

# Swiss Family Robinson

COMPREHENSION GUIDE



VEXCLUSTRE

# SWISS FAMILY ROBINSON

Comprehension Guide  
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# SWISS FAMILY ROBINSON

## *How to use this Guide*

This guide is intended to help you study, understand, and enjoy *The Swiss Family Robinson*. You might ask if a guide is really necessary to read a book. Is the student not just working to improve reading skills while being taught to enjoy reading a book? Certainly it is the case that the more a child reads, the more he should improve his skills, but quantity is not the only issue. Once a child has received adequate phonetic training he should learn how to read a book. Most educators using this guide will be teaching children in the grammar stage, generally understood to be during the elementary years in a classical education. (For a thorough understanding of classical Christian education we recommend reading *Recovering the Lost Tools of Learning* or *The Case for Classical Christian Education*, both by Douglas Wilson.) The basic goals of reading in the grammar stage are as follows:

The student should be able to:

1. Fluently read a given selection orally.
2. Show an increased desire for reading.
3. Show comprehension on a literal and inferential level.
4. Demonstrate an increased vocabulary.
5. Identify basic Biblical values in the literature being read.
6. Identify various styles (myths, poems, fantasy, fiction, nonfiction, etc.)

Answers to the questions are found in the back of the guide. The students' answers should be in complete sentences, and they should restate the question in their answer.

*Example:*

**Question:** Throughout the entire first chapter, to whom does the family turn for help?

**Answer:** Throughout the entire first chapter, the family turns to God for help.

Such writing practice trains the student to answer thoroughly, completely, and with prop-

er grammar. Another reason is to encourage integration. We want students to understand that how they write something is as important as what they write. After the grammar stage, students enter the dialectic stage, where they develop an interest in logic, analysis and critical thinking. *The Swiss Family Robinson* is a good book to start transitioning students into this stage. It is a wonderful story to talk about God's sovereign grace as you continue to see the family's dependence on God. This book is also full of scientific information and Latin vocabulary. What a great place for integration. In the back of this guide there is a Go Fish Latin Game made up of words from the book—a great way to review Latin vocabulary while enjoying the book.

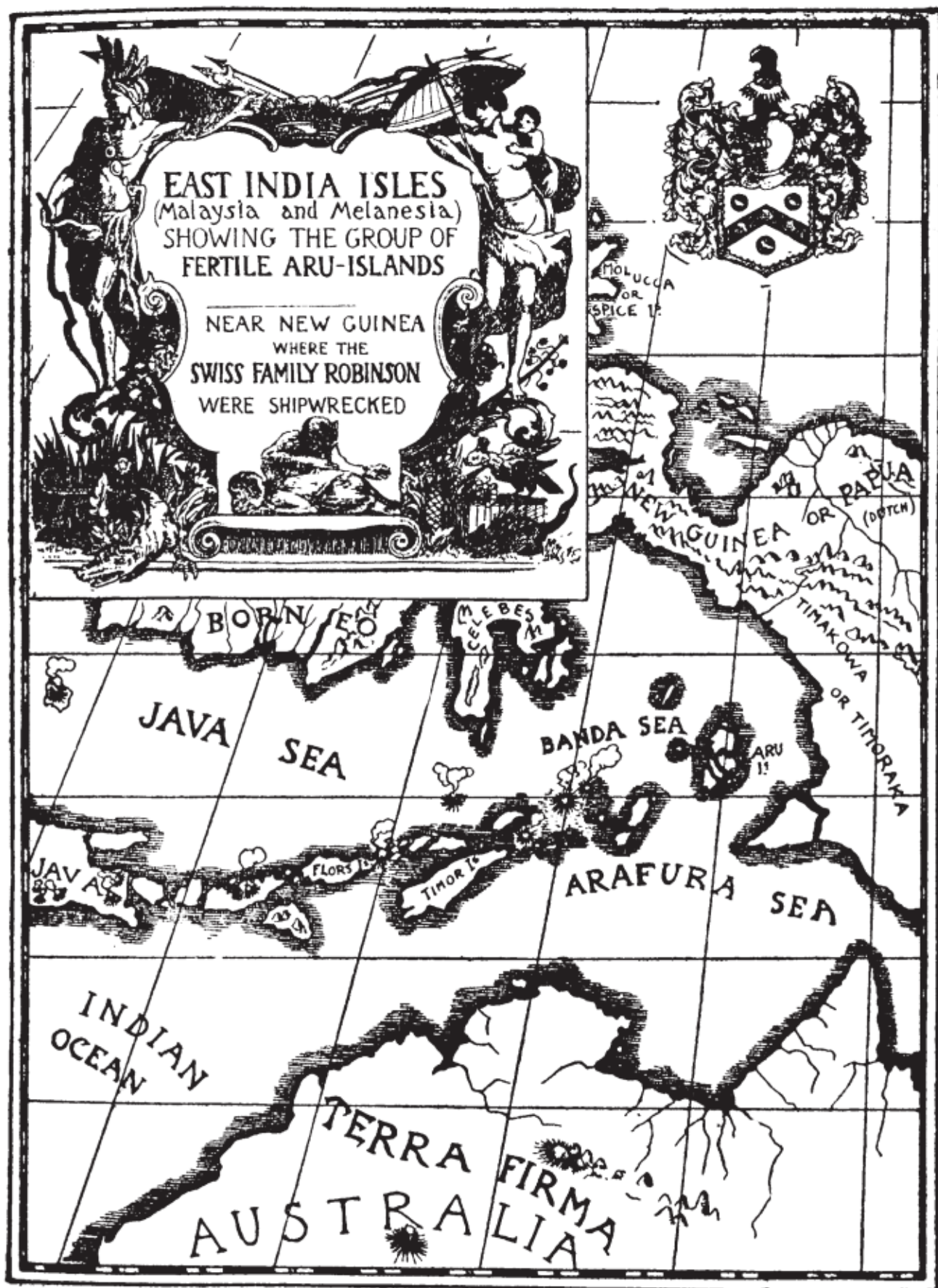
As a teacher and or parent you may want to look ahead in the guide to the project for chapter 17—a desert island feast. To do it well requires some planning and preparation. Also, you need to know that you do not need to do all the projects in this guide. Pick out the ones that best fit your students.

