

Robin Hood

The story of Robin Hood has intrigued generations for hundreds of years. Scholars and historians alike have wondered and researched to see if there ever really was a man called Robin Hood.

Earliest Candidates

Taking place around Nottingham and Sherwood Forest, the oldest written story about Robin Hood dates back to 1450. In the story, entitled 'Robin Hood and the Monk', Robin is captured by the Sheriff of Nottingham and has to be rescued by his friends, Little John and Much the Miller's Son.

The Gest of Robyn Hode

The most detailed early retelling of the legend, 'The **Gest** of Robyn Hode', is widely thought to date back to around 1460.

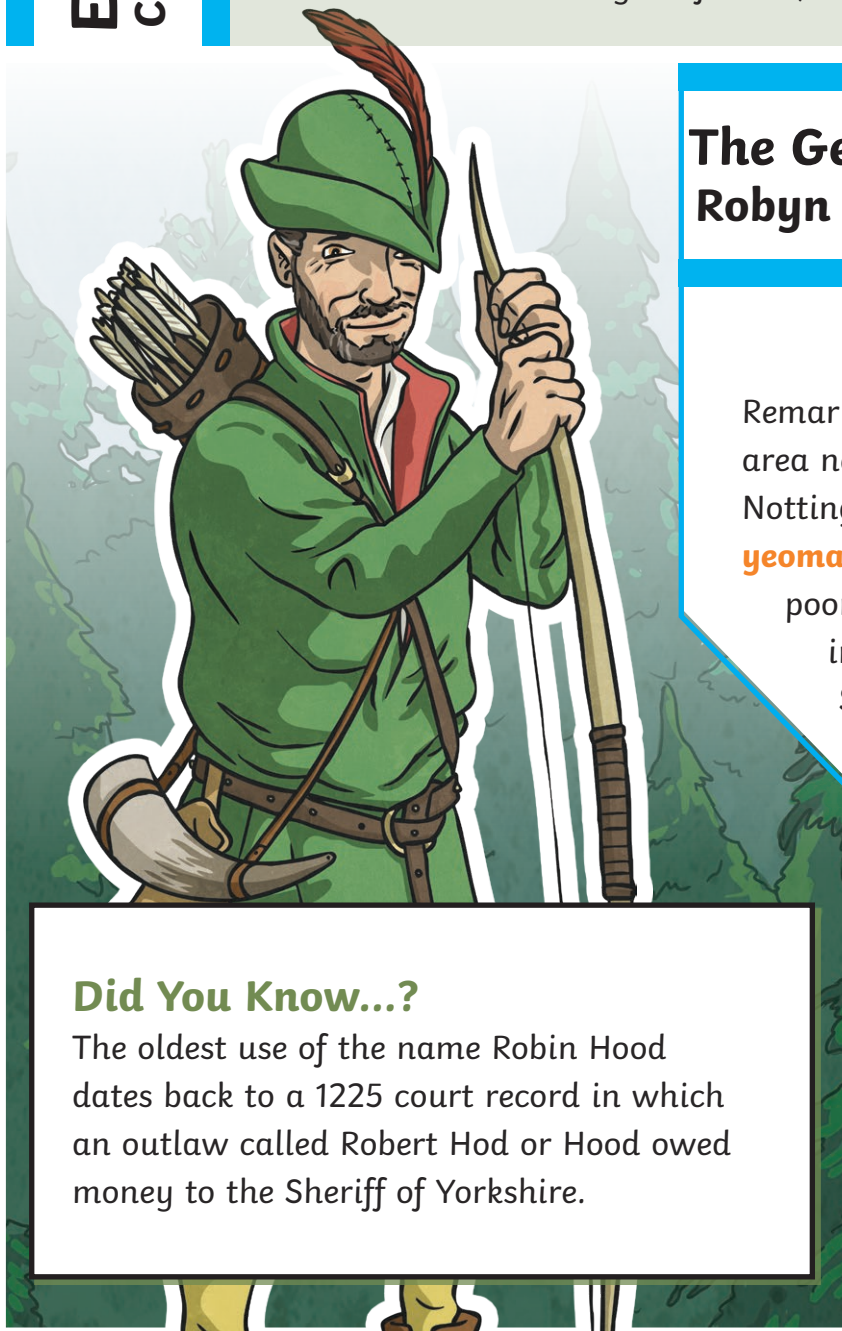
Remarkably, the story is set in a wooded area near Barnsdale in Yorkshire and not in Nottingham. Also, Robin is not a knight but a **yeoman** and archer who meets and helps a poor knight, robs a greedy monk, takes part in an archery contest hosted by the Sheriff of Nottingham and ends up working for a King Edward.

