

The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood Study Guide

The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood by Howard Pyle

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Overview

Howard Pyle's Robin Hood is the first, the most beautifully illustrated, and the most complete of the many renditions for young people of the adventures of the famous yeoman-thief of Sherwood Forest. Pyle's is the quintessential Robin Hood on which later films and a television series were based, and the book has proven a perennial favorite, numbering among its enthusiastic readers the British poet William Morris as well as American presidents Theodore Roosevelt and John F. Kennedy. The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood by Howard Pyle remains the best book available for young readers on this enduring folk hero.

Like most of Pyle's works, Robin Hood is morally earnest. Pyle transforms the sly Robin Hood of the medieval sourceballads into a hero who is upright, compassionate, and unflinchingly honest.

Although considered a thief and outlaw, Robin Hood is nevertheless presented in this work as a moral force in a world that allows the rich and powerful to take ruthless advantage of the poor and defenseless. Although he is technically a criminal, Robin is more honest than his foe, the Sheriff of Nottingham, who is charged with upholding the law. A just man, Robin Hood is a fugitive from justice. He is also more charitable than the various hypocritical churchmen he encounters. Pyle's Robin Hood exemplifies the virtues of justice, fair play, generosity, and compassion that the author felt were essential qualities of mature adulthood.

Pyle's moralizing does not, however, take away from Robin's fast-paced adventures in and around Sherwood Forest. Pyle relates these traditional tales with an incomparable zest, generosity of spirit, and unfailing good humor. Even after more than a century, this version of the Robin Hood legend engages modern readers—young and old alike—with its sprightly innocence, nobility, pathos, and bittersweet nostalgia for a golden age when humans lived harmoniously with nature.

provides an exciting, joyous, and ultimately moving narrative for those readers patient and sophisticated enough to meet its stylistic demands.

The beautiful illustrations in this work round out the narrative to make for a memorable and most enjoyable reading experience.

About the Author

Howard Pyle was born in Wilmington, Delaware, on March 5, 1853. Showing considerable artistic ability at a young age, he was allowed to leave school at sixteen to pursue private art studies in Philadelphia. He placed his first illustrated article in Scribner's Magazine in 1876, and, encouraged by this early success, moved to New York City in October to study and work. There Pyle vacillated between careers in art and in literature, eventually solving his dilemma by becoming both an illustrator and a writer.

After establishing himself with Harper's, Scribner's, and other major publishing houses during his three years in New York, Pyle returned to Wilmington in 1879, where he lived—a devoted family man and industrious artist, teacher, and writer—until the year before his death in 1911. These thirty years saw a prodigious outpouring of illustrations, articles, and books.

His works in prose and pictures concerning colonial America helped a nation torn apart by the Civil War to rediscover its common roots. In his illustrations for the historical works of Woodrow Wilson and Henry Cabot Lodge, he provided a vision of early American costume, character, and event. Pyle's keen interest in history also manifested itself in works on piracy and on medieval life. In addition, he wrote several adult romances, thrillers, and tales of adventure, as well as a realist novel, *Rejected of Men* (1903).

Pyle's reputation as a writer now rests, however, on his illustrated works for young people, works that occupy a permanent position in the canon of juvenile literature. The *Merry Adventures of Robin Hood* and the four-volume series of Arthurian tales offer the best indication of his considerable skill as storyteller and illustrator.

Pyle was also instrumental in the nineteenth-century revival of the folktale, producing three volumes of lively stories. *Pepper & Salt*, *The Wonder Clock*, and *Twilight Land* are characterized by deft moral instruction tempered by playful whimsy and wit. Pyle, along with his contemporary Mark Twain, wrote some of the first historical novels for young people, including *Otto of the Silver Hand* and *Men of Iron*, both set in medieval Europe, and *The Story of Jack Ballister's Fortunes*, set in colonial America. These classic works, many of which have never been out of print, constitute an enduring legacy.

Wishing to share his expertise as an artist and illustrator, Pyle began teaching in 1894 at Drexel Institute's School of Illustration, commuting several days a week to Philadelphia. After resigning from Drexel in 1900, he opened his own school in his studios in Wilmington. His aim as teacher was to foster a truly American art no longer dependent upon European models.

During his sixteen-year teaching career, Pyle instructed a whole generation of American illustrators, including Maxfield Parrish, Jessie Willcox Smith, and N. C. Wyeth. At the end of his career, he turned his attention to mural painting and left Wilmington in 1910 to study in Florence, Italy, where he died on November 9, 1911.

An important art educator, Howard Pyle is called the "Father of American Illustration" for his role in elevating American illustration to a position of world eminence. In addition, he is recognized as a classic American writer for young people, a significant figure in the "Golden Age of Children's Literature."



Plot Summary

The novel was written in 1938 but takes place in England in the early 1200's. Utilizing a mock medieval English language and woodcut prints by the author, the series of stories tells of a band of outlaws who vow not to hurt women or children, but instead, rob from the rich and give to the poor. The book may be read as a series of short stories or as a longer, continuous story. Told in a lighthearted, flourishing style that matches the setting, Robin Hood and his band of merry men continually foil the efforts of the Sheriff of Nottingham and others to bring them to justice.

As the first story opens Robin Hood is going to an archery contest, but accidentally kills one of the sheriff's men. This event, however, changes the course of the young man's life. The first stories set the tone of the book and provide insight into the characters as the band of merry outlaws is formed.

The Sheriff of Nottingham vows to catch Robin Hood, and makes three attempts to do so in the First Part. At first a Tinker is sent to serve papers upon Robin, however, Robin gives him some strong drink that makes him fall asleep and steals the papers. The Sheriff then holds a shooting match in Nottingham, hoping to lure Robin there and to take him prisoner. However, Robin goes in disguise, wins first prize, and later sends the Sheriff a note explaining what happened. The Sheriff then captures Will Stutely and announces that he will be hanged. However, Little John postpones the hanging just long enough for Robin and his men to rescue Will, much to the disgust of the Sheriff.

Robin then buys clothes, a cart, and meat from a butcher and sets up a booth at the market in Nottingham where he is subsequently invited to a feast at the Sheriff's own Guild Hall. As usual, Robin Hood ridicules the Sheriff, selling him deer that the Sheriff thinks will be cattle, after which the Sheriff is given a traditional feast in Sherwood Forest by the merry men.

At one point, Robin and his men make ready to rob from Midge, the Miller's son. The son outsmarts them, however, by throwing flour in their faces, blinding them while he strikes them with a stick.

Finally, the King sends a thief named Guy of Guisbourne to kill Robin Hood as even the Sheriff and his men have given up. Robin wins this battle also, but later succumbs to a fever. He goes to be treated by his cousin, the Prioress of the Nunnery of Kirklees. Instead she turns traitor and kills Robin, much to the dismay of his once merry band.



Preface and Prologue

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The author explains that the reader should not look for seriousness in the story, but, rather, for mirth and gay colors. Henry II, a stout, lusty fellow with a quick temper, will be a character as will Queen Eleanor, a fair, gentle lady, and Lord Bishop of Hereford, a fat rogue in rich clerical robes. There will also be a sour fellow with a grim look, the Sheriff of Nottingham, and a large, tall, merry fellow called Richard of the Lion's Heart.

The reader is told there will be a hundred dull, dreary places decked out with flowers and what not so they will be unrecognizable, and the reader is invited to follow the author onto the stage as the curtain lifts.

A famous outlaw Robin Hood lives in Sherwood Forest near Nottingham Town. He is an excellent archer who lives with his band of men. They spend their days in sporting contests and feasting on the King's venison and drinking wine. However, all the people in the land love them, as Robin Hood never refuses help for genuine need. Good King Henry II is the ruler of the land.

When Robin is a youth, he is on his way to an archery contest sponsored by the Sheriff of Nottingham, when he is ridiculed by some of the King's Foresters for being too young and inexperienced to compete. Robin bets them that he can kill a deer that is threescore rods away, and does so immediately. It makes the Foresters angry to have been wrong, and they immediately tell Robin Hood that he has violated the King's law by killing his deer. As they begin to chase Robin, one of the leaders shoots an arrow which barely misses him, and Robin turns and shoots an arrow into the heart of his pursuer, killing him immediately.

Robin Hood runs through the forest, leaving his joy and brightness behind with the deed he has done. A two hundred pounds bounty is set upon his head, and thereafter he is forced to hide in the forest. The Sheriff of Nottingham vows to catch Robin to get the reward money and also to avenge the death of one of his men. However, Robin hides in the forest for one year, and, in that time, gathers around him many others who have been unjustly accused of crimes against the King. They swear to avenge their various crimes but also not to harm women or children. As their reputation spreads, they become loved by the people of the kingdom.



One day Robin meets a man at a footbridge, and each challenges the other to cross first. When, after a long and fair battle, Robin finds himself in the creek, he and the man exchange names, and after an archery contest which ends a tie, the man agrees to join Robin Hood's band, and is named Little John. Back at their camp, the men show Little John their huts of bark, the couches made of sweet rushes, and mats of green moss, and make a merry game of initiating Little John into their midst.

Preface and Prologue Analysis

The scene is set in a forest where Robin Hood has been forced to retreat after breaking a law of the King. Others who have been wrongfully accused of crimes join him, and they agree to hurt and steal only from those who have wronged others, and not to commit any crimes against women or children.

The language is that of England around 1200 AD, and the reader is invited by the author to join him on the stage as the story unfolds. The mood is merry with a great deal of description of the places and events that take place along the way.

Robin's group is a band of merry men who enjoy drinking tubs of ale and eating the King's deer. They are skilled in the arts of fighting through contests among themselves, and are popular among the people surrounding the forest.



Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

The Sheriff tries to get someone to agree to serve Robin Hood with a warrant requiring he turn himself in to the King. None in Nottingham will go as they know of Robin Hood and his band and do not want to rise against them. The Sheriff then sends a messenger to the next town, Lincoln, to find someone who has not heard of Robin Hood. On the hot dusty road the messenger stops at the Blue Boar Inn, a quiet pub in the shade of several oak trees to have a pot of ale. As the messenger relaxes, he begins to tell of Robin Hood and how he lives.

When the telling is done, a jolly man called the Tinker asserts that he is best in the land with a cudgel, and can beat Robin Hood himself. So, with a promise of fourscore bangles of bright gold, the Tinker agrees to go to Nottingham in search of Robin Hood. After he receives the signed warrant, he searches for Robin Hood. Walking along a path in the forest, he meets Robin Hood, but neither exchange names. He indicates what his errand is, and Robin tells him that the man he seeks is much like himself. They go to the Blue Boar Inn, and Robin secretly asks the innkeeper to add some strong spirits to the Tinker's ale. With singing and drinking the Tinker soon falls asleep and Robin Hood takes the warrant from his bag and leaves the Inn. When the Tinker wakes, the innkeeper tells him that he was drinking with Robin Hood. Even though he has been paid, the innkeeper insists that the Tinker pay him again. Since the Tinker has no money, the innkeeper takes his coat and hammer as pay, and the Tinker leaves very unhappily.

Soon Robin Hood and the Tinker meet again, and challenge each other. This time Robin's staff breaks, and the tinker thinks he has Robin as a prisoner. However, Robin blows three quick blasts on his horn, summoning his merry men. When they arrive and wish to hang the Tinker, Robin instead asks him if he will join their band as they need a man who works with metal. The Tinker agrees and they go back to Sherwood Forest, singing ballads all the way.

After being harshly chastised by the king for his failure, the Sheriff devises a plan to catch Robin Hood. He announces a great shooting match that Robin will not be able to resist, and thus surface at and be caught. However, one of Robin's men hears of the plan, so Robin instructs his men to wear disguises, and plans to compete in disguise himself. When the contest is down to ten men, only two contenders are unknown, and neither bears a likeness to Robin Hood.