The book was written by David Wyss who was born in Berne, Switzerland, in 1743 and became a military chaplain in 1766. He developed the tale of the Swiss Family Robinson to amuse his four children. It is obvious that he greatly admired Robinson Crusoe, a story founded upon a Russian sea-captain's report of the discovery of a Swiss pastor and his family who had been shipwrecked on an island near New Guinea. He really intended this story only for his own family; his son was the one who gave the manuscript to a publisher many years later.

You may wonder how to grade the student's work in this guide. Keep it simple. Unless otherwise indicated you should assume that each question is worth ten points.

We pray that you will enjoy this study as much as our family has. It is one of our favorites.





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# SWISS FAMILY ROBINSON

## *Chapter 1*

1. What trouble did the Robinson family encounter on their voyage?

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2. How did Father make the “swimming-belts” for his wife and children?

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3. How did the family get the raft they built into the water?

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4. What did the family use as a substitute for spoons to eat their soup?

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5. What did Fritz shoot?

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6. Throughout the entire first chapter, to whom did the family turn for help?

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# SWISS FAMILY ROBINSON

## *Chapter 1, Project—Making a Ship*

The Swiss Family Robinson had many tempest-tossed days on their ship. *Enjoy making this model of the ship. You may want to allow the children to create items that were on the deck of the ship using construction paper.*