Some of his more familiar friends are also featured in the story: Little John, Will Scarlet and Much the Miller's Son.

Historians have found written accounts of a **forester** named Robert Hood or Hode who lived in Wakefield near Barnsdale in the early 1320s. In 1322, the nearby Earl of Lancaster and his local supporters tried and failed to overthrow King Edward II.

Did You Know...?

The oldest use of the name Robin Hood dates back to a 1225 court record in which an outlaw called Robert Hod or Hood owed money to the Sheriff of Yorkshire.





Historical evidence suggests that Robert was one of the Earl's rebels who was charged with treason afterwards. A year later, King Edward II visited the area and offered pardons to the Earl's fighting men.



Numerous court records of an outlaw called Robin Hood can be found from the 14th to the 16th centuries. Historians have determined that these outlaws were just using the legend's fame and were not the actual Robin.

Trying a different strategy, historians have looked into similar historical stories rather than similar names and found two men who possibly could be the source for Robin's tale. Born around 1180, Fulk FitzWarin was a Shropshire knight who got on the wrong side of Prince John. As a result, he lost his lands and was charged with treason. Robert Fitz Odo, who was the Lord of Loxley Manor, lived in Warwickshire in around 1196 and was also disinherited and charged as a fugitive.

Additional Characters

Robin's great love, Maid Marian, didn't really exist and was not even included in the legends until much later on. Many of the other merry men, such as Friar Tuck, were also added in later.

The story of Robin Hood continues to captivate us even today. Some historians believe the legend to be a blend of stories about several men while others think that the true Robin has yet to be found.

Glossary

forester:

A person who took care of and protected the deer and plant life in a forest.

gest:

A tale of adventures.

yeoman:

A common landowner.



Questions

1. Which character didn't appear in the stories until much later? Tick one.

- ☐ Little John
- ☐ Much the miller's son
- ☐ Will Scarlet
- ☐ Friar Tuck

2. Number the events from 1–4 to show the order that they happened in 'The Gest of Robyn Hode'.

- ☐ Robin works for King Edward.
- ☐ Robin meets and helps a poor knight.
- ☐ Robin robs a greedy monk.
- ☐ Robin takes part in an archery contest.

3. Who tried to overthrow King Edward II?

4. Look at the first paragraph.

Find and copy one word that means the same as 'interested' or 'fascinated'.

5. Fill in the missing words.

Trying a different strategy, historians have looked into _____ historical stories rather than similar names and found two men who possibly could be the _____ for Robin's tale.

6. If you could speak to a historian about Robin Hood, what would you like to ask them and why?

7. How do you think historians felt when they found records of Robert Hood of Wakefield?
Explain your answer.

8. Write what you have learnt about the legend of Robin Hood in 25 words or fewer.

Answers

1. Which character didn't appear in the stories until much later? Tick one.

- ☐ Little John
- ☐ Much the miller's son
- ☐ Will Scarlet
- ☒ **Friar Tuck**

2. Number the events from 1–4 to show the order that they happened in 'The Gest of Robyn Hode'.

- 4** Robin works for King Edward.
- 1** Robin meets and helps a poor knight.
- 2** Robin robs a greedy monk.
- 3** Robin takes part in an archery contest.