When the finalists were but three, they were Gill o' the Red Cap, Adam o' the Dell of Tamworth Town, and one unknown man in tattered scarlet with only one eye and a brown beard. After three rounds, the stranger is named winner and the Sheriff gives him the prize, a golden arrow. The stranger says his name is Jock o' Treviotdale, and the Sheriff of Nottingham asks that he attend his festivals, but Jock says that he answers to



no man and declines. Back in Sherwood Forest, a band of men begin to take off their disguises, and, Robin Hood sheds his scarlet to show his Lincoln green. However, the walnut stain will not go from his beard so quickly. The men make merry that Robin has taken the King's prize. However, Robin Hood takes Little John aside and tells him that they must let the King know that it was he, Robin Hood, who won the Sheriff's contest and prize. So, Little John and Will Stutely go to the Sheriff's house and leave him a message attached to an arrow stating, "Now Heaven bless thy grace this day, Say all in sweet Sherwood, For thou didst give the prize away, to merry Robin Hood." Chapter 1, p. 39.

The Sheriff devises a new plan to capture Robin and his men, and offers gold to any person who can bring him in, dead or alive. Many men accept the challenge leave for Sherwood Forest in groups of four. Robin does not want blood to be shed, so he orders his men to hide for seven days and nights. Then, to discover what is happening, he sends Will Stutely, dressed as a friar, to the Blue Boar Inn to get the news. He is discovered, however, and soon captured. The maiden from the Inn, buxom Maken, comes to tell Robin Hood of the capture. The men are gathered, and all agree that they must hasten to Nottingham by different routes to rescue the brave Stutely from certain death by hanging.

Robin's men soon find that Stutely is to be hanged this very evening. And so it comes about that the Sheriff leads a group of men clad in armor guarding Will Stutely, who is bound in a wagon, from the castle gates. Stutely begs to be let loose so he can fight rather than be hanged, but the Sheriff says he will be hanged where three roads meet so that all may see what becomes of him, and also that the Sheriff will quarter him after the hanging. Soon, Little John appears from the crowd and cuts the ties holding Will Stutely. The rest of Robin's men appear, steal Stutely and take him to the forest, while the Sheriff retreats, fearing death. Once safe, the Sheriff states that Robin Hood and his men fear nothing, so to save further embarrassment; he decides to bother Robin and his men no more.

Chapter 1 Analysis

The Sheriff of Nottingham is embarrassed by Robin Hood and his men, and devises three unsuccessful schemes to catch them. Finally the Sheriff decides to leave them alone rather than suffer further defeat.



Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

After some time of being isolated in the woods, Robin Hood decides to seek adventure elsewhere. He comes across a butcher going to market with a full load of meat, and Robin buys the cart and all the meat, and dons the butcher's apron and goes to Nottingham and sells his meat with the other butchers. He sells for fewer pennies than do the others, so he is invited to sit next to the Sheriff at a feast. Robin is not recognized in the butcher's apron, and enjoys a fair meal at the Sheriff's expense. Robin says grace, and then mocks the Sheriff by saying that the Sheriff may someday catch Robin Hood, if he sheds some of the fat of his stomach and the dust from his brain. As everyone laughs at his joke, Robin also says that he will pay for the entire feast so that no butcher nor the Sheriff will pay one penny.

The Sheriff becomes greedy, thinking he may lighten the purse of Robin Hood for his own betterment. So, the Sheriff offers to buy all the cattle Robin has, and they agree to go to where Robin says they are kept, The Sheriff rides horseback while Robin Hood runs along beside him on foot. When they reach the edge of Sherwood Forest, the Sheriff notes that there could be danger from Robin Hood, but Robin, going by the name of Robert o' Locksley, says there is no more danger from Robin Hood than there is from himself. Once well into the Forest, a herd of deer crosses their paths, and Robin points to them and calls them his "horned beasts." The Sheriff, realizing he is in trouble, wants to leave, but Robin's men arrive and the Sheriff compelled to feast with the band of merry.

There is a fine feast and the men show their skills at the various sports until the moon rises and the Sheriff says that it is time for him to leave. With that, Robin tells him that he must pay for the feast and that the fee is three hundred pounds, the same as he was to pay for the cattle. The Sheriff complains, but seeing that it is useless to argue, gives Little John his entire purse and leaves on his horse.

The fair that happens every five years in Nottingham takes place this fall. Little John is allowed to go to compete and dresses in scarlet robes for the occasion. Once there, he buys ale for many people, insuring their love and loyalty. After dancing with many fair maidens, Little John goes to the ring where the cudgel is played, and sees that no man wants to challenge Eric o' Lincoln, well known for his prowess at the sport. The first round goes slightly to Little John, the second is a tie, but in the third Little John manages to knock Eric down substantially, and Reynold Greenleaf, the name Little John has taken for himself that day, is proclaimed the winner.

When the tests of the long bow are finished, Reynold is also proclaimed the winner. The Sheriff congratulates him and asks him to serve with the Sheriff's men. Thinking it will be a merry joke, Little John agrees.



Little John stays with the Sheriff for six months, getting fatter and more languid by the day. One day he wakes very hungry, and asks the steward to get him his breakfast. When the steward refuses, the two fight. The steward is knocked to the ground, but the cook comes to his rescue with a drawn sword. Little John tells him that there is a feast laid and that the two might as well eat before they fight so as not to waste a good meal and ale. Getting their fill, the cook sings *The Song Of The Deserted Shepherdess* lustily and sweetly, and Little John follows with *The Good Knight And His Love*.

After their feast, they agree that they must continue the fight they started, and so they go at each other with swords, until neither is a winner. When Little John realizes how good the cook is with a sword, he invites him to join Robin Hood and his band, and the cook agrees. Taking some of the Sheriff's silver with them they go into Sherwood Forest and to Robin Hood's camp. Soon there is a happy reunion and the cook is welcomed into the group. However, Robin is distressed that Little John has stolen the Sheriff's silver as a common thief. With that, Little John offers to get the Sheriff and to let him tell Robin and the others that he gladly gives them the plates.

When Little John finds the Sheriff, he tells him that he has seen an unusual sight in the woods which consisted of men all dressed in green eating the King's deer. He agrees to take the Sheriff there to see for himself, but insists that the two go alone lest they frighten away the men in green. When they get to the camp, Robin Hood says that the Sheriff came to do no man harm, and so he gives him back his silver and shows him the way home.

Chapter 2 Analysis

Robin Hood once more ridicules the Sheriff at his own feast. There is a great deal of description of the castle and its vendors' stalls, and the mood remains light and much like a continuing party. There is a great deal of irony, as, in one instance, the Sheriff tells the disguised Robin Hood that he is afraid Robin Hood may be near and could attack them. Robin Hood tells him he should have no more fear of Robin Hood than he does of himself.

Little John attends the fair, and it is described in great detail with its drinking, dancing, and competitions. More irony continues as Little John, now known as Reynold Greenleaf, becomes a member of the sheriff's service, and lives very highly off his wealth. Medieval songs are sung until at last Little John steals his cook and some of his silver and returns to the men in Sherwood Forest. The Sheriff is once more made to look like an utter fool, is despondent and vows to get even.



Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

Some time after the previous events, Robin sends Little John with a bag of gold to see Hugh Longshanks to buy Lincoln green fabric. Little John comes to a point where two roads merge, one going to Ancaster where he would find Longshanks, the other to the Blue Boar Inn. Looking up and seeing nothing but beautiful blue skies, he makes up the excuse that it could rain that evening, so he better take shelter at the Blue Boar Inn until the next day.

Early the next morning, Little John is on his way when he spies a man sneaking through the forest. The man is Arthur a Bland, a tanner known to poach the King's deer for their hides and meat, and also a champion with the quarterstaff. The two exchange words, each calling the other names, until they decide to fight with their staffs.

After an almost equal match, Arthur knocks Little John down, and is declared the winner. Robin Hood has come upon them unnoticed, and watches the whole match. He now shows himself and congratulates Arthur a Bland for his victory. He introduces himself and Little John, and asks the tanner to join his merry band, and Arthur accepts immediately.

The three go on their way, soon stopping at a spring to drink and relax. Soon Robin spies a man coming slowly down the road, sniffing the first rose of spring. He wears a scarlet silk coat and stockings, has gold trim on his leather scabbard, and wears a cap of scarlet velvet that covers his head of long gold locks. The three watch as he walks towards them, the Tanner and Little John commenting how he seems much stronger and worthier than he looks. Robin, however, says he is nothing but a wealthy boy living off land taken from the poor. With that, Robin steps out and asks him to halt and give him his purse. The man in scarlet talks softly and slowly, not at all concerned about Robin's presence blocking the road in front of him. Agreeing to fight, the boy goes to the side of the road and easily pulls up an oak sapling and calmly trims it with his sword.

After an extensive battle, the young man defeats Robin Hood, and Little John and the Tanner emerge from the woods to keep him from harming Robin further. As they exchange names it turns out that the young man is looking for his uncle, a man named Robin Hood, and his own name is Will Gamwell. He explains that a man spoke ill of his father, so he hit him on the ear, and the man died immediately. As a result, Gamwell was sent to find and stay with Robin rather than go to jail, and now they meet.

Robin welcomes him, but says that he must change his name. Little John immediately calls him Will Scarlet, and the name is accepted. Soon Robin Hood and Little John exchange verbal jabs and they agree to forget the names they have been calling each other; Robin calling Little John "Fat", and Little John threatening to tell the story of Robin's defeat by a somewhat effeminate boy with a quarterstaff.



They stop on the way back to Sherwood Forest for lunch, and each is to sing a song. Scarlet's song is too full of birds and flowers for the rest, and the Tanner's is little better. When Little John begins, Robin stops him because a young man comes along the road. Little John recognizes the man as a local miller. Robin suggests they buy the flour he carries and invite him to feast with them at their camp, but first they decide to make merry with the boy. Stopping him, Robin asks for his money, but the miller says that he has none. Robin, disbelieving him, threatens to empty his sack of rye flour for the coins he thinks are hidden at its bottom. The miller finally admits there are coins, and puts the sack on the ground and digs deeply down to his elbows looking for it, while the other four look on closely to see what it is that he has hidden. Suddenly the miller throws hands full of flour into their faces until they cannot see at all, then begins striking them with his staff. Robin Hood tells him who he is and asks him to stop hitting them, but the youth says that Robin Hood would not rob a poor miller and continues to throw flour into their faces and strike them until Robin blows three blasts with his horn to summon his band. Arriving at the melee, the men learn the miller is Midge, the Miller's son, and Robin immediately asks the young miller to join the band of merry men to which Midge agrees immediately.

Chapter 3 Analysis

The section is full of irony and much humor. Again, three separate stories are told in chronological order, all with the theme of Robin Hood adding skilled fighters to his band. As Robin and the Tanner start their combat, they are likened to dogs circling each other before a fight. The effeminate boy approaching on the road is described by Robin as "a gaily-feathered bird."

At one point Robin Hood is shown to be embarrassed by the beating he takes from such a sissy-type boy, and he harshly instructs Little John to keep the bout a secret. The humorous incident continues when Robin agrees with Little John that there was a good chance of rain when Little John was sidetracked to the Blue Boar Inn, even though they both know that not to be true. Humor is also used to describe the battle of the four burley men with the lowly Miller who dashes flour in their eyes.

Songs are sung which reflect the personalities of Will Scarlet, the Tanner, and Little John.



Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

Robin sends seven men to Foose Way to find a victim to bring to feast and to lighten of his gold. However, after almost an entire day, no such man passes by the road where they hide. Late in the afternoon they hear a sobbing some distance away, and investigating they find a youth with clothes awry, long golden locks unkempt and dirty, and a beautiful harp inlaid with gold and silver beside him with a bow and arrows. While most of the men make fun of the crying boy, Will Scarlet consoles him and tells him to pay no heed to the others. Arriving at the camp to the smell of the feast being prepared, Robin meets the men and finds that the lad is Allan a Dale, a minstrel who has lost his loved one because her father did not like him. More than a month passes, and Dale learns the girl's father has planned to marry her to old Sir Stephen of Trent in two days. Being assured that the maiden would marry Dale if given the chance, Robin comes up with a plan to get the two together. With that the plans are laid to wed Allan a Dale to Ellen a Dale. After the feast, the minstrel sings of his love and her planned wedding. Afterward there is silence in awe of the beautiful voice and song. Robin congratulates Allan a Dale and asks him to join the band of men. Dale accepts and pledges his life to Robin Hood who has been so generous to him.

Will Scarlet leads a chosen few of Robin's men a long distance until they come to a ford in a river. Here they must cross to find the Friar of Fountain Dale whom they plan to convince to perform the marriage the next day. Robin states that if he had known of the river, he would not have worn beautiful white leather. However, he decides to go by himself to talk with the Friar.

Robin soon hears what he supposes is two men talking, but both their voices sound a great deal alike. Coming upon a bed of wild thyme, he finds a Friar. He has a round head with close-cropped black hair, and wears a loose robe and beads that designate him as a friar. He is a stout and strong-looking man, but has a face of merriment and contentment. Robin hides and watches as the good friar eats, drinks, and talks to himself with great merriment, as if there were two of them. Then, finishing his meal, he sings as if to another The Loving Youth And The Scornful Maid. It is a song with two parts, that of a man, then that of a woman answering, and the friar sings both parts equally well. Not being able to contain himself, Robin joins in the last chorus to the amazement of the friar who pulls a stout sword from beneath his robes. Robin calms him down and asks if he knows of the Curtal Friar of Fountain Abbey. The friar says he does, and begins to talk in circles that would confuse anyone about which side of the river the Curtal Friar may be found.

With that, Robin, mentioning his clothes, asks the friar if he will carry him across the river so he will not get wet. At first the friar is enraged, but eventually calms down and agrees. However, upon reaching the other side, the friar notes that his business is back on the side from which they came, and commands Robin to carry him back across on



his back. Confused, but without his sword, Robin ponders the suggestion. Having no choice, Robin takes the friar upon his back and carries him back across the river. Upon reaching the other side, Robin deftly steals the friar's sword, and, having both swords, commands the friar to carry him back across the river. This time, however, once reaching the half-way mark, the friar throws Robin off into the water head first, stating that the water should cool off his temper. Getting out of the water the two fight with their swords for over an hour before resting. At that point, Robin blows three blasts which bring his men running with bows and arrows drawn, but at the same time the friar blows on a whistle which brings four great shaggy hounds to his rescue. As the hounds leap at Robin, his men let go with their arrows, but the hounds are agile and each grabs an arrow in the air and breaks it harmlessly.

With that, Will Scarlet jumps between them and calls the hounds by name, and they stop their attack immediately. Soon introductions are complete, the friar's several names given and the final one chosen to call him by - Friar Tuck. He is the friar that Robin has been seeking to perform the marriage the next day.

As several men leave with Robin to steal the maid away, Robin is dressed as none have seen before, and never merrier. Arriving at the church where the wedding is to take place, Friar Tuck takes a place near the bishop who is to perform the ceremony, and Robin, dressed as a minstrel, begs to play for the bride and groom to ensure their marriage will last. As the ceremony begins, Robin Hood leaps between the bride and groom and asks how such an old man can expect to make such a maiden happy, and tells all that this is not a fit wedding. With that, eighteen of Robin's men escort Allan a Dale down the isle. Sir Stephen, the girl's intended groom, says that he was unaware of the love between Allen and Ellen, and steps aside. Robin offers Ellen's father gold if he will bless the wedding, and her father, Edward of Deirwold, accepts the gold and gives away his daughter. With that, Robin removes the gold chain from the Bishop's neck, and calls it payment for a feast the Bishop might join them at in Sherwood Forest. The wedding over, Robin and his men begin the trip back to their forest, but Friar Tuck asks Robin if they might need a friar amongst them. Robin laughs and allows Friar Tuck to join his band of merry men.

Chapter 4 Analysis

Again there are three stories in the chapter, each much more merry than those in the previous chapter. Besides the wedding, the highlight of the three episodes occurs when a duel develops between Robin Hood and the man to be known as Friar Tuck, as both try to outwit the other in the crossing of the river.

The settings continue to be full of flowers, scents, and soft touches, one time even mentioning the four senses to the tune of birds singing brightly. The first person is used at the end of the chapter to apologize for the reader's absence from the feast that follows the wedding.



Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

Some time passes and Robin Hood decides their money is running low. Going some distance away with several of his merry men, he stops a sorrowful knight named Sir Richard of the Lea. Sir Richard tells Robin that his castle and his lands are in pawn for a debt he owes, and in three days the Priory of Emmet will seize it forever. Richard owes four hundred pounds more, but has nothing. Robin tells him that he now has friends, and that he will help him to keep his castle. Returning to Sherwood Forest, they find that Little John has brought the Bishop of Hereford and three friars to feast, along with a great trunk which appears to be laden with gold. After the feast, the money carried by the Bishop's three pack horses is counted, and Robin determines that much of it will go to charity, some will be returned to the Bishop, some will be sent to those to whom it belongs, and the rest to Robin and his merry band. Of the fifteen hundred pounds of gold, five hundred pounds are given to Sir Richard to pay his debts and he promises to repay the money in one year and one day. Three days later when it is certain that Sir Richard has paid his debts, the Bishop is allowed to leave. As he does so, he vows within himself to someday make Robin Hood pay for what he has done.

Sir Richard rides with ten men-at-arms to the great gate of Emmet, seeking Prior Vincent of Emmet, to pay his debt. Once inside, he finds Prior Emmet feasting with the Sheriff of Nottingham and other high-ranking men of wealth. Sir Richard says he has no money and asks for a one year extension. Prior Emmet does not agree, but, instead, thinking it makes no difference what he says to the man who has nothing, tells him he will take no less than three hundred pounds to pay off the debt, which is one hundred pounds less than Sir Richard owes. With that Sir Richard throws the gold onto the table to the surprise of everyone at the feast. At that point the Sheriff of Nottingham notices the tallest of the men-at-arms, and recognizes him as Reynold Greenleaf. The man, actually Little John, says that it is indeed he, and that he will tell Robin Hood of all the evil things said at the table during their discussions.

One year later, Sir Richard's lands and his castle are once again rich with repair, and he begins a trip with his men-at-arms to Sherwood Forest to repay Robin Hood. Seeing in the distance a fair at Denby, he turns his horse and his men to partake in some sport on the way to see Robin. A wrestling contest is being held, and the current winner, William of the Scar, is challenging any man to get into the ring with him. Soon a man from Nottingham steps forward and accepts the challenge. Sir Richard, who has accepted a role as one of the judges, thinks he recognizes the man, but no one else has seen him before. The match begins quite evenly, but finally the stranger gets William in his grasp and throws him down in defeat. Accepting the prize of a gold ring, a pair of gloves, and a pipe of wine, he leaves with all present wondering who he is. As the stranger walks proudly away, a crowd of Denby residents begins to call him names, and at last one throws a rock that brings blood to the stranger's brow. As he falls, the crowd is upon him, and may have killed him were it not for Sir Richard and his men who ride to the



stranger's rescue. The young stranger introduces himself as David of Doncaster and is one of Robin Hood's men.

The group arrives in Sherwood Forest, and while taking the usual feast, Sir Richard explains their adventure at the fair in Denby. Soon Sir Richard pays the five hundred pounds that was borrowed back to Robin Hood, along with a gift of one hundred beautiful bows and arrows, one for each of his merry men. There is a very special one for Robin - a bow with gold engraving on it and arrows notched with gold.

Chapter 5 Analysis

The chapter begins and is quickly changed to the first person, with the author explaining that two groups of Robin's men leave their camp. However, not being two persons, the author cannot go two ways, so he says he will take the reader with him to follow the adventure that Robin Hood will find. Robin Hood's generosity is once more on display as he assists a Knight in need.

The feast of the wealthy is described and Robin's men once again outwit the Sheriff of Nottingham. Little John appears as a witness to the cruel things that are said of Sir Richard.



Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

Early the next spring, Robin and Little John decide to go on an adventure. Little John dresses like a friar and takes one road, while Robin takes the other in search of a beggar to exchange clothes with.

Little John soon meets three pretty maids carrying eggs to the market at Tuxford. Putting one basket on his back hanging from his rosary, Little John carries the other two in his hands, and the four start merrily off towards Tuxford. Arriving there, Little John gives the maids their eggs and bids them goodbye.

Further down the road, Little John, still dressed as a friar, comes to an inn where he meets a Peddler, a Tinker, and a Beggar. They buy Little John pots of beer and he begins to sing them songs when the landlord of the inn arrives with two friars, one fat and one thin. The friars admonish Little John for drinking and singing, behavior not fit for a friar. As Little John makes fun of them, he tells them that he wishes their company so as not to succumb to any more temptations. The two real friars do not want Little John's company, but have no choice as he insists on accompanying them toward Lincoln Town.

As they travel along the road, Little John walks between the two friars who are on horseback, and makes fun of them with all they meet until the friars can stand it no longer and ask Little John to go his own way. Little John agrees to leave, but asks them for money so that he might eat. The friars indignantly tell Little John that they have no money at all, so Little John grabs the reins of their horses and tells them to get down and they will all pray to Saint Dunstan for money to continue their journeys. Getting off their horses angrily, Little John forces them to bend in prayer.

Afterwards both friars still claim they have no money, so Little John makes them bow in prayer once more. Finishing, Little John pulls three golden angels from his pouch as if the prayer worked. The friars, however, say they still have nothing. Thrusting his hand into the pouch of the thin one Little John pulls out one hundred and ten pounds of golden money, and notes, saying it was sent by Saint Dunstan and the friar merely missed it. Opening the bag of the fat friar he finds threescore and ten pounds. Giving them each one pound, which, he tells them is more than they swore they had before their prayers, Little John takes all the rest and merrily walks away from the woeful friars.

While Little John is on his adventure with the two friars, Robin Hood takes another path. It is a fine spring day and Robin comes upon a poor beggar dressed in rags of many colors and wearing a tall leather cap. Robin inquires where he might get something to eat and drink, and the beggar tells him there is a sweet little inn, but the beggar says he is not welcome there himself. It seems that when the Prior of Emmet went there to eat one day, the landlady made him a dear tart of stewed crabs, and when she put it on the windowsill to cool, the beggar took it, saying he would find its owner. Since then he has



been unwelcome at the inn. He then shows Robin a feast he has stolen from various farms. Robin says he will go to the inn and get them ale if the beggar will share his meal. When they are finished, Robin tells the beggar that he would like to become a beggar also. The beggar tells Robin he is too old, and that there is much for him to learn before he is beaten badly for his innocent way of begging. Still, Robin tells him he wants to buy the beggars' clothes and will pay him two golden angels. The beggar is obviously unhappy at the thought, and introduces himself as Ricon Hazel from Holywell, in Flintshire, and that he is well known for his skill with his staff. He tells Robin that he will not sell his clothes, and they begin to fight with their staffs. Ricon is not able to touch Robin, and soon finds himself on the ground without his staff, and Robin looks down upon him and asks again if the beggar will not sell his clothes. So, Rincon Hazel gives his clothes to Robin, but not before the beggar takes ten golden pounds he had hidden in his robe.

Going along the road, Robin soon finds four merry beggars feasting beside the road. One has a board saying "I am blind," another's says "I am deaf," another's "I am dumb," and the fourth's sign reads, "Pity the lame one." The four welcome Robin, not knowing that he is not a beggar like themselves. However as they talk further, they begin to realize that Robin Hood does not know the language of beggars, and immediately suspect him of being an imposter. One has hinted that they carry money to Lincoln Town, and they quickly fall on Robin, thinking he may be a thief. Robin is able to defend himself, and when two are downed and two have fled, he opens the purse of the Blind man and finds four hundred pounds of gold.

