

## “ So, where is the Spanish Main?”

Granddad said my sister Maisie and I should go and look it up on the globe in his study. He said it was the name given to the lands around the Caribbean Sea many years ago.



As we were reading it, we could feel a draught coming from the space in the bookcase where the book had been. We took away some other books and discovered a small door at the back of the bookcase.

Straight away, Maisie turned the key and pulled it open.

“ There’s a room in there. It’s a bit dark.”

And before I could say anything, she had jumped through.

“ C’ mon Josh!” came a voice from the gloom. We looked around in silence. It was a bit like

Granddad’s study, but instead of a computer, there was a pen and inkpot on the table. There were so many old things around it was like we were in a museum. The room started to rock gently from side to



While we were looking at the globe, one of Granddad’s books fell out of the bookcase on to the floor. “ That’s funny,” said Maisie. “ I didn’t even touch it” .

It was a really old book about piracy in the Caribbean—just what we were really interested in! A page had come loose in the fall. It was about a vast hoard of treasure that had been buried but never found.



**LOST TREASURE**  
A GALLEON belonging to the Spanish fleet, called the *Almiranta*, was reported to have gone down off the southern coast of Hispaniola in the Caribbean Sea during a storm in the year 1714. All hands were lost. She was known to have been carrying an unusually valuable cargo of gold and silver coins, emeralds and pearls. Yet, when a salvage of the stricken vessel was attempted just three months later (an operation considered without great difficulty in the shallow waters close to shore), no sign of the treasure was found. It was strongly suspected that pirates active in the area were the culprits. It was further rumoured that a chest containing some of the treasure trove was buried on a nearby island, and that it remains there to this day.



FIG 1. A treasure hoard believed to be similar to that which was lost with the sinking of the *Almiranta*.



Phew—that was close! Luckily, one of the crew had spotted us heading off from the beach and told the Captain.

Otherwise... I shuddered to think what might have been. As it was, we were on our way back to the *Esmeralda* as heroes! The treasure was won back and Crow and his men were marooned on Mermaid Island. Hah! We'll not have any trouble from him again. Now was the time to party!

Sam cooked a massive feast: fresh chicken, fish, fruit and vegetables and—best of all—turtles' eggs, all washed down with ale.

The pirates certainly knew how to enjoy themselves! The fiddler struck up a jig and soon they were all on their feet dancing...

Then we remembered that Granddad would be very worried about us. I whispered to Maisie that we should go and look for the secret door. She agreed. But when I felt for the key on my belt, IT WASN'T THERE! We looked aghast. Were we now trapped on this ship forever, 300 years away from our own time?

Just then, we noticed a glint of gold in the fish's jaws on the plate. It was the key! I must have lost it over the side during the storm, but a fish had grabbed it in its mouth. By an amazing coincidence, someone had later caught that very same fish for our feast!