3. Who tried to overthrow King Edward II?

The Earl of Lancaster tried to overthrow King Edward II.

4. Look at the first paragraph.

Find and copy one word that means the same as 'interested' or 'fascinated'.

intrigued

5. Fill in the missing words.

Trying a different strategy, historians have looked into **similar** historical stories rather than similar names and found two men who possibly could be the **source** for Robin's tale.

6. If you could speak to a historian about Robin Hood, what would you like to ask them and why?

Pupils' own responses, such as: I would ask a historian what sorts of records and sources do they look at and read in order to find evidence about Robin Hood. I think it would be interesting to know what they use.

7. How do you think historians felt when they found records of Robert Hood of Wakefield?

Explain your answer.

Pupils' own responses, such as: I think they were probably very excited when they discovered Robert Hood because there are a lot of things about him that line up with what happens in 'The Gest of Robyn Hode'.

8. Write what you have learnt about the legend of Robin Hood in 25 words or fewer.

Pupils' own responses, such as: Robin Hood is a popular legend that dates back to 1225.

Historians have found a few possible men who could have been the actual Robin.

The Legend of

Robin Hood

Since 1377, the story of a noble thief, fighting against an oppressive Prince John with his trusty band of thieves while living in Sherwood Forest is a favourite tale. Many modern historians have searched extensively to see if there ever was a man behind the myth.

Earliest Candidates

The earliest record of a similar name that's been found is in a York court record from 1225; a fugitive called Robert Hod or Hood was fined for owing money to the Sheriff of Yorkshire.

'Robin Hood and the Monk' is the first written Robin Hood story and dates back to 1450. It takes place around Nottingham's St Mary's Church, Nottingham itself and Sherwood Forest. In the story, two of Robin's men, Little John and Much the Miller's Son, save Robin after he is captured by the Sheriff of Nottingham.

Barnsdale

Nottingham



The Gest of Robyn Hode

Considered by most historians to date back to around 1460, 'The Gest (a tale of adventures) of Robyn Hode' is the most comprehensive early written story about Robin Hood. In this account, Robin actually lives in a forest near Barnsdale in Yorkshire, which is about 50 miles away from Nottingham.



The story begins with Robin, a yeoman (a landowner but not a nobleman) and talented archer, capturing a poor knight who owes a debt to an evil monk at St Mary's in Nottingham. Robin helps the knight pay his debt and then steals the money back from the monk later on. Next, Robin meets with an unspecified King Edward, who asks him to come work for him. Again, some familiar characters we know today are mentioned: the Sheriff of Nottingham (who hosts an archery contest), Little John, Will Scarlet and Much the Miller's Son.



Historians have found evidence of a forester (a person who took care of and protected the deer and plant life in a forest) named Robert Hood or Hode who lived in Wakefield near Barnsdale in the early 1320s. As an adult male during that time, he would have been expected by law to practise his archery every day.



Due to the legend's popularity, numerous medieval court records of an outlaw called Robin Hood pop up all over the country during the 14th to the 16th centuries. Historians have concluded that none of these were the actual Robin Hood but just outlaws trying to use the legend's fame.

Focusing on the story and not just the name, historians have looked into two other possible candidates with interest. Born in Shropshire around 1180, Fulk FitzWarin was a knight who supposedly wasn't liked by Prince John, lost his lands and became an outlaw for several years. The second candidate, Robert Fitz Odo, who was the Lord of Loxley Manor, lived in Warwickshire in around 1196 and was also disinherited and charged as an outlaw.

In 1322, the nearby Earl of Lancaster tried and failed to depose King Edward II. As a result, many of his local supporters were named as traitors. There are records that hint that Robert was one of those rebels. The following year, the King travelled north and pardoned many of those who had followed the Earl and offered them work.