Robin sings as he leaves the beggars, but soon grows tired and decides he would like one more merry adventure before returning to Sherwood Forest. In time he spies a thin man on a woe begotten horse, both looking like they were half dead. Robin laughs as he knows the man to be a wealthy corn engrosser of Worksop who buys grain and holds it until near-famine prices are reached before selling it at a great profit. When Robin stops the man he is told that he has not a penny upon on him. Robin then shows the man his stash of gold whereupon the other is amazed and tells him to hide it as Robin Hood may be near and he dislikes beggars no less than he does fat priests. Robin finds that the man is going to Newark, and asks to go along with his, as two men are better than one in the area of Sherwood Forest. As they come abreast of the Forest, Robin states that he is afraid that possibly Robin Hood himself with find them and steal his gold. With that the corn engrosser winks and tells Robin that he has as much gold himself, but that it is hidden where no one from Sherwood Forest will ever find it. With that Robin identifies himself as the true Robin Hood and tells the man that if he continues his travels he must go barefoot, for Robin has taken a liking to his shoes and must have them.

That night around the fires, Robin Hood's band of merry men feast and tell stories of their days adventures, including how Robin himself took the shoes full of gold.



Chapter 6 Analysis

The author continues his flowery description of the forest with its beautiful skies, sweetly singing birds, the green grasses, and the fresh smells the days bring. The first mention in the book of Robin's own maid, Marian, is brief.

Irony continues as the deaf man is the first to hear of Robin's approach, the blind man is the first to see him, the dumb man welcomes him eloquently, and the lame man sits beside a wooden leg with his own two legs stretched in front of him and makes room for Robin. This continues when the man who pretends to be blind calls Robin Hood a liar.

Recounting the day's events, the author speaks directly to the reader and tells of how each of the two spent his day and asks who had the most fun when he says, "...I leave it with you to say for yourselves whom you hold with." Part Sixth, p.244



Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary

One fine hot summer day, a fair youth of about sixteen years with long golden hair approaches the Blue Boar Inn where two of Robin Hood's men are resting. The man announces that he is Richard Partington, the Queen's Page from London Town, and is looking to give a message from the Queen to Robin Hood. With that, Robin's men take the young man to the greenwood tree to meet Robin. Upon their meeting, the page tells Robin that he brings an invitation from the Queen to go to Finsbury Fields for a shooting match. If Robin attends, the Queen will do her best to see that no harm comes to him and his merry men. Then Richard gives Robin a ring of gold from the Queen's thumb. Robin accepts the ring and swears to keep it on his hand 'til death, and also accepts the invitation from the Queen. Robin tells Little John, Will Scarlet, and Allan a Dale that they will accompany him, and appoints Will Stutley to be in charge while he is gone.

It takes them four days to reach the gates of London Town where they meet Queen Eleanor in her royal bower. Feasting on fine rich foods after their long journey, they tell the Queen of their adventures and then Allan sings to her. When it is time for the shooting contest, they are taken to Finsbury Fields where there are booths for the archers, rows and rows of seats, a raised dais for the King and Queen, and marks for which the archers are to shoot. The rules are set and the prizes are listed. There are two score and ten golden pounds, a silver bugle inlaid with gold, and a quiver with ten arrows tipped with gold for the winner. Second prize is five score bucks; and third prize is two tons of Rhenish wine.

The contestants dwindle from four hundred to three, and the Queen asks the King if he is certain these are the best three in the land. The King says they are, and also the best in the wide world. The Queen mentions that she has seen three who are not in the contest that she feels are just as good, and the King says if they can match to the best three of the day he will give them forty days of free passage anywhere in the kingdom, and will give them prizes if they win. The Queen laughs, but the King bets the Queen ten tons of Rhenish wine, ten tons of stout ale, and one hundred bows of stout Spanish yew with quivers and arrows to match that the men of her choosing cannot outshoot the winners of the contest. These winners are named Tepus, Gilbert, and Clifton.

The last round of the contest is held, and Clifton loses the third place to Hubert, with Gilbert being first, and Tepus taking second. While the men are congratulated, Robin Hood, Little John, Will Scarlet, and Allan a Dale follow Richard Partington to the booth of the King and Queen, which is also occupied by the Bishop of Hereford. The Bishop turns red in the face when he sees Robin and his men and hears of the wager.

The men shoot their best, but Robin's team comes out the winner by a slight amount. The King, very unhappy with the outcome, admits his defeat in the wager, but asks Robin Hood and Gilbert to shoot again until one is proclaimed the true individual winner.



In the first round Gilbert's arrow catches a breath of wind and misses the center of the target by the breadth of a barley straw, but Robin's arrow hits the center of the bull's eye. The results are final, Robin Hood takes first prizes, Little John takes those meant for second, and Gilbert is given the third. Robin and Little John give some of their prizes to the opposing archers, and are cheered by the crowd.

At that moment one of the King's guard whispers into Robin's ear a secret message from the Queen, "The lion growls. Beware thy head." Robin understands exactly what is meant by the message, and takes his men quietly away from Finsbury Fields and London Town.

The Bishop of Hereford had talked the King into capturing Robin and his men while still at Finsbury Fields. Not finding them, the King gives five hundred men to the command of the Bishop to find Robin Hood.

While at an inn at Barnet Town, twelve miles from London, Partington, comes to them and explains that the Queen has discovered that men of the King's guard are after them and to leave at once. Robin tells his men that they must go in haste to Saint Albans, but they separate instead, Robin going alone by a different way and Little John, Allan a Dale, and Will Scarlet by another, none going to Saint Albans. When they at last get back to Sherwood Forest, Robin is not yet there.

Not finding Robin or his men at Saint Albans, Bishop Hereford enlists the aide of the Sheriff of Nottingham, and men block every road and lane near Sherwood Forest. While Robin stops to drink by a stream, arrows begin to fly near him and he realizes he has been found. Seeing soldiers in the other direction also, Robin runs as fast as he can, mile after mile until he feels he is safe again.

Hiding in a thicket, Robin soon sees a cobbler coming down the lane. Robin tells the cobbler that he is in the thicket putting salt on the tails of golden birds. The not-too-bright cobbler is amazed, and Robin goes on to tell him that it is not ordinary salt, but that gotten from boiling a quart of moonbeams in a wooden platter. Robin offers to exchange clothes with the cobbler and give him ten shillings beside if he will do so and share his meal too. The cobbler agrees, they exchange clothes and then eat the cobbler's meal and drink his beer. Just as they finish, six horsemen arrive suddenly and seize the honest craftsman roughly, laughing with the idea that they are four-score pounds richer than they were a minute ago before they caught the man in blue. The cobbler is stunned by the incident and his slow mind does not grasp what has happened as he is tied and led away by the King's soldiers.

Robin is able to go only a few miles distance before he overcome by need for rest and sleep, and so he goes to the only inn for miles around. There he is shown a room, and immediately goes to sleep though it is only late afternoon. Black clouds begin to form, warning of a storm sure to come. Four stout burghers ride up to the inn to take refuge from the storm and are given the other two rooms in the inn. As the storm breaks and lightning begins amidst loud claps of thunder, a friar from Emmet Priory seeks shelter in the inn also. After a good meal, he is told the only bed left at the inn is with a poor



cobbler. However much he dislikes sharing a room with a poor cobbler, the friar has no choice so is shown to the darkened room. When the friar sees that the man he is to share a bed with is not so rough or dirty as he imagined he would be, the friar takes off his clothes and crawls in beside Robin who sleepily moves over to make room for him.

The next morning Robin wakes early to find the friar sleeping soundly beside him. Deciding to take advantage of the situation, Robin puts on the clothes of the friar, and going out into the fresh morning air is given the mule of the friar also.

When the friar wakes and sees what has happened, he is very unhappy, but, on his way to do business at Emmet Prior that very morning he has no choice but to put on the cobbler's clothes. He has not gone too far when the King's men arrest him, having been convinced by then that Robin Hood is wearing the clothes of a cobbler.

Robin is close to Sherwood Forest when he meets Sir Richard of Lea, and tells him of the happenings of the last few days. Sir Richard tells Robin that he is in deep trouble as the Sheriff's men are in front of him guarding every entrance to Sherwood Forest, and the King's men are coming in strength behind him. There are few options for Robin but Sir Richard has one suggestion. Robin is to go with him to his castle and dress as Sir Richard's men, and Sir Richard will take him with several of his men back to London where Robin can ask for the mercy of good Queen Eleanor. Robin agrees and does as Sir Richard suggests.

As Queen Eleanor walks through her garden several days later, a man jumps over the fence quickly into the midst of the Queen and six of her ladies-in-waiting. She is surprised that Robin should be in the jaws of the lion and tells him that the King is searching all over the land for him. Telling Robin that she has not done well by him, she pledges her support and asks him to wait in the garden. Soon she returns with Sir Robert Lee and is told that the King has agreed to his safe passage in three days to Sherwood Forest, and will send his head page with him. So it is that Robin returns to Sherwood Forest.

Chapter 7 Analysis

The gaiety and pageantry of the shooting match at Finsbury Fields is described in detail. The King is pictured as one who does not keep his word, but the Queen proves to be caring and honest, even with her little joke on her husband, the King. Upon winning the contest, Robin and Little John make themselves well-liked by sharing their prizes with those with whom they were matched.

The point of view shifts abruptly from that of Robin to that of the King to show how he betrays Robin and his men at the insistence of the Bishop of Hereford.

The author uses the old wives-tale about putting salt on the tail of a bird to hypnotize it as a ploy for Robin to get the cobbler to talk to him from the thicket and to dupe the cobbler out of his clothes. Then, in contrast to the near-perfect weather found in the rest

of the book, black clouds come onto the horizon followed by lightning and thunder, forcing a friar to take refuge in an inn he would otherwise find distasteful and pass by.



Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary

One fine summer day, Robin Hood meets a fierce-looking man with a hooked nose, restless, black eyes, and a thin, cruel mouth. Exchanging harsh words, Robin finds the man's name is Guy of Gisbourne from Herefordshire and he is an outlaw hired by the Sheriff of Nottingham to find Robin Hood and to bring him in dead or alive. Keeping his identity to himself, Robin challenges the big man to a shooting match, and wins quite handily. Then Robin throws down his bow, pulls out his sword, and tells Guy of Gisbourne that he himself is truly Robin Hood. With that Guy of Gisbourne also draws his sword and the two begin to fight to the death. Robin's boot catches in a root and he falls, with Guy of Gisbourne on him immediately. However, as he thrusts his sword at Robin, Robin catches it with his bare hand and the sword falls harmlessly into the dirt. Robin immediately jumps up and thrusts his sword through Guy of Gisbourne, killing him immediately. Deciding that the Sheriff of Nottingham owes him a debt, Robin Hood puts on the dead man's bloody clothes, and hides his face in the hat of horsehide and heads eastward towards Nottingham Town.

While Robin Hood is going to Nottingham, Little John is on an adventure of his own. Walking some distance out of Sherwood Forest, he comes upon an old, gray-haired lady who is sobbing. He finds that her three sons have been taken by the King's foresters for slaughtering a deer the previous night. They have been taken to the King's Head Inn where the Sheriff is waiting for someone who has gone looking for Robin Hood. Little John changes clothes and puts on a great false beard to cover his own. He goes to find the Inn and a score or more of the King's men who await the return of Guy of Gisbourne.

When the old lady's three sons are brought before the Sheriff, he tells them that they will all be hanged for killing the King's deer as a lesson to others who would do the same. They are taken to the edges of Sherwood Forest to be hanged. There they meet an old gray-haired man who is really Little John, and as preparations are made to hang the three young youths, the Sheriff calls to the old man to speak with him. He offers him sixpence to hang the youths as he does not want his men-at-arms to be hangmen. The old man agrees, but asks if they have been shrived. The Sheriff tells the old man that he may say a few words on behalf of the three, but to get on with it as the Sheriff is in a hurry to get back to the Inn.

