2007, p. 203)

From the Leavers and Takers' perspectives, Crusoe's statement exemplifies a Taker mentality, representing the prevalent exploitative approach towards both nature and fellow beings. Robinson's depiction of himself as a ruler and the island as his possession reflects a sense of entitlement and ownership over the land and its resources. This aligns with the Taker belief that the world exists solely for human benefit, empowering humans to dominate and control nature for their own advantages.

Robinson's portrayal of his people as "perfectly subjected" and himself as the absolute Lord and Lawgiver showcases a hierarchical and authoritarian leadership style. This reveals the Taker mindset of pursuing power and control over others, viewing them as subjects or commodities to be exploited for personal gain. This serves as an illustration of the clash between the Taker and Leaver ideologies, prompting readers to contemplate the consequences of such perspectives on the relationships between humans and the natural world.

While Crusoe may have temporarily embraced a "Leaver" mindset during his isolation on the island, his

return to civilization demonstrates the powerful hold of his Taker mindset and how it can overpower his more balanced and respectful relationship with the environment. Therefore, the metaphor of Crusoe's agricultural activities representing a shift towards a "Leaver" mindset is indeed valid, but it is essential to recognize that this transformation is contextual and temporary, influenced by the absence of his original cultural conditioning. Once back in his familiar cultural setting, the "Taker" mentality once again takes precedence. This adds depth to the novel's exploration of human-nature relationships and the profound influence of cultural conditioning on individual behavior.

Drawing parallels between Crusoe's Taker mindset and Friday's Leaver perspective, the novel *Robinson Crusoe* can be viewed as an exploration of the clash between divergent cultural outlooks. Crusoe's Western, colonialist worldview clashes with Friday's more sustainable and respectful approach, which represents Indigenous or non-European cultures.

By examining the concepts of Taker and Leaver in both *Ishmael* and *Robinson Crusoe*, we gain valuable insights into the distinct attitudes towards nature and resource utilization. These narratives shed light on ecological and cultural themes, offering a deeper understanding of how different societies perceive and interact with their environment.

### Conclusion

Daniel Defoe's masterpiece, *Robinson Crusoe*, is a captivating story that has captured the imagination of readers for over three centuries. At its core, the novel grapples with fundamental questions about human existence, probing the complex relationship between humans and the natural world. By examining the themes of isolation, survival, and cross-cultural encounters, *Robinson Crusoe* invites readers to reflect on their place within the larger context of the universe. One particularly insightful lens through which to view the novel is the distinction between "Leavers" and "Takers," as introduced by Daniel Quinn in his inspiring book *Ishmael*. This binary classification offers a powerful tool for comprehending the divergent ways in which people interact with their surroundings, shedding light on the tensions and conflicts that arise throughout the narrative.

There is a striking parallel between the significance of the Agricultural Revolution for "Takers" in Daniel Quinn's philosophy and Robinson Crusoe's agricultural endeavours in the novel. Both exemplify the shift from a hunter-gatherer lifestyle to one focused on farming and settling. Similar to how the Agricultural Revolution enabled humans to create permanent communities and increase their populations, Crusoe's attempts to cultivate crops and domesticate animals on the island help him sustain himself and establish a stable life. In both scenarios, this shift signifies a pivotal moment in human history, initiating a more intricate social structure and

technological progress. Furthermore, Crusoe's agricultural endeavours mirror the concept of "Takers" exploiting the environment for their advantage, utilizing the island's resources to generate sustenance and essential items. This comparison emphasizes the interconnection between human advancement, technology, and the utilization of natural resources, key themes in both Quinn's philosophy and Defoe's narrative.

When viewed through the prism of the "Leaver" versus "Taker" dichotomy, Robinson Crusoe's journey takes on a deeper meaning. On one hand, Crusoe personifies the quintessential "Taker," driven by insatiable desires and an unquenchable thirst for control over nature. His initial objective of exploiting the island's resources to amass wealth and his relentless efforts to domesticate and shape the environment exemplify the destructive mindset of Takers. This mentality, regrettably, remains prevalent today, as humans continue to deplete natural resources, pollute the planet, and contribute to climate change. Crusoe's early experiences on the island demonstrate the consequences of a consumption-oriented society, where short-term gains are pursued at the expense of long-term sustainability.

However, as the narrative unfolds, Crusoe gradually begins to adopt aspects of the "Leaver" philosophy. He learns to live off the land, harnessing available resources while avoiding unnecessary harm to the environment. Although he still maintains some elements of his Taker mentality, such as his desire to "own" the island and assert dominion over it, his dependence on nature and the constraints imposed by the island's limited resources nudge him toward a more balanced relationship with the natural world. Notably, Crusoe comes to value the importance of preserving the island's biodiversity, ensuring the long-term availability of essential resources.

Friday, the indigenous man who becomes Crusoe's companion, represents another crucial aspect of the "Leaver" archetype. Unlike Crusoe, Friday hails from a culture that traditionally lives in harmony with nature, exhibiting a deep understanding and reverence for the land and its inhabitants. His presence introduces Crusoe - and by extension, the reader - to alternative perspectives on human existence, emphasizing cooperation rather than domination. Through Friday's teachings, Crusoe acquires knowledge about the island's ecosystem, learning how to cohabit peacefully with dangerous creatures like the wolves. This cross-cultural exchange highlights the richness of diverse traditions and the benefits of integrating various ways of knowing and being.

Friday, initially perceived as a potential "Taker" due to his cannibalistic customs, undergoes a remarkable evolution into a loyal companion and influential figure in Crusoe's life. This friendship fosters mutual understanding and appreciation for each other's cultural backgrounds, leading to a profound transformation in Crusoe's perspective. While the novel does not explicitly employ the "Leaver" vs. "Taker" paradigm, it underscores the significance of recognizing diverse cultural identities and embracing differences with profound respect.

