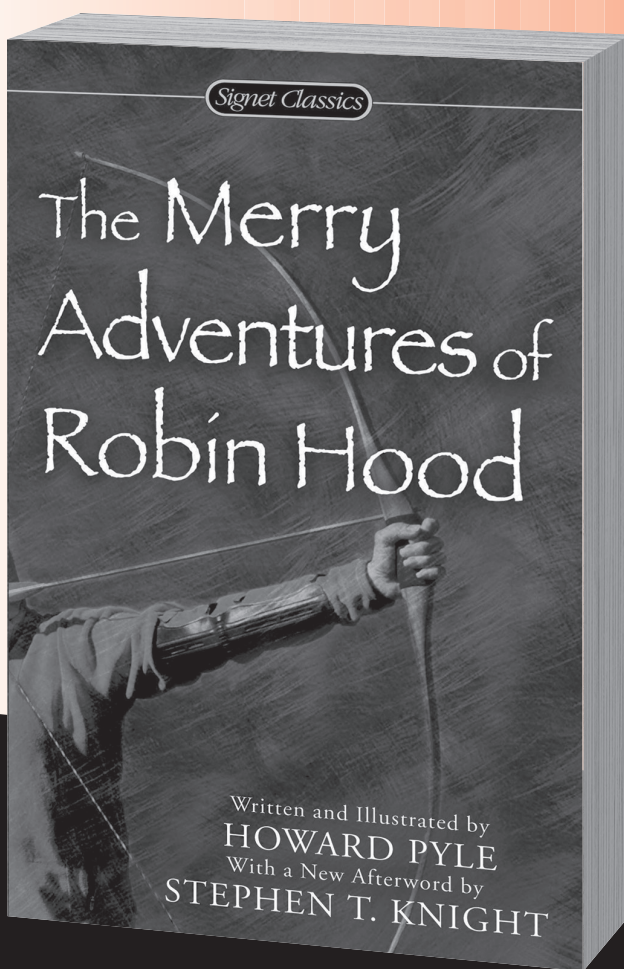


TEACHER'S GUIDE

A TEACHER'S GUIDE TO THE SIGNET CLASSICS EDITION OF

# THE MERRY ADVENTURES OF ROBIN HOOD

BY HOWARD PYLE



BY ALLEN KROMER

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## INTRODUCTION

In the Digital Age, much of what adults once considered commonplace has vanished from the experience of youth—telephones with dials with numbers on them, cassette tapes that record music, and clocks with arms that spin around seem as quaint to many middle and high school students today as steam locomotives and biplanes seemed to their grandparents. How is it, then, that a literary figure conceived in 14th century ballads and popularized in the 19th century still resonates in popular culture? The outlaw Robin Hood is an underdog, a figure not uncommon in current media. Just as Rocky defeated Apollo Creed or Daniel-san defeated the bullies from Cobra Kai in *The Karate Kid*, Robin battles and triumphs against political and social systems that profit from injustice and reward the already-powerful. Similarly, Robin Hood removes himself from an oppressive society—and what adolescent has not dreamed of doing much the same thing, casting off the bands of academic servitude, and escaping to the woods to live a merry life of permanent summer with his best friends in tow? Perhaps part of the legend's allure rests in Robin's assembling his band of remarkable compatriots; his champions are not unlike the characters who comprise the Avengers or X-men of comic book lore. While they lack the ability to fly or harness the power of advanced technology, Robin's Merry Men are exceptional compared to their peers, and they can out-shoot, outfight, outwit, and out-sing any who comes against them. Finally, Robin Hood is an appealing figure because he is imminently accessible; his modest beginnings, his charisma, his wiliness, his sense of humor, and his overall sense of morality and decency combine to cast him as a man not terribly unlike typical men. Perhaps it is this accessibility that allows readers to glimpse a bit of themselves in the hero from Sherwood Forest.

First published in 1883, Howard Pyle's *The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood* affords readers

the opportunity to revel in Robin's exploits, and its accessible examples of literary devices are well suited for inclusion in today's language arts curricula. Pyle's prose shines with vivid imagery, descriptions, and allusions to medieval culture. The characters are complex but depicted simply enough, and the action rarely grows so convoluted as to create confusion. And, many of the book's narrative elements are appealing because they recur frequently in modern texts—characters will seek revenge, do battle to protect their pride, celebrate their triumphs and mourn their defeats. These familiar motifs allow readers to draw from personal beliefs and past experiences to understand and appreciate Pyle's text. The novel is adaptable and approachable for students of differing abilities with the caveat that teachers should consider how the work sometimes relies on archaic diction and syntax and plan appropriate pre-reading instruction. Also, teachers have the luxury of excerpting chapters or sections as they see fit because structurally and thematically these shorter pieces can be explored independently.

The content and activities in this guide can be used as a resource for planning to teach the novel. The Pre-reading activities set the foundation for appreciating the novel by establishing an awareness of the historical and cultural underpinnings of Pyle's novel, the literary techniques he employs in his narrative, and some of the themes of the tales. The During-reading content will help students focus on specific elements and events in the text to explore the novel's artfulness. The Post-reading activities promote a holistic review of the novel, an analysis of the impact of its parts, and the opportunity to establish and debate meanings. The activities in this guide should be used to address curricular requirements, reinforce preferred teaching styles, and promote academic success for students. The best approach is one that is selective, adaptive, and creative.

## LIST OF MAIN CHARACTERS

Although Robin's band and his adventures involve a comprehensive cast of characters, the list below identifies the novel's central characters.

<b>Robin Hood</b>	An outlaw for murder and the leader of a rebellious group in Sherwood Forest
<b>The Sheriff of Nottingham</b>	Robin's main nemesis, the local law enforcement authority
<b>Little John</b>	Robin's most loyal supporter, renowned for his abilities with the staff
<b>Will Scarlet</b>	Robin's nephew, a dandy, and strongest man of the band
<b>Alan a Dale</b>	Troubadour and balladeer, renowned for his musical abilities
<b>Queen Eleanor</b>	Advocate for Robin Hood, married to Henry
<b>King Henry</b>	Villainous king who despises Robin and seeks his death
<b>The Bishop of Hereford</b>	Chief religious authority in the book, Henry's advisor and Robin's enemy

## SYNOPSIS OF THE NOVEL

*The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood* consists of a series of linked episodes. In addition to the Prologue and Epilogue, the narrative is conveyed through twenty chapters arranged in eight sections. Pyle provides summaries of each chapter in the Table of Contents and short summaries throughout the novel. As a result, the book lends itself to easy navigation. However, there are several main types of episodes which re-occur and can be selected if opting not to read the entire novel.

### Robin Recruits New Members to the Band

The recruitment stories typically start with Robin's boredom; in an effort to alleviate the tedium he decides that he (sometimes with his merry men) will seek adventure. Upon setting off, Robin encounters a fellow traveler, and, having either offended the traveler or been offended himself, Robin and the new character engage in a battle. Then, after the

battle, Robin recruits his new ally to join the Merry Band in Sherwood Forest.

For instance, in the second half of the Prologue, Robin, seeking sport, sets forth from Sherwood Forest and encounters a tall stranger at a bridge. After an exchange of taunts and challenges, Robin and the stranger begin to battle with staffs. During the battle, both combatants prove their expertise by unleashing powerful blows and parrying the same. However, when Robin grows angry and lashes out at the stranger, the loss of his composure costs him the contest; the stranger "thwacks" Robin and sends him into the stream. Chagrined, Robin laughs and seeks the stranger's assistance in regaining the shore where he then summons his men who set upon the tall stranger. Robin ends the assault and asks the stranger to join his band. The stranger, John Little, accepts the offer after Robin demonstrates his prowess with a bow. Because of his remarkable height and build, the men laughingly call him "Little John."

## Robin Dupes the Authorities

Authority in the novel usually appears in the guise of a religious figure like the Bishop of Hereford or a well-fed monk or the Sheriff of Nottingham, his agents, or agents of Henry. In this type of episode Robin encounters an authority figure on the road and uses deception to best the authority figure. Robin's triumph typically includes robbing the authority figure and embarrassing him as well. In some instances these stories foreshadow subsequent conflicts as the authority figures seek to avenge their losses.