The old man talks to each one, and as he does so cuts the ropes binding their hands, and tells them quietly to remain still until he throws off his beard, then they are to remove the nooses around their necks and run for the woods. Then Little John quickly removes his wig and calls for the boys to run, at the same time pointing his bow at the Sheriff and his men, vowing to kill the first that moves toward him. The Sheriff in a great rage because his men stand cowardly, spurs his horse on toward Little John and rides toward him at great speed. Little John begins to shoot an arrow at the Sheriff, but as he



does so his bow breaks and the arrow falls harmlessly to the ground and the Sheriff strikes Little John's head, knocking him senseless to the ground. Little John is tied backwards on a horse and taken to the King's Head Inn; however the three boys are free. Deciding to take Little John back to the tree in Sherwood Forest where the tree boys were to be hung, they return with Little John still tied backwards on the horse. As they arrive at the tree, they see Robin Hood, whom they now believe to be Guy of Gisbourne, walking toward them. He tells the Sheriff that he has just killed Robin Hood, and carries his bow and sword as proof. He then asks the sheriff if he can also kill Little John himself to which the Sheriff agrees.

Robin Hood puts Little John against a tree as if to cut him into pieces where he stands, but then quietly cuts the ropes binding Little John. As Robin throws off the disguise he aims his bow at the Sheriff, who turns his horse and rides swiftly away. However, Little John shoots an arrow into the Sheriff's rear, making it difficult for him to sit for many days.

King Richard has replaced King Edward by this time, and is planning a visit to Nottingham Town. There is much done in preparation for his visit and banners and flags are raised and the Guild Hall is set for a banquet in his honor. The King finally rides into town amidst fifty knights in shining armor with the Sheriff of Nottingham at his side. Soon a man calls out loudly welcoming King Richard and the Sheriff realizes it is Friar Tuck, and sees Robin Hood and his merry men with him. The Sheriff is very embarrassed that Robin and his men fear him so little that they would show themselves on his streets.

After a great feast at which tales of the men in Sherwood Forest are told, the King asks that he be taken to meet Robin Hood. A man named Sir Hubert suggests that they disguise themselves as the Order of Black Friars and go into Sherwood Forest with one hundred pounds, and they will likely meet Robin Hood and feast with him.

The next day they do so, and it is not far into the forest where they meet Robin Hood and his men. Robin asks to see their purse, and finds one hundred pound in it, and keeps fifty and gives back the purse with the other fifty. He then asks the King, who is still dressed as a friar, to remove his cowls, but the King tells him that he and his fellow friars have vowed not to remove their cowls for twenty four hours, so Robin allows them to keep them on.

Once at the camp, there is much merry-making, and the King, still in disguise, asks to see a shooting match to which Robin agrees. It is decided that each of Robin's men will shoot three arrows at a garland of leaves; any who does not get all three within it shall be buffeted by Will Scarlet. Most of the men shoot straight and hit it; however, some are buffeted by Will Scarlet and fall to the ground, rubbing their ears. When Robin is asked to show his skill, he is confident he will not miss. However a slight breeze catches one of his arrows and it misses by an inch. The King is allowed to provide Robin's buffet, and Robin is knocked down quite handily to the surprise of everyone.



At that time Sir Richard of Lea rides into the camp with Little John, and tells Robin Hood and his men that the King is rumored to be looking for Robin and his band, and that they should all take refuge and hid at his castle. Sir Richard then sees the King, still disguised as a friar, and recognizes him immediately. With that the King removes his cowls revealing himself as the true King Richard, and addresses Robin and his men. He tells them that he will pardon them, but that they cannot be allowed to continue their ways in Sherwood Forrest. He selects Robin and several others to serve him in London, and the rest are to be appointed as royal rangers assigned to care for the deer in Sherwood Forest.

Chapter 8 Analysis

The last part contains more adventures showing the skills and passion of Robin Hood's men. Robin kills for only the second time in his life, again in self-defense. A simple and happy way of ending the adventures of Robin and his men in Sherwood Forest is proposed by the King to the satisfaction of all.

The only defeat of Robin Hood in all his adventures is at the hand of the King when Robin is knocked down after his arrow misses a target of garland. This is symbolic of Robin Hood's skill and stature throughout England during the time of his adventures.



Epilogue

Epilogue Summary

Many years later, Robin Hood, now bearing the title of Robert, Earl of Huntington, returns to Sherwood Forest. Upon doing so he blasts his bugle as he had done in times past. Those of his men still in the area hear the song and know that Robin has returned. Seeing his men again and finding the forest more to his liking than life as an Earl, he vows to take refuge in the Forest and never to leave it again.

King John, by then King of England, hears this news and is embarrassed that Robin Hood has left and taken up with his outlaws once more. He sends Robin's old enemy, the Sheriff of Nottingham, along with Sir William Dale, to bring him in, dead or alive. Hiding for several days, Robin comes down with a fever, and decides to see his cousin, now the Prioress of the nunnery of Kirklees, to have some of his blood let that he might fight off the fever.

Fearing what might happen if she aides him, his cousin cuts a vein that runs blood from the heart instead of a small one, and soon Robin is too weak to save himself. Little John, hearing a faint blast from Robin's bugle, runs into the nunnery to Robin's side but it is too late to save him and Robin Hood dies in his arms.

Epilogue Analysis

While Robin spent his life aiding those he felt were unnecessarily abused, he passed away forgiving those who were unfaithful to him. The section ends with a copy of wording on a stone that marks the grave of Robin Hood, Robert, Earl of Huntington, dated "Ohiit 24 Kal, Dekembris 1247." Epilogue, p. 339

The last sentence reverts to the first person as the author states that he must part with the reader as from the grave of Robin Hood, we all must go our own separate ways.



Characters

Robin Hood

Robin Hood is a tall man with broad shoulders and wears his blond hair and beard very long. Robin is skilled at sports and hunting, and is a very cunning man.

While still a youth of eighteen, Robin Hood encounters a man who makes fun of him and shoots an arrow at him while Robin is on his way to an archery contest. Robin quickly turns and shoots a return arrow at the man who is killed instantly. The local sheriff swears he will bring Robin to justice. As a result, Robin Hood is forced into exile. He creates a band of men who have been falsely accused of a crime, and they live in Sherwood Forest and rob those who are rich, giving the spoils to those who are poor and deserving.

He is a just and fair man, liked by all who follow him, and he becomes well-known throughout England.

Little John

Little John stands seven feet tall and has extremely broad shoulders. He is a jolly man that everyone admires and respects, and proves himself to be very brave many times in the story. Totally dedicated to Robin Hood, he follows him without question.

Will Stutley

Will Stutely, Robin's first-in-command, is a sly individual, very familiar with Sherwood Forest. He is generally in charge of the men in Robin's absence.

The Sheriff of Nottingham

The Sheriff is a fat, rather lazy man who hates Robin Hood and his men as obstacles to his success. He has ruddy cheeks, and would rather eat and drink than tend to his responsibilities. Often the butt of Robin's jokes, the Sheriff will do anything to avenge his reputation.

He is loyal to the king, but wants to gain a reputation for himself through political favors rather than through hard work.



The Tinker

The Tinker is sent by the Sheriff to serve a warrant upon Robin Hood, but drinks so much liquor and ale that Robin is able to steal the warrant as the Tinker sleeps. He has a deep voice like an angry bull and defeats Robin with his staff in a fair fight the next day. He joins Robin's band as Robin needs a man who works with metal.

King Henry

The Kings speaks with a deep voice, showing his inner anger. He is not true to his word, and puts his wealth ahead of all else. He has questions about the Sheriff of Nottingham's abilities, and takes every chance he can to ridicule him for his inability to capture Robin Hood.

The Butcher

The butcher is a jolly fellow who is to be married soon. He sells his horse, cart, and meats to Robin Hood so that Robin may pose as a butcher at the market at Nottingham.

Queen Eleanor

The Queen is a very compassionate woman. She invites Robin Hood to an archery match so that she can show her husband, King Henry, that his archers are not as good as he thinks they are, and so she can win a bet with him.

Eric o' Lincoln

Eric is the renowned wrestler from Lincoln that Little John defeats at the fair in Nottingham.

Reynold Greenleaf

Little John disguises himself at the Fair in Nottingham and then goes into the service of the Sheriff of Nottingham at his household as Reynold.

The Cook

The Cook works for the Sheriff, but Little John convinces him to leave the Sheriff's household and join Robin Hood and his band as their cook.



The Tanner of Blyth

The Tanner of Blyth is a stout man well known for his feats of strength and wrestling. He is known by the name of Arthur a Bland's. He beats Little John at a duel with their quarterstaves, and then joins Robin Hood's band.

Will Scarlet

Will is actually Robin's cousin, Will Gamwell. He dresses boldly in scarlet silk and walks with a dainty gait. His sword is carried in a leather scabbard that has fine threads of gold woven into it. His hair is long and yellow and curls upon his neck, and he speaks with a soft and gentle voice. He is extremely strong, however and knocks Robin to the ground with a staff before the two realize they are related. He seeks Robin and his band because he unintentionally killed a man and so is now wanted by the Sheriff.

Midge, the Miller's Son

When Robin, Arthur a Bland, and Will Scarlet meet Midge, the Miller's Son, Robin tries to get him to show him what may lie at the bottom of his flour sack. Midge gets the three to look closely down into the sack as he opens it, then throws flour in their faces and begins to hit them with his crudgel. Robin admires his courage and strength and asks him to join his band.

Allan a Dale

Allan is a young minstrel who was to be married, but his maiden's father did not like him so planned to sell his daughter to an old farmer instead.

Ellen o' the Dale

Ellen o' Dale is the beautiful maiden who is as pure as the first snowdrop of spring. She is in love with Allan a Dale but her father has other plans for her marriage.

Friar Tuck

Friar Tuck is the name given to the Curtal Friar of Fountain Abbey. With shining cheeks covered with a black beard, he is an extremely jolly, good-hearted man. He is very cunning, and though a friar, is fond of drinking ale and being rowdy. He joins Robin's band as their religious leader.



Lord Bishop

Lord Bishop is to marry Ellen o' the Dale. He is a wealthy farmer, but not very likeable.

The Bishop of Hereford

The Bishop of Hereford wears a vestment of the richest silk, a chain of beaten gold, a hat of black velvet ringed with jewels and is the richest Bishop in the kingdom. He is to attend the marriage of Allan a Dale. He is pictured as a man who takes advantage of anyone he can to increase his great wealth through illegal seizing of people's property, questionable and illegal taxes, and unjust fines.

Prior Vincent of Emmet

Prior Emmet wears rich clothes, however, not so fine as the Bishop's. They are of soft silk and a heavy gold chain with a great locket pendant on it. He is often seen with a favorite falcon for he is fond of the sport.

Sir Richard of Lea

Sir Richard is a good stout knight, but a very sorrowful one. His clothes are very plain and with no golden chains such as knights usually wear. His estate was to be sold to pay a debt of Six hundred pounds to the Prior of Emmet. He is basically a very good man, and becomes indebted to Robin and stays loyal to him whenever necessary.

David of Doncaster

David is the best wrestler in all the mid-country of England. He wins a match with the great William of the Scar at the Denby Fair.

The Beggar

Robin meets a beggar who shares a meal with him and sells him his clothes so that Robin may learn the ways of a beggar. He tells Robin that there is a great deal of skill in becoming a beggar and that he himself served an apprenticeship before he became successful.

The Four Beggars

Robin Hood, dressed as a beggar, meets four other beggars who are having lunch. The Blind Beggar is the first to see Robin's approach, the Deaf Beggar is the first to hear Robin coming, the Dumb Beggar talks eloquently, and the Lamé Beggar has two good



legs plus a wooden one. Together they carry fifty golden pounds that are meant for the beggars' guild.

