SS

Ms. Fargo

Identity

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        Swiss Family Robinson is an epic tale of one family's survival on an uninhabited island. The book starts by describing a violent and relentless storm, which has trapped them on their ship. A crew member spots land, but almost right away, the ship crashes and lodges itself into some rocks. The crew proceeds to abandon the family and take all the lifeboats, so they decide to wait out the storm under the deck. Once they awake in the morning, they grab as many supplies as they can and build a raft to head ashore. Later, when they finish exploring the island, they discover that the crew did not make it. Nevertheless, they continue to unload supplies from the crashed boat and build a sophisticated life on the island. The universal and individual identities and stereotypes of people in a certain group changes how they function together.

        The family immediately has a deep trust in each other, something much less common in non-blood relations. The parents' identities with their children allow them to have a caring, but also dictator-like leadership. The author immediately establishes the dad as the leader, as would be customary for the time, and this can be seen throughout the whole book. The relationships and attitudes are very stereotypical for a large, wealthy, European family of this time. For example, at the beginning of the book when the dad says, ". . . my wife went to feed and comfort the animals. . ." The wife, who goes unnamed throughout the entire book, was constantly tending to a side task or chore, and the boys were always building, hunting, or exploring.

The author plays into these stereotypes, for example, when he puts the wife in a side character position throughout the book, to help the reader understand the archetype of this time. The identity of a lead character can affect a much larger group in a survival setting, such as this. The author uses many tools to manipulate the story through one or more characters' actions. The universal and individual identities and stereotypes of people in a certain group changes how they function together.