



Hampstead Stage Company
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The Hampstead Stage Company
Proudly Presents
Robin Hood
A Study Guide

For use with the Theatrical Production by The Hampstead Stage Company
Created by Amanda Pawlik, Education Director
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Robin Hood

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Education Director's Welcome

Thank you so much for bringing Hampstead Stage Company to your students!

The following study guide and workshop lesson plans are meant to supplement and enhance our performance. Please note, no formal preparation is required for seeing our shows, but we hope that these educational materials will inspire your students to continue learning about classic literature. We hope you enjoy them just as much as we enjoyed creating them for you!

Sincerely,

Amanda Pawlik

Education Director

Hampstead Stage Company

About Hampstead Stage Company

We are a nationally touring educational theatre that brings high quality, professional theatre to schools, libraries, and communities all over the 48 contiguous states (everywhere but Hawaii and Alaska!). The Hampstead Stage Company's goal is to bring great books to life through live theatre; sparking an interest in reading, and creating a new way to use your imagination.

The Hampstead Stage Company got its name from our founders, who came to America from the Hampstead area of London, England to pursue their dreams. Since its inception, our company has grown into one of the largest educational touring companies in the nation. We have performed for over twenty million audience members!

Our interactive educational tours run year-round and are performed by two professional actors, each playing multiple roles. Our scripts are original adaptations, based directly on literary classics, and include children and adults from the audience. The plays last one hour, with a



question and answer session following the performance. We travel to your space, and bring our own realistic sets and costumes; designed using extensive historical research. Our productions are flexible enough to fit into any assembly/performance space.

Theatre performance helps us learn about ourselves and the world around us. But more than that, by using our imagination we can be proud of who we are, create goals for ourselves, and even help the way we think at home and in our communities!

The Hampstead Stage Company is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. All HSC study guides and supporting lesson plans are available to download for free from our website!

Contact: Anna Robbins, Company Manager: info@hampsteadstage.org
Website: www.hampsteadstage.org

All About Pantomime

The Hampstead Stage Company specializes in a special form of theatre called pantomime. Don't be fooled, we are not silent mimes with painted faces!

Pantomime, also known as "panto", goes back much farther than that. Panto is a form of theatre traditionally found in the United Kingdom, Australia, Zimbabwe, India, and Ireland; and has been performed since the time of Ancient Greece! The word "pantomime" comes from the Greek words pantos, "every, all"; and mimos, "imitator, actor". Pantomime in Ancient Greece used to mean a group of actors and musicians imitating a story. Many famous poets used to write scripts for these actors, and were paid very well!

Pantomime was first performed in England as a show between the acts of an opera, so they could change the set backstage. It became such a popular performance, that it soon became a show of its own. It is said that pantomime had its first full performance in the early 19th century.



Actors travelled from town to town performing well-known stories that taught a lesson, or encouraged the audience to think about the characters, and how they solved the problems they were presented.

Now pantomime is a very well-known form of theatre in England. Shows are based on traditional children's stories, and call for a LOT of audience participation! In England, the audience often "boos" the villain character, "awws" for the damsel in distress, and yells comments to the characters such as: "he's right behind you!", "Oh, yes, he is!", or "Oh, no he isn't!". Volunteers are often called on stage by the Hampstead Stage Company to act as the Chorus. They become extras, playing many characters in multiple scenes, and are often on stage as much as the two other actors!

HSC actors follow traditional pantomime casting: girls play boys, boys play girls, and there are many, many costume changes. Actors rely on their voices and physicality (the way they move their bodies) to portray different characters. Just like all pantomime shows before; Hampstead actors travel all over the country, performing in many different types of spaces!

About Robin Hood's Story and History

The character of Robin Hood has been famous for centuries and is truly a legend: many are familiar with his story and believe it to be true, though there is no substantial proof that a real Robin Hood existed. The history of this story and its perseverance are as complex as the legend itself.

As early as the 13th century terms like "Robehod", "Rabunhod", and "Robynhod" were used as nicknames for criminals, which has led scholars to believe that these names were inspired by a real-life outlaw, a fictitious one, or some combination of both, and furthermore, that if these names were being used in the 13th century, whoever or whatever their inspiration was must have existed before this time.



In addition to this, in the 13th and 14th centuries, outlaws would use the names “Robin Hood” and “Little John” as pseudonyms when committing crimes, again suggesting that whoever or whatever inspired this usage must have existed prior to this time.