### *Supplies*

2 milk cartons

2 straws

playdough

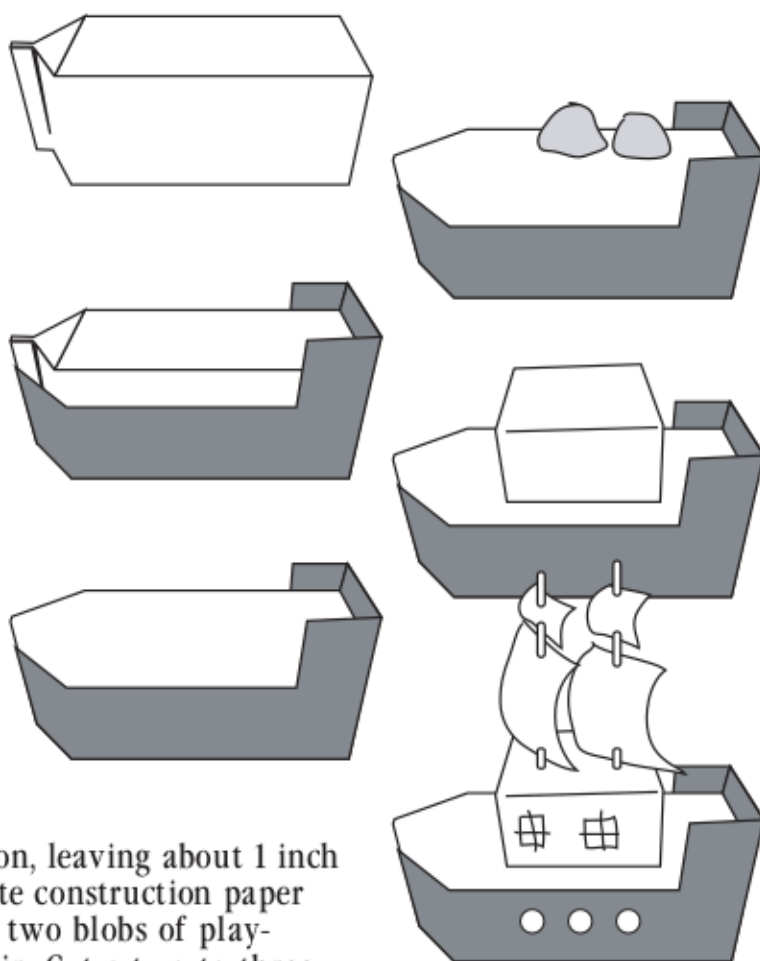
yellow, black and white  
construction paper (or use craft  
foam instead of construction  
paper so the ship can float  
in water)

glue, scissors and tape

### *Instructions*

Tape a piece of construction paper about 1/2 way up the milk carton as shown in the photo to the right.

Tape black construction paper all the way up the back of the milk carton, leaving about 1 inch sticking up over the carton. Tape white construction paper over the rest of the milk carton. Glue two blobs of playdough into the center of the pirate ship. Cut a two to three inch piece off the bottom of the second milk carton. Tape it onto the ship (covering the playdough) poke two holes in it (with a pencil) right above the playdough blobs. Cover with white construction paper. Stick two straws through the holes you poked in the top carton. Cut two large rectangles and two small rectangles from yellow construction paper. Poke two holes in each rectangle with scissors or a hole punch and thread onto the straws as masts. Draw windows and a door with markers. Cut yellow circles and glue them to the side of the ship as portholes.





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# SWISS FAMILY ROBINSON

## *Chapter 2*

1. What did Fritz think the coconut he found on the ground was?

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2. How did Fritz get the baby monkey?

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3. What was the thicket of reeds?

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4. What kind of animals attacked the family's camp?

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5. How did Jack make use of the dead jackal?

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# SWISS FAMILY ROBINSON

## *Chapter 2, Project—Bark Paintings*

### *Materials*

Brown paper bag

Glue

Scissors

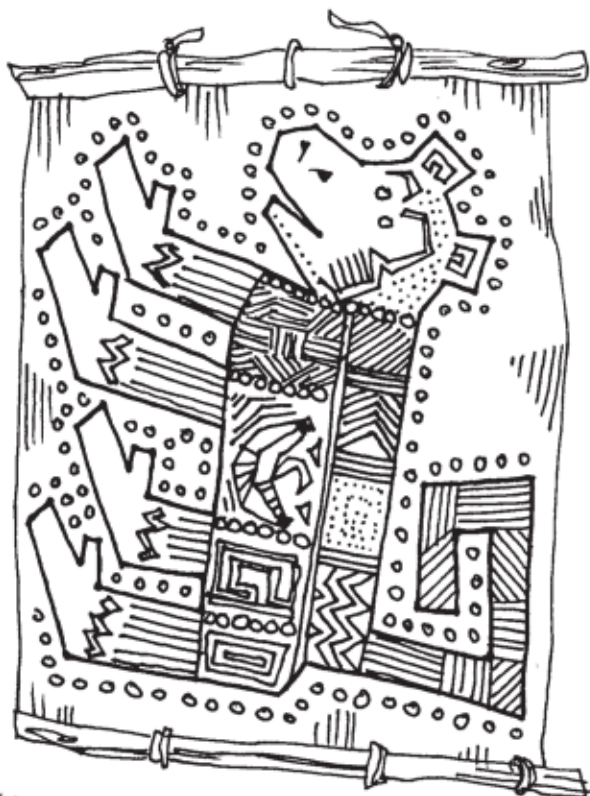
Paint (red, black, yellow and white)

Paint brush

### *Instructions*

Bark painting was originally done by the aborigine people. They would cut rectangles of bark from the stringy bark tree during and immediately after each wet season. The bark was flattened and minerals were ground to create the paints. The paintings were created as a means to tell stories. We will be using brown paper bags to simulate the look of the bark. The Robinson family would only have had the natural materials on the island with which to make art. Make a bark painting of Fritz's baby monkey.