Robin's recurring strategy is to "invite" the authority to feast with the merry band of Sherwood and then require compensation. In "How Little John lived at the Sheriff's House," the narrative varies from the formula by centering on one of the Merry Men and by having Robin show lenience. Having proven himself at the Nottingham Fair, Little John (posing as "Reynold Greenleaf") is recruited by the Sheriff to serve as his right hand man. Little John lives in luxury at the Sheriff's house for six months, but, having tired of the civilized life, steals the Sheriff's silver plate and rejoins the Sherwood band. Little John then lures the Sheriff to Robin's hideout. After the Sheriff recognizes Little John, Robin returns the stolen silver to the Sheriff (Robin cannot see how the Sheriff has wronged any of his tenants) and sends him on his way.

## Robin Serves Justice

In these episodes, Robin learns of an injustice and through martial strength or craftiness rights the wrong. Abusive authorities like those that Robin frequently dupes in other chapters typically create the injustices; the events underscore the authority's villainy and the victim's goodness.

In Part Fifth, Robin comes to the assistance of Sir Richard of the Lea, a knight who has fallen into debt for ransoming his wrongly-accused son. In three days' time, Richard will

lose his entire estate to the Priory of Emmet. Robin senses the injustice and offers to help the poor knight. When Little John brings the Bishop of Hereford to the forest as a guest, Robin and his band entertain their visitors with feasting and feats of prowess. Robin then inspects the Bishop's party's goods, and divvies up the bill of goods according to his judgment. One of the items is a box of fifteen hundred gold pounds collected by the Church as rentals, fines, and forfeitures. Robin awards some of the gold to Richard so that he can pay off his debts to the Priory and keep his estate. Richard pays his debt, foils the Church's attempts to seize his land, and later repays the Merry Band with an opulent gift of resplendent bows and arrows.

## Robin Serves Rightful Authority

While Robin serves as a representative of well managed authority in his realm, his is not the supreme authority. Robin willingly submits himself to the service of those authorities he respects and supports, namely royalty who treat those under their power with benevolence and justice. In these chapters, Robin meets or is summoned by a rightful ruler, pledges his allegiance to him or her, serves the ruler in impressive fashion, and finds himself in the ruler's good graces.

In Part Seventh, Robin risks his life to fulfill the request of Queen Eleanor to appear in London as her representative at an archery match simply so she can outwit her husband, King Henry, in a bet on the archers. Robin, Little John, Will Scarlet, and Allan a Dale travel to the city and vow their allegiance to the Queen. Having bested the King's champion archers, Robin and Little John give their prizes to the King's men, and, having been warned by the Queen's page, flee London. Pursued by Henry's soldiers, Robin and his fellow competitors flee to the safety of Richard of the Lea's castle until Eleanor can mitigate Henry's wrath.

## PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

These activities are designed to build students' background knowledge, prepare them to understand the novel's themes, and enable them to better appreciate the work's artistry.

### I. BUILDING BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE OF HISTORY AND CULTURE

#### The Norman Yoke and Anglo-Saxon Resentment

While social injustices and economic disparity may be familiar to many modern readers, some of the motivations in *The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood* might prove more elusive. In his "Afterword" to the Signet Classics edition, Stephen Knight alludes to "the oppressive and aristocratic 'Norman yoke,'" to indicate the Anglo-Saxon freedoms that were lost with the arrival of William the Conqueror and his Norman followers. In the book, characters typically speak favorably of Saxons—Robin tells the Butcher, "I love a fair Saxon face like thine right well" (p. 62)—and critically of Normans: in "Will Stutely Rescued," the palmer criticizes "cruel Norman[s]" (p. 52). Establishing the basics of the Norman Conquest and its effects on Anglo-Saxon culture can help readers understand the characters' motivations more fully.

Ask students to research William, Duke of Normandy, and the Norman Conquest, or provide students with sources that describe England before, during, and after the invasion and subsequent conquest. Some resources are:

"Explore the History of the Norman Invasion in 1066." Essential Norman Conquest. Osprey Publishing, 2006. Web. 31 May 2013. <http://www.essentialnormanconquest.com/index.htm>

Ibeji, Mike. "The Conquest and its Aftermath." *History*. BBC, 17 February 2011. Web. 31 May 2013. [http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/normans/after\\_01.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/normans/after_01.shtml)

Have students share some of the major changes that William brought as a conqueror. Considering each of the changes as a cause, have students make inferences to identify the effects on the defeated population. Ask students to think critically about the attitudes and biases that being conquered by a foreign force might have engendered in the people.

Classes might also research to draw parallels between the events and attitudes surrounding the Norman Conquest and the events and attitudes surrounding the Revolutionary War, the Civil War, or the US Occupation of Iraq or Afghanistan. Drawing such parallels might allow students to more clearly understand the resentment and hostility that the occupied often feel and afford them the opportunity to put the events associated with the Robin Hood legend into a more contemporary and personal context.

#### Feudalism

While some scholars argue that William the Conqueror was not exclusively responsible for the introduction of feudalism into English society, the changes he brought upon his arrival undoubtedly affected the hierarchy's proliferation. Rigid social classes that range from the very powerful to the powerless comprise one of feudalism's central traits; this inequality proves fertile ground in the Robin Hood legends because Robin consistently steals from the rich aristocrats and church dignitaries and gives to the poor. Learning about feudalism and the social position of serfs can help readers recognize Robin's motivations for seeking to help the poor in his society.

Begin by giving students a general overview of feudalism at web sites, like those linked below. Ask students to define feudalism, to identify the social levels of the system, and to infer the size of the population at each level. As an assessment, ask students to create and annotate a visual representation of the system with the ranks and roles identified for each respective level.

After students have demonstrated their mastery of the definition of feudalism, share resources that provide an overview of peasant life in the Middle Ages, particularly the difficulties of life for the lowest ranks of society. Ask students to create a chart of two columns; in the first column, tell them to list specific aspects with brief descriptions of peasant life: jobs, food, lodging, education, upward mobility, and the like. In the second column, have students list corresponding aspects from their own lives. By completing this assignment, students may foster an appreciation for the difficulty of life for the poor in the Middle Ages.

Discuss with students: What did the different ranks in society provide and receive in the feudal system? Was medieval society just?

Sample resources for feudalism:

“Middle Ages for Kids: Feudal System and Feudalism.” *Ducksters*. Technological Solutions, Inc. (TSI), June 2013. Web. 2 June 2013. This overview is simple and accessible and useful when time is limited. [http://www.ducksters.com/history/middle\\_ages\\_feudal\\_system.php](http://www.ducksters.com/history/middle_ages_feudal_system.php)

“Feudalism.” *Infoplease*. Pearson Education, 2013. Web. This overview is detailed and contains advanced concepts and vocabulary. <http://www.infoplease.com/encyclopedia/history/feudalism.html>

Sample resources for medieval peasant life:

Percy, Nigel. “Peasant Life in the Middle Ages.” *Helium*. RR Donnelly, June 2013. Web. 2 June 2013. <http://www.helium.com/items/1531118-how-peasants-lived-in-the-middle-ages>

Baker, Suzette. “Peasant Life in the Middle Ages.” *Helium*. RR Donnelly, June 2013. Web. 2 June 2013. <http://www.helium.com/items/1469386-peasant-life-during-the-middle-ages>

## Corruption in the Medieval Church

A common target for Robin Hood and his men are bishops, priests, and other clerics, for in the book those individuals typically possess con-

siderable material wealth, particularly when compared to the yeoman and commoners that Robin champions. Have students gain an overview of the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience by reading one or more sources on the vows and practices of monasticism. A useful resource can be found on the Conventual Franciscans' website: <http://www.franciscans.org/index.php/en/who/conv-franc/vows>; another source is the Catholic Encyclopedia: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10459a.htm>

With additional time, you may ask students to read sections of the *Rule of Saint Benedict*, for example, Chapter 33, “Whether Monks Ought to Have Anything of Their Own,” available at <http://www.osb.org/gen/rule.html>. Have students create a chart or graphic organizer displaying what they learn about the vows and lives of clergy to refer to as they read the tales.