In 1521, the Scottish historian **John Major** wrote in his “**History of Great Britain**” that Robin Hood was active in 1193-4, during the time when Prince John attempted to take the throne from King Richard the Lion Heart and scholars believe it is possible to pinpoint Robin Hood’s existence (either the actual man or the legendary one) to this time, though not all versions of the *Robin Hood* story will do so.

The tale of Robin Hood has been shared through ballads and poems, passed down orally, and recorded in short story and book form throughout the ages. The earliest written compilation of *Robin Hood* stories was **Joseph Ritson’s** *Robin Hood: A Collection of All the Ancient Poems, Songs, and Ballads, Now Extant, Relative to that Celebrated English Outlaw*. Published in 1795, this work was revolutionary in that it compiled every *Robin Hood* text Ritson could find from the Middle Ages to the end of the 18th century. His work influenced his contemporaries’ versions of the *Robin Hood* stories such as Sir Walter’s Scott’s Robin Hood who appears in *Ivanhoe* (1820) as well as Thomas Love Peacock’s Robin Hood in his *Maid Marian* (1822). **Alexandre Dumas** adapted Robin Hood’s story into two volumes, *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves* and *Robin Hood the Outlaw*, which were published in 1872 after his death. In 1883, author and illustrator **Howard Pyle** adapted the stories into *The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood* for young readers. Film makers, playwrights, and writers still create and tell stories about Robin Hood today, ensuring that Robin Hood’s legend will live on for generations to come.



Plot Summary

Our play begins when a jolly troubadour, a character called the Fool, enters and tells the following tale. There once was a noble king, King Richard the Lion Heart, who was much loved by the people. However, one day, King Richard left to lead an army in a far-off land. He left his younger brother, Prince John, in charge, and Prince John promised to carry on King Richard's good work. However, as soon as King Richard left, John appointed himself King and began to rule out of jealousy. Years passed, and the people became more and more miserable. Famine grew and the people continued to be taxed more and more. Those who could not pay their taxes were jailed or made outlaws. The law was very unfair. This is where the story of Robin Hood begins.

The scene changes and the Sheriff of Nottingham enters and reads a proclamation from the King. Because the citizens have been complaining about all the taxes, new taxes have been created for them, including taxes on "merriment" and "laughing." King John is creating laws that are extremely unfair. Sir Robin of Loxley enters. He speaks to the Sheriff on behalf of his tenants, who cannot afford to pay the King's many high taxes. The Sheriff, however, will not listen to Robin and says he must go collect taxes from Much, the Miller's son, who turns out to be one of Robin's tenants. Robin offers to pay Much's taxes, but the Sheriff refuses. From this, a fight breaks out between Robin and the Sheriff. The Sheriff tells Robin he is under arrest, but Robin breaks free and runs away.

In the next scene, Robin enters and revisits everything that has happened. Now that he disobeyed the law, he is stripped of his title and must hide and disguise himself. He chooses a new name, Robin Hood, and goes to hide in Sherwood Forest, where only "cutthroats and villains" dare to live.

The scene shifts to King John who is in an outrage about the people's protests. He laments that the people's love of his brother is to blame for his poor ruling: he was set up for failure, because everyone loved Richard so much, John became forgotten and thus became the person he is now.



King John calls for his Fool (the troubadour we met earlier) to come in and cheer him up, however, nothing the Fool does seems to work, so he is sent away. King John, feeling miserable from this entire exchange decides that if he cannot be happy, then no one should be happy without paying for it, and thus he enacts a tax on joy. King John then exits to get some rest.

In the next scene, Robin enters Sherwood Forest. He is a little on edge because the forest has a reputation for being dangerous. Suddenly, a man, who we later learn is Friar Tuck, enters with a sword and stops Robin Hood. The two begin talking and it becomes apparent that Tuck is not an outlaw. He goes to introduce Robin Hood to the other “outlaws”, who also appear to be harmless. We learn that the “outlaws” have only been made “outlaws” because they could not pay their outrageously high taxes. Robin convinces Tuck and the rest of the outlaws that they should band together against King John. Using the forest to their advantage, Robin pledges that they shall rob from the rich to give to the poor, and fight back against King John. Tuck and the outlaws agree and elect Robin as their leader.