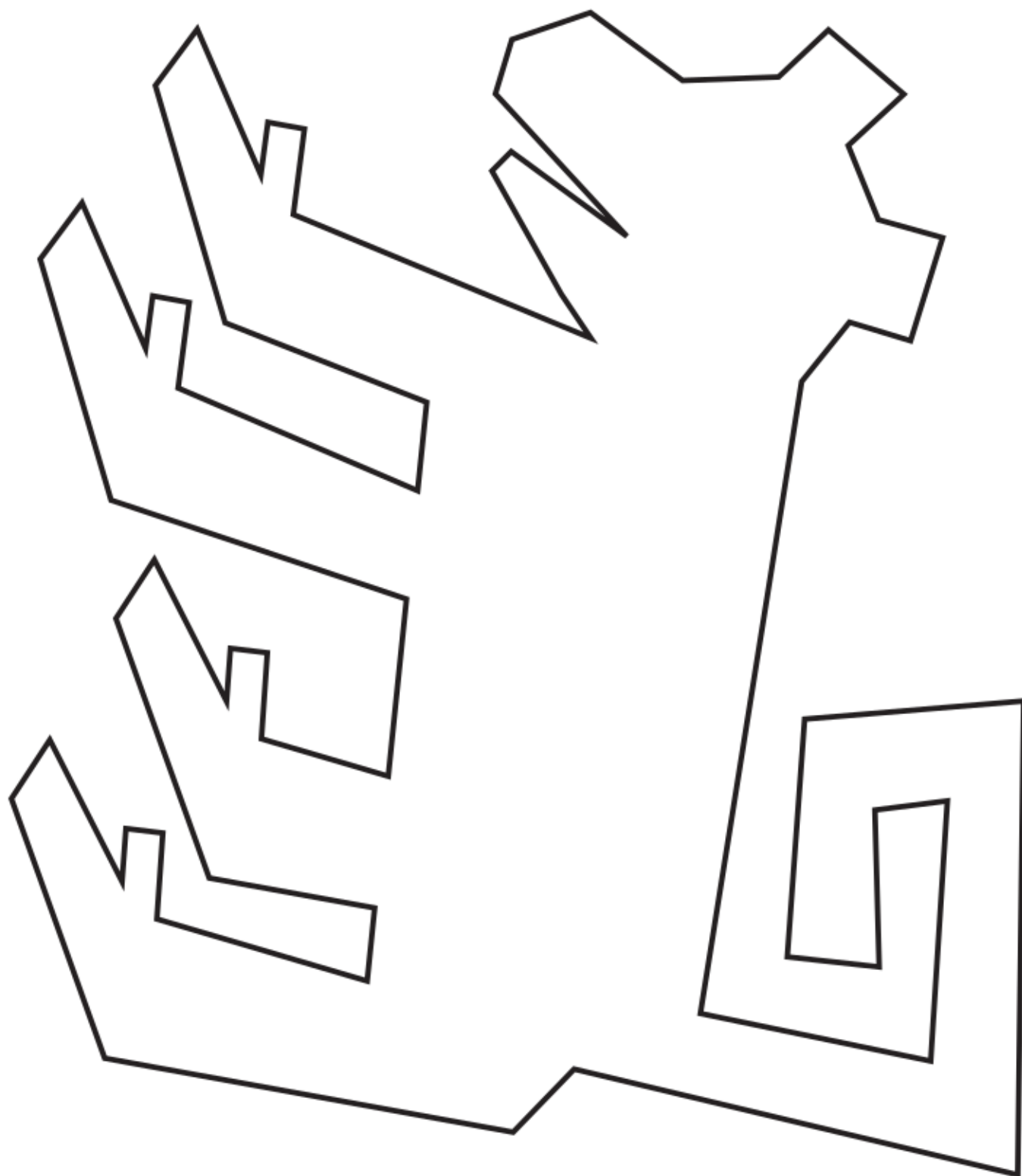
1. Crumple the brown paper bag.
2. Cut the paper bag to obtain a large panel.
3. Trace the monkey shape onto the panel.
4. Use paints to add facial features.
5. Decorate the rest of the paper with paint. The aborigine people used lines and circles to represent different things. For example circles may have been used to express a happy feeling and zigzag lines may have been used to show anger, as in a lion growling at its prey. Bark paintings often have the feel of x-ray, in that you can see the animal's bones and important organs.



