

AI-Generated Graded Readers

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About This Edition

This book is a simplified English adaptation created for extensive reading practice. The text was generated using ChatGPT and prepared for intermediate English learners as part of an educational project.

Target reading level: CEFR A2-B1

This edition aims to support fluency development through accessible vocabulary, expanded narration, and improved readability while preserving the original story structure.

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Howard Pyle, *The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood* (Simplified Edition, Adapted and Simplified by ChatGPT)

Part 1

In old England, long ago, when King Henry the Second ruled the land, there lived a young man named Robin Hood. He lived near the great green forest called Sherwood, not far from the town of Nottingham. Many people later spoke his name with smiles, for he became famous as a brave outlaw who lived in the forest with many loyal friends. He was known as the best archer in all the land. No one could send an arrow flying as straight or as far as he could, and the men who followed him were strong, cheerful yeomen who loved freedom more than comfort.

Robin and his companions lived deep among tall trees where sunlight fell in soft green light through the leaves. They hunted deer for food and drank good ale beside clear streams. Though they lived outside the law, poor people loved them. Any person who came to Robin in trouble rarely left without help. Because of this kindness, many stories about him spread from village to village.

But Robin had not always been an outlaw. Once he had been only a young man of eighteen years, strong in body and quick in temper. The tale of how he first broke the law began on a bright morning in spring.

The Sheriff of Nottingham announced a great shooting match. The best archer would win a large barrel of fine ale. When Robin heard this news, his heart grew excited. "I will go," he said to himself. "I will show my skill, and perhaps I will win the prize." Thinking also of Maid Marian and wishing to impress her, he took his long yew bow and many arrows and set out toward Nottingham.

It was early morning in May. The grass shone with fresh green color, and flowers opened beside the path. Birds sang loudly above him. Robin walked happily, whistling as he went. Warm sunlight touched the forest floor, and soft wind moved the leaves. His thoughts were light, and he felt joy simply to be alive.

As he walked along a forest path, he suddenly came upon a group of foresters

resting under a large oak tree. There were fifteen men. They laughed loudly while eating from a large pie and drinking ale from heavy horns. Their green clothing showed they served the King's forest.

One forester looked up and called, "Where are you going, boy, with that small bow?"

Robin stopped. He did not like being mocked. "My bow is good," he answered firmly. "I go to Nottingham to shoot in the contest."

The men laughed again. Another said, "You are too young. You cannot draw a strong bow."

Robin's face grew red. "I will wager twenty marks that I can strike a target sixty rods away," he said.

The foresters laughed even louder. One pointed toward a distant group of deer grazing far down the glade. "There is your target," he said. "Hit one of those if you can."

Robin's anger burned hot. Without another word, he set the end of his bow against his foot and bent it smoothly. He placed an arrow on the string, lifted the bow, and drew the feather back to his ear. For one quiet moment the forest seemed still. Then the string sang, and the arrow flew like a swift bird through the air.

A great stag leaped high and fell dead upon the grass.

Robin lowered his bow and smiled slightly. "What say you now?" he asked.

But the foresters did not praise him. Instead, their faces turned dark with anger. One shouted, "You have killed the King's deer! That is a crime!"

Another cried, "Catch him!"

Robin turned and began to walk away, wishing no trouble. His heart still burned with anger, but he did not want a fight. Yet one forester, angry from drink and shame, quickly lifted his bow and shot an arrow at Robin's back.

The arrow passed close beside Robin's head.

Robin spun around in shock. Without thinking, he drew his own bow and fired. His arrow flew straight and struck the man who had shot at him. The forester fell to the ground and did not move again.

Silence filled the forest.

Robin stood frozen. His anger vanished at once, replaced by fear and sorrow. He had never meant to kill anyone. Seeing the other foresters rushing toward their fallen companion, he ran into the deep forest as fast as he could.

As he ran, his heart felt heavy. "What have I done?" he cried softly. "If only I had walked another path. If only I had held my anger." But he knew the truth. The deed could not be undone.

From that moment, Robin Hood became an outlaw. Not only had he killed a man, but he had also hunted the King's deer. A great reward was offered for his capture. The Sheriff of Nottingham swore he would bring Robin to justice, partly for the reward and partly because the dead forester was his relative.

Robin hid in Sherwood Forest for many months. During that time, others came to join him. Some were poor men punished for hunting when they were hungry. Some had lost their homes to powerful lords. Others had been treated unfairly by rich officials. Each had his own sorrow, and each found safety in the greenwood.

Soon more than a hundred strong men gathered around Robin and chose him as their leader. Together they made simple rules. They would take wealth from cruel and greedy men, but they would help the poor. They would never harm women or children. Because of this, common people began to see Robin not as a criminal but as a friend.

