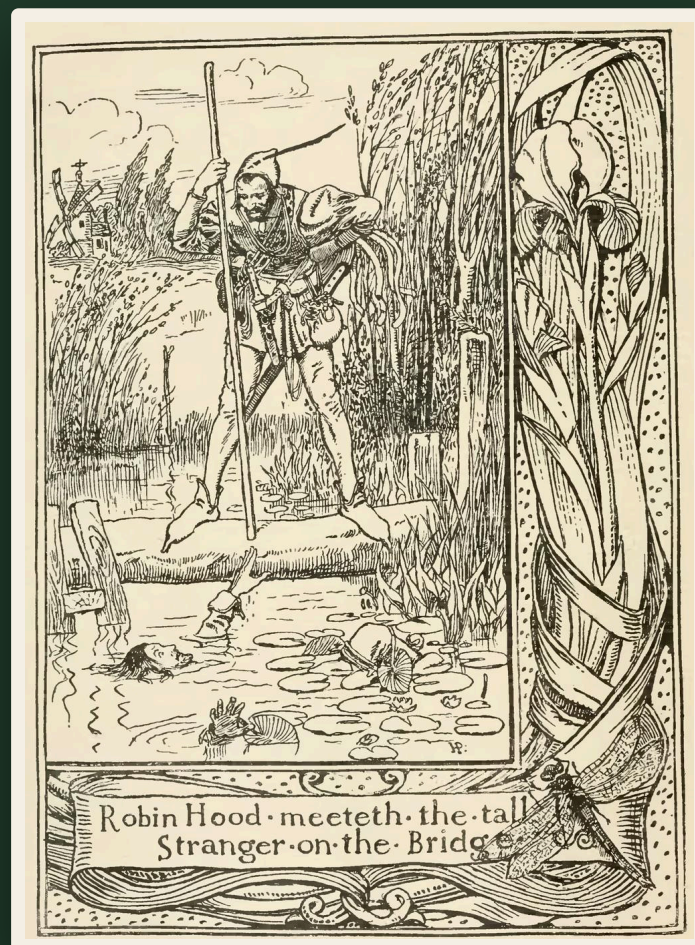


Greenwood Outlaw Printables Free Sample

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FREE

7 PAGES

A4 + US LETTER

RETOLD IN OUR OWN WORDS

Little John and the bridge

From: Robin Hood and Little John (Child 125), a ballad first found in print in 1723, and Howard Pyle's Merry Adventures of Robin Hood (1883)

In the ballad Robin Hood and Little John, Robin is only twenty but already leads a band of sixty-nine bowmen. One morning he goes into the forest alone, telling them to come if they hear his horn.

He meets a stranger on a long, narrow bridge, and neither will give way. Robin threatens him with an arrow, and is reminded that this is cowardly when the other man has only a staff.

So Robin lays down his bow and cuts himself an oak staff. They agree that whoever knocks the other into the water wins.

In Howard Pyle's telling they fight on the bridge for a good hour, until the stranger tumbles Robin 'heels over head into the water'. Robin climbs out laughing at himself.

Robin blows his horn. His men rush up and want to give the stranger a ducking, but Robin stops them.

The stranger joins the band. His name is John Little and he is seven foot tall, so Will Stutely says his name must be changed, and they rename him Little John.



Picture: Robin Hood meeteth the tall Stranger on the Bridge, 1883, by Howard Pyle (Public domain).

QUESTIONS

Little John and the bridge

Read the story again, then answer in full sentences

WORD BANK

bowmen: archers: people who shoot with a bow

staff: a long, strong wooden pole

ducking: a push or dip into water

stranger: someone you have not met before

1. How old is Robin, and how many bowmen does he lead?

2. Why does Robin put down his bow?

3. How do they agree to decide who wins?

4. What does Robin do after he falls in, in Pyle's telling?

5. Why do the outlaws rename John Little?

LABEL IT

Is this story **History**, **Literature** or **Tradition**? How do you know?

COLOUR ME

Across the water

Colour Howard Pyle's 1883 drawing



LITERATURE Robin finds the friar walking by the water and asks to be carried across. The friar carries him without a word, then draws his sword and makes Robin carry him back.

Drawing: The Merry Friar carrieth Robin across the Water, 1883, by Howard Pyle (public domain), turned to black and white.

SORT IT

Legend, literature or history?