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# SWISS FAMILY ROBINSON

*Chapter 2—Bark Paintings, Page 2*



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# SWISS FAMILY ROBINSON

## *Chapter 3*

1. What kind of bird's nest did the Robinsons find?

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2. Where did the Robinsons decide to make their permanent residence?

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3. What were the dogs eating?

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4. What caused the dogs to howl in pain?

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5. Near the end of the chapter, what new pet did the Robinsons get, and how did they get it?

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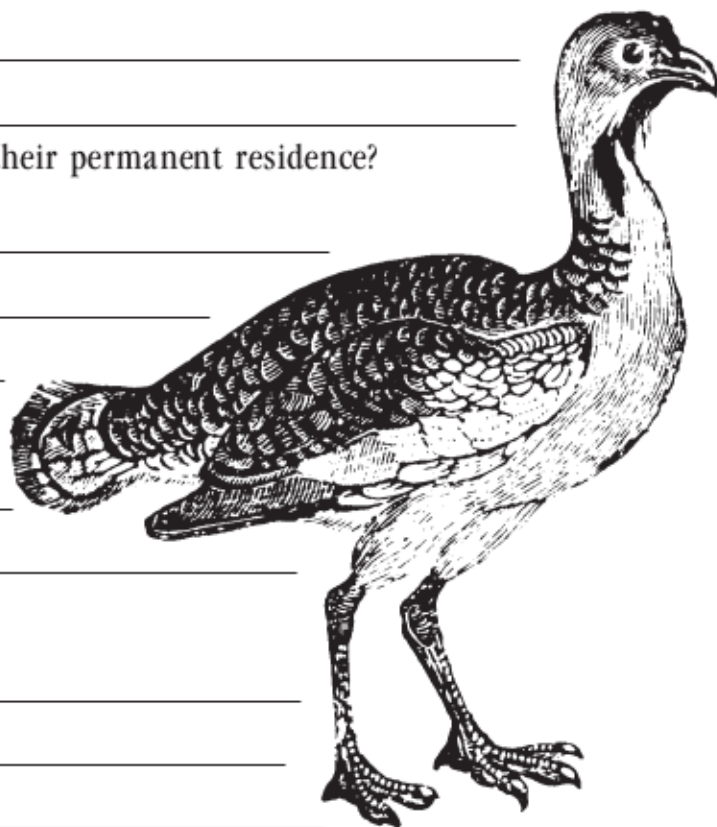
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6. What was the last thing the Robinsons did before going to bed their first night in the tree house?

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# SWISS FAMILY ROBINSON

## *Chapter 3, Project—Measuring a Tree*

*For those with a love of math this is a fun project to be enjoyed. Most children twelve years old or younger will require help.*

### *Project A*

Measure the distance between two branches the same way the Robinsons did.

Find the part in the book where the Robinsons are trying to find the length of the planks they need to put up into trees. Reread this section and find out how they do it. After this get the materials they used and go find two trees with low branches that are close to each other and do the same thing that they did.

### *Project B*

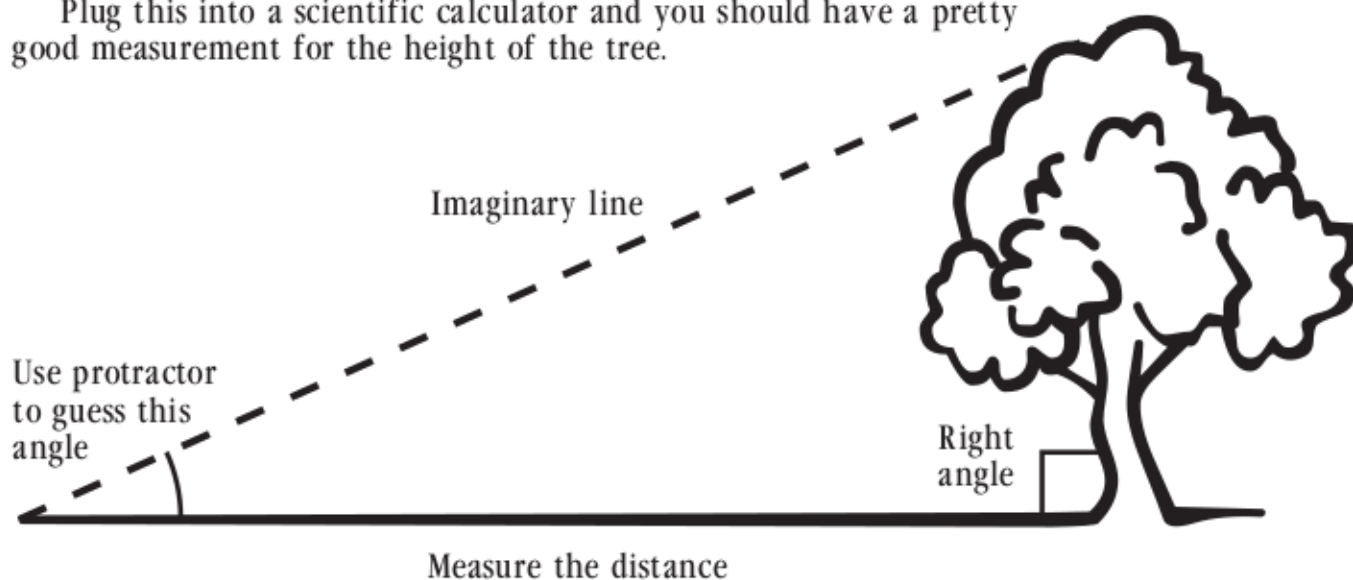
Measure the height of a branch the same way that Mr. Robinson did.