Additional Characters

Added into the story much later on, Robin's great love, Maid Marian, didn't really exist. Many of Robin's other friends, such as Friar Tuck, were also added in later.

Popular even today, the story of Robin Hood continues to thrill and entertain. Some historians believe the legend to be a mixture of stories about several different men while others think that the true Robin is still hidden away in some written account yet to be seen.



Questions

1. Who did Robert Hod or Hood owe money to in 1225? Tick one.

- ☐ The Sheriff of Nottingham
- ☐ The Sheriff of Yorkshire
- ☐ King Edward II
- ☐ The Earl of Lancaster

2. Draw **four** lines and match each year to its description.

1180	'Robin Hood and the Monk' dates back to this year.
1450	'The Gest of Robyn Hode' was written around this year.
1460	Fulk FitzWarin was born in Shropshire.
1322	The Earl of Lancaster tried and failed to depose King Edward II.

3. How many miles away is Barnsdale from Nottingham?

4. Look at the section called **The Gest of Robyn Hode**.

Find and copy one word that means the same as, 'detailed' or 'extensive'.

5. Fill in the missing words.

Due to the legend's _____, numerous _____ court records of an outlaw called Robin Hood pop up all over the country.

6. Why do you think Maid Marian was added in later on? Explain your answer.

7. Why do you think many outlaws liked to call themselves Robin Hood?

8. In your opinion, is Robert Hood from Wakefield the real Robin Hood? Explain your answer.

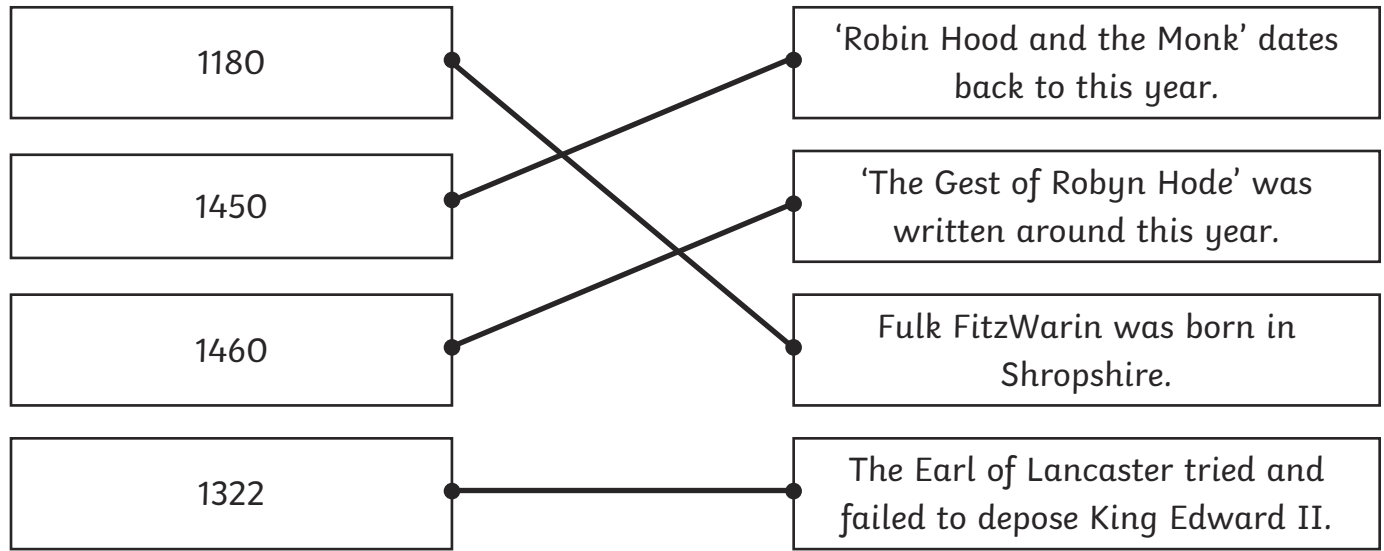
9. Do you think it's possible that Robin Hood actually lived near Barnsdale and not in Nottingham? Explain your answer.