The Rich Corngrosser of Worksop

Robin meets a man dressed as a very poor person riding on a skinny, old horse. The man wears heavy wooden clogs that Robin realizes are filled with the rich man's gold.

Richard Partington

Richard Partington is Queen Eleanor's page. He is around sixteen years of age, is fair as a maiden, and has long yellow hair. He wears silk and velvet and has jewels attached to the dagger he wears at his waist.

Quince of Derby

A cobbler known as Quince of Derby sells his clothes and bags to Robin Hood, and is later apprehended by the King's men when he is found wearing Robin's clothes.

Friar of Emmet Priory

A friar of Emmet Priory unknowingly shares a room at an inn with Robin Hood. When he wakes in the morning, his clothes and gold are gone as Robin has put them on and left with the friar's mule. The friar wears Robin's clothes, the same ones purchased from the cobbler, and the friar is soon apprehended by the king's men who think he is

Robin Hood in disguise.

Guy of Guisbourne

Guy of Guisborne is one of the meanest, boldest, outlaws in the country. King Henry hires him to kill Robin Hood. He is clad in horse's hide still with the hair on it. He wears a heavy broadsword and carries a double-edged dagger. His face looks somewhat like that of a hawk with fierce, restless, black eyes, a hooked nose, and his mouth is crooked and cruel-looking.

King Richard

King Richard replaces King Edward upon his death. King Richard is very fair and just, and goes into Sherwood Forest to see for himself the men that he has heard so much about. Dressed like one of the black friars, King Richard shows his strength by knocking down Robin Hood, his compassion by allowing Robin and his men to go free, and his wisdom by giving them all positions of honesty and integrity.



The Prioress of the Nunnery at Kirklee

The Prioress of the Nunnery near Kirklee is Robin's cousin. He has helped her gain the position she holds, but she does not remain true to Robin when he is sought by the King. She kills him by cutting a vein in his arm and letting him bleed to death.



Objects/Places

Sherwood Forest

When Robin Hood kills a man he decides to retreat to Sherwood Forest. It is a place not well known and few people venture into its depths. Under a greenwood tree he makes his home upon a bed of ferns, and the forest becomes the home of his band of merry men. While the area has a great deal of rain, the author tells the reader that he will not mention that, but only describe the beautiful bright blue sky and floating white clouds, the green trees and grasses, and the colorful flowers beside the many sparkling, clear brooks.

Dirt paths run through the forest's depths, and Sherwood is described as a beautiful place free from worries or cares where Robin and his men roam freely, shooting deer to eat and creating feasts from the other natural foods abundant there. The men often have sporting events there designed to hone their skills at archery and cudgery.

At night crackling fires can be seen, and the sweet smells of roasting venison fill the air.

Blue Boar Inn

The Blue Boar Inn sits on a hot, dusty road between Nottingham and Lincoln, not too far from Sherwood Forest. It is a place of shade and coolness under several large oak trees. One can get a fresh pot of ale and wine there from the landlord and his lady who are friends of Robin Hood and his band.

The Nottingham Shooting Match

The Sheriff of Nottingham holds a shooting match to lure Robin Hood into his grasp. It is held on a green meadow, and one side has wooden benches placed with the first row on the ground, and subsequent rows higher and higher. These are for knights and their ladies, squires and dames, and rich burgers, but the poor folk are to sit upon the ground behind logs on the other side of the field. At one end of the meadow is a target of flower garlands, near which sits a raised seat covered with ribbons, scarves, and garlands of flowers reserved for the Sheriff and his dame.

On the green are tents reserved for the archers so they may talk of their shots and prepare their bows and arrows for the next rounds. Also near these are the marks for which the contest is held.



Market at Nottingham Town

The market in Nottingham is sectioned by trades with booths for the vendors, each of whom calls out the advantages of his wares to those who pass by. It is a merry place of singing and happiness.

Fair at Nottingham Town

The Fair is set on the green near the town and is dotted with rows of booths, tents of many-colored canvas decorated with streamers and flowers. Some booths feature dancing to merry music, some sell sweet cakes and barley sugar, some sell beer and ale, and some areas are reserved for sports such as wrestling, archery, and matches with quarterstaves.

Crudgels

Crudgels are staffs of wood, generally stout oak, cut to seven foot lengths. These are used for hunting small animals, for protection, and for sport.

Scene of the Battle with the Miller

A battle with a miller carrying flour to market happens on a dusty road. The miller throws flour into the faces of his four adversaries, causing all five of the participants to be covered with white flour, as is the ground surrounding them. As they strike one another, great clouds of white dust fly into the air.

Allan a Dale's Harp

Allan a Dale is a minstrel who has a harp of polished wood inlaid with gold and silver in artful carvings.

Fountain Abbey

The Fountain Abbey nearest to Sherwood Forest is a small community, not rich or proud, but populated with happy, common folk. It is the home of the Curtal Friar of Fountain Abbey, later to be known as Friar Tuck. It sits on a placid river where horses pull barges loaded with goods from Fountain Abbey to the larger towns nearby. Dragonflies and water lilies join birds on the banks of the river near the small community.



Church of the Prior of Emmet

The little church owned by the Prior of Emmet is near Rother Stream. It sits just over a high rock wall, covered by vines of blossoming woodbine that fill the air with the sweet odor of summer.

The Lord Bishop of Hereford's Box

The Bishop of Hereford carries wealth in a large wooden box with a strong lock. It is broken open with a sword and found to contain much gold and a written accounting of where the gold came from; whether from rentals, fines, or from forfeits of estates.

Prior of Vincent's Castle

The castle has large windows that let streaming light slant in on the rich stone floors. Tables inside are covered with fine, snowy white linen, and tables and chairs are set for a grand feast.

Sir Richard of the Lea's Castle

The fields around the castle are covered with rich crops. The castle's entrance is reached by a wooden drawbridge lowered over the moat with iron chains. The battlement tower is topped with a gilded weathervane and spire, and everything is orderly and well kept.

The Gifts from Sir Richard

Sir Richard gives each of Robin's men a bow of the finest Spanish yew inlaid with silver figures. There are matching quivers of leather that are embroidered with golden thread, and arrows with burnished heads and feathered with peacock's plumes. Robin's gift is a bow inlaid with gold and arrows lined with gold.

The Little Inn

Little John, dressed as a friar, goes to a small inn for some ale. The sign outside has a stag's head painted on it, and there is a clucking hen scratching in the dust with a brood of chicks beside her. Sparrows chatter under the eaves of the merry place. Inside ale is drunk while sitting on broad wooden benches.



Clogs of the Corn Engrosser

The Corn Engrosser wears shoes made of wood with a secret place built in to hide his gold. Inside each is a little box that opens when the second nail from the toe is twisted, allowing part of the sole to lift like a lid.

Finsbury Fields

Archery contests are held each year at Finsbury Fields. At the end of the meadow stand booths covered in striped canvas for the archers. Different colored flags hang from high staffs to identify the archers and what village or town they come from. Attendants run in and out with ale and beer, and extra bow strings and sheaves of arrows. On each side of the meadow are wooden booths that are raised to very great heights. On the north side is a raised dias set for the King and Queen, and hung with great streamers of silken pennants of red, blue, green and white. The targets are set eighty yards from the archers.

Queen Eleanor's Royal Garden

The Queen's garden is full of sweetly blooming roses and other fragrant flowers. Its ground is covered with lush green grass and the garden is surrounded by a wall of stone.

Setting

Nominally the book is set in "merry England in the time of old," the thirteenth century, when Henry II ruled the land. However, Pyle admits in his preface that the country and the historical characters who figure in the work are "all tricked out with flowers and what not, till no one would know them in their fanciful dress." Instead of the scrupulously accurate settings he provides for his historical novels, Pyle sets his Robin Hood tales in a time out of time, a nostalgic golden age. In the preface, readers are invited to escape into a "land of fancy," a "No-man's-land" separated from "every-day life."

The setting remains fanciful and idealized throughout. Robin's adventures take place for the most part in an Arcadian greenwood "wherein no chill mists press upon our spirits, and no rain falls but what rolls off our backs like April showers off the backs of sleek drakes." Sherwood Forest provides a pastoral retreat wherein every want of food, drink, and protection is supplied to the band of merry men by an everbeneficent Nature. Part of the great charm of this work comes from Pyle's frequent descriptions of seasonal changes and of the different faces of nature.



Social Sensitivity

Pyle wrote predominantly for boys in a late-Victorian era dedicated to the formation of the *mens sana in corpore sano*, or "the healthy mind in the healthy (male) body." This tradition praised the boy with "pluck." Consequently, *The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood* features only male heroes and extols what Pyle and his contemporaries thought to be male virtues—courage, physical prowess, and adventurous independence. The very few women who make brief appearances in *Robin Hood* fill stereotypical roles: they are young maidens to flirt with; or they are motherly figures like Queen Eleanor; or they are *femmes fatales*, deadly women who entrap and harm men, such as the treacherous Prioress of Kirklees who bleeds Robin to death at the end of the book. This stereotypical treatment of women and Pyle's narrow audience focus may prove troubling to parents and teachers dedicated to providing young people with a gender-balanced reading list.

However, modern young people can certainly be made to understand that the virtues extolled in *Robin Hood* do not pertain to males alone, nor do the roles assigned to women in the work amount to the only life options now available to female readers. Despite its origin as a book for males, *The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood* can be enjoyed by today's young women as well.

A socially sensitive parent or teacher will also want to clarify for young readers Pyle's disparaging references to Jews in the work. When, for example, the Sheriff of Nottingham strikes a shrewd bargain with Robin, who poses as a spendthrift, Robin calls the Sheriff an "old Jew." A man of his time, Pyle shared the unfortunate social prejudices then prevalent, a problem inherent in many older classics for young people. A sensitive presentation of such works will acknowledge changed values and stereotypical characterizations, while pointing out the universal features which make these works timeless.

Literary Qualities

Pyle's instinct to present a tightly woven plot does not desert him in *The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood*. His sources for the book were a loose collection of ancient ballads about Robin Hood. These ballads rarely suggest motives for human actions or provide any sense of cause and effect. Pyle, however, clarifies both logic and character motivations, thereby weaving the ballads into a coherent story. Through frequent summaries and forecasts and by internal references to previous adventures, Pyle binds his material so seamlessly that the reader forgets these tales were originally only loosely related.

The success of Pyle's *Robin Hood* depends not only on his skillful splicing of the medieval ballads but also on his creation of a narrator whose enthusiasm reflects genuine pleasure in telling the tales. This narrator is witty, colloquial, and genial. His language is rich in striking metaphors, poetic rhythms, and quaint aphorisms.

Robin Hood also derives much of its charm from Pyle's careful attention to the natural setting. The work is filled with delightful word pictures of the changing seasons, as in the following description of a languid summer's afternoon: All across the meadow lands the hot air danced and quivered, and in the limpid waters of the lowland brook, spanned by a little stone bridge, the fish hung motionless above the yellow gravel, and the dragonfly sat quite still, perched upon the sharp tip of a spike of the rushes, with its wings glistening in the sun.

Every setting in pasture, woodland, or town is lovingly depicted, and accompanying the many word pictures are Pyle's splendid illustrations of scenes and events, the works of a master illustrator.

Robin Hood remains a classic because of its crisp, well-integrated plot, its attractive narrative voice, its rich poetic prose, and its adroit blending of word pictures and actual illustrations. In no other of his works are Pyle's many talents as illustrator and storyteller better displayed.