The angle that the tree creates with the ground is a right angle ( $90^\circ$ ). Measure the distance from the base of the tree to a point on the ground at least half the height of the tree. Then take the included protractor and set it at the point that you measured out. In your head create an imaginary line from that point to the branch for which you are trying to find the height. Guess the angle that the imaginary line makes with the ground. Use this information and the following equation to figure out the height of the tree.

$$a \times \tan(b) = \text{the height}$$

Where  $a$  is the distance on the ground from the tree to the point and  $b$  is the angle you guessed.

Plug this into a scientific calculator and you should have a pretty good measurement for the height of the tree.

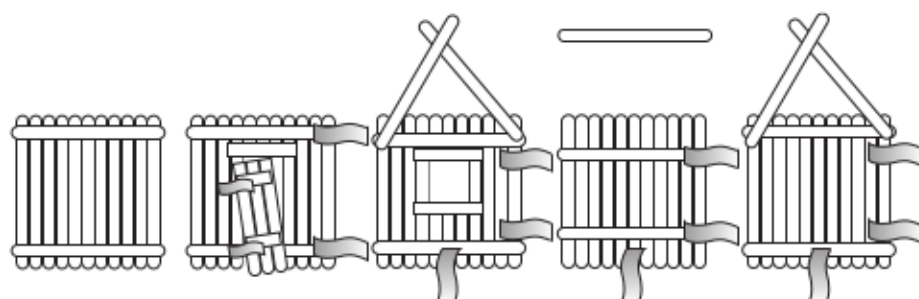