Read each statement. Tick the right label.

History: what records and historians show. **Literature:** what a named ballad, poem or book says. **Tradition:** a later belief, custom or local story.

1. A royal account roll of Easter 1262 records that the Prior of Sandford, in Berkshire, was pardoned for seizing without warrant the goods of 'William Robehod, fugitive'.	☐ History ☐ Literature ☐ Tradition
2. In the ballads Robin's most frequent enemy is the Sheriff of Nottingham.	☐ History ☐ Literature ☐ Tradition
3. Historic England records the tradition that Robin shot an arrow from his deathbed in the gatehouse of Kirklees Priory to choose where he would be buried.	☐ History ☐ Literature ☐ Tradition
4. The name Sherwood was first recorded in 958, as Sciryuda, 'the woodland belonging to the shire'.	☐ History ☐ Literature ☐ Tradition
5. The first known mention in literature is in William Langland's poem Piers Plowman, written around 1377. The character Sloth admits he cannot say his Paternoster properly, 'but I kan rymes of Robyn Hood'.	☐ History ☐ Literature ☐ Tradition
6. Hathersage in Derbyshire has been the traditional birthplace of Little John for at least 250 years. The Derbyshire record itself calls him 'mythological'. His so-called grave was already there in 1685.	☐ History ☐ Literature ☐ Tradition

ANSWER KEY · FOR ADULTS

Little John and the bridge

1. He is only twenty, and he leads sixty-nine bowmen.
2. He is reminded that it is cowardly to threaten a man who has only a staff.
3. Whoever knocks the other into the water wins.
4. He climbs out laughing at himself, then blows his horn.
5. He is seven foot tall, so Will Stutely says his name must be changed: they call him Little John.

Label it: Literature. It comes from a ballad, and it is not medieval: Child found its oldest copy in a collection printed in 1723.

Sort it

1. History
2. Literature
3. Tradition
4. History
5. Literature
6. Tradition

WANT MORE?

Six full packs (detective pack, reading worksheets, character cards, activity and colouring, posters, quiz and word puzzles) are available from the REALLYBYTE store: see robin-hood.folklore.im/shop/ for links. Free stories, an atlas and games: robin-hood.folklore.im



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PICTURES

PICTURE	ARTIST	LICENCE	SOURCE PAGE (WIKIMEDIA COMMONS)
Robin Hood meeteth the tall Stranger on the Bridge, 1883	Howard Pyle	Public domain	commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_merry_adventures_of_Robin_Hood_(1883).djvu?page=30
The Merry Friar carrieth Robin across the Water, 1883	Howard Pyle	Public domain	commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_merry_adventures_of_Robin_Hood_(1883).djvu?page=12

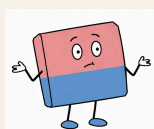
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WHERE THE FACTS COME FROM

Every labelled fact in this pack was checked against the sources below on 30 Oct 2026. **History** means what historians, archaeologists or heritage bodies say. **Literature** means what a named ballad, play, poem or book says. **Tradition** means a later belief, custom or local story, recorded by a named source. Retellings are in our own words and follow the events in the named text.

Francis James Child (ed.), *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, vol. 3 (1888), Project Gutenberg: www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/62474
 Howard Pyle, *The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood* (1883), Project Gutenberg: www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/10148
 Dr Mike Ibeji, 'Robin Hood and his Historical Context' (2011, archived web article): www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/middle_ages/robin_01.shtml
 Britannica (Scholars): Robin Hood: kids.britannica.com/scholars/article/Robin-Hood/63909
 Historic England: Kirklees Priory and Kirklees Park, list entry 1413828:

historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1413828
 Nottinghamshire County Council: History of Sherwood Forest, Robin Hood and Major Oak: www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/culture-leisure/country-parks/history-of-sherwood-forest-robin-hood-and-major-oak
 William Langland, *The Vision and Creed of Piers Ploughman*, vol. 1 (ed. Thomas Wright), Project Gutenberg: www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/43660
 Derbyshire Historic Environment Record: Little John's Grave, Hathersage (MDR4224): her.derbyshire.gov.uk/Monument/MDR4224



NEED HELP?

Useless can't help (he's an eraser, and he is busy keeping his three pencils apart), but we can. Problems with your file, or spotted something we should fix? Email **info@reallybyte.com**.

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