Answers

1. Who did Robert Hod or Hood owe money to in 1225? Tick one.

- ☐ The Sheriff of Nottingham
- ☒ **The Sheriff of Yorkshire**
- ☐ King Edward II
- ☐ The Earl of Lancaster

2. Draw **four** lines and match each year to its description.



3. How many miles away is Barnsdale from Nottingham?

Barnsdale is about 50 miles away from Nottingham.

4. Look at the section called **The Gest of Robyn Hode**.

Find and copy one word that means the same as, 'detailed' or 'extensive'.

comprehensive

5. Fill in the missing words.

Due to the legend's **popularity**, numerous **medieval** court records of an outlaw called Robin Hood pop up all over the country.

6. Why do you think Maid Marian was added in later on? Explain your answer.

Pupils' own responses, such as: I think Maid Marian was added in later on to bring romance and love into the story. Romance and love are popular themes in a lot of successful tales so it would appeal to a larger audience.

7. Why do you think many outlaws liked to call themselves Robin Hood?

Pupils' own responses, such as: I think they were trying to build a reputation or possibly a sense of fear by using the name. They also probably felt they were being wrongly accused, like Robin.

8. In your opinion, is Robert Hood from Wakefield the real Robin Hood? Explain your answer.

Pupils' own responses, such as: I think he is most likely the source of the story in 'The Gest of Robyn Hode'. However, I think the story was around long before him and someone just used his life to tell a different Robin Hood tale.

9. Do you think it's possible that Robin Hood actually lived near Barnsdale and not in Nottingham? Explain your answer.

Pupils' own responses, such as: I think it is possible that Robin did live near Barnsdale because the earliest record of a Robert Hood talks about the Sheriff of Yorkshire and Robert Hood of Wakefield lived in Yorkshire too.

The Legend of Robin Hood

Since 1377, when 'The Rhymes of Robin Hood' is referenced briefly in another medieval text, the legend of Robin Hood has fascinated people from all walks of life.



The tales of an honourable thief, fighting against tyrannical Prince John with his loyal band of thieves while living in Sherwood Forest are well known. However, many people have also grown curious as to whether he ever actually existed. Historians have scoured a variety of documents and court records, using the legends as their guide, to find the man behind the myth.

The Gest of Robyn Hode

The most elaborate early tale of Robin Hood is 'The Gest (a tale of adventures) of Robyn Hode' and most historians believe it dates back to around 1460. Surprisingly, Robin actually lives in a forest near Barnsdale in Yorkshire in the story, which is about 50 miles away from Nottingham.

In the story, Robin is a yeoman (a landowner but not a nobleman) and a talented archer. He captures a poor knight who owes a debt to an evil monk at St Mary's in Nottingham. After hearing of his misfortune, Robin helps the knight pay his debt and then proceeds to rob the monk afterwards. Later on, Robin meets with an unspecified King Edward, who offers him a job.

Robin works for him for over a year and then leaves because he's homesick. It also features several archery contests and other recognisable plot lines. Again, some familiar characters from the story as we know it appear: the Sheriff of Nottingham, Little John, Will Scarlet and Much the Miller's Son.

Earliest Candidates

The earliest use of the name was found in a court record entry in 1225. A fugitive called Robert Hod or Hood was fined for owing money to the Sheriff of Yorkshire.

The first written story about Robin Hood dates back to 1450 and is called 'Robin Hood and the Monk'. Taking place mostly around St. Mary's Church in Nottingham and Sherwood Forest, it describes how two of Robin's men, Little John and Much the Miller's Son rescue Robin from the clutches of the Sheriff of Nottingham.