One bright morning, after many peaceful days, Robin said to his men, "Stay here and listen for my horn. I will go alone to seek adventure." Then he walked through the forest paths, enjoying the fresh air and watching travelers pass along the roads.

At last he came to a narrow bridge over a clear stream. At the same time, a tall stranger approached from the other side. Both men stepped forward, each wishing to cross first.

"Stand back," said Robin. "Let the better man cross."

The stranger laughed. "Then you should stand back yourself, for I am the better man."

Robin smiled slightly. "We shall soon see."

The stranger held only a long staff, while Robin carried bow and arrows. Seeing

this, Robin laid his weapons aside. “I will fight you fairly,” he said. He cut himself a strong wooden staff and returned to the bridge.

The stranger was enormous—taller and broader than any man Robin had ever seen. Yet Robin felt no fear. They stepped onto the bridge and began to fight.

Their staffs struck again and again with loud cracks. Each blow was strong. Each man moved quickly, blocking and striking in turn. The fight lasted a long time. Sweat ran down their faces, and both breathed heavily, yet neither gave up.

At last the stranger struck Robin’s head with a powerful blow. Robin lost his balance and fell backward into the stream with a great splash.

The stranger burst into laughter. Robin stood up in the water, laughing too despite his pain. “You are a brave fighter,” he called. “Give me your hand.”

The stranger helped him to the bank. Robin lifted his horn and blew three clear notes that echoed through the forest.

Soon many green-clad men ran from the trees. They were Robin’s companions, led by Will Stutely. Seeing Robin wet and bruised, they rushed toward the stranger.

“Stop,” Robin said, laughing. “He is a good man. No harm shall come to him.”

Then Robin turned to the tall stranger. “Will you join us?” he asked. “Live freely in the forest and share our food and fortune?”

The stranger crossed his arms. “If any man here can shoot better than I, I will think about it.”

Robin smiled. A target was set far away. The stranger shot first, and his arrow struck the center perfectly. The men cheered.

Robin then raised his own bow. His arrow flew straight and split the stranger’s arrow in two.

The stranger stared in wonder. “Never have I seen such a shot,” he said. “I will follow you.”

“What is your name?” Robin asked.

“John Little,” the man replied.

The men laughed at the name, for he was very large. “Then Little John you shall be,” said Will Stutely.

Though annoyed at first, the giant soon laughed with them. That day he joined

Robin Hood's band and became his closest friend.

Thus Robin Hood gained his right-hand man, and the merry company of Sherwood grew stronger beneath the green trees.

Part 2

After Little John joined the band, life in Sherwood Forest became even more lively. The men built small huts from branches and bark. Soft grass and deer skins made their beds. In the center of their camp stood a great oak tree whose wide branches spread like open arms above them. Beneath this tree Robin often sat while his men gathered around him to eat, laugh, and tell stories. Fires burned warmly at night, and the sound of singing carried through the forest.

That evening they prepared a feast to welcome their new companion. Fresh deer meat roasted above the flames, and a barrel of strong ale was opened. Robin placed Little John beside him as a sign of honor, for he had already seen the strength and courage of the tall stranger.

When the meal ended, Will Stutely stood and clapped his hands. "Now," he said with a grin, "it is time to give our new friend a proper name."

The men laughed loudly. Before Little John understood their plan, several strong yeomen seized him by the arms and legs. Though he struggled, they carried him forward while others watched with great amusement.

One man pretended to be a priest and held a full pot of ale. "Who brings this child?" he asked in a serious voice.

"I do," answered Will Stutely.

"And what name shall he have?"

"Little John," said Will.

The mock priest raised the pot. "Then Little John he shall be!" he declared, pouring the ale over the giant's head.

Brown ale ran through Little John's beard and down his face. For a moment he looked ready to grow angry, but the laughter around him was so warm that he soon began laughing too. Robin himself gave him new green clothes and a fine

bow. From that day forward, Little John stood as Robin's trusted companion.

So the band grew stronger, and many stories of their kindness spread through the countryside. Poor families found food at their doors. Travelers who treated others fairly passed safely through Sherwood. Only greedy men feared Robin Hood.

Not long after these events, the Sheriff of Nottingham still searched for a way to capture Robin. Two hundred pounds had been promised for the outlaw's arrest, yet no man dared attempt it. The Sheriff offered a reward to anyone brave enough to serve a warrant upon Robin Hood, but the people of Nottingham only laughed. They knew how dangerous such a task would be.

Angry and ashamed, the Sheriff sent a messenger toward Lincoln to find a man bold enough to try.

