Robin Hood

Summary
When the evil Sheriff of Nottingham discovers that Robin Hood, the popular robber of Sherwood Forest, is really the land-owning Robin Fitzooth of Locksley, he devises a plan to catch him at his wedding to Marian Fitzwalter. But, as always when cornered by the sheriff, Robin uses his superior skill and cunning to evade capture. However, he cannot now return to his lands, and becomes an outlaw. He settles in the forest of Sherwood with a band of trusty men.

King Richard supports him and restores Robin's land. Richard dies, his brother John ascends to the throne and once more Robin finds himself pitted against the sheriff. Inevitably he escapes, but not before receiving a mortal wound. He dies and is buried in the forest of Sherwood.

Chapter 1: Sir George Gamwell fights against a Norman lord who wants his lands. His two sons and his wife are killed, leaving him with his only daughter, Joanna. He teaches her to defend herself. She falls in love with a Norman and, as her father will not accept him, she escapes to the forest with him. They have a boy, Robin Fitzooth. Joanna teaches her son to live in the forest.

Chapter 2: At twenty-five, Robin is a kind man who helps poor villagers. When the Sheriff hears stories about a robber called Robin Hood on his lands, he sends one of his men in disguise to find out about him. The robber is Robin of Locksley. The Sheriff has a plan: he will go to St. Mary's Abbey the next day with his men and arrest Robin before he marries Lady Marian.

Chapter 3: On his wedding day to lovely Lady Marian, the Sheriff’s men interrupt the ceremony and there is a fight outside the abbey. Robin now has to hide in the forest because the Sheriff knows who he is, but he asks Marian to wait for him.

Chapter 4: After the events at the church, Prince John sells Robin’s lands to the Sheriff and the situation of the villagers gets worse. Much the forester is found carrying a dead deer and, as he cannot pay for it, the Sheriff will kill him. He then tells the Sheriff he can lead him to Robin, but escapes into the forest. He is killed and his house burnt down. Much's son joins Robin.

Chapter 5: On a walk along the forest, Robin meets Little John, a big and strong man. They fight. Little John wins and throws Robin into the river. Robin then invites him to join his group in the forest.

Chapter 6: Will finds a sad Sir Richard of Lee in the forest and takes him to Robin. He needs help to repay the money lent to him by the Abbot of St Mary’s to save his son's life. Robin offers him the sum he needs and Little John goes with him, but they want to test the Abbot and see if he’s ready to be flexible.

Chapter 7: They find out the Abbot will not wait another year for the money so that he can have Sir Richard's lands and house. When Little John adds the sum Sir Richard needs to meet the full amount of the debt, the Abbot is very angry.

Chapter 8: In the summer, Lady Marian and her father have their big party. The Sheriff knows Robin will be there. When his men try to catch him, another fight breaks out.

Chapter 9: The next day, the Sheriff visits Marian's father and announces he wants to marry his daughter. Marian does not talk to him but she listens behind a door. Her father advises her to marry the Sheriff but she refuses.

Chapter 10: Now Marian has to flee to the forest too, as she refuses to marry the sheriff. She brings with her Friar Tuck, but they get separated in the forest. Robin and Marian want him to marry them, but first they need to find him!

Chapter 11: Robin finds Friar Tuck working as a ferryman and has some fun with his boat before asking the friar to officiate at his marriage to Marian, and then to join the outlaw band.

Chapter 12: To recover the money they have given to Sir Richard, Robin's men invite two rich churchmen to a forest dinner and rob them of their clothes, their horses and their bags full of gold.
Chapter 13: When Sir Richard tries to return the money Robin has lent him, he does not take the gold. Instead, he gives him fine clothes and a beautiful white horse for his wife.

Chapter 14: Once again, the sheriff devises a cunning plan to catch Robin. He organizes an archery contest, knowing that Robin will be tempted to prove his mastery. Robin duly comes, wins the contest and escapes.

Chapter 15: King Richard arrives in Sherwood himself to check up on Robin Hood. When he has satisfied himself about the outlaw's true self, he reveals himself and restores Robin's lands.

Chapter 16: King Richard dies and Robin is caught and wounded. From the St. Mary’s Abbey, where he lies dying, he shoots an arrow and is then buried in the forest where it falls.

The original text

There are several versions of the Robin Hood story. Robin of Locksley first appears in English songs of the fourteenth century. Many of the people in the songs are real – King Richard, who ruled England from 1189 to 1199, and his brother, John, who became King when his brother died. Many of the places are real, too – Sherwood Forest, for example, and the nearby city of Nottingham, with its famous castle. There were certainly people living in the forests throughout The Middle Ages. They killed and ate the king's deer, which was against the law. It is uncertain, however, whether there was one particular outlaw called Robin Hood. A chronicler has it that he was a Wakefield man and took part in Thomas of Lancaster’s rebellion in 1322.

Robin became a popular folk hero because of his generosity to the poor and down-trodden peasants, and his hatred of the Sheriff 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, or Richard the Lionheart.

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 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.