Interestingly, there are historical records of a forester (a person who took care of and protected the deer and plant life in a forest) named Robert Hood or Hode, who lived in Wakefield near Barnsdale in the early 14th century. In addition, archery practice was compulsory by law for every adult male as the English longbow was the military's weapon of choice. Robert Hood would also have used a longbow in his role as forester.



Due to the legend's popularity, there are numerous medieval court records from the 14th to the 16th centuries that mention an outlaw called Robin Hood: either a contemporary outlaw who chose to change their name to Robin Hood or had their names changed by creative court officials.

Moving away from the name, there are two other feasible candidates that historians have investigated with interest. A Shropshire knight who lived in Whittington Castle, Fulk FitzWarin, was born around 1180. Legend has it that he fell out of favour with Prince John, lost his lands and became an outlaw for several years. Another possibility is Robert Fitz Odo, who lived in Loxley in Warwickshire in around 1196. He also was dispossessed, became an outlaw and was pardoned.



In 1322, the Earl of Lancaster (who lived very near Wakefield) led a rebellion against the King; many of his local supporters were made outlaws and had to forfeit their property. There are records that hint at the possibility that Robert was one of those rebels who supported the Earl. The following year, King Edward II toured that part of the country. Coincidentally, there are also court records of a certain Robyn (a common nickname for Robert) Hode as being in King Edward's service around that time.

Additional Characters

Maid Marian, one of the most well-known characters, is completely fictional and was not even included in the legends until much later on. Many of the additional merry men, such as Friar Tuck, were also later additions.

Eternally popular, the man behind the legend continues to elude historians. Some conclude that his story may be an amalgamation of stories about several different men while others think that the true Robin is still out there, waiting to be discovered in some historical text waiting to be read.

Questions

1. Which familiar character is in the earliest tales? Tick one.

- ☐ Maid Marian
- ☐ Will Scarlet
- ☐ Little John
- ☐ King Richard

2. Draw **four** lines and match each man to his description.

Robert Hood or Hode

A man recorded as being in King Edward II's service.

Robyn Hode

A Shropshire knight who lived at Whittington Castle.

Fulk FitzWarin

He lived in Wakefield near Barnsdale in the early 14th century.

Robert Fitz Odo

A man who lived in Loxley, Warwickshire in around 1196.

3. What was the military's weapon of choice in the 14th century?

4. Fill in the missing words.

Moving away from the name, there are two other _____ candidates that historians have _____ with interest.

5. Look at the last paragraph.

Find and copy one word that means the same as 'a combination' or 'mixture'.

6. What was the most interesting thing you learnt about Robin Hood? Explain your answer.

7. Would you have liked to have been a forester like Robert Hood? Explain your answer.

8. Why do you think Robin Hood has fascinated generations of people from all walks of life? Explain your answer.

9. Do you agree with historians that the story of Robin Hood is actually based on several different men? Explain your answer.