The messenger rode along a dusty road beneath the bright sun. At last he reached an inn called the Blue Boar, where cool shade and good ale promised rest. Outside sat several cheerful men drinking and singing. Among them was a loud and merry tinker with a strong voice and a heavy staff resting beside him.

The messenger joined their company and soon began telling news. He spoke of Robin Hood, of the reward upon his head, and of the Sheriff's desire to arrest him. The tinker listened carefully while drinking deep from his cup.

At last the tinker struck the table. "I will do it!" he cried. "If this Robin Hood refuses the King's warrant, I will beat him until he cannot stand."

The messenger smiled widely. "Then come with me to Nottingham," he said. "You shall earn great gold."

The tinker agreed proudly, and together they set out.

Some days later, Robin himself walked along a country lane toward Nottingham, wishing to see what news might be found there. He carried his bow across his back and twirled a staff in his hand as he walked. Soon he saw a man approaching while singing loudly. It was the same tinker, though Robin did not yet reveal who he was.

"Good day," said Robin cheerfully.

The tinker stopped singing. "Who are you to interrupt my song?" he asked.

Robin laughed. “Only a traveler. Tell me your news.”

The tinker gladly spoke, for he loved conversation. Soon he proudly explained that he carried a warrant to arrest the outlaw Robin Hood and planned to beat him if he resisted.

Robin hid his smile. “I know that man,” he said calmly. “He looks much like me.”

The tinker studied him but shook his head. “No, Robin Hood must be older and stronger.”

“Perhaps,” Robin replied. “Come drink with me at the Blue Boar, and afterward I will help you find him.”

The tinker agreed at once.

Inside the inn, Robin secretly asked the host to mix strong drink into the ale. The tinker drank deeply and happily sang songs while everyone listened. Slowly his speech became thick, and his head began to sway. Before long he fell asleep at the table.

Robin laughed softly and removed the warrant from the man’s pouch. Leaving money for the host, he slipped away.

When the tinker finally woke, evening shadows stretched across the ground. He searched his pouch and found the warrant gone. Furious, he demanded answers from the innkeeper and soon learned the truth.

“That man was Robin Hood!” the host said.

The tinker roared with anger and hurried into the forest to find him.

By chance, the two soon met again on a forest path. Robin greeted him with a grin. “Did you enjoy the ale?” he asked.

The tinker raised his staff. “Now I will pay you back!” he shouted.

They fought fiercely with their staffs. Blow followed blow. The tinker was strong, and at last Robin’s staff broke beneath a heavy strike.

Seeing himself at a disadvantage, Robin lifted his horn and blew three loud notes.

Little John and several men rushed from the trees. They surrounded the tinker, ready to seize him, but Robin stopped them.

“He is brave,” Robin said. “Let him choose freely.”

Turning to the tinker, he spoke kindly. “Join us. Live freely in the forest. Share our food and friendship.”

The tinker looked around at the cheerful men and then laughed. “You tricked me,” he said, “but you fought me fairly. I will stay.”

And so the tinker became another of Robin Hood’s merry men, singing songs beside their fires and sharing their adventures beneath the greenwood trees.

Yet far away, the Sheriff of Nottingham still planned revenge, and soon he would prepare a trap meant to capture Robin once and for all.

Part 3

The Sheriff of Nottingham grew more angry each day when he heard how people laughed at him. News spread quickly that his messenger had failed and that even the bold tinker had joined Robin Hood instead of capturing him. Nothing troubled the Sheriff more than becoming a joke among the townsfolk. He walked through his hall in silence, thinking again and again about how he might trap the outlaw.

At last he decided to travel to London and speak directly to King Henry. With this plan made, his castle filled with activity. Servants hurried through the halls. Smiths worked late into the night repairing armor and sharpening weapons. Horses were prepared, and soldiers gathered for the journey.

After two days of preparation, the Sheriff and his men rode south along the great roads. Their armor shone in the sun, and many travelers stopped to watch them pass. At last they reached London, where the King held court with Queen Eleanor among richly dressed nobles and knights.

The Sheriff knelt before the King. “My lord,” he said, “a bold outlaw named Robin Hood lives in Sherwood Forest. He kills your deer and robs travelers. He even stole a royal warrant.”

The King listened with growing impatience. “You are Sheriff,” he replied sharply. “Why come to me with this matter? Are my laws not strong in your own

county? Take him yourself. If you cannot keep order, perhaps you are not fit for your office.”

The Sheriff bowed deeply, his face pale with shame. He understood that failure might cost him his position. During the long ride back to Nottingham he spoke little, thinking carefully. Many ideas came and went, each seeming weak. Then suddenly a thought struck him.

“Robin Hood loves contests,” he said aloud. “If I announce a great shooting match, he will not resist coming. Then I shall take him.”