## II. BUILDING BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE OF LITERARY ELEMENTS

Pyle's use of literary elements in *The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood* makes events and places vivid, enabling readers to envision the book's colorful characters more fully. In order to understand the impact of these elements and techniques on readers, students should start with an understanding of literary devices and their uses and practice identifying, thinking, and writing about stylistic elements before they immerse themselves entirely in the novel.

### Setting and Imagery

It never rains in Sherwood Forest, “the merry greenwood.” Instead, the hideout of Robin and his band is depicted consistently in idyllic terms. Pyle typically opens each new episode with a glowing depiction of Robin's band lounging about in an Edenic setting. While settings allow readers to visualize the time and place of an event, some who analyze more deeply can also understand a work's social context, the tone that a setting can impart, and the effects that setting can have on characters.



Locate images that feature the natural world and elicit emotions similar to those elicited by the descriptions of Sherwood Forest. Having located one or two suitable images, work with students to analyze each image. Ask guiding questions to help students focus on elements in each image and to refine their initial reactions. First, identify the elements in the image. Then, analyze how the artist presents the images; color, position, size, and arrangement can all affect a viewer. Next, ask students to share the emotions created by the image. Have students explain what elements in the work contribute to their feelings. Having students compose a paragraph that describes the painting as if it were a setting can help them make the connection between image and text.

Different online catalogs feature images that are suitable for this activity. The Metropolitan Museum of Art's website (<http://www.metmuseum.org/>) presents works so that viewers can enlarge, zoom in to focus on elements, and search the collections quickly and easily. One work suitable for this activity is Maxfield Parrish's "Girl on a Swing" (<http://www.metmuseum.org/Collections/search-the-collections/20017802?rpp=20&pg=1&ft=Parrish&pos=5#fullscreen>); another is Asher Brown Durand's "The Beeches" (<http://www.metmuseum.org/Collections/search-the-collections/20011137?rpp=20&pg=1&ft=hudson+river+school&pos=7#fullscreen>).

## Legend as a Literary Form

Understanding the literary form of legend will enable readers to identify its elements in the tales and thus to understand how the tales of Robin Hood have remained popular for over seven hundred years. According to Sandra Dolby in her article, "Legend" in *The New Book of Knowledge* (Grolier Online, 2013), legends recount the feats of an important individual, reinforce the traditional beliefs of a culture, entertain audiences, are set in a specific time, are realistic, and typically are entertaining.

Ask students what they think when they hear the word, "legend." Record their ideas on a class graphic organizer. Then ask students to

individually create a brief list of legendary figures. Who are modern day "legends"? Make a two column chart with "Legend" and "Not Yet a Legend." Have students share their lists, placing names in columns, according to the agreement reached by the students. Once the class agrees on the few persons who are legends, ask them to identify the characteristics of these persons. What do they have in common? What makes a person a legend? Then have individuals or small groups research one of the figures they added to their lists. Once they have looked at biographical content, stories and anecdotes, digital content, and other elements associated with the figure, ask students to provide specific evidence to prove that their figure is a legend.

The format for this project could be an oral presentation, a PowerPoint presentation, a Weebly Web site (<http://www.weebly.com/>), a written passage, or another digital medium.

## Dramatic Irony

Because they often rely on subterfuge to dupe their marks, Robin and his Merry Men possess knowledge that other characters do not. When readers share this knowledge, the resulting irony is dramatic irony. For example, Robin poses as a beggar and speaks ill of Robin Hood to a wealthy official. Practicing with short stories or other works before reading the tales will enable students to identify the technique, analyze the information that all characters do not share, and see more clearly how the technique engages readers and affects their understanding of characters.

Kate Chopin's "The Story of an Hour" is brief enough to be accessible, artfully written, and compelling for readers. Have students identify the event that elicits the characters' reactions: Brently Mallard has been killed in a railroad accident. Then, have students list the emotions and reactions of the other characters, Mrs. Mallard's emotions and reactions in one column, the other characters' emotions in a second column. After students have finished responding, have them determine why the emotions and responses are different.



Discuss: What advantages does dramatic irony give readers? How does dramatic irony allow readers to immerse themselves more fully into a text? What can readers infer about the characters based on their emotions and reactions?

## Contemporary and Traditional Ballads

In Pyle's book, rarely does an adventure go by without one or more of the characters bursting into song. Singing, it seems, is serious business; early on in the novel, for example, the Tinker grows indignant when Robin dares interrupt his singing when they meet on the road. Most of the songs in the work are ballads, and teaching students about the traditional form, typical subject matter, and contemporary ballads will help them appreciate the novel more fully.

Begin by presenting an overview of the traditional ballad form. Pages like Erik Simpson's well-executed ballad overview (<http://www.math.grinnell.edu/~simpson/Connections/Poetry/Forms/ballad1.html>) offer a thorough, accessible introduction to the form. To help students understand ballads, use the elements provided in the overview as a starting point to analyze sample ballads from texts or the Internet. In addition to identifying the different traits like rhyme scheme, stanza, repetition, and dialogue, ensure that students understand the plot in the narrative of the poems.

Textbooks, libraries, and the Internet all offer good examples of traditional and contemporary ballads. George Wharton Edwards' *A Book of Old English Ballads* (online at Project Gutenberg at <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/9405/9405-h/9405-h.htm>) features ballads that recount Robin's encounters with Allen-a-Dale and Guy of Gisborne as well as Robin's death and burial. "Robin Hood and the Butcher" (<http://www.bartleby.com/243/119.html>) and "Robin Hood and the Three Widow's Sons" (<http://www.bartleby.com/243/122.html>) are also available. Using a variety

of examples will help students practice with more works and increase the chances that students will encounter a poem that resonates with them. To promote this, ask students to bring in popular song lyrics that are ballads to analyze and share with the class. Be advised that current common use sometimes identifies slow rock songs as "ballads" even though they do not have many (if any) elements of traditional ballads.

Once students are familiar with sample points and the finer points of balladry, ask them to write a stanza or short ballad to practice their skills. Students are often willing to recite or sing their ballads for peers, and many regions feature ballad singing as a popular art form. This activity can also be used later as a means of reviewing the text as students are reading through the novel.

## Pre-teaching Vocabulary and Style

Spending part of a class period to teach students some of the rudiments of Elizabethan style can make Pyle's text more accessible to modern readers. Contemporary readers may struggle with the novel's verbs like "thou hast," "mayst," and "wert." Providing a style sheet that gives rules and examples of pronoun usage and conjugation can give students a useful resource as they begin reading, and in many instances, students will develop proficiency as they progress through the novel. Teachers can find resources online that will help students understand the basic elements of Elizabethan conjugation, and using those resources in conjunction with sample sentences or passages from *Robin Hood* will help students gain confidence as they start to read on their own. For example, Seamus Coomey's page (<http://homepages.wmich.edu/~coomeys/tchg/lit/adv/shak.gram.html>) gives some insights on archaic pronouns and conjugation. For instruction and review, teachers can locate or create resources like the Quizlet Elizabethan grammar review (<http://quizlet.com/3698477/elizabethan-grammar-flash-cards/>).

Early in the reading, model for students the process of identifying through listing or highlighting words that they do not know. For example, in the first two pages of the Prologue, students will encounter “seven-score,” “draughts,” and “fain.” Have students record those phrases or words that they do not understand independently, creating a lexicon of words that the teacher and class can then review. Initially the lists may be lengthy, but many archaic words recur throughout the book; understanding them early on will help students read more successfully in subsequent chapters or excerpts. While general online searches or access to the expansive *Oxford English Dictionary* in libraries may help students define words, content-specific glossaries like the “Shakespeare Archaisms” (<http://www.shakespearestudy-guide.com/Archaisms.html>) are especially helpful as much of the content is located on a few easily navigated pages.

### III. BUILDING BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE THROUGH INITIAL EXPLORATION OF THEMES

*The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood* includes themes that are at once compelling and accessible to contemporary readers.

#### Courageous Action

1. Many of Robin's adventures are a result of his willingness to act in resistance to authority. However, rather than his being branded an outlaw, many in his society consider him a hero because he is brave enough to act against unjust legal and religious authorities. This theme underlies much of the great social change throughout history. By examining those historical precedents, students can recognize Robin's courage as a positive force for social change.