Robin proposes that they steal the unfair tax wages from the Sheriff of Nottingham and share the spoils with the poor. Tuck goes to keep the lookout while Robin trains the outlaws. Suddenly, Tuck’s signal is heard and the Sheriff enters. Robin takes the Sheriff’s money and tells him to pass on a message to King John: Robin Hood and his Merry Men have taken the taxes and given them back to the poor people and they will continue to do so until Richard the Lion Heart returns to England. The Sheriff exits and Robin and his men celebrate their first success.

The scene shifts to King John reacting to the news of Robin Hood. His first response is to send men to attack him, but then he comes up with a better plan: He will capture one of Robin’s Merry Men and wait for Robin to come and rescue him. To do this, he must send someone who appears innocent, someone that will never be suspected. This person is Maid Marian.



In the next scene, we see Maid Marian entering Sherwood Forest. We learn that she is only working for King John to help pay off her father's debts. Friar Tuck enters and Marian begins speaking with him. She lies and says that she has lost her way and needs a brave person to escort her to a fantastic seven course feast. Through flattery and the mention of delicious food, Maid Marian convinces Tuck to go with her. She has Tuck close his eyes and when he does, guards come out of hiding and capture him. Feeling terrible, she apologizes and tells Tuck about the King's plan, but she, unfortunately, cannot let him go free.

In the next scene, a royal decree states in honor of the King's birthday, Friar Tuck will be executed in the town square. Robin Hood enters, reacting to the news. He dresses up as a toy doll and sneaks into the castle right under King John's nose. He goes to help Tuck, but as he does, John enters -he was not fooled by Robin Hood after all.

A sword fight takes place between Robin Hood and King John. Robin wins and the guards come and take King John away. Even though there is much celebrating at King John being captured, Robin laments that he is still an outlaw and England still needs a king. Suddenly, King Richard the Lion Heart enters, and he absolves Robin of his past crimes and vows that he has returned to rule England. We learn that Maid Marian is King Richard's niece. King Richard asks Robin to forgive her, for the money she received from helping King John made it possible for him to return. The play ends with order restored, King Richard back in rule, and all living happily ever after.



Places

Time Period: Our play is set in England during the Middle Ages, or Medieval times, specifically during King Richard the Lion Heart's absence in 1193-4.

Nottingham: City in the county of Nottinghamshire, England where our story is set.

Sherwood Forest: Where Robin and his Merry Men reside, and do most of their good deeds. The forest is in Nottinghamshire, England. During the Middle Ages, there was a main road that went from London to York that crossed right through this forest. Sherwood Forest still exists today!

The Palace: Where King John rules in King Richard the Lion Heart's absence.

Main Characters

The Fool: A troubadour, employed by King John.

Sheriff of Nottingham: Employed by King John to collect the many taxes the King has placed on the people of England.

Robin Hood: Begins the play as Sir Robin of Loxley, but loses his title and becomes Robin Hood when he stands up to the Sheriff in defense of his tenants who cannot pay the cruel taxes enacted by King John.

King Richard the Lion Heart: Well-loved, rightful ruler of England. At the start of the play, he has left England to fight battles in other lands. King Richard was a real person, and ruled from 1189-1199. He was the son of King Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine.

King John: King Richard's younger brother. As soon as Richard leaves England, he takes over the throne and rules in a cowardly, cruel way, enacting many unpayable taxes on his citizens. King John was a real king, famous for being as tyrannical as he is in our play.



His unpopularity led to one positive change, however: he was pressured to sign the Magna Carta, which was drafted by his citizens, a document that states, “No freeman shall be taken, imprisoned...outlawed, banished, or in any way destroyed... except by the lawful judgment of his peers and by the law of the land.” It prevented a king from acting unlawfully against his citizens simply because it was his will. This document has become a mainstay in guiding common law today and was a primary source for the American colonists in the drafting of the Bill of Rights.

Friar Tuck: Another “outlaw” banished to Sherwood Forrest, becomes a great ally to Robin.

Robin’s Merry Men/Guards: Played by members of our audience! Supporters of both Robin Hood and King John respectively. As Robin’s Merry Men, they play Little John, Will Scarlet, and Gamble Gold.

Maid Marian: Starts the play in the employment of King John. We learn however that the only reason she is working for him is to save her family by paying back their debt. She is King Richard’s niece and is integral to his return to England.



Vocabulary

Troubadour: A composer and performer

Avaunt: Middle English, “go away!”