As soon as he returned home, messengers rode in every direction. They announced a grand archery contest open to all England. The prize would be a golden arrow, bright and beautiful. Word spread quickly through towns and villages.

When Robin Hood heard the news, he was visiting Lincoln. He returned at once to Sherwood and called his men together beneath the great oak.

“The Sheriff holds a shooting match,” he told them. “The prize is a golden arrow. I would see one of us win it.”

Young David of Doncaster stepped forward. “Master,” he said carefully, “this may be a trap. I heard at the Blue Boar that the Sheriff hopes you will come.”

Robin smiled calmly. “Perhaps it is a trap,” he said. “But shall we hide because he calls us? No. We will go, but wisely. Some of you shall dress as farmers, some as friars, some as beggars. Carry your weapons hidden. We will meet cunning with cunning.”

The men agreed gladly, excited by the adventure.

On the morning of the contest, Nottingham Town shone with color and noise. Outside the walls stretched a wide green field prepared for the match. Rows of benches stood for nobles and wealthy townspeople. Poorer folk gathered behind a railing, sitting on the grass. Bright ribbons and flowers decorated a raised seat prepared for the Sheriff and his lady.

Archers arrived from across England. Some tested their bowstrings. Others examined arrows carefully, turning them in the light to be sure they were straight. Famous archers stood among them, each proud of his skill.

Soon the Sheriff arrived dressed in fine velvet, wearing gold chains and rich clothing. His lady rode beside him, and soldiers surrounded them. Trumpets sounded, and the crowd cheered loudly.

Among the crowd moved Robin Hood and his men, dressed in simple disguises. Robin himself wore the clothes of a humble yeoman so that none would know him. Yet his sharp eyes watched everything, especially the guards placed carefully around the field.

The contest began. One by one the archers stepped forward and shot their arrows. The crowd shouted at each fine shot. Some arrows struck near the center; others missed wide. Each round removed weaker archers until only the best remained.

Robin waited patiently. When his turn came, he stepped forward quietly. Few noticed him at first, for many grand archers had already shot. He lifted his bow calmly, feeling its familiar weight in his hands. The world seemed to grow silent around him.

He drew the string slowly to his ear and released.

The arrow flew straight and struck the very center of the mark.

Murmurs spread through the crowd.

Other archers tried to match the shot but failed. Round after round passed until Robin alone remained the clear winner.

The herald announced him victor. The Sheriff forced a smile, though anger burned inside him. He presented the golden arrow with polite words, studying the unknown archer closely.

Robin bowed respectfully and accepted the prize. For a moment their eyes met. Something in Robin's calm face troubled the Sheriff, but before he could act, Robin stepped away into the crowd.

Soon afterward, Robin and his disguised companions slipped quietly out of Nottingham and returned safely to Sherwood Forest. There, beneath their great tree, Robin hung the golden arrow upon a branch so all might admire it.

The men laughed and celebrated long into the night, pleased that they had outwitted the Sheriff once again.

But the Sheriff's anger only deepened, and he swore that next time Robin Hood would not escape so easily.

Part 4

When the Sheriff of Nottingham learned that the unknown archer who had won the golden arrow was truly Robin Hood, his anger grew hotter than ever. Servants heard him shouting through the halls of his castle, and none dared speak to him unless spoken to first. He felt not only defeated but mocked, for the outlaw had come openly into Nottingham, won the prize, and escaped before his very eyes.

"This cannot continue," he said again and again. "I will take him yet, though I must search every tree in Sherwood."

Meanwhile, life in the forest remained cheerful. Robin and his merry men gathered often beneath the great oak tree. The golden arrow shone among the leaves above them, moving gently whenever the wind passed through the branches. The men laughed whenever they looked at it, remembering how cleverly they had fooled the Sheriff.

One morning, as sunlight fell in long lines through the trees, Robin rose early and called his companions together. "It has been many days since we have seen new adventure," he said. "I will walk abroad alone today. Keep watch for my horn, and come quickly if I call."

With that he took his bow and staff and walked toward the edge of the forest. The air smelled fresh after rain, and small drops of water still shone upon leaves and grass. Birds sang loudly, and the forest seemed peaceful.

As Robin traveled along a road near Sherwood, he saw many travelers. A lady rode slowly upon a gentle horse, and Robin stepped aside respectfully, removing his cap as she passed. Later he met a monk leading a small mule loaded with bags. Then he saw merchants walking together and speaking quietly. Yet none of these meetings brought adventure, and Robin continued onward.

At last he reached a narrow path leading toward a small village. There he saw a young man walking sadly, his clothes worn and dusty. The man's head was bent

low, and he seemed troubled by heavy thoughts.