Ask students to brainstorm the concept of civil disobedience and then create a class graphic organizer with students' ideas. Identify examples of civil disobedience that may be in the

news, such as Moral Mondays in NC, Occupy Wall Street, Anti-War or School of the Americas protests. Have students read brief excerpts concerning those events and summarize what they learn about the motives of protesters.

Once students are familiar with one or more contemporary events, conduct a class discussion based on the following questions: How is it possible for the actions of the few to transform society? Do the changes brought about by protest justify the risks involved with protesting? What distinguishes social protest from simply breaking the laws or violating norms? What steps can a protester take to ensure that society will see the merits of his or her perspective?

During the discussion, one focus might also be those instances where a student (or an individual that a student personally knows) acted courageously. Did those courageous actions create any lasting change for other individuals or society?

2. Arriving at a definition of courage can help students to interpret Robin's actions in the novel. As a starting point, have students consider what other thinkers and philosophers have written about courage. Provide a series of quotes about courage. Students can also locate quotes on their own online or by using library resources. Once students have read and thought about others' ideas on courage, ask them to identify the quote that they feel corresponds most directly to their own interpretation of what the word means. Ask students to explain their reasoning and to briefly defend their choices. Student responses can be written passages, oral presentations, or other media.

Following are sample quotes on courage found at [http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/topics/topic\\_courage.html](http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/topics/topic_courage.html).

“One man with courage is a majority.”  
—Thomas Jefferson

“Faced with what is right, to leave it undone shows a lack of courage.”  
—Confucius

**“Life shrinks or expands in proportion to one’s courage.”**—Anais Nin

**“Courage is a kind of salvation.”**—Plato

**“Courage—a perfect sensibility of the measure of danger, and a mental willingness to endure it.”**

—William Tecumseh Sherman

3. Have students read and summarize Aristotle’s definition of courage in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book 3, Chapter 7, available at [http://www.constitution.org/ari/ethic\\_00.htm](http://www.constitution.org/ari/ethic_00.htm)

Discuss how to determine if an act is foolish or courageous, using Aristotle’s definition.

## Types of Leadership

From Sherwood Forest, Robin rules amicably and enjoys the voluntary allegiance of his merry men. King Henry, on the other hand, follows the advice of evil men and rules inconsistently, breaking his promises and suffering emotional swings. However, Henry’s realm is larger than Robin’s, and his power exceeds that of his green-clad adversary. *The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood* is primarily a tale of adventure, but it also provides the opportunity to think critically about the qualities of an ideal ruler.

1. In Nicolo Machiavelli’s *The Prince*, he poses the question, “Whether it be better to be loved than feared or feared than loved?” (See Chapter XVII “Concerning Cruelty and Clemency, and Whether it is Better to be Loved Than Feared” online at Project Gutenberg at <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1232/1232-h/1232-h.htm#link2HCH0017>). Ask students to brainstorm the traits and philosophies of a beloved leader and a feared leader. Providing examples and some brief background of some notable leaders of both types (Winston Churchill, Adolph Hitler, Joseph Stalin, Pol Pot, Martin Luther King, Jr., Mohandas Gandhi) might help facilitate student responses.

After cataloging class responses, lead students in a class discussion: Is it better to be loved or feared if one’s sole concern is remaining in power? What traits are most valuable in a

leader? Which leader has the greatest likelihood of maintaining power—a beloved one or a feared one? Ask students to defend their answers with specifics and credible reasoning. At discussion’s end, ask students to write a brief opinion piece sharing their ideas. The class can return to these responses during reading or post-reading to evaluate Robin’s strengths and weaknesses as a leader.

2. George Orwell’s essay “Shooting an Elephant” (digital version from Project Gutenberg Australia available at <http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks02/0200141.txt>) discusses his responsibilities as a British police officer in colonial Burma and inspires reflection on the price that men pay to oppress others. In it he writes, “When the white man turns tyrant it is his own freedom that he destroys...He wears a mask, and his face grows to fit it.” Have students read (or read aloud) Orwell’s essay and use a note taking organizer like Cornell notes (instructions available from James Madison University’s Special Education Program at <http://coe.jmu.edu/LearningToolbox/cornellnotes.html>) to consider the premise of a tyrant destroying his own freedom. Instruct students to record those instances where the speaker indicates that he is sacrificing some part of himself based on the expectations of those he allegedly oversees.

After sharing their findings as a class, ask students to critique Orwell’s actions in the essay. Did he act properly? Why or why not? How do his actions reflect on his suitability as a leader? What is it in the essay that inspires the greatest fear in him? Are his fears typical of all leaders?

## The Effects of Anger

Anger is a transformative emotion—seemingly benign souls can act rashly if their passions are so inflamed. Early in the *Adventures*, Robin’s anger causes him to act irrationally, and that single decision results in his being branded an outlaw for most of the balance of his days.

1. Adolescence is an emotionally tumultuous period, and while some may experience

broad swings of emotion, few pause to consider the causes and nature of their emotions. Reflecting on their own emotions will allow readers to understand and empathize more fully with the protagonist Robin. Begin by asking students to free write about an instance in their lives where they have felt very angry. Assure them that any responses will be confidential. Once students have written brief accounts of the event, their emotional state and its causes, shift the focus to sources that explain that there are both appropriate and inappropriate kinds of anger. Ask students to add to their thinking by identifying the cause of their anger as specifically as they can; then, ask students to determine whether or not they believe that their anger resulted in positive change for them or for others. Teachers can then use the free writing as a starting point for a class discussion about the emotion of anger, its merits, and how anger can sometimes be used to affect positive change. Teachers can draw examples and specifics from the resources below to help students think about emotions on an intellectual level.

Discussion: How can anger (which many view negatively) be a positive force for individuals? If an individual makes a mistake while angry, is it possible for that individual to craft that mistake into something that benefits himself and others? What distinguishes appropriate anger from inappropriate anger, or appropriate responses to anger from inappropriate ones?

PBS's "This Emotional Life" series focuses on anger and defines anger, looks at its causes, expressions, effects and briefly discusses misconceptions about the emotion: <http://www.pbs.org/thisemotionallife/topic/anger/what-anger>

Molly Edmonds' "How Anger Works" gives a more detailed look at the symptoms, causes, and physical effects of anger: <http://science.howstuffworks.com/life/inside-the-mind/emotions/anger.htm>

2. Robin's life as an outlaw begins when he angrily shoots a ranger for taunting and threatening him. Many would consider this a crime of passion, an act that is dictated not by rational thought but by the individual's emotional state. More often than not, the emotion that begets crime is anger. Having students reflect on crimes of passion can help them work to analyze the gray areas that surround some crimes and determine if there is always a clear cut, "right" answer in relation to a criminal's guilt.

Begin by providing a general definition of a crime of passion. Cornell University's Legal Information Institute website ([http://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/crime\\_of\\_passion](http://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/crime_of_passion)) provides one definition. Then, give students some examples of crimes of passion from media accounts or other resources. Sources like Erik Devaney's ([http://www.ehow.com/list\\_6827633\\_examples-crimes-passion.html](http://www.ehow.com/list_6827633_examples-crimes-passion.html)) provide a good starting point by setting up categories without disclosing sordid details that might offend some students. Devaney alludes to adultery-related crimes, combat- or assault-related crimes, bitter disagreements, and revenge/retaliation as types of crimes of passion. Using the groups as a starting point, have students rank the groups according to how justifiable they are. For instance, is an individual who has been attacked more justified in the commission of a crime of passion than someone who is embroiled in a bitter disagreement? Have students defend their rankings; then, use the students' ideas as the foundation for a class discussion.

## DURING READING ACTIVITIES

### I. WHOLE TEXT ACTIVITIES

The following activities can be completed as students read the novel. Some activities relate to specific parts of the book, so completing them while the text is still fresh in readers' minds will deepen students' critical thinking. Instructors can use the activities to assess comprehension and to provide helpful feedback.