# SWISS FAMILY ROBINSON

## Chapter 3, Project—Build a Model Treehouse

### Materials

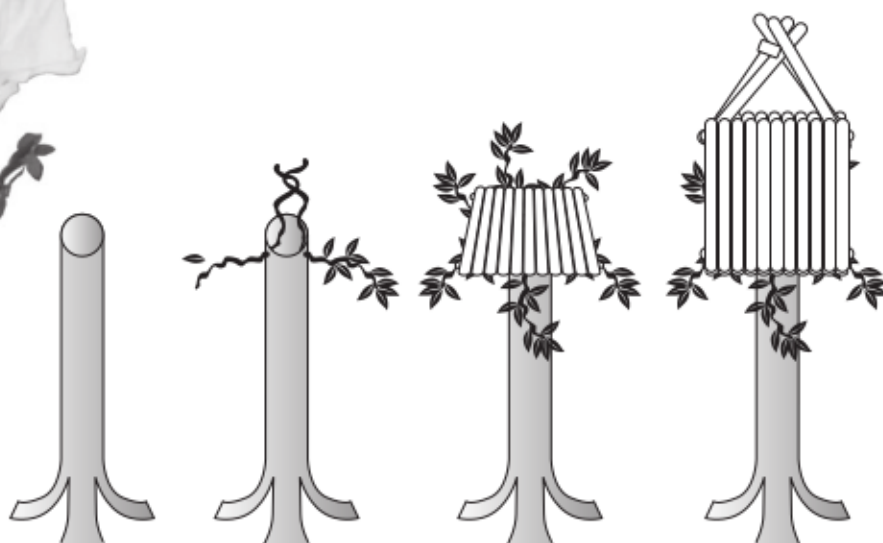
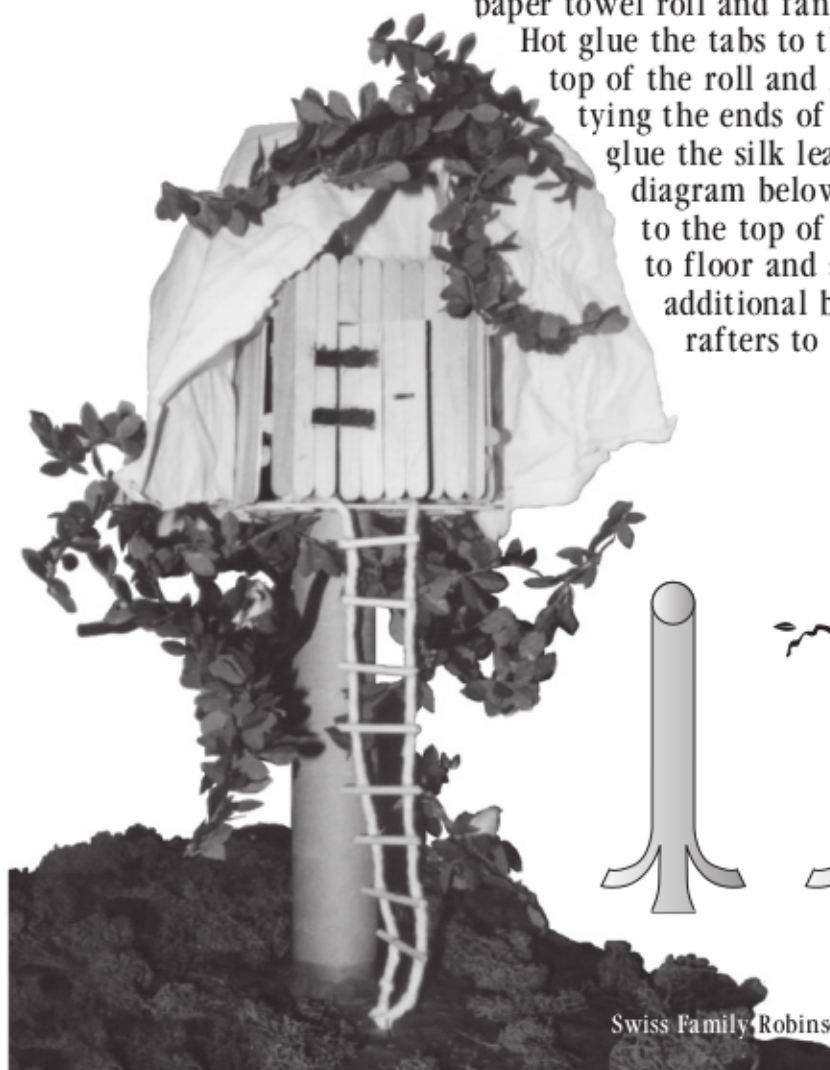
Brown clay  
grass material  
paper towel roll  
brown pipe cleaners  
hot glue gun  
silk leaves  
popsicle sticks  
utility knife  
scissors  
brown paint  
small paint brush  
cardboard



### Instructions

To create the floor and walls lay popsicle sticks side by side to form a square panel. Hot glue additional sticks horizontally. Using an X-acto knife, cut in windows and a door. Additional segments of popsicle sticks will be necessary to add on and around these elements to maintain the integrity of the walls. Hot glue small cardboard tabs on each wall to link each panel together (see diagram above). Make four vertical cuts in the paper towel roll and fan out the resulting tabs to form the base.