Robin greeted him kindly. “Good friend, why do you look so sorrowful on such a fair day?”

The young man stopped and sighed deeply. “I am called Allan a Dale,” he said. “My heart is heavy because the woman I love is to be married today against her will.”

Robin listened closely. Allan explained that a rich old knight wished to marry the lady for her wealth, though she loved Allan truly. The wedding would take place that very day in a nearby church, and Allan felt powerless to stop it.

Robin’s eyes grew serious. “No woman should be forced into marriage,” he said. “Come with me. We shall see what may be done.”

Together they returned quickly to Sherwood, where Robin gathered his men. When he told them the story, anger rose among them all.

“We will help,” said Little John firmly. “Lead the way.”

The band disguised themselves as pilgrims and travelers so they might enter the town unnoticed. They walked together toward the church where the wedding bells already rang.

Inside, people gathered quietly while the old knight stood proudly beside the bride. The young woman looked pale and unhappy. Her eyes searched the room as though hoping for rescue.

Just as the priest prepared to begin the ceremony, the church doors opened. Robin and his men entered calmly among the crowd. Robin stepped forward.

“Hold,” he said clearly. “Before this marriage continues, let the bride speak her true wish.”

The people murmured in surprise. The Sheriff’s men, who were present among the guests, looked uncertain, unsure whether trouble had truly begun.

Robin turned gently toward the bride. “Lady,” he said, “do you freely choose this marriage?”

The young woman shook her head, tears in her eyes. “No,” she said softly. “My heart belongs to Allan a Dale.”

At once Robin brought Allan forward. The lovers looked at one another with

joy and relief.

The old knight protested loudly, but Robin's men stepped closer, and the knight quickly fell silent. Even the priest hesitated, unsure what to do.

Robin spoke kindly but firmly. "A marriage without love is no true marriage. Join these two instead."

Seeing the determined faces around him, the priest agreed. Soon Allan a Dale and his beloved were married properly before all present. Smiles replaced fear, and many guests quietly approved, though none dared speak too loudly.

After the ceremony, Robin and his men slipped away before soldiers could gather. They returned safely to Sherwood, where the newly married couple thanked them again and again.

That evening the forest rang with music, for Allan a Dale proved a wonderful singer. His voice was clear and sweet, and when he sang beside the fire, even the wind seemed to pause among the trees. The men listened happily, knowing they had brought justice where none had existed.

Thus another loyal friend joined Robin Hood's band, and the stories of their kindness spread even farther across the land.

Yet beyond the forest, the Sheriff continued to plan new schemes, certain that someday fortune would turn in his favor.

Part 5

Days passed peacefully in Sherwood Forest after Allan a Dale joined the company. His songs became part of daily life among the merry men. In the evenings, after food was shared and the fires burned low, Allan would sing while the others listened in silence. His voice carried through the trees, soft and clear, and even the restless men grew calm as they listened. Robin often sat with folded arms, smiling quietly, pleased that another good heart had found safety among them.

Yet Robin never allowed his band to grow careless. Each morning some men watched the forest paths while others hunted or gathered food. Though laughter

filled their camp, they remembered always that the Sheriff searched for them.

One afternoon a tired knight rode slowly into the edge of Sherwood Forest. His horse moved weakly, and dust covered both rider and saddle. Robin, who was walking nearby, stepped forward and raised his hand in greeting.

“Welcome, sir knight,” he said kindly. “You look weary. Will you rest and share food with us?”

The knight hesitated at first, for he had heard many tales of Robin Hood, some kind and some fearful. But Robin’s manner was gentle, and hunger pressed strongly upon him. He accepted the offer.

The merry men led the knight to their camp beneath the great oak tree. A meal of venison and bread was set before him, along with fresh drink. The knight ate slowly at first, then with greater hunger as strength returned to him.

Robin watched him carefully. The man’s clothes were once fine but now worn. His face showed worry deeper than simple travel weariness.

“Sir,” Robin said at last, “you seem troubled. If it is no secret, tell us your sorrow. Many who come here carry heavy burdens.”

The knight sighed deeply. “My name is Sir Richard of the Lea,” he said. “I am ruined. My lands will soon be taken from me because I cannot repay a great debt.”

The men listened quietly while he explained. He had borrowed money from a powerful abbot to save his son’s life. Now the time of payment had come, and he lacked the gold. If he failed, he would lose everything.

Robin’s eyes grew thoughtful. “How much must you pay?” he asked.

“Four hundred pounds,” the knight answered sadly. “A sum far beyond my reach.”

The merry men exchanged glances. It was a great amount of money.

Robin stood and walked slowly beneath the oak tree, thinking. At last he turned back. “Sir Richard,” he said, “you have spoken honestly, and I believe you. Stay with us tonight. Tomorrow we shall see what may be done.”