1. When students formulate questions about a text, relate text events to personal experience, or make connections between book events and broader culture, they develop their skills of comprehension. Teach students to apply sticky notes at those points in the novel where a question arises, where they find a significant detail, or they encounter a particularly confusing passage. Have students write their questions or connections on the sticky notes as they read. The students can then use the notes to refer back to specific parts of the text—rather than leafing through page after page, the points of interest or confusion are identified exactly. And, unlike highlighting and annotating, the text is unmarked for subsequent readers, the notes can be removed and shared with the class, and the teacher or peers can help the reader work through the challenging parts. If students compile their collective responses on a white board or sheets of large paper, the teacher can also assess class mastery and work to clarify points of common misunderstanding. The notes can also serve as the foundation for class discussion.

2. As indicated in the earlier section on vocabulary, *The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood* challenges today's readers, fluent in modern English, with archaic diction and foreign and elusive concepts. For example, how might most modern middle and high school students interpret the Tinker's boast: "...if I do not score his knave's pate, cut my staff into fagots and call me woman" (p. 29)? Teachers can use a variety of means to compile lists of words that cause collective confusion, and pre-teaching some words can ease the task of reading for students. Following are two strategies to build vocabulary while reading the novel.

Vocabulary organizers: Students can use vocabulary organizers as they read to record those words that they do not know and review later to find definitions. Or, teachers can preview a passage or section and provide organizers that have vocabulary words listed in order of appearance. Finally, teachers can provide organizers that feature focused lists, such as lists of medieval measurements, flora and fauna, or medieval professions, that help students group words by class. The vocabulary organizers can be as simple as words and definitions, or can include denotation, connotation, space for annotations, and similar words.

A sample focused list for measurements:

UNIT OF MEASUREMENT	MEASURES	MODERN EQUIVALENT
Score	Number	20 (four score=80)
Rod	Distance	16.5 feet/ 5.029 meters
Tun	Volume	252 gallons

Word Walls: Identifying confusing or unknown words and placing them in a central location for definition and discussion can promote understanding, identify concepts that confuse groups of students rather than individuals, and encourage the idea of a community of learners working towards a common goal.

Reserve a section of bulletin board or white board to use as the word wall for *The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood*. Teachers can also purchase a sheet of rigid foam insulation from a hardware store, size it accordingly, and staple the words to it. As students read, have them write down words that they do not know. Students can list words on their own paper, in a section of their reading journals, on vocabulary organizers, or on tickets that can double as bookmarks. As the class completes a passage or section, have students add one or two of their words to the word wall. As students add words, some peers will be able to help define the words; in other instances, few if any students will know a word's defini-

tion and teachers can supply the definition or ask students to engage in research about the meaning of the word. Leave the collective words on the wall for the duration of the Robin Hood unit so that students can use it to review and recall words from past sections.

3. One recurring element in the Robin Hood legends is the offer of a bounty for the individual who can bring Robin to justice. However, none of the bounties offered are in contemporary currency, so students may not be able to interpret the magnitude of the price placed on Robin's head. Online resources can help students understand the amounts of money offered and thus appreciate more fully how much authorities wanted to capture Robin. For example, in the Prologue, the authorities offer a two hundred pound reward for Robin because he killed the forester and also poached the King's deer (p. 6). Ken Hodges' "List of prices of medieval items" hosted on Luminarium (<http://www.luminarium.org/medlit/medprice.htm>) will allow students to calculate what two hundred pounds would have purchased in medieval times. Some results? In 1382, a Warden of London Bridges earned ten pounds a year, so the bounty would have been the equivalent of twenty years' salary. Or, in 1316, one could hire 2,000 knights at two shillings per knight for a single day.

Using online resources, students can also calculate the modern day equivalent of two hundred pounds from centuries ago. The Currency Converter hosted by Great Britain's National Archives (<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency/results.asp#mid>) allows users to convert a sum of money from as far back as 1270 into its 2005 equivalent. Two hundred pounds in 1270 are the equivalent of 106,544 pounds today. Use an online currency converter like the one offered by XE (<http://www.xe.com/currencyconverter/>) to convert the pounds into dollars. In today's dollars, the bounty would have approximately equaled \$167,257. Most would agree that the bounties placed on Robin's head seem a good incentive to turn him in.

Students' calculations can also be used as the basis for discussion: What can readers infer

about the characters who offer the bounty? Does the bounty seem reasonable given the nature of Robin's crimes? What might readers infer about social attitudes or Robin's abilities if nobody is willing to attempt to bring Robin in?

4. Like other feats in the novel, archery contests and shooting typically get detailed description, and readers can sense that those details are supposed to convey an idea of a character's prowess with a bow and arrows. However, like the bounties offered for Robin's head, the details typically cite size, distance, and relationships that most modern readers are not familiar with. Setting up one of the targets that is described in the adventures can help students visualize the setting, understand more fully why Robin's abilities are so impressive, and offer a contrast to contemporary archery competitions.

Locate one of Pyle's descriptions of a contest that gives specifics about distance and target size. In Part Fifth, students can locate two such courses (pp. 203-204). The first course's length is seven score yards (140 yards); the target is a garland "three palms' breadth" in width. The second, more demanding course that Robin competes on is four score yards, or eighty yards, at a hazel wand target that is about the breadth of a man's thumb. Having students construct a replica of the course on an athletic field (an American football field measures 120 yards from the outside of one end zone to the outside of the other) using comparably sized targets will help define Robin's abilities and engage kinesthetic learners.

To extend this activity, students can compare the novel's archery to Olympic archery, a sport that features detailed rules about equipment, target size, and distance. Using guidelines from online sources or the library (like the information found at <http://olympics.about.com/lw/Sports-Recreation/Amateur-sports/Olympic-Archery-Rules-and-Judging.htm>), students can set up the equivalent of an Olympic archery course: the distance is 229 feet, eight inches; the bullseye size is 4.8 inches in diameter. They can then compare the feats from Sherwood Forest to those of the Olympics. And, online videos like the



*Anything You Can Do* episode “How To Be An Olympic Archer” ([http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rB\\_T3\\_ZAojQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rB_T3_ZAojQ)) or footage of Olympians competing (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aKVGaYc0v1s>) can demonstrate the challenge of modern archery.

The class can then discuss the likelihood of Robin's accuracy, how his feats lend a sense of the legendary to the narrative, and whether or not the inclusion of such remarkable abilities gives staying power to the legends of Robin Hood.

5. Most episodes in Pyle's version of the Robin Hood legend include either partial or complete ballads. Analyzing one of the ballads from the text can increase students' understanding of the form and refine their understanding of culture in the times of Robin Hood.

After reading a chapter or section, have students recount the event using the elements of the ballad form. Depending on the amount of time available, the ability of students, and the level of student interest, the criteria for a successful ballad can be adapted. Simpler ballads might consist of five stanzas of four lines each, no set line length, and ABCB rhyme scheme. Additional criteria might include lines of eight and six beats each, the use of dialogue to advance the narrative, additional stanzas to increase the poem's length. Allowing students to critique early drafts of ballads generally strengthens the final drafts, and it also enables students to review and rethink the plot, characters, and specifics of the episodes they are adapting into ballad form. Reviewing the sample Robin Hood ballads linked earlier in this guide may prove useful for teaching students how to excerpt the essential plot events and provide models. After completing the ballads, invite students to recite or perform their ballads for the class.

6. From beggar to king, the characters in *The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood* are typically described in detailed fashion upon their first appearance in the novel. Analyzing those descriptions can help students understand both individual characters and the larger contexts of the novel. And, the descriptions

enable students who are artistically inclined to reflect on the text and provide their own visual interpretations of the cast of characters.

As students complete a chapter or section, have them review the characters that appear therein. In many instances, Pyle provides thorough descriptions of characters that figure heavily in each episode. For example, the Sheriff of Nottingham (p. 38), Sir Richard of the Lea (p. 195), and the villainous Guy of Gisborne (pp. 324-5) are depicted vividly. If a section contains such a description, ask students to locate and catalog those elements that describe a character. After they have listed the descriptive elements, ask students to generate ideas about the details' connotative meanings. What do readers associate with physical traits or appearances? What significance might a character's belongings have in characterization? How does a character's appearance compare to other similar characters that readers have already encountered? A note taking organizer can help students collect their ideas.

