

Tuesday - Yr 5 English Robinhood

Robin Hood

by Ben Johnson

Legend has it that Robin Hood was an outlaw living in Sherwood Forest with his 'Merry Men' – but did he really exist?

There are several versions of the Robin Hood story. The Hollywood one is that of an incredibly handsome man – Errol Flynn – clothed in garments of Lincoln green, fighting for the rights of the oppressed and outwitting the evil Sheriff of Nottingham.

However the first known literary reference to Robin Hood and his men was in 1377, and the Sloane manuscripts in the British Museum have an account of Robin's life which states that he was born around 1160 in Lockersley (most likely modern day Loxley) in South Yorkshire. Another chronicler has it that he was a Wakefield man and took part in Thomas of Lancaster's rebellion in 1322.

One certain fact is that he was a North Country man, with his traditional haunts as an outlaw in Sherwood Forest and a coastal refuge at Robin Hood's Bay in [Yorkshire](#).

One well known story about Robin that places him in Whitby, Yorkshire, is about him and Little John having a friendly archery contest. Both men were skilled at archery and from the roof of the Monastery they both shot an arrow. The arrows fell at Whitby Lathes, more than a mile away. Afterwards the fields where the arrows landed were known as Robin Hood's Close and Little John's Close.

Robin became a popular folk hero because of his generosity to the poor and down-trodden peasants, and his hatred of the Sheriff and his verderers who enforced the oppressive forest laws, made him their champion. Some chroniclers date his exploits as taking place during the reign of Edward II, but other versions say the king was Richard I, the Lionheart. Robin having fought in the Crusades alongside the Lionheart before returning to England to find his lands siezed by the Sheriff.



All versions of the Robin Hood story give the same account of his death. As he grew older and became ill, he went with Little John to Kirklees Priory near Huddersfield, to be treated by his aunt, the Prioress, but a certain Sir Roger de Doncaster persuaded her to murder her nephew and the Prioress slowly bled Robin to death. With the last of his strength he blew his horn and Little John came to his aid, but too late.

Little John placed Robin's bow in his hand and carried him to a window from where Robin managed to loose one arrow. Robin asked Little John to bury him where the arrow landed, which he duly did.

A mound in Kirklees Park, within bow-shot of the house, can still be seen and is said to be his last resting place. Little John's grave can be seen in Hathersage churchyard in [Derbyshire](#).

But what of his lover Maid Marion? Not much of Robin's career is known, but nowhere in the chronicles is Maid Marion mentioned, so we must assume she was 'added' to the stories at a later date.

So, Robin did exist, but not in quite the same way as the Robin Hood we all think of, the cinematic Robin of Sherwood, Prince of Thieves! His story however, remains one of the best known tales of English folklore.



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Maid Marian was excited for tomorrow! The big competition for the Golden Arrow was going to happen, and she was hosting it in little old Nottingham. But what had her most excited was that she (and many others) thought the famous outlaw Robin Hood might be there. She had met him just once when she was quite young. Too young to fall in love her father would say. But those few hours she interacted with him had been replayed in her mind many times over the last five years. The thought of possibly seeing him put a smile on her face that would not go away.

It was the morning of the competition. Robin Hood and one of his Merry Men (whose name no one can remember) were to participate. The past few days leading into the competition had been chaotic. Robin and Little John had argued about which disguise to wear. Robin was afraid if the disguise was too intricate he would not perform well in the competition. But Little John was afraid if not careful he would be spotted by either the Bishop of Hereford or the Sheriff of Nottingham. Thus, they settled on a modest disguise - Robin would grow out his beard and wear red instead of his normal olive green.

Maid Marian greeted the participants as they arrived to the competition. She was keen on seeing Robin Hood and did not fail to greet a single participant. There were only about ten men left to greet. One of them caught her eye - he looked familiar but he had a scraggly beard and wore a very bright red shirt. Robin would never dress like that she thought. But when she greeted him his eyes had the same twinkle Robin's had had years before. The archery competition began. Robin was performing splendidly. The field of archers had dwindled from around 800 men to about 25 men. The targets kept moving further and further away. Robin thought to himself how he must not be distracted by the beautiful Maid Marian, who sat nearby. He must win this Golden Arrow first. It belongs in a reliquary he reminded himself, while thinking of Fail-Not. He let another arrow fly - bullseye! Another arrow, another bullseye! This time he got cocky and closed his eyes, yet the arrow did not miss its mark. The competition had only two competitors left, and the other man was one of the Bishop of Hereford's men.

Maid Marian watched in awe. The man who she thought might be Robin Hood was a very skilled archer. Her suspicions must be correct, she thought to herself. She was so happy! But at the same time she was worried. She noticed how the Sheriff of Nottingham looked at the man in red. She wondered if he too had suspicions about this man being Robin Hood.

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This man of the Bishop's was really good. However, he was no match for Robin Hood. In fact, the only person who would be a match for Robin would be the man who possessed Fail-Not. The target was moved back to 100 yards. The official announced to the crowd (mostly made up of the losers) that the best shot would win. Robin's competitor would go first. He drew back his bow and released - the arrow hit the target soundly, and stuck to the ring just outside of the bullseye. Robin knew he that he had to execute the perfect shot. He nocked an arrow, drew back his bow, took a deep breath, and then released. Thump! The arrow stuck to the bullseye and the crowd went crazy!

Maid Marian had never seen such a great shot in her life. She ran out to the winner and gave him a peck on the cheek. Then she handed him the Golden Arrow!

Robin embraced Maid Marian after the win and cherished her light kiss. He took the prize and looked down at it. On the stem of the arrow were the words, "The secret lies with the Stone of Tristan." After Robin read this, almost everything went wrong for Robin and his Merry Men. The Sheriff of Nottingham along with the Bishop of Hereford came over to Robin and took the Golden Arrow out of his hands. The two men had figured out who he was - both from their own knowledge and from the whispers in the crowd.

The Sheriff of Nottingham marched Robin Hood away towards the city jail. Luckily for Robin, his men were not far behind (in fact they were ahead). After a couple twists and turns down the street Little John appeared in the middle of the road. He came up to the Sheriff and socked him right in the face. This strong blow by a giant man was enough to free Robin. They escaped to the Sherwood Forest.