That evening Robin called his men together privately. “We take wealth from those who grow rich through unfair means,” he said. “If this knight speaks truth, we should help him.”

The men agreed at once.

The next morning Robin brought out bags of silver gathered from past adventures. Carefully they counted the coins until the full sum lay before them.

Sir Richard stared in disbelief. "I cannot accept this," he said. "I have nothing to give in return."

Robin smiled. "Repay it when you are able," he said simply. "Until then, think of it as help from friends."

Tears filled the knight's eyes. He promised to return the money one day and rode away with renewed hope.

Not long afterward, Robin heard that the same abbot who demanded the debt traveled through the forest carrying rich payments collected from tenants. Robin and his men prepared an ambush along the road.

When the abbot's party approached, Robin stepped forward politely. "Good father," he said, bowing slightly, "we ask you to dine with us."

The abbot trembled, recognizing the famous outlaw. He tried to refuse, but Robin's men gently guided him into the forest.

A feast was prepared, and the abbot sat nervously while the merry men ate heartily around him. Robin spoke kindly yet firmly. "We hear you have done good business collecting rents," he said.

The abbot admitted he carried much gold.

"Then perhaps you will share a little," Robin replied. "For many poor people suffer while wealth gathers in few hands."

The bags were opened and counted. The amount matched closely the sum given to Sir Richard. Robin kept enough to repay their gift and allowed the abbot to leave unharmed, though much lighter in purse.

Some weeks later Sir Richard returned to Sherwood dressed once more as a noble knight. He brought the full repayment as promised, along with gratitude deeper than words.

"You saved my honor," he told Robin. "I will never forget it."

Robin accepted the money only after much urging and shared it among his men, for he believed fairness must guide all things.

As evening fell that day, the band gathered again beneath the great oak. Fires burned warmly, Allan sang, and laughter rose into the night air. Though danger always waited beyond the forest, within Sherwood there lived friendship, loyalty, and a strange kind of justice that bound them all together.

And still the Sheriff of Nottingham searched, unaware that each failure only made Robin Hood's name grow greater across the land.

Part 6

The fame of Robin Hood spread farther with each passing season. Travelers carried stories from village to village, telling how the outlaw helped the poor and humbled the proud. Some stories grew larger with each telling, yet at their heart remained the same truth: Robin and his men lived by their own sense of fairness beneath the green trees of Sherwood.

One cool morning, mist lay low across the forest floor. Robin walked alone beside a small stream, listening to the quiet sound of water moving over stones. He enjoyed such moments of peace, for leadership brought many worries. Though laughter filled their camp, he knew danger always stood near.

As he returned toward the camp, he heard hurried footsteps. Little John approached, his long stride quick and serious.

"Master," he said, "a friar walks near the river road. He looks strong and carries himself boldly. I think he may bring either trouble or sport."

Robin smiled slightly. "Then let us meet him," he said.

Together they went toward the riverbank. Soon they saw a large friar dressed in brown robes. The man stood calmly beside the water, holding a stout staff. His face was cheerful but watchful.

Robin greeted him. "Good father, will you help me cross this stream? My boots are new, and I would not wet them."

The friar looked at him carefully and laughed. "Climb upon my back, then," he said. "I will carry you."

Robin agreed and climbed onto the friar's shoulders. The friar stepped into the

water and crossed steadily. But when they reached the far side, the friar suddenly shifted his weight and dropped Robin into the stream with a splash.

Water soaked Robin from head to foot.

The friar laughed loudly. "Now we are equal," he said. "Carry me back across!"

Robin wiped water from his face, half angry and half amused. "Very well," he replied.

He carried the friar back, but halfway across he too stumbled on purpose, sending the friar into the water. Both men stood dripping and laughing.

Soon laughter turned into challenge. Each took up his staff, and they began a fierce fight beside the river. Their blows rang loudly. The friar moved with surprising speed, meeting Robin strike for strike. Neither man gained advantage, and both grew tired from effort.

At last the friar lifted a horn and blew a loud call. From the woods ran several strong dogs barking fiercely.

Robin quickly answered with his own horn. Little John and other merry men rushed forward.

Seeing both sides ready for battle, the friar lowered his staff. "Enough," he said calmly. "You must be Robin Hood."

Robin nodded. "And you must be a brave friar indeed."

The friar smiled warmly. "Men call me the Curtal Friar. I have heard much of you."

After friendly words, Robin invited him to join their company. The friar agreed gladly, saying he preferred honest laughter in the forest to quiet walls of stone. That evening he shared food and drink with the band, proving both strong and cheerful company.