This activity can also be extended to allow students to create their own artistic interpretations of characters. Pyle's illustrations can be used as models. Creating art based on textual content will help some students recall and appreciate more from the book. If the entire class creates illustrations of characters, peers can evaluate each other's work to ensure that the depictions are accurate according to the text and to appreciate their classmates' abilities.

## II. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND DEEPENING UNDERSTANDING

Discussion questions represent an opportunity to assess understanding and to strengthen comprehension of the novel and its literary elements. Students can answer the questions individually, they can work as groups to answer a series of questions to refine their understanding of a section, or one student can work exclusively on a single question to become the class expert who then shares his/her expertise with peers and the instructor.



## Prologue

1. In the Prologue, Robin encounters the King's foresters, men charged to protect his lands and to prevent poaching. What details (appearance, actions, words, attitudes) does Pyle use to depict the foresters negatively?
2. After he is insulted and a forester lets fly an arrow towards him, Robin responds by killing the forester (p. 6). Are Robin's actions justified? Why or why not? What details does Pyle select to convince readers of the sincerity of Robin's immediate and profound regret at having killed a man?
3. Once Robin takes up residence in Sherwood Forest, he crafts a code of conduct for his followers (p. 7). What are the central tenets of this belief system? How do the specifics of the code work to depict Robin and his actions positively? What diction does Pyle use to depict Robin as a good character and the authorities as a negative force in their society?

## Part First

1. In chapter I, after he dupes the Tinker, Robin attempts to recruit the man to join his band (p. 31). What elements in his spiel might be particularly appealing to a serf or peasant? Would Robin's offer be as appealing in modern times? Why or why not?
2. To gain information that will assist the band in liberating Will Stutely, David of Doncaster consults with a palmer (p. 52). What details does the palmer provide that present the community's attitude toward Robin and his band? What can readers infer from the exchange about the palmer's attitude towards the Sheriff and other authorities?
3. In a section that consistently allows Robin to demonstrate his courage, what details and events on pp. 57 and 58 depict the Sheriff as a cowardly leader?

## Part Second

1. Early in the section Robin "set[s] forth to seek adventure." Using your understanding

of life in Sherwood as a starting point, what are some of Robin's other motivations for setting forth? What does he seek? What does he hope to gain from his adventures?

2. After he agrees to sell "five hundred and more horned beasts" to the Sheriff for three hundred pounds, the other butchers feel that the Sheriff has tricked a naive man (pp. 66-67). How is this an example of dramatic irony? What are the horned beasts that Robin plans on selling, and to whom do they really belong?
3. When Little John defeats Eric o' Lincoln at the fair, the Sheriff recruits John to join his band (p. 81). In what ways does the Sheriff's offer resemble Robin's recruitment efforts? How does living in the Sheriff's house transform Little John? Why does Little John decide to return to Sherwood Forest?

## Part Third

1. In the novel, Pyle consistently depicts life in Sherwood Forest as idyllic and nearly perfect. What sensory imagery does the author include to create a detailed sense of how pleasurable life is in the forest? To what senses does he appeal?
2. Many works of literature illustrate how looks can be misleading. In Chapter II, Robin and his colleagues encounter Will Scarlet for the first time. Using the description of Will in the text, what kind of person does he appear to be? Are the conclusions that readers might make based on Will Scarlet's appearance deceiving? How does his appearance differ from the men of Sherwood Forest? What does Robin conclude about Will based on his appearance? What happens to Robin as a result?
3. Based on his principles and past events, is it likely that Robin would truly want to rob the Miller (p. 133)? Why or why not? During their conflict, what details and techniques (irony, imagery, dialogue, diction) does Pyle use to make the fight humorous?

## Part Fourth

1. Allan a Dale's story shows that his heart is broken. What specifics are included to create sympathy for Allan? What arguments do Allan and the band make to show the wrongness of Ellen's arranged marriage to Sir Stephen?
2. To defend himself, Friar Tuck sets his hounds on Robin and his band who shoot arrows at the dogs. The dogs dodge the arrows, catch them in their mouths, and break them. Do the dogs' abilities seem realistic? What does this detail add to the narrative?
3. While Friar Tuck is depicted as a poor religious man, the Bishop of Hereford is presented as being considerably more powerful and wealthy. How do the descriptions of Tuck (p. 161) and the Bishop (p. 182) differ? What inferences can a reader make about the concerns of the two men? What do you think their central priorities are? Based on your understanding of monastic vows, do either adhere to the ideals set for dutiful monks?
4. After Robin and his band disrupt the wedding of Sir Stephen to the beautiful maiden Ellen, the Bishop of Hereford calls Robin an "evil man" (p. 187). Based on your understanding of Robin, his attitudes, and his actions, do you think Robin is evil? Why or why not? Is the Bishop's calling Robin "evil" ironic?

## Part Fifth

1. In Chapter I, Richard of the Lea recounts his plight to Robin and his band after they stop him on the road. What parts of Richard's story work best to convince readers that he and his family have been wronged? How does Richard's story help readers understand the corruption of the Church in the novel?
2. Unlike most others in positions of power, Richard of the Lea is depicted positively. What actions, attitudes, and words of Richard indicate that he is a good person? What is his attitude towards Robin and his band?

## Part Sixth

1. In Chapter I, Robin and Little John engage in a debate over which lifestyle is superior: that of a beggar or that of a friar. Based on your understanding of the novel, which lifestyle do you think is superior, and why?
2. How are Little John's prayers answered at the end of Chapter I? Are the two friars Ambrose and Thomas exemplary priests? Why or why not?
3. Unlike other beggars, Robin disguised as a beggar has little to fear from the local dogs because the speaker notes that "dogs know an honest man by his smell, and an honest man Robin was—in his own way" (p. 263). In what ways is Robin an honest man? In the book, who are some dishonest men, and what traits do they have that contrast with Robin's character?
4. Read the description of the Corn Engrosser (p. 263-264) and his actions. What about him would make him a particularly villainous individual in medieval times? What group comprised the greatest percentage of the population in a feudal society? What details does Pyle use to depict the Corn Engrosser negatively?

## Part Seventh

1. When Robin is summoned to appear before Queen Eleanor by Richard Partington, he willingly reports to London. What can readers infer from his actions about his attitude towards Eleanor? In what ways does Eleanor as an authority figure treat Robin differently from most other authority figures in the book?
2. The descriptions of the archery match contain detailed imagery and specifics (p. 281-294). Why would an author go into such great detail over such an event? What is the effect on readers?

3. After they win the shooting match, Robin and Little John share some of their prizes with the King's men. Soon after, one of the King's men delivers a warning that Henry wishes them ill (pp. 294-295). What effect does this episode have on readers' perceptions of Robin's leadership abilities? Does it change readers' views of King Henry?

## Part Eighth

1. Guy of Gisborne is perhaps the most fearsome adversary that Robin Hood encounters in the entire novel. What central images does Pyle use to convey his villainous nature? What is Robin's attitude towards his adversary?
2. In Chapter II, King Richard visits Sherwood Forest. As King Henry's successor, he brings change to the region. In what central ways does Richard differ from Henry? Contrast Richard's actions and attitudes with Robin Hood in the forest and Henry's actions and attitudes after the great archery contest.
3. When King Richard leaves Sherwood Forest, he pardons Robin and presses Robin and several of his men into service

so that they can serve him in London (p. 359). Based on your understanding of Robin, do you think his willingness to abandon his life in Sherwood is believable? Why or why not?

## Epilogue

1. At the beginning of the Epilogue, Robin returns to Sherwood Forest after a long absence. What elements does Pyle use to help readers understand that Robin's adventures are ending? What emotions does Robin feel upon his return to his old haunts?
2. King John sends his troops after Robin because Robin overstayed his visit to Sherwood. Are the king's actions reasonable considering Robin's offense? What about Robin has changed that would allow him to put his men at risk against Sir William and his forces?
3. Having fallen ill from a fever, Robin is taken to an abbey to be healed by his cousin, the Prioress of Kirklees (pp. 370-1). How does his downfall reflect his longtime conflicts with authority? Do you think that the Prioress's treachery reflects the attitudes of the majority or minority of the clergy in the novel? Why?