10. Tick one box in each row to show whether each statement is **true** or **false**.

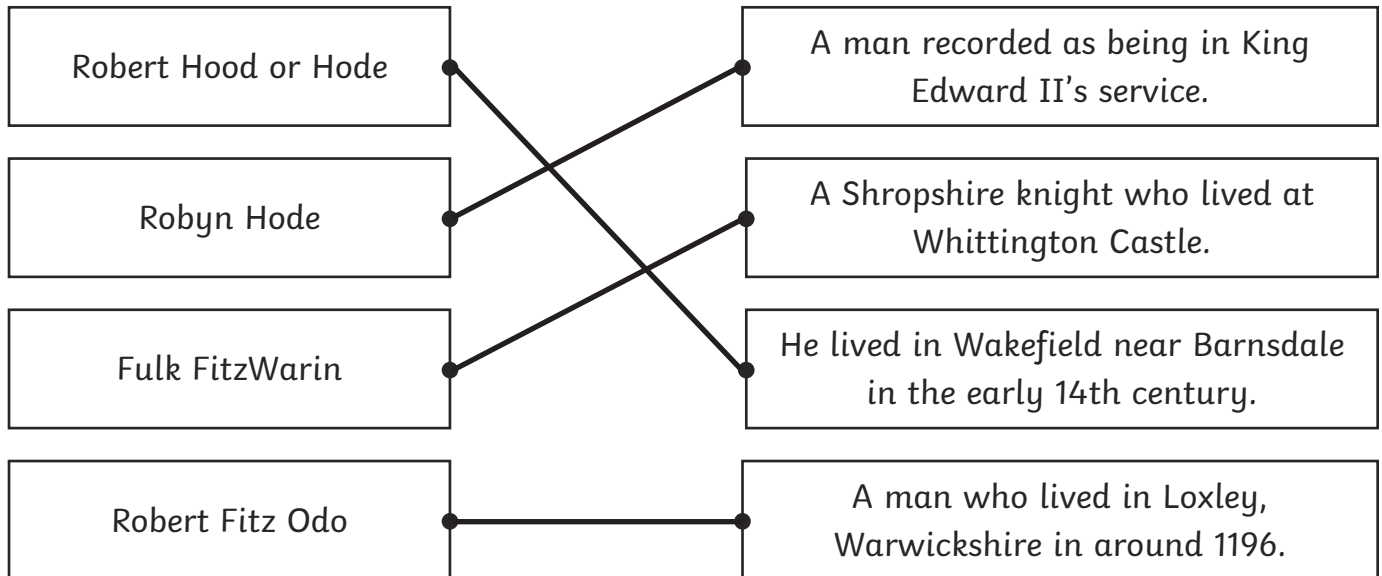
	True	False
Robert Hood lived in Wakefield in the 14th century.		
Maid Marian has always been a part of the stories.		
The earliest record of a Robert Hood dates back to 1225.		
The Earl of Lancaster led a rebellion.		
Historians have actually found out who the real Robin Hood was.		

Answers

1. Which familiar character is in the earliest tales? Tick one.

- ☐ Maid Marian
- ☐ Will Scarlet
- ☒ **Little John**
- ☐ King Richard

2. Draw **four** lines and match each man to his description.



3. What was the military's weapon of choice in the 14th century?

The English longbow was the military's weapon of choice.

4. Fill in the missing words.

Moving away from the name, there are two other **feasible** candidates that historians have **investigated** with interest.

5. Look at the last paragraph.

Find and copy one word that means the same as 'a combination' or 'mixture'.

amalgamation

6. What was the most interesting thing you learnt about Robin Hood? Explain your answer.

Pupils' own responses, such as: I think the most interesting thing I learnt about Robin Hood was that the characters I know were not always part of the story. It makes me wonder why they were added in and for what reasons.

7. Would you have liked to have been a forester like Robert Hood? Explain your answer.
Pupils' own responses, such as: Yes, I think it would have been interesting work to take care of all the animals and plants of the forest. It also would have been peaceful because he probably worked by himself.
8. Why do you think Robin Hood has fascinated generations of people from all walks of life? Explain your answer.
Pupils' own responses, such as: I think Robin Hood has fascinated generations of people because it has a lot of positive themes and the story is entertaining. He is a bit naughty, the stories are usually funny and there's also romance mixed in.
9. Do you agree with historians that the story of Robin Hood is actually based on several different men? Explain your answer.
Pupils' own responses, such as: After reading this comprehension, I would agree that he is probably a combination of stories about actual men who were made outlaws for one reason or another but fought back.
10. Tick one box in each row to show whether each statement is **true** or **false**.

	True	False
Robert Hood lived in Wakefield in the 14th century.	✓	
Maid Marian has always been a part of the stories.		✓
The earliest record of a Robert Hood dates back to 1225.	✓	
The Earl of Lancaster led a rebellion.	✓	
Historians have actually found out who the real Robin Hood was.		✓

Award 2 marks for all **five** correct.

Award 1 mark for **four** correct.