Not long afterward another adventure arose. News reached Sherwood of a young woman forced toward an unwanted marriage arranged for wealth rather than love. Remembering Allan a Dale's sorrow, Robin decided once again to act.

Disguised as travelers, Robin and several men went to the village where the wedding would occur. The church bells rang as people gathered. Robin waited until the final moment before stepping forward.

“Before this marriage,” he said calmly, “let the bride speak freely.”

The crowd fell silent. The young woman admitted she loved another. Robin quickly brought her true love forward from among the crowd. With gentle pressure and the support of his men, the ceremony changed, and the loving pair were joined instead.

The villagers whispered in surprise but many smiled quietly. Robin and his companions departed before soldiers could arrive, leaving behind another tale soon repeated across the countryside.

As months passed, Sherwood became almost a small hidden world of its own. New members arrived from time to time, drawn by stories of freedom and fairness. The band trained daily with bows and staves. Laughter followed hard work, and shared danger strengthened friendship among them.

Yet beyond the forest, King Henry himself began to hear more stories of Robin Hood—not only complaints from the Sheriff but also praise from common people. Some said the outlaw punished cruelty better than many officials did.

One evening, as the sun set red beyond the trees, Robin sat quietly beneath the great oak. Little John joined him.

“Do you ever wish for another life?” John asked.

Robin thought for a long moment before answering. “Sometimes,” he said softly. “But while injustice lives in the world, perhaps this is where I must be.”

The sounds of laughter rose behind them as Allan began another song. Firelight flickered through the leaves, and the forest seemed warm and alive.

None of them knew that soon a royal visitor would enter Sherwood itself, bringing events that would change their fortunes forever.

Part 7

As the seasons changed, stories of Robin Hood reached even the royal court again and again. Some spoke of robbery and broken laws, yet many more told how poor people received help when no one else cared for them. King Henry listened to these tales with growing curiosity. Though he valued order in his

kingdom, he also wondered whether the outlaw truly deserved the hatred shown by the Sheriff of Nottingham.

At last the King decided to learn the truth for himself.

Disguised as a simple knight and accompanied by a small group of trusted men, he traveled quietly toward Nottinghamshire. Word of his journey was kept secret so that none might prepare for his arrival. The Sheriff knew nothing of the King's plan.

Meanwhile, Robin and his merry men continued their life in Sherwood. One bright morning they gathered for archery practice. Arrows flew through the air and struck trees with sharp sounds. Little John laughed loudly whenever a shot landed poorly, while Allan a Dale sang short verses to tease the archers.

Suddenly one of the watchers hurried into camp. "Travelers approach," he said. "Well armed, yet dressed as common knights."

Robin nodded calmly. "We will greet them," he said.

Soon the strangers entered a forest clearing where Robin waited. The leader, dressed simply but carrying himself with natural authority, studied the outlaw carefully.

"Good day," said the stranger. "We seek food and rest. Will you grant it?"

Robin bowed politely. "All honest travelers are welcome in Sherwood," he replied. "Share our meal."

The visitors accepted. Fires were lit, and food was brought. During the meal, Robin spoke freely with the leader, unaware he addressed the King himself.

"Men speak many things of you," said the stranger thoughtfully. "Some call you thief, others call you friend."

Robin smiled slightly. "A man's name depends on who speaks it," he answered. "We take from those who grow rich through unfairness and help those who suffer."

The stranger watched him closely. "And what of the King's law?"

Robin paused before replying. "If the law protects justice, I honor it. If it protects cruelty, then I follow a better path."

The words were spoken calmly, without pride or fear. The stranger seemed pleased.

After the meal, Robin proposed an archery contest for sport. The strangers agreed gladly. One by one the men shot arrows, and laughter filled the clearing. At last Robin himself shot, striking the center cleanly. The leader then took a bow and shot nearly as well, earning cheers from the merry men.

Evening came, and the guests remained. Songs were sung, and ale passed freely. The King observed how the men treated one another—with loyalty and warmth rather than fear. He saw poor travelers welcomed and shared food equally among all.

At last the leader stood. “Robin Hood,” he said, “you have shown kindness and courage. It is time you knew who speaks with you.”

He removed his disguise.

The merry men fell silent as they recognized King Henry standing before them.

Robin stepped forward quickly and knelt. “My lord,” he said, surprised yet calm.

The King raised him at once. “Rise,” he said kindly. “I wished to see you with my own eyes. I have heard many stories, and now I know the truth lies somewhere between praise and blame.”

The men waited anxiously, unsure what judgment would follow.

The King continued, “You have broken my laws, yet you have also corrected wrongs done by others. Therefore I offer pardon to you and your men—if you will leave the forest and serve honestly under my rule.”

Murmurs passed through the band. Some looked hopeful; others uncertain.

