

LEVELED BOOK • Q

Robin Hood and the King



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An English Folktale
Adapted by Katherine Follett
Illustrated by David Cockcroft

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Table of Contents

Introduction	4
King Richard	5
The Feast	7
The Archery Match	9
King Richard Reveals Himself	13
Glossary	16



Introduction

Robin Hood and his Merry Men lived in hiding in Sherwood Forest. Even though Robin and his band were outlaws, they stole only from the rich and gave the money to the poor. Robin thought the **corrupt** lords were the real thieves. They ruled the land unjustly while good King Richard was off at war. The wicked lords wanted to hang Robin Hood, but they could never catch him. When King Richard finally returned from war, even he could not help respecting this outlaw who fought to protect the common people.



King Richard

King Richard loved all sports and those who were good at them. "I wish I could see Robin Hood," said King Richard in his castle. "I wish I could see him and his men shoot and wrestle and show off all their skills. But if they heard the king was coming, they would think that I wanted only to arrest them. They would run and hide deep in the forest, and I would never see them."



“I’ll tell you how you can see him,” laughed one of the king’s trusty companions. “Put on the robes of a fat **abbot** and ride through Sherwood Forest with gold in your pouch. Robin will be sure to offer you a feast so he can steal your money.”

“I’ll do it!” said King Richard, slapping his knee. “It will be a great **jest**



The Feast

So the king and seven of his followers dressed themselves as an abbot and seven **friars**. They rode out along the road toward Sherwood Forest. Sure enough, Robin Hood and his men stopped them after they entered the forest and took the king's pouch of gold. But Robin returned one-third of the gold to the pretend abbot because he never left any man in need. Robin Hood was pleased with these churchmen because they seemed happy to be in his company.

"Now we shall give you a feast that will be worth all your money," said Robin Hood.

"I love a feast," said the pretend abbot. "But even more, I would like to see the **archery** I have heard you are so good at."

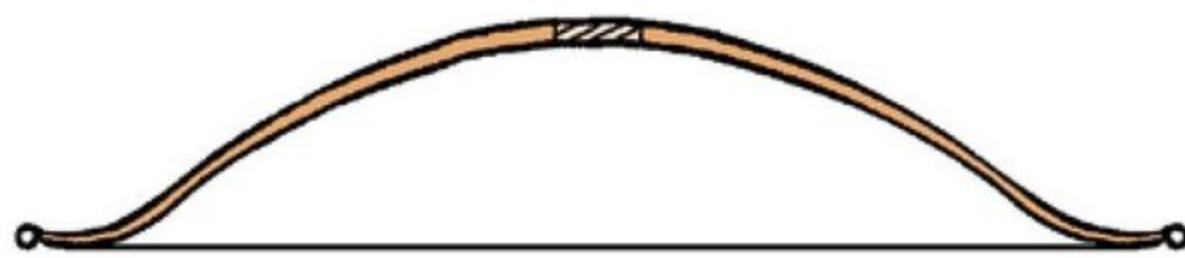
"You will see the very best we can do," answered Robin. "But, Holy Father, why don't you take off your hood so you can enjoy this sweet evening air?"

"Nay, I cannot," answered the pretend abbot. "My brothers and I have **vowed** not to let our faces be seen during this journey."

"Very well, then," said Robin Hood. "I **interfere** with no man's vows." And he never once thought that he was feeding the king.



Robin and his men gave a splendid feast of roasted meat, fish, and wild birds. The king was very impressed with the delicious food. He had no idea that outlaws could be so well fed and happy. After the men cleared the dishes, they set up for the sports.



The Archery Match

The archery target was a tiny **garland** of leaves and flowers hanging from a stake far away.

“Each of you will have three shots,” said Robin Hood to his Merry Men. “Anyone who misses the mark will receive a blow to the side of his head as hard as I can give.”

“Can anyone hit inside that little garland at such a distance?” asked the king. He didn’t believe it.