Themes

Good Versus Evil

The essential theme of the adventures of Robin Hood is good versus evil. Robin and his men are always pictured as fair, even to those from whom they rob. Robin's adventures begin, not because he kills a man, but because he has killed one of the King's deer, and a bounty is put upon his head. As he gathers men to be part of his merry band, they vow not to harm women or children, and, "when the people began to find that no harm was meant to them, but that money or food came in time of want to many a poor family, they came to praise Robin and his merry men, and to tell many tales of him and of his doings in Sherwood Forest, for they felt him to be one of themselves." Prologue, p. 6

The story places Robin at a time when much land has been taken from the honest, hard-working Saxons, and given to the lazy, fat, and wealthy land owners. Robin's goal is to avenge these ill deeds and return what he can to those in need.

The evil of the theme is embodied by the Sheriff of Nottingham. He is pictured as a lazy, fat man who is only interested in advancing himself through good deeds done for the King, and he becomes Robin's main adversary. Others, such as King Henry are pictured as the highest rulers in the land, but King Henry is shown not to be trustworthy as he goes against his vow to Queen Eleanor not to harm Robin and his men after the Finsbury Fields archery contest.

Finally, Guy of Gisbourne is sent to kill Robin Hood and states, "Set a thief to catch a thief." Part Eighth, p. 293. In contrast to Robin Hood, a merry, happy outlaw, Guy of Gisbourne hides his face behind a hood much as a modern outlaw hides behind a mask. His clothes are untanned horsehide covered with hair, and his entire being is described as fierce and cruel.

Irony

The first specific example of irony occurs when Robin Hood, calling himself Robert o' Locksley, tells the sheriff that he has a herd of five hundred horned beasts. The Sheriff, thinking he will purchase the cattle at a bargain price, pays three hundred pounds, but finds out that the "horned beasts" are actually deer, and that he has paid his enemy, Robin Hood, for them. The irony is that Robin Hood has become an outlaw due to the killing of one of the King's deer, and now the sheriff pays three hundred pounds for something even he cannot take as his own.

At one point, Little John, talking to the Tanner, tells him that he and his friends are the King's Foresters. He thinks to himself, however, that at least they take care of the King's deer.



Irony suits the characters in the story as they often disguise themselves as someone else, and play pranks upon those who would do them evil. Robin Hood, dressed as a beggar comes upon four other beggars having a lunch beside the road. Each has a sign beside him proclaiming his problem: one has a sign that says he is blind, one a sign proclaiming he is deaf, one has a sign telling that he is dumb, and the last a sign saying he is lame. The author tells us that the man who is deaf is the first to hear Robin's approach, the blind man is the first to see Robin coming, the man who is supposedly dumb greets Robin eloquently, and the lame man has two good legs plus a wooden one.

The final ironic deed happens when Robin's own relative, a cousin who is in charge of a nunnery, is the one responsible for his final demise. He has helped her rise to her present position, and yet, she betrays him.

Humor

The story, written essentially for young readers, contains a great deal of violence. However, that feature is greatly softened by the use of humor, particularly when there is harm being done to someone, and so remains appropriate for the targeted readers.

It is easy to imagine what Will Stutely sees when he comes upon Robin and three of his friends who have threatened a miller, and have had flour thrown all over their faces and bodies. The miller continually beats them, causing clouds of white flour to fill the air and cover the ground where the fight takes place. The language, then, enhances this vision when Robin tells Will Stutely, "yon traitor fellow hath come as nigh slaying me as e'er a man in all the world. Hadst thou not come quickly, good Stutely, they master had been dead." Part Third, p. 124.

Language is generally humorous also, as in the case of Robin's meeting with the Curtal Friar of Fountain Abbey, and they vie with words about who will take whom across the river.

"Yet the other side is but one side, thou dost mark?"

"No man could gainsay that," said Robin.

"Then if the other side is one side, this side is the other side. But the other side is the other side, therefore both sides of the river are the other side." Part Fourth, p. 150



Themes/Characters

The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood is narrated by a genial, imaginary speaker who leads the reader through the land of Fancy and down the metaphorical road of Robin's life. The narrator pulls the episodes together by means of foreshadowing and summary statements, offers droll comments on the action, and draws subtle thematic conclusions about the moral implications of the merry adventures. This minstrel-narrator makes a congenial traveling companion, one the reader remains comfortable with throughout the long journey.

Robin Hood is the sun around whom all the characters revolve. As a rash youth, he is outlawed for killing a man.

Although he commits this act essentially in self-defense, the initial antagonism is caused by Robin's youthful pride. Once outlawed, however, Robin grows into a responsible leader of his band. Quick to laugh, even at his own expense, Robin is a trickster addicted to sport and rollicking good times, and is ever ready for adventure. Shrewd but generous, just, and compassionate, he serves as an exemplar, embodying all of the virtues requisite in the upright person. He is the best of all his merry men, the magnet who attracts not only his loyal followers but also certain "law-abiding" citizens such as Sir Richard of the Lea and Queen Eleanor herself. Robin is the epitome of the Saxon yeoman—handsome, fresh, boyish, and a model for youthful emulation.

Robin's band—Little John, Will Scarlet, Allan a Dale, Friar Tuck, Will Stutely, Midge the Miller's Son, David of Doncaster, and a host of tinkers, tanners, and palmers—are merry denizens of the green and golden world of high romance.

They lead charmed lives without wives, families, jobs, or grown-up responsibilities. Their frequent disguises indicate that they are without defined roles in society; adolescents, they are ever in the process of becoming adults. They enjoy an enviable freedom in the greenwood and live lives devoid of rancor, envy, and malice. They are brave, resourceful, fun-loving, clever—in every way fit followers of their lovable and worthy leader. Clothed in their Lincoln green apparel, Robin and his band of merry men blend into the forest that so naturally sustains them.

Their foil is the corrupt Sheriff of Nottingham, a cowardly man of sour disposition. He is a narrow-minded, pinched soul who, whenever possible, tries to take advantage of those under his jurisdiction. He attempts, for example, to extort money and possessions from Robin, who comes to him in the guise of a spendthrift. An avaricious man, his stratagems for cheating others usually backfire because of Robin's intervention. Always conscious of his dignity and position, the Sheriff is mean-spirited and treacherous, as contemptible and dishonest as Robin is upright and admirable.

In the same category as the Sheriff are the proud and greedy prelates, the Bishop of Hereford and the Prior of Emmet. These are churchmen given to luxurious living and extortionate dealings with those beneath them in rank or wealth. The Sheriff and his



legal and clerical colleagues are everything Robin and his band are not. They are the true outlaws in that they violate the civil and religious laws they are sworn to uphold.

Robin and his band, on the other hand, uphold the spirit, if not the letter of the law. This ironic conflict provides the tension in Pyle's action-filled plot.

A central theme in the work is the moral imperative to exercise charity and compassion for the less fortunate. Robin and his men are always helpful to those in distress, arranging, for example, for Allan a Dale to wed his true love, Ellen, even though she has been sold by her father to a rich but elderly suitor. Robin also helps Sir Richard of the Lea recover his ancestral lands, which have been seized by the covetous Prior of Emmet.

Robin is famed for "robbing the rich to give to the poor," in that he restores to the rightful owners the wealth and land that has been stolen by the Sheriff and his henchmen. The most admirable traits of Robin and his band are their charity and selflessness, as well as their dedication to just distribution, qualities that insure their heroic stature.

A second important theme in the work is the importance of choosing duty over pleasure. This theme underlies the adventure of Little John, who goes to the Blue Boar Inn with its "humming ale" and "sweet companions" when he should be completing an important errand in the neighboring town of Ancaster. For this negligence, Little John is soundly trounced by the stout Tanner of Blyth, who is eventually inducted into the band.

The ballad of "The Wooing of Sir Keith," sung by Will Scarlet, celebrates an Arthurian knight whose devotion to duty is rewarded. He agrees to kiss loathsome lady when none else will, and at his kiss, her enchantment is dispelled. She regains her beauty and grants Sir Keith her hand and fortune in marriage. Will Scarlet interprets the ballad to indicate that "a duty which seemeth to us sometimes ugly and harsh, when we do kiss it fairly upon the mouth, so to speak, is no such foul thing after all."

A related theme is the need to distinguish between reality and illusion, an ability that the Sheriff never develops.

His duplicity and greed frequently lead him directly into the snares Robin sets for him, snares a more honest man would avoid.

The book also makes a clear point that violence and bloodshed are to be shunned whenever a more peaceful solution is possible. The youthful Robin is haunted by having killed a man and vows to avoid unnecessary bloodshed.

His long reign in Sherwood is assured by winning over his foes through the exercise of his wits. When Robin slays the treacherous man-beast, Guy of Gisbourne, he is clearly acting in selfdefense. After his later experiences in King Richard's wars, Robin tragically forgets the important lesson of nonviolence. Thus, in the last climactic battle, many good men are slain, from Robin's band as well as from among the Sheriff's followers.



Robin's sorrow over the carnage induces a fever that his cousin, the Prioress of Kirklees, uses as a pretext to bleed him to death. Robin, though an outlaw, strives ever to live peaceably, realizing that violence and bloodshed only beget revenge and more bloodshed—a theme Pyle highlights throughout his *Robin Hood*. This lesson, although seriously offered, is never laboriously presented, being instead submerged in the merry high jinks of these youthful heroes.



Style

Points of View

The novel begins with the author, as the first person, explaining a little of what has preceded the action and what will take place in the story. As if in a play, he then invites the reader to participate in the action, and physically leads him into the story.

The story is unfolded chiefly through the third person point of view, mainly through the eyes that follow Robin Hood. When the story follows another character, it is generally to allow the reader to understand some action that is taken by Robin Hood or his men, or to develop a character more thoroughly without the character taking part in the main action.

It is interesting to note, however, that the story begins and ends in the first person, that being the author. Also, the last paragraph of each Part (except for part First) reverts to the first person and explains what the reader will find in the next Part.

Setting

The story takes place around the beginning of 1200AD, and Robin's death happens in December of 1247. The setting is Sherwood Forest, and a mythical area nearby that is located near Nottingham, Lincoln, and not too far from London. Sherwood forest is pictured as a bright, gay place full of colors such as bright blues, blinding whites, deep greens, and pure blues. Birds and flowers abound, and merry paths run every which way through the gay forest which contains thick ferns, lush grasses, and tall trees everywhere. The deer are plentiful as are clear, sparkling streams, and there is never a shortage of food or merriment.

While action happens on a year round basis, the author tells the reader specifically that the cold, wintry days, and those with rain or misery will be omitted, and that the reader should look at all the scenes as taking place on bright, summery, and flowery days.

The sporting action takes place at fairs in Nottingham and on Finsbury Fields, and both are described in length as having an atmosphere of fun and happiness. Several Inns such as the Blue Boar and the King's Head Inn seem to be full of fun-loving people and buxom wenches, all filled with merriment and songs.

Language and Meaning

The fictional mediaeval language created by the author is extremely appropriate for the purpose of setting the mood and the time. While written in 1938, the action supposedly takes place seven hundred years before the story is told.



When Robin pretends to be a beggar, and is asked, "What art thou, brother? Uprightman, Jurkman, Clapper-duddgeon, Dommerer, or Abrahamman?" (Part Sixth, p. 235) and does not know the terms, he is exposed as a fake.

A flowery, descriptive language is exceptionally fit for the style of the story. An example is found at this break in the action: "so passed the gentle springtime away in budding beauty; its silver showers and sunshine, its green meadows and its flowers. So, likewise, passed the summer with its yellow sunlight, its quivering heat and deep, bosky foliage, its long twilights and its mellow nights, through which the frogs croaked and fairy folk were said to be out on the hillsides. All this had passed and the time of fall had come, bringing with it its own pleasures and joyousness; for now, when the harvest was gathered home, merry bands of gleaners roamed the country about, singing along the roads in the daytime, and sleeping beneath the hedgerows and the hay-ricks at night." Part Fifth, p. 173

Structure

The story begins with a Preface from the Author to the Reader, and completes with an Epilogue that ends the life of "Robin Heud." A detailed Table of Contents precedes the Prologue, and contains a general outline of each chapter or, "Part", and the two or three sections each contains. There are eight parts that are basically chronological, beginning with the reasons that Robin Hood becomes an outlaw, and ending with his death.