## AFTER READING ACTIVITIES

These activities provide opportunities for students to deepen their understanding of the text, to analyze and make connections to other texts, and to draw from their beliefs and life experiences to appreciate the novel more fully. Most can be adapted for completion by individual students or small groups of students.

### I. TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION AND ESSAYS

1. In the novel, this statement appears: "The good old times have gone by when such men grow as grew then; when sturdy quarterstaff and long bow toughened a man's thews [muscles and tendons] till they were like leather" (p. 101). Many

changes have occurred since the times of Robin Hood. However, has society changed to the point that men of today are mere shadows of the heroes of yesteryear? Is it possible for an individual to be heroic in today's society? Using support from the book and your opinions about modern society, defend, refute, or qualify the novel's statement.

2. Robin Hood is presented through much of the novel as an idealized man—he can outwit, outshoot, or outrun any man in all of England. However, despite his exceptional nature, he is not perfect. After thinking back over the novel, consider Robin Hood's flaws and actions. Then, write a response to explain how it is

possible for an imperfect individual to be considered heroic.

3. "It doth make a man better...to hear of those noble men that lived so long ago. When one doth list to such tales, his soul doth say, 'Put by thy poor little likings and seek to do likewise'" (p. 143). This statement asserts that hearing of legendary tales of heroism improves the listener by inspiring the undertaking of comparable acts. Do you believe that hearing of heroic acts leads to moral improvement? Why or why not?
4. To recruit followers, Robin Hood offers clothes, money, food, and lodging. The Sheriff of Nottingham offers much the same. Using your understanding of the two characters and the novel as a whole, explain why Robin is regarded in a positive light by his men and by many people in his society. As you plan your response, contrast Robin's actions, attitudes, and words to those of the Sheriff.
5. As the novel progresses, Robin's reputation as a heroic outlaw grows until all in the region have heard of him and his magnificent deeds. In what ways might a reputation such as his lead to changes in the way others view him? How might it change the way he views himself? Overall, are the effects of reputation positive or negative for Robin Hood?
6. Early in the novel, Robin Hood commits crimes, yet as the novel progresses he is considered a hero. If one does not agree with Robin's values, then he is simply a murderer and poacher. What elements in society have the greatest effect on how individuals are perceived? Are people's perceptions more likely to be influenced by outside forces today than they might have been in the past?
7. Most of Robin's adversaries are depicted as villains, but not all are equally bad. Using your understanding of the novel, identify one character as the most villainous in the book. Then, using specific examples from the story, defend your choice as you prove that the character is the most evil person Robin encounters.
8. In *The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood*, the rich get richer and the poor suffer more. When Robin acts to correct things, he breaks the law, stealing from and assaulting those who do not agree with him. However, his actions do not really seem wrong because they benefit the downtrodden. In an unjust society, when is civil disobedience acceptable?
9. At the start of the novel, Robin Hood loses control of his temper and kills one of the King's foresters. Towards the end of the novel, he listens to Guy of Gisborne's insults, manages his anger, and murders Guy. After reflecting on the entirety of the novel, what experiences or realizations does Robin have that allow him to deal with his emotions more successfully at the end? Do you think he uses his anger properly in the conflict with Guy? Why or why not?

## II. GROUP AND INDIVIDUAL PROJECTS

1. Robin Hood legends have resonated with audiences for hundreds of years in part because Robin takes from the rich and gives to the poor. This generosity towards the downtrodden allows readers to empathize with rather than to condemn a man who is in essence a robber. Is the appreciation of Robin's motives and actions truly timeless?

On New Year's Eve, 2012, Corey Allan Donaldson stole over \$140,000 from a bank in Wyoming and then spent the next month traveling the western United States giving the money away to people he found living in shelters and on the streets. An Associated Press account of the story is at:

[http://billingsgazette.com/news/state-and-regional/wyoming/bank-robbery-suspect-says-he-gave-to-the-poor/article\\_d97d5c91-5ced-5325-9931-9493b54351df.html](http://billingsgazette.com/news/state-and-regional/wyoming/bank-robbery-suspect-says-he-gave-to-the-poor/article_d97d5c91-5ced-5325-9931-9493b54351df.html)

Share the story with students. Ask students to annotate the account as they read (or to take

notes as the class covers the text together) identifying those actions and attitudes that they agree with and those that they view as troubling or problematic. Also tell students to think critically about the figure of Donaldson to understand him more as an individual. Once students have familiarized themselves with the story and reflected on it, have them compare it to *The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood*. How are the social contexts similar in the two accounts? How do they differ? Are there any differences between the actions of Donaldson and the Merry Men? Students can also compare and contrast Donaldson and Robin Hood. What traits do they share? How do they differ? What about Robin Hood categorizes him as legendary? Should Donaldson be considered as a legend? Why or why not? The analysis of the Donaldson account compared to the Robin Hood legend can be completed as a class discussion, a compare/contrast essay, small group projects or presentations, or other formats that are best suited for a given class.

2. While the guide has already included some strategies to help students consider Robin Hood as a character, reviewing the entire novel and charting Robin's growth as a character provides an opportunity to review the text, to focus exclusively on Robin, and to see some of the nuances that are not as evident while reading the text. Adapt the activities here to correspond with available time, resources on hand, student abilities, or class interest.

## Robin Hood Resumé

Have students review the novel to identify Robin's mental and physical strengths, his attitudes and charisma, his abilities, and his experiences. In the planning stage students can simply catalog the traits and organize them into categories. A class discussion can also generate a useful body of information and allow students to see elements that they might have overlooked. After students understand the range of Robin's abilities and traits, have them brainstorm different modern professions that such a character might be well-suited for. Then have students

choose independently the profession that they believe he would be most successful in. Once students have reviewed the character, have them create a resumé for Robin Hood that shares his remarkable traits, the experiences he has had, the individuals he might use as a reference, and so on. Word processing programs often feature a resumé template that students can complete with their own information. Telling students that their task is to present Robin Hood as the best candidate for the job that they have chosen may inspire them to reflect on Robin's merits.

## Robin Hood Timeline

Ask students to create a timeline that details significant events in Robin's life that affected his development—times when he learned or experienced something that he had not before, he completed a task that was new to him, or he recruited an ally who became one of his most trusted lieutenants. On the timeline, have students record events in order; then, after the events are in place, have students annotate the timeline to explain how the event was significant in the development of Robin as a character. For example, students would probably make a strong argument that Robin's meeting, battling, and recruiting Little John paid lifelong dividends in terms of martial strength and friendship, but they might exclude Robin's encounter with Midge the Miller unless they might argue that Robin learned that he ought not discount an adversary based only on appearances.

3. In many ways, Pyle's third person narration succeeds because it allows him to record the novel's vivid settings in glowing language, to recount fights in gripping fashion, and to move from one character to another without disrupting the narrative flow. However, rarely do readers get a glimpse of the characters' internal workings, their thoughts, feelings, and perceptions unless those elements appear as part of a dialogue because the thinker has opted to share his feelings with his fellows. Having students compose letters using the voices, ideas, and philosophies of a character gives them a medium to share their knowl-

edge of plot, character, and setting. The activity also allows students to write creatively, to draw from their imagination, and to review the novel. Letters might be evaluated on accuracy to story elements, accuracy of voice, scope of content, and creativity.

Possible letter assignments might include:

- Robin to the family of the King's ranger that he killed in the Prologue to express his remorse, convey his condolences, and to explain his side of the story.
- The Sheriff of Nottingham to Guy of Gisborne to detail his hatred of Robin, to praise Guy's abilities, and to attempt to recruit Guy to track down and defeat the outlaw of Sherwood.
- The Prioress of Kirkless to King John to pledge her allegiance to him, to explain her displeasure with her cousin Robin, and to confess to the crime of bleeding him to death.
- Little John to the remaining men to inform them of Robin's death, to express his sorrow, and to recall with nostalgia their past adventures.

4. Using shadow puppets to present *The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood* is a creative project that allows students to think critically about the content and style of Pyle's novel and to collaborate on artistic interpretations of the novel. Divide the class into smaller groups of three or four, give instructions (like those found at <https://docs.google.com/a/bcsemail.org/document/d/1kcPKxnaEbeDqGNsOw47gtOy9yIrhC5GOzl6Z3GTPgyM/edit>), assign the section that students are responsible for, give the groups materials, and allow them to work together to create their presentations. The materials for puppets are free or affordable in a classroom setting; the only equipment needed for presenting is an overhead projector and white board or screen. Shadow puppet adaptations work well for many different works, for students of varying academic levels, and typically result in presentations that while enjoyable provide a meaningful overview of the literary work.