“Watch and see, friend,” answered Robin Hood proudly.



First, David of Doncaster shot all three of his arrows within the garland while the king watched in surprise. Then Much, the miller's son, also shot all his arrows inside the tiny garland. Then Wat the Tinker drew his bow, but he was unlucky—one of his arrows barely missed the mark.

"Come here and take your punishment," called Robin Hood. The king thought Wat would receive only a tap. Instead, he got a blow that knocked him to the ground.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed his companions.

"Oh, ho!" laughed King Richard. "I am glad I am not in this contest." The shooting went on. Most of the men hit the mark, but a few missed and received hard punches.



The last to shoot was Robin Hood. His first shaft struck so hard that it split off a piece of the stake on which the garland hung. His second hit barely an inch from the first. But the final arrow he shot was missing some feathers. It flew to one side and struck an inch outside the garland.

Then all the men roared with laughter, for they had never seen their master miss before.

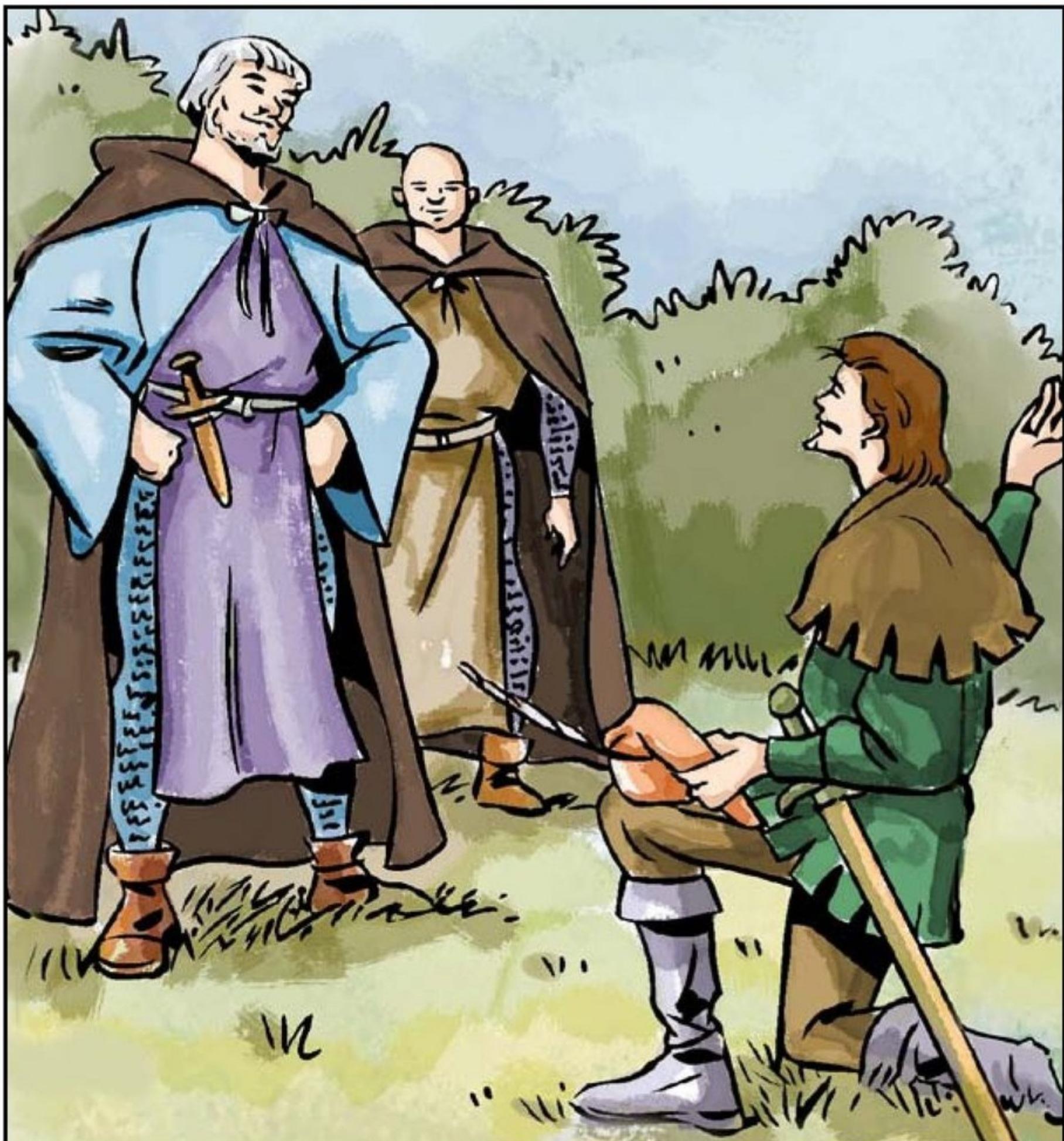
“Go and take your punishment, Master,” said Much. “I hope it will be as rough as Wat’s was.”