Robin thought deeply. The forest had been his home for years, yet peace under royal pardon offered safety for his companions.

At last he spoke. “If my men are forgiven as well, we will serve faithfully.”

The King nodded. “So it shall be.”

Joy spread among the company. Many laughed and embraced one another, relieved that years of danger might finally end.

That night they celebrated not as outlaws but as men granted a new beginning. Fires burned bright, and Allan a Dale sang louder than ever before.

Yet Robin felt both happiness and sadness. As he walked alone beneath the trees, he touched the bark of the great oak where the golden arrow still hung. Sherwood

had shaped his life, and leaving it would not be easy.

Still, he knew change had come.

And so the merry company prepared to follow the King toward a different future, unaware that new trials still waited ahead before their story would reach its true ending.

Part 8

The morning after the King revealed himself in Sherwood Forest dawned clear and cool. Sunlight moved slowly through the branches as Robin Hood and his companions gathered beneath the great oak tree. The news of pardon still felt strange to them. For many years they had lived as hunted men, always listening for danger. Now the King himself had offered forgiveness.

Some of the merry men spoke excitedly of new lives beyond the forest. Others remained quiet, unsure whether they truly wished to leave the greenwood that had sheltered them so long.

Robin stood before them. "My friends," he said gently, "each man must choose freely. None are bound to follow me if his heart remains here. Yet the King has shown mercy, and such mercy should be honored."

Little John crossed his arms and laughed softly. "Where you go, master, I go," he said. "Forest or court matters little so long as we stand together."

Many others nodded in agreement.

Soon the King and his knights prepared to depart. Robin and several of his closest companions traveled with them toward Nottingham. As they left Sherwood, the men looked back often at the tall trees fading behind them. Birds called overhead, and the forest seemed almost to watch them go.

When they entered Nottingham Town, people gathered along the streets. Some stared in surprise at the famous outlaw walking openly beside the King. Others smiled quietly, remembering kindness received in hard times.

The Sheriff of Nottingham stood waiting before his hall. At first he did not understand what he saw. Then recognition struck him, and his face turned pale.

The King spoke firmly. "Sheriff, this is Robin Hood. I have granted him and his men pardon. They will serve me faithfully henceforth."

The Sheriff bowed deeply, hiding his anger. He dared not argue with the King's command, though bitterness filled his heart.

For a time Robin and several companions remained at court. They learned the manners of noble halls and took part in royal service. Fine clothing replaced their forest dress, and soft beds replaced the ground beneath trees. Yet comfort did not fully satisfy Robin. Often he missed the open air and honest laughter of Sherwood.

Court life required patience. Many nobles judged by rank and wealth rather than courage or kindness. Robin remained respectful but spoke plainly, earning both admiration and dislike among courtiers.

After some months, Robin approached the King. "My lord," he said, "I thank you for your mercy, yet my heart longs for simpler life. I serve you faithfully, but I wish also to return at times to the forest."

The King studied him thoughtfully. "You are not made for walls alone," he said at last. "Go when you wish. Serve me honestly, and you shall remain in my favor."

With permission granted, Robin and several companions returned often to Sherwood. Though no longer outlaws, they still hunted, practiced archery, and welcomed travelers. The forest remained their true home.

Years passed quietly. Some merry men married and settled in nearby villages. Allan a Dale traveled widely, singing songs that told of their adventures. Little John stayed always near Robin, loyal as ever.

As Robin grew older, his strength remained great, yet time slowly touched him. One autumn he fell ill after long travel. Feeling weak, he sought rest at a nearby priory where a woman related to him served as prioress.

The sisters welcomed him kindly and promised care. Robin trusted them and allowed himself to rest there while Little John waited nearby.

But weakness deepened, and Robin sensed his life nearing its end. Calling Little John to him, he spoke quietly.

"Dear friend," he said, "do not grieve. Every path must end. I have lived freely and among true companions."

Little John struggled to hide his sorrow. “You will grow strong again,” he said. Robin smiled gently. “Perhaps not in this world.”

He asked for his bow and one last arrow. With effort he stepped to a window and drew the string slowly. The arrow flew far across the fields beyond the priory walls.

“Where that arrow falls,” Robin said softly, “there let me rest.”

Soon afterward his strength faded, and the great outlaw who had lived boldly beneath Sherwood’s green leaves passed peacefully away.

Little John and the remaining companions buried him where the arrow had landed, beneath open sky and whispering trees. They stood silently, remembering laughter, battles, and long days of freedom.

Though years would pass and stories would change with each telling, the name of Robin Hood lived on. People remembered not only the outlaw but the man who helped the weak, challenged injustice, and filled the greenwood with courage and joy.