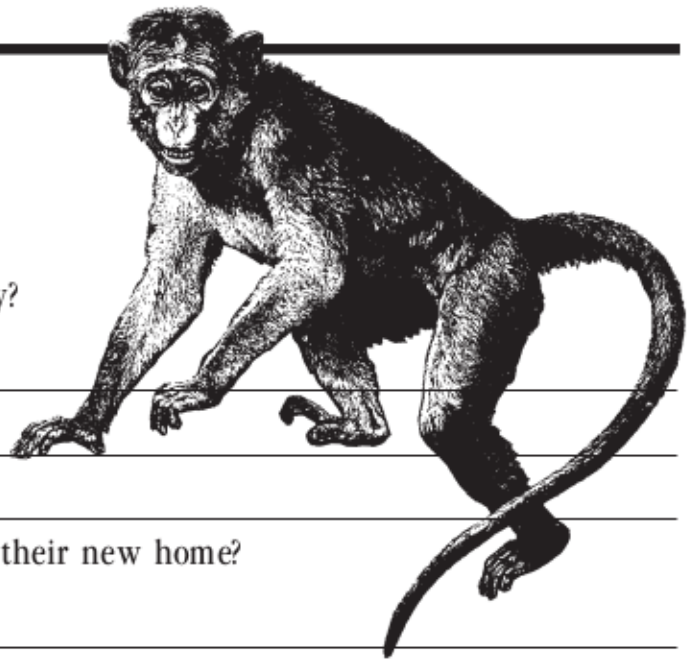
Hot glue the tabs to the cardboard base. Poke holes near the top of the roll and force the brown pipe cleaners through, tying the ends of the pipe cleaners together inside. Hot glue the silk leaves on the “branches” and set aside (see diagram below). Hot glue the floor of the treehouse to the top of the tree trunk. Hot glue tabs from walls to floor and a horizontal stick across rafters. Add additional branches, then drape material across rafters to make the sailcloth roof.



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# SWISS FAMILY ROBINSON

## *Chapter 4*



1. How did the Robinsons worship on Sunday?

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2. What did the Robinsons determine to call their new home?

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3. What new source of food did the Robinsons find?

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4. How did Ernest and Jack catch the geese and ducks?

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5. Why had the Robinsons not been finding eggs from the hens?

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# SWISS FAMILY ROBINSON

## *Chapter 4, Project—Bow and Arrow making*

In chapter four Jack and his father make a bow and arrow for Franz. *Here is your chance to try your hand at making one.*

### *Materials*

4' piece of 1/2" pvc tube

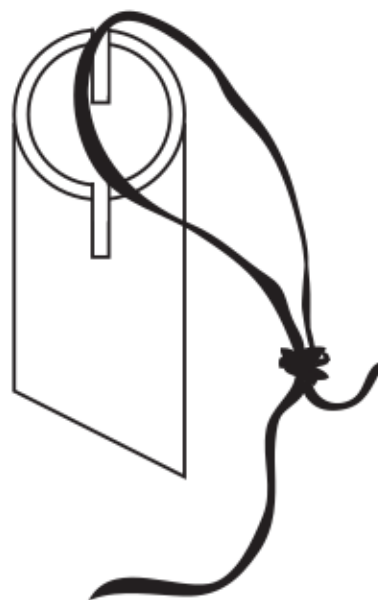
4' of twine

5" of 1/2" pipe insulation

Several 3 x 5 x 1 3/4" cleaning sponges

Several 18" lengths of 1/4" wooden dowels

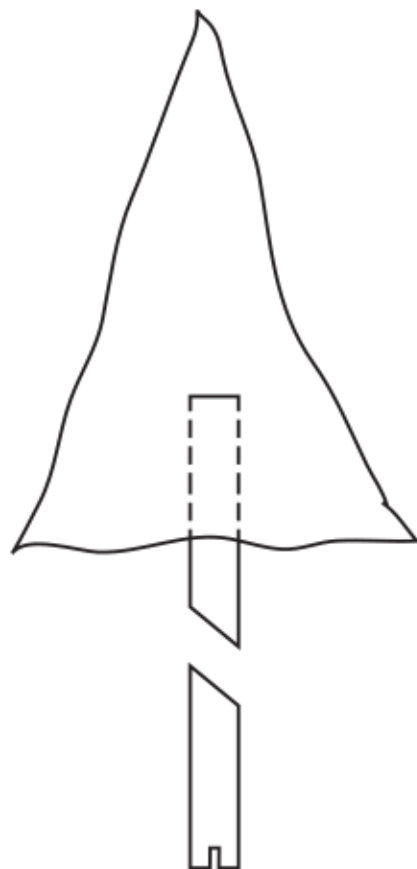
Glue



### *Instructions*

Cut .25" to .5" inch notch in both ends of the pvc tube. mark the center of the tube with a pencil. Slide the insulation up to touch the middle mark on the tube. Glue the insulation in place or wrap tightly with electrical tape. Tie loops in the ends of the string so the length is approximately 3'. Bend the tube allowing the loops of string to be placed into the notches of the pvc tube.

Notch 1/8" each of the wooden dowels on one end. Cut triangles out of the sponges (you can get 2-3 arrow heads out of each). make a 1/2" hole in the bottom end of the sponge arrow heads, cover the unnotched tip of the dowels in glue and set in the arrow heads.





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