“Very well,” said Robin Hood, “I will take my punishment from our guest.”



Robin was being clever. He did not like the thought of being knocked down in front of his band. He thought that the arms of a churchman would be soft, for abbots never worked or used their muscles much. But the pretend abbot bared an arm so thick that it made the men stare. King Richard was an active king, and years at war had made him very strong. Robin Hood placed himself in front of him, and the king struck him a mighty blow. Down went Robin Hood, rolling over and over on the ground while his men shouted with laughter.

“Well,” said Robin Hood, sitting up, half dazed. “Ere today, I did not think there was a person in all of England who could strike such a blow. Who are you, man? I’ll bet you are not the churchman you appear to be.”



King Richard Reveals Himself

King Richard threw back his hood, and Robin knew it was his king. If he had been a disloyal man as well as an outlaw, he would have trembled. But Robin had always been loyal to his king. He believed that helping the poor people of England was the greatest service he could perform for King Richard. Robin Hood knelt before the king.

"Your Majesty," he said, "you have no subjects in England more loyal than me and my Merry Men. We have done no evil except to the greedy lords who have stolen from your subjects. We beg your pardon if we have done wrong. And we beg for your protection, as we always serve you faithfully."

The king looked down at Robin Hood. He was amazed that an outlaw should speak so well. He was also impressed that Robin Hood hadn't run away in fear of being arrested. He saw that Robin Hood truly was one of his most loyal subjects. King Richard also knew that Robin was the best archer in England. He wanted him by his side.

"Come with me to my court and serve me there," he said. "I will forgive all your crimes and order the nobles to leave you alone. You shall bring three of your best men to become knights in my court. The rest of your men will be royal **rangers**, since I am sure they can protect Sherwood Forest better than anyone."

"With all my heart," replied Robin Hood, and a great roar went up from the Merry Men.



So Robin Hood left the forest and went to the king's court, where he served King Richard well. His men became rangers of the forest and protected the land and its people. The common folk of England never had to suffer under the rule of wicked lords again.

Glossary

abbot (<i>n.</i>)	the leader of a group of monks (p. 6)
archery (<i>n.</i>)	the art of shooting arrows with a bow (p. 8)
corrupt (<i>adj.</i>)	dishonest in order to gain something (p. 4)
ere (<i>prep.</i>)	before (p. 12)
friars (<i>n.</i>)	Christian monks (p. 7)
garland (<i>n.</i>)	a small group of branches arranged in a circle or semicircle (p. 9)
interfere (<i>v.</i>)	to get in the way of (p. 8)
jest (<i>n.</i>)	a joke or trick (p. 6)
rangers (<i>n.</i>)	people who watch over and protect a forest or other wooded area (p. 14)
vowed (<i>v.</i>)	made a solemn promise (p. 8)

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from an original retelling
by Bertha E. Bush
Illustrated by David Cockcroft

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