The story is interrupted in many places by someone singing a song, generally in the style of a ballad. In some instances the words relate to the story, but this is not always the case. The songs do not always relate to the mood of the action at the time such as when Robin Hood tells Will Scarlet that it would be better to sing of deeds of men than of flowers and birds.

The author's own woodcuts are utilized throughout the story to illustrate the action, and, in some cases, give a clue as to the countryside and the attire described by the text. Each contains the author's initials, "H P," in the drawing somewhere. These pictures each contain a title in the actual drawing or as text below it. Some additional drawings, such as the one after the end of the Preface, warrant additional attention as they often hold some hidden meaning. This is also true of the circular drawing preceding the Prologue.

Each Part is also preceded by a drawing, generally in a romantic style and greatly detailed. These often hold a title, and show some action that is to follow.

The final phrase used is the inscription on the tomb of Robin Hood, in a more realistic version of the language of the twelfth century.



Quotes

"Alas!" cried he, "thou hast found me an archer that will make thy wife to wring!" I would that thou hadst ne'er said one word to me, or that I had never passed thy way, or e'en that my right forefinger had been stricken off ere that this had happened! In haste I smote, but grieve I sore at leisure!" Prologue, p. 5.

"Nay," quoth Robin, laughing loudly, "many do like me and wish me well, but few call me honest." Part Second, p 55.

"Come, fill us some sack!" cried Robin. "Let us e're be merry while we may, for man is but dust, and he hath but a span to live here till the worm getteth him, as our good gossip Swanthold sayeth; so let life be merry while it lasts, say I. Nay, never look down i' the mouth, sir Sheriff. Who knowest but that thou mayest catch Robin Hood yet if thou drinkest less good sack and Malmsey, and bringest down the fat about thy paunch and the dust from out thy brain. Be merry, man." Part Second, p. 59.

"Ay, marry, that is true, I make no doubt," quoth Robin. "What a pity that such men as he, that have no thought but to go abroad in gay clothes, should have good fellows, whose shoes they are not fit to tie, dancing at their bidding. By Saint Dunstan, Saint Alfred, Saint Withold, and all the good men in the Saxon calendar, it doth make me mad to see such gay lordlings from over the sea go stepping on the necks of good saxons who owned this land before ever their great-grandshires chewed rind of brawn! By the bright bow of Heaven, I will have their ill-gotten gains from them, even though I hang for it as high as e're a forest tree in Sherwood!" Part Third, p. 103.

"... I mind me our good gaffer Swathold was wont to say, 'He who jumps for the moon and gets it not leaps higher than he who stoops for a penny in the mud.' " Part Fourth, p. 128.

"Then if the other side is one side, this side is the other side. But the other side is the other side, therefore both sides of the river are the other side. Q. E. D." Part Fourth, p. 150.

"Marry," quoth Robin. "that is a question hard to answer. One man calleth me kind, another calleth me cruel; this one calleth me good, honest fellow, and that one vile thief. Truly, the world hath as many eyes to look upon a man withal as there are spots on a toad; so, with what pair of eyes thou regardest me lieth entirely with thine own self. My name is Robin Hood." Part Fifth, p. 176.

At this point the King laughed loud and long. "Truly," said he, "thou art taking up with strange matters for a queen. If thou wilt bring those three fellows that thou speakest of I will promise faithfully to give them free pardon for forty days, to come or to go wheresoever they please, now will I harm a hair of their heads in all that time." Part Seventh, p. 257.



"The loin growls. Beware thy head." Part Seventh, p 267.

"Marry," quoth merry Robin, "I sit beneath the hedge here to drop salt on the tails of golden birds; but in sooth thou art the first chick of any worth I ha' seen this blessed day." Part Seventh, p. 277.

"Little John," said he, Little John, mine own dear friend, and him I love better than all others in the world, mark, I prythee, where this arrow lodges, and there let my grave be digged. Lay me with my face toward the east, Little John, and see that my resting=place be kept green, and that my weary bones be not disturbed." Epilogue, p. 336.

HEAR UNDERNEAD DIS LAITL STEAN

LAIS ROBERT EARL OF HUNTINGTUN

NEA ARCHIR VER AS HIE SAE GEUD

AN PIPL KAULD IM ROBIN HEUD

SICK OUTLAWS AS HI AN IS MEN

VIL ENGLAND NIDIR SI AGEN.

GHIT 24 KAL, DEKEMBRIS 1247

And now, dear friend, we also must part, for our merry journeyings have ended, and here, at the grave of Robin Hood, we turn, each going his own way. Epilogue, p. 339.



Topics for Discussion

1. As the prologue indicates, Robin is outlawed when he shoots one of the King's deer on a wager and then kills a forester. Should Robin be outlawed for this? Who is in the wrong—Robin or the forester?
2. Little John tumbles Robin into the stream during their bout with the quarterstaff, and then refuses to accept Robin's invitation to join his band. Why does Little John initially refuse? Why does he change his mind?
3. After he kills the forester, Robin decides to avoid direct confrontations and bloodshed. The narrator remarks that Robin's long reign in the greenwood is directly attributable to this avoidance.

What strategies does Robin resort to instead of direct confrontation with his enemies? Cite several specific examples of these strategies as employed by Robin Hood.

4. Robin is always quoting the wise sayings of a certain "Gaffer Swanthold."

Which of Gaffer Swanthold's sayings remind you of proverbs currently in use?

5. Why does Robin Hood reprimand Little John for stealing the Sheriff's silver serving pieces and utensils? How does this event differ from Robin's earlier confiscation of the Sheriff's three hundred pounds?
6. Why is Robin Hood delighted to see Little John beaten at a bout of quarterstaff by Arthur a Bland, the Tanner of Blyth?
7. After hearing a tale of one of King Arthur's knights, Robin quotes an aphorism from Gaffer Swanthold: "He who jumps for the moon and gets it not leaps higher than he who stoops for a penny in the mud." Robin thinks that he who leaps for the moon is the more admirable figure, while Will Stutely observes that at least the other gets the penny to buy bread with and is thus better off. With whom do you agree, Robin the idealist or Will Stutely the pragmatist?
8. Even though Robin and his men are outlaws, they profess great loyalty to Henry II, to his queen Eleanor, and to their son, Richard the Lion-Hearted.

How would you reconcile this seeming contradiction?
9. Guy of Gisbourne is the second man Robin kills. Robin suffers no remorse this time as he had earlier in his killing of the forester. Why not? What does Guy of Gisbourne's costume reveal about his character?
10. Toward the end of the story, King Richard penetrates the shades of Sherwood and, for the first time, confronts Robin in Robin's own secure domain.

How is Richard able to do what no one else has been able to do until that time?



Essay Topics

Define "irony" as it might be used in the story, and give two examples of its use.

In your own words, describe the countryside around Sherwood Forest. Is it a happy or sad place?

How does the author use his illustrations throughout the story?

Discuss the meaning of "outlaw" and "thief" as they pertain to Robin Hood and his band of merry men.

Review the main reason(s) that Robin Hood becomes an outlaw.

Explore the most important message you think the author has in telling this story.

In his adventures, Robin and his men often rise up against authority. What characters in the story represent "authority?"

Which is more important to Robin Hood in his defeat of his foes, his physical strength or his mental shrewdness?



Ideas for Reports and Papers

1. In his preface, Pyle admits to dressing "good, sober folks of real history" in "gay colors and motley" so that "you would not know them but for the names tagged to them." Among those whom Pyle so disguises are King Henry II, Eleanor of Aquitaine, and Richard the Lion-Hearted. Choose one of these English monarchs and read a reliable biographical source concerning him or her. Write a report in which you discuss the ways Pyle deviates from or follows the facts known about Henry, Eleanor, or Richard.
2. The Robin Hood ballads were collected in the eighteenth century by Joseph Ritson (*Robin Hood: A Collection of All the Ancient Poems, Songs, and Ballads*, 1795). If your community library has an edition of this book, read one of the original ballads and write a report in which you discuss the differences between the ballad and Pyle's version. How does Pyle adapt the original ballads to fit them into *The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood*?
3. After Little John is bested by the Tanner of Blyth, Robin is beaten by his own nephew, Will Scarlet. This beating is a just punishment for Robin's failure to see what Will Scarlet is really like rather than what he merely appears to be. In short, Robin is deceived by appearances. This failure to see the reality beneath appearances is repeated in other situations throughout Pyle's *Robin Hood*. Which other characters in this work likewise fail to detect reality beneath appearances, and what are the consequences of their failures of vision?
4. In the episode concerning the marriage of Allan a Dale, Robin agrees to help the two lovers because he hates to see a rich older man, Sir Stephen of Trent, force himself on a young woman of lower social station. Another reason for Robin's becoming involved is that Sir Stephen is a Norman, and young Ellen is a Saxon like Robin himself. The Norman conquest of Britain took place in 1066, but the tensions between the Norman conquerors and the conquered Saxons persisted for centuries. Read at least one good source concerning the Norman invasion of England and write a report providing background information for the antagonism felt by Saxons for Normans in *Robin Hood's* day.
5. Robin Hood and his merry men frequently don disguises and change roles. For what reasons do they most often change identities? Which episodes involving such changes do you find the most entertaining? Most thematically significant?
6. Sir Richard of the Lea's son is exiled in Palestine, fighting "for the cross and the holy sepulchre." In other words, he is fighting in the Crusades. Write a report providing background on the English role in the Crusades.
7. Richard the Lion-Hearted is said to have had adventures "as stirring as any that ever befell Robin Hood." After reading at least one reliable source, write a report on Richard's most stirring adventures.



8. Pyle's prose is studded with metaphors and similes. For example, in one place Robin's heart is described as being "as free from care as the yolk of an egg is from cobwebs." Select those figures of speech most to your liking and indicate how they contribute to the passages in which they appear.

9. Contrast the way Robin Hood treats Sir Richard of the Lea in Sherwood with the way that knight is treated by the Prior of Emmet. More specifically, contrast the way that Sir Richard is received in Sherwood and at the Priory; the two banquets held while he is present; and his departure from each of these places.

Further Study

Abbott, Charles D. Howard Pyle: A Chronicle. New York: Harper, 1925.

This is the standard biography.

Agosta, Lucien L. Howard Pyle. Boston: Twayne, 1987. This work offers a thorough critical introduction to the life, literary works, and illustrations of "Howard Pyle Commemorative Edition."

Children's Literature Association Quarterly 8 (Summer 1983). This is a collection of critical essays on Pyle's life, career, and works, marking the publication centennial of *The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood*.

Morse, Willard S., and Gertrude Brinckle. Howard Pyle: A Record of His Illustrations and Writings. 1921.

Reprint. Detroit: Singing Tree Press, 1969. This work is a complete bibliography of Pyle's writings and illustrations.

Nesbitt, Elizabeth. Howard Pyle. London: Bodley Head, 1966. This study offers a brief survey of Pyle's life and work.

Pitz, Henry C. Howard Pyle: Writer, Illustrator, Founder of the Brandywine School. New York: Bramhall House, 1965. A biographical and critical survey, this source is especially strong in assessing Pyle's career as illustrator and teacher. It includes a generous sampling of Pyle's illustrations.

Related Titles

was Howard Pyle's first book. Toward the end of his career, Pyle again celebrated the life and deeds of a traditional cultural hero, King Arthur. In a series of four volumes (The Story of King Arthur and His Knights; The Story of the Champions of the Round Table; The Story of Sir Launcelot and his Companions; and The Story of the Grail and the Passing of Arthur), Pyle points to the knights of the Round Table as models of courage, humility, and moral rectitude.

His vigorous account of the adventures of Arthur and his knights is one of the earliest and still one of the best renditions of this significant cultural legend available for young people today.



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