Background and themes

In Robin Hood, the good thief who steals from the rich to give to the poor exists in many cultures and goes back hundreds if not thousands of years. The stories abound in situations where people do not even have enough food to feed their family, and in this situation the ethical question arises: Is it acceptable to steal when the only alternative is starvation for yourself and your family? On a theoretical level it seems, from the success of these stories, that the answer is yes, but when a person actually becomes a victim of a crime, the answer sometimes changes. In many societies, particularly modern ones, there is the notion of the victimless crime. Nobody suffers because the victim has enough money not to miss it, or because the insurance company will pay. In truth, of course, there is no such thing as a victimless crime.

Discussion activities

Before reading

1 Discuss: (link to activating schemata) Ask students to look at the title and the front cover and say what they know about Robin Hood.

2 Discuss: Put students into small groups and ask them to look through the illustrations. For each illustration and caption, ask them to think of a possible story.

Chapters 1–3

Before reading

3 Research: Ask students to find information about everyday life in feudal times and draw social classes in a pyramid from least (bottom) to most (top) important.

4 Discuss: Use the information from the research above to decide whether life was hard in feudal times for the king, his soldiers, the men of the church and the villagers.

While reading

5 Write: (After reading page 2) Ask students to draw the Gamwell family tree.

6 Discuss: (After reading Chapter 1) Talk about Robin’s life in the forest and his life with his grandfather. Use these questions as a guide: What can be do in the forest? What can be do in the house? Which does he enjoy more?

7 Write: (After reading Chapter 3) Lady Marian is at home. Ask students to imagine they are Lady Marian. They write an entry in her diary about what happened at the church. Remind them to write her answer to Robin’s ‘Wait for me.’
Robin Hood

After reading
8 Discuss: Put students into groups to discuss this question: If you don't have enough money, is it all right to steal money or food, particularly from rich people?

Chapters 4–7
Before reading
9 Discuss: Have students discuss the following: Would you like to live in a forest now? What things would be different in your life?

While reading
10 Role play: (After reading the introductory paragraph in Chapter 4) Two villagers compare life on Locksley's lands before and after Robin went to Sherwood Forest to hide. Ask students to role play the conversation.
11 Discuss: (page 13) Sir Richard tells Robin he has got £600 but he has to give it to the abbot. Divide the class into two groups. One group thinks of reasons why the money should go to the Abbot. The other group gives reasons why Robin should keep the money. Then they share ideas.
12 Role play: (page 13) Sir Richard of Lee tells his story to Robin and his men. Divide the class into two groups: one is Sir Richard, the other one Robin and his men. Ask them to pool ideas as to what each might have said in that conversation. Then re-group them in pairs and ask them to role play the conversation.

After reading
13 Discuss: Robin Hood is able to hide in Sherwood Forest and the sheriff can’t find him. How can you hide in a forest? Ask students to think of some ways.

Chapters 8–10
Before reading
14 Discuss: Have students read the titles of Chapters 8, 9 and 10. Get them to speculate about Lady Marian's future.

While reading
15 Artwork: (page 15) Ask students to design and draw the invitation to Lord Fitzwalter's annual summer party.
16 Guess: (page 18) The Sheriff of Nottingham wants to marry Lady Marian. He visits her father and will come back the next day for an answer. Ask students to guess what Lady Marian will answer. Encourage them to account for their answers.
17 Role play: (page 20) Robin meets Marian in the forest. She tells him the news about her father and the Sheriff. Ask students to role play this conversation.

After reading
18 Discuss: Ask students to discuss the following questions: Is Lady Marian safe in the forest? Or is she a danger to Robin and his men?
19 Guess: Where can Friar Tuck be?

Chapters 11–13
Before reading
20 Discuss: Have students discuss the following questions: Will Lady Marian marry Robin? Will the Sheriff catch Robin Hood and put him into prison? Will Robin go back to Locksley House?

While reading
21 Discuss: (page 22) Robin tells Will that he would like to try Friar Tuck. Ask students to think of other ways to try Friar Tuck.
22 Role play: (page 22) Marian talks to the friar who lives in her uncle's house. Marian and Robin want him to marry them, but the friar is afraid. Ask students to imagine the conversation between Marian and the friar.
23 Artwork: (page 22) Robin and his men are looking for Friar Tuck. Have students make a ‘wanted’ sign with information about Friar Tuck.
24 Write: (page 25) Have students imagine they are Will Scarlet. He writes a letter to Sir Richard of Lee and he tells him how they got the £500 back.

Chapters 14–16
Before reading
25 Guess: The abbot and the sheriff would like to kill Robin. Ask students to guess what plans they may have to kill him.

While reading
26 Discuss: (pages 31–34) Get students into groups. Ask them to find three true things which the tall friar says and one false thing.
27 Discuss: (page 31) Have students compare King Richard and Prince John. Then, ask them to get into two groups: one represents King Richard and the other Prince John. Each group will say why King Richard or Prince John must be the King of England.
28 Write: (page 35) The sheriff and his men stop Robin one day with a letter from the king. Ask students to write the letter the king sent to the sheriff.

After reading
29 Write: Ask students to imagine they are one of the churchmen who were robbed of their money, clothes and horses by Robin's men. Write a letter to the Abbot to tell him about the forest dinner and how Robin stole all their belongings.
30 Discuss: The Sheriff makes plans to catch Robin. Have students get into two groups: one thinks of other ways to catch Robin and the other thinks how to make the Sheriff’s plans fail.

Vocabulary activities
For the Word List and vocabulary activities, go to www.penguinreaders.com.