Moreover, the bond between Crusoe and Friday poignantly illustrates the transformative potential of positive relationships across cultural boundaries. Their unlikely friendship challenges stereotypes and blurs the lines between supposed opposites: civilized vs. savage, colonizer vs. colonized, and Taker vs. Leaver. United by shared experiences and emotions, they develop a strong connection that supersedes their disparate backgrounds. This heartening alliance suggests that bridges can be built between seemingly irreconcilable worldviews, fostering hope for greater understanding and collaboration among nations, cultures, and ideologies.

By incorporating elements of both the "Leaver" and "Taker" mentalities, *Robinson Crusoe* engages readers in a nuanced conversation regarding our position in the natural order. It cautions against the perils of ruthless exploitation but also acknowledges the difficulties inherent in fully adhering to a Leaver lifestyle, especially given the realities of contemporary societies. Instead, the novel proposes a middle ground, where humans strive for a symbiotic relationship with nature, striking a balance between utilizing resources and protecting the planet's wellbeing.

In conclusion, *Robinson Crusoe*'s exploration of "leavers" and "takers" beckons us to contemplate our position in the natural world and the ultimate outcomes of our choices. It challenges us to adopt a conscious and responsible approach that values and respects nature instead of exploiting it. Defoe's timeless novel continues to resonate, inviting readers to envision the profound transformation achievable when we embrace the principles of being "leavers," for our betterment and the well-being of our planet.

### Extended Summary

This study explores the enduring novel *Robinson Crusoe* by Daniel Defoe through the lens of the contrasting beliefs of Leavers and Takers, as first introduced by Daniel Quinn in his philosophical work *Ishmael*. The research seeks to provide a comprehensive analysis of these cultural paradigms and their profound effects on the protagonist's journey and broader philosophical themes. By examining Crusoe's character development and his intercultural exchange with Friday, an indigenous character on the deserted island, the study sheds light on the clash between Leaver and Taker mentalities and offers insights into the impact of cultural diversity on individual perspectives.

Daniel Defoe's timeless masterpiece, *Robinson Crusoe*, has captivated audiences for generations, immersing them in a thrilling tale of survival, exploration, and determination. While the novel's captivating plot is well-known, it also serves as a fascinating reflection of the cultural and ecological ideals prevalent during the early 18th century. This research seeks to enrich our understanding of this literary gem by examining it through the thought-provoking concepts of Leavers and Takers introduced by Daniel Quinn in *Ishmael* (1992).

During the 18th century, rapid technological advancements, the expansion of empires, and the growth of colonialism fostered the belief in European exceptionalism. Western societies considered themselves superior and justified in exploiting the natural environment for economic gain. The protagonist of *Robinson Crusoe*, embodies this colonial mindset, reflecting the prevailing notion of human dominance over nature and the right to conquer and rule it.

In *Ishmael*, Quinn introduces the Leaver and Taker concepts as representing contrasting cultural paradigms regarding humans' relationship with the natural world. The Takers view the world as existing solely for human benefit, leading to the exploitation and degradation of nature, while the Leavers embrace harmony with nature, sustainable practices, and recognition of their interconnectedness with the environment.

This study begins by exploring Crusoe's character development, illustrating his transition from a conventional Taker to a Leaver. As Crusoe becomes isolated on the deserted island, his initial focus is on exploiting the resources for survival, reflecting the Taker mindset. However, as he learns to cultivate the land and nurture crops, he undergoes a profound transformation. Through his agricultural endeavors, Crusoe learns to coexist harmoniously with nature, recognizing the importance of sustainable practices and the delicate balance of life on the island. This shift from a mindset of dominance to cooperation and respect for the environment signifies his journey toward embracing a Leaver mentality.

The encounter with Friday, an indigenous character representing the Leaver ideology, becomes a pivotal moment in Crusoe's evolution. Initially perceiving Friday's cannibalistic customs as evidence of the Taker mindset, Crusoe gradually comes to appreciate the sustainable and respectful approach of his companion. The relationship between Crusoe and Friday symbolizes the clash between cultural outlooks, prompting the protagonist to question his own beliefs and values.

The study further delves into the colonial context of the novel, examining the master-slave relationship between Crusoe and Friday. Crusoe's role as a dominant figure over Friday reflects the prevailing attitudes of Takers against the Leavers, mirroring the power dynamics that characterized colonial encounters. This analysis highlights the impact of cultural conditioning on individual behavior and attitudes, shedding light on the enduring influence of one's "Mother culture."

Moreover, the study explores the significance of religious beliefs and practices in shaping Crusoe's worldview. As Crusoe introduces Friday to Christianity, the passage emphasizes the clash between Taker and Leaver perspectives on spirituality and the concept of a higher power. Crusoe's portrayal of himself as a ruler and the

island as his possession aligns with the Taker mentality of dominance and ownership over nature, prompting readers to contemplate the consequences of such attitudes on the human-nature relationship.

In conclusion, *Robinson Crusoe* serves as a thought-provoking exploration of the Leaver and Taker concepts, presenting a complex and nuanced depiction of cultural paradigms and their impact on the human-nature relationship. Through Crusoe's character development and his intercultural exchange with Friday, the novel sheds light on the clash between divergent worldviews and emphasizes the enduring importance of cultural sensitivity and mutual respect in our interconnected world. By embracing diversity and appreciating the wisdom of different cultures, humanity can forge a path towards a more harmonious and interconnected global community, resonating with the timeless significance of *Robinson Crusoe* beyond its historical setting.

<https://edubirdie.com/examples/the-law-of-life-and-ishmael-by-daniel-quinn-analytical-essay/>

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