



Who Was Robin Hood?

We've all heard of Robin Hood. He's possibly one of the most famous outlaws in English history. But did he ever actually exist? Is he more myth than man? Read on to find out.

Early Beginnings

In the Middle Ages, lots of stories were told in song. These were called *ballads*. The earliest ballads that talk about Robin Hood are from the 15th century. However, there is a ballad from 1370AD that talks about poems about Robin Hood, but it doesn't mention him directly. Lots of the things we now associate with Robin didn't appear back then. There were no Merry Men and no Maid Marian. These were all added in the following centuries as the story was passed along.

Stealing From The Rich

Everybody has heard that Robin Hood stole from the rich to give to the poor. Unfortunately, this might not have been quite true. If he existed, Robin was definitely an outlaw at some point in his life. Most outlaws didn't only steal from the rich, though. They'd take money from anybody passing by. There is a good chance that he may have been generous with his takings. He might have shared it amongst his own band of outlaws, but it's unlikely he would share it with everybody else.

The Legend

So how much of what we know is true? King Richard and King John were very real. In fact, John did succeed in taking the throne while King Richard was fighting in the Crusades. There were many bandits and outlaws at the time that may have started the legend of Robin Hood. However, some think that "Robin Hood" might just have been a fake name (an alias) used by other outlaws when they were caught.

By the late 15th century, there are records of people turning up at popular May Day celebrations dressed as Robin Hood. He has certainly always been a popular legend.

Modern Times

In the beginning, tales of Robin Hood were quite violent. The first children's version of the story was written in 1820. Since then, there have been lots of different versions of the character. In Disney's version, he was portrayed as a fox! There was even a series in France where the story was set in the Middle Ages in France.

Ultimately, it is unlikely we will ever know the truth about who he was. For now, we will have to make do with the legend.



RETRIEVAL FOCUS

1. When were the first versions of Robin Hood written for children?
2. Which kings were real?
3. When did people turn up to celebrations dressed as Robin Hood?
4. What type of stories were they originally?
5. What were stories called if they were sang?

VIPERS QUESTIONS

E

Why has the author used italics for the word ballads?

V

Which word or phrase is closest in meaning to give lots of something away?

I

Find the paragraph that starts "Everybody has heard...". What is the effect of the word **unfortunately**?

V

Write down an antonym for directly.

S

Write a paragraph explaining the different ways in which Robin Hood has been presented.

Answers:

1. 1820
2. King Richard and King John
3. 15th century
4. Violent
5. Ballad

E: It is technical vocabulary.

V: Generous

I: The legend of taking from the rich and giving to the poor is a good one and would be nice if true

V: Indirectly

S: Any summary that shows an understanding of the Modern Times paragraph