Whimsy: A humorous tale

Tenant: Someone who rents land/property from another

Friar: A member of certain religious orders of men

Forest: A large area covered primarily with trees and undergrowth

Mutton: Sheep

Merry Men: In Mediaeval times, this term referred to any followers or assistants of outlaws or knights. Thus, Robin Hood’s Merry Men are his followers.

Helpful Literary Term

Legend: A story handed down through generations, often focusing on the heroic acts of one person. It is often considered to be history; however, it cannot be verified as true. A person who inspires such a story can also be called a “legend”. Both Robin Hood and his story are legends.



Preshow Discussion Questions

The following questions provide a guide for getting students excited about seeing the performance and to guide them in watching the show.

Today we are going to see a performance by Hampstead Stage Company called Robin Hood.

- Has anyone read the book or seen a movie version of this story? If so, what do you remember most about it?
- Was Robin Hood a real person?
- What was he famous for?

If possible, write up student ideas on the board or chart paper so the whole class can see all the answers. Here are some key points for students to consider:

- **Was Robin Hood a Real Person?** The story of *Robin Hood* is a **legend**, which means that it has been handed down over the ages (for more than 800 years!). A legend focuses on the heroic acts of one person. A legend is often considered to be history, though there is not enough evidence to prove that it is true. Therefore, many people believe that Robin Hood was a real person, however, we may never know for sure as his stories could also have been inspired by the acts of several people or simply a story that was told for entertainment.
- **What was Robin Hood Famous for?** He robbed from the rich to give to the poor.
- **Look for:** An interesting post-show activity is to have students debate if it was right for Robin Hood to break the law. We have included a more formal process for this for students in grades 6-8 in the following Activities and Lesson Plans section, however, this question could also be approached more informally as a post-show debrief with students. Therefore, it may be helpful to encourage students to notice when Robin Hood breaks the law in the play and to note if they agree with him or if they might have done anything differently. **You may even have students discuss before the show if they believe it is right for Robin Hood to rob from the rich and break the law and have them notice if their answers change while watching the performance.**



Post Show Discussion Questions

- Have students share general reactions to the performance
- Who was your favorite character? Why?
- **Robbing from the rich to give to the poor:** Ask students to share their responses to Robin Hood robbing from the rich to give to the poor. Do they agree with what Robin Hood did? If they had discussed this question prior to the show, ask them if their opinions have changed and to share why.
- Are there any other questions you have about the play or theatre that the actors did not get to answer?
 - Hampstead Stage loves to receive letters and emails! If students have questions or more comments they would like to share, they are encouraged to write to us! Our contact information may be found on our website.

Activities and Lesson Plans

We have prepared the following workshop lesson plans for those who wish to expand upon seeing our performance in the classroom. These activities may be done either before or after seeing the performance. Teachers are encouraged to modify as needed for the needs of their students. A summary of the workshops is provided below. The full lesson plans may be downloaded for free from our website.

Grades K-2

Sherwood Forest Craft & Community Service: This interactive workshop guides students in creating artwork inspired by *Robin Hood's* Sherwood Forest. Two options are included, one that incorporates students going outside to find natural materials to use in their artwork and another can be done in any classroom setting. Keeping with the spirit of *Robin Hood*, which emphasizes being of service to those who are in need, several ideas are included for how to use this activity as part of a larger community service project.



Grades 3-5

Robin Hood: Legends and Storytelling: This interactive workshop teaches students the definition of a “legend” and shares Robin Hood’s legendary history. Students are then guided in writing their own legends and acting them out with the help of their peers.

Grades 6-8

Robin Hood Debate: This interactive workshop guides students in debating and discussing some of the major questions in *Robin Hood*, including the question, “**Was it right for Robin Hood to break the law?**” There is an optional extension activity included for students to take their ideas from this workshop and further develop them into an essay.

Works Cited and Further Resources

For further reading on the topics discussed in this study guide, please visit:

<http://www.history.com/topics/british-history/robin-hood>

http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/middle_ages/robin_01.shtml

<http://www.thehistoryvault.co.uk/inventing-an-outlaw-joseph-ritsons-robin-hood-1795/>

http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/richard_i_king.shtml

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/11671441/King-John-the-most-evil-monarch-in-Britains-history.html>

Many of the activities used in the workshops are inspired by the **Arts Literacy Project** and **Expeditionary Learning**. For more information, please visit their websites:

<http://www.artslit.org/handbook.php>

<https://eleducation.org/>