This sample video shows how to use the

overhead projector and basic puppet manipulation: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=feF5BKHKGGg>. This longer video on "The Complete History of Corn" uses a backlit screen instead of an overhead projector, but it offers some phenomenal examples of cutout shadow puppets: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pQ2HM05b2jo>.

5. Like the Robin Hood legends, another work that criticizes some of the medieval Church's practices is Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*, and students can learn more about the excesses of the clergy by examining some of the religious figures in that text: the Monk, the Friar, and the Pardoner.

Ask students to review what they learned earlier about the vows taken by religious clerics. Then, analyze the three characters from Chaucer's Prologue (if time or interest preclude the possibility of covering all of the characters, analyzing a single character will probably suffice). Using an analysis guide like the one posted by Debra Bruch (<http://www.fa.mtu.edu/~dllbruch/scriptanalysis/charguide.html>, (this guide is meant to be used with drama, but it will work well here, too) will help teachers and students focus on a specific set of traits.

When students have a good understanding of the characters, have them evaluate the actions, appearances, and attitudes of Chaucer's characters using the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience as a measure. Students can present their conclusions in a brief written assignment, a graphic organizer, an annotated list, or simply by highlighting and adding comments to their completed character analysis guides. If schools do not have textbooks that feature the Prologue, an accessible and free modern English translation of Chaucer's tales can be found at:

Chaucer, Geoffrey. *The Canterbury Tales*. Trans. Ronald Ecker. Palatka, Florida: Hodge & Braddock, 1993. Web. <<http://english.fsu.edu/canterbury/>>.

6. Great gaffer Swanthold's adages recur throughout the novel, and these wise sayings convey ideas that Robin and his band have



taken to heart. “He who is fat from overliving must needs lose blood” (p. 116), “Gold is an over heavy burden for a two-legged ass to carry” (p. 134), “He who jumps for the moon and gets it not leaps higher than he who stoops for a penny in the mud” (p. 143), and “If Ned never tries, Ned never does” (p. 264) are examples of Swanthold’s adages that seem to guide or characterize Robin’s philosophies throughout the novel. To help students review *The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood* and to highlight Swanthold’s wit and wisdom, use the adages as a foundation for identifying and analyzing the key tenets of Robin’s belief system. First, have students review the text and record the adages and their page numbers. To ease these labors, small groups might be responsible for different sections, or marking the locations of the sayings could be integrated into the activity as a during reading activity. Once the class has located and compiled the sayings, ask individuals or small groups to select and list those five to ten sayings that they believe represent main points in Robin’s life philosophy. After creating the adage list, students should annotate the list to prove how Robin’s actions represent the idea in practice. For instance, if students chose the adage “Overcaution spilleth the milk” (p. 291), they might cite the instance of Robin’s challenging the fearsome Guy of Gisborne despite the villain’s universal infamy—Robin is willing to take risks because being too cautious sometimes causes as many problems as taking a chance. The students then might infer what risks of not acting in that confrontation might be: the loss of reputation, the risk of falling prey to Guy when he is less prepared to meet him, the possibility that Guy might commit future crimes against those that Robin has worked to protect and provide for. Using Gaffer Swanthold’s ideas in this activity allows students to reflect on the adages to glean their meanings, to think critically about their truth, to align the ideas with plot elements, and to understand Robin’s character more fully.

7. At the end of the Epilogue, Pyle transcribes Robin Hood’s epitaph in “ancient English” (p. 376):

Hear underneath dis laitl stean  
lais robert earl of huntingtun  
nea arcir ver as hie sae geud  
an pipl kauld im Robin Heud  
sick utlaws as hi an is men  
vil England nidir si agen.

obiit 24 kal. dekembris 1247.

The dialect here is more challenging than most other instances in the text, for while the narrative contains dialect and archaic vocabulary, the context, repetition, and preponderance of modern English provide enough clues for most students to gain the overall meaning. However, the epitaph’s language is closer to Middle English, the epitaph is isolated from the balance of the text, and the context provides no clues other than the speaker’s identifying it as an epitaph. After assessing student ability, have individual or small groups work independently or with teacher guidance to translate the epitaph from its original presentation into modern English. If students need assistance, ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Reference\\_desk/Archives/Language/2012\\_September\\_28](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Reference_desk/Archives/Language/2012_September_28)) can provide translations of single words or entire lines.

Once the students have all completed the translation, ask them to analyze the epitaph. What important traits or accomplishments does the epitaph include about Robin and his life? What omissions do the students think should have been included? Ask students to draft a different epitaph for Robin Hood that they feel better summarizes his accomplishments, qualities, and the attitudes that others felt about him. Remind them that epitaphs are typically fairly brief, so students might want to catalog their ideas and then selectively incorporate the best content into their final drafts. As a summative activity, analyzing the epitaph is fitting because the content centers on the end (and entirety) of Robin’s



life, the task requires some fluency in the book's dialects, and the concept allows students to reflect on Robin and his life's efforts.

To extend this assignment, students might also compose epitaphs for other central characters in the novel using the same process of reviewing, reflecting, cataloging, selecting, and composing. If enough students complete epitaphs, a section of the room might be reserved as the Sherwood Burial Ground or Nottingham Cemetery where "tombstones" could be displayed for all learners to see and appreciate.

### III. TEXT TO FILM COMPARISONS

Have students contrast elements of the novel and Robin Hood films in order to think critically about both media and to reflect on the merits of the text version. While there have been many different adaptations of the Robin Hood legend to the silver screen, one of the most critically-acclaimed and well-received is the 1938 adaptation directed by Michael Curtiz and William Keighley and starring Errol Flynn as Robin, Olivia de Havilland as Maid Marian, and Basil Rathbone as Sir Guy of Gisbourne.

*The Adventures of Robin Hood.* Dir. Michael Curtiz and William Keighley. Perf. Errol Flynn, Olivia de Havilland, and Basil Rathbone. Warner Brothers Pictures, 1938.

1. One approach to using film to study literature is to compare elements from the book as they appear in a movie adaptation. With Robin Hood, it makes sense to focus either on characters or key plot events. If time limits the possibility of showing the entire film, preview the film to identify those scenes that focus on the character of Robin and correspond to events in the book. Then, students can analyze what is most successful in both presentations of the outlaw and compare the two, determine which version is more compelling, and draft an argument or

debate with classmates to convince others of their viewpoint. Another approach is to compare episodes. The climactic battle between Robin and Guy, for instance, appears in both the film and novel, but each has unique elements that distinguish it from the other. Students can easily refer back to the pertinent passages or scenes, analyze them both, and argue the merits of each.

2. A second approach is to view the entire film and compare it to the text version. One strategy is to identify those elements that are similar and to note those elements that are different. Given the rigors of adapting one story into a different medium, differences obviously exist between versions, even if the tales are largely the same. By looking at additions and omissions, students are inspired to think critically to identify the effects of making the changes. For example, the Flynn version of *Robin Hood* omits some of the most colorful dialogue in its screenplay, has no compunctions about having Robin shoot soldier after soldier, and relies more on images and stunts than descriptions to convey action. Ask students to create a graphic organizer showing the similarities and differences between the versions and then write a brief review explaining which version they prefer and why.

### Other Robin Hood Films

These alternative titles might work for comparison. Teachers are advised to preview titles before incorporating them into their curricula.

*Robin Hood.* Dir. John Irvin. Perf. Patrick Bergin, Uma Thurman, Jurgen Prochnow. 20 Century Fox Television, 1991.

*Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves.* Dir. Kevin Reynolds. Perf. Kevin Costner, Morgan Freeman, and Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio. Warner Brothers Pictures, 1991.

*Robin Hood.* Dir. Ridley Scott. Perf. Russell Crowe, Cate Blanchett, and Max von Sydow. Universal Pictures, 2010.

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## NOTES

**NOTES**

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