

Robin Hood - fact or fiction?

WORD GUIDE

according to one story: as one story says / **claim:** suggest / **fact or fiction** : real or not real / **Friar:** Brother, a monk / **fugitives:** wanted man / **inspiration:** idea, origin / **legend:** story that is perhaps true / **maid:** young woman / **outlaw:** person beyond the law, perhaps a bandit / **tale:** story

Robin Hood, Sherlock Holmes and Indiana Jones are all famous heroes; but were they real, or just invented characters?

There can be no doubt about Sherlock Holmes or Indiana Jones. They are definitely invented characters. But Robin Hood: **0. fact or fiction?** That question has many answers. It depends a bit on what you mean by a "real person". If we mean: "Was there a man called Robin Hood, who did all the things we can read about?", then the answer is *no*. But if we mean: "Was there a man who lived in the Middle Ages, and is remembered in the legends of Robin Hood", then the answer is *yes*.

The **1** _____ of Robin Hood is a very old one; and it is certainly based on reality. **2** _____, Robin was really an Anglo-Saxon nobleman, perhaps called Robin of Huntingdon, or Robin Fitz-Ooth, and he was a rebel against England's Norman rulers. After William the Conqueror conquered England in 1066, England was ruled by Norman kings and Norman barons. Most of the ordinary Anglo Saxon people accepted their new masters; but some didn't. They became **3** _____, enemies of the Norman barons and the people who worked for them.

In modern language, we could perhaps call this Robin a "resistance fighter" – though some people might call him a "terrorist".

The legend tells us that he took money from the rich, and gave it to the poor. In fact, he probably took money from the Normans (who were relatively rich), and gave it to poor Anglo Saxons. This is why he soon became a legendary hero among Anglo Saxons.

Other stories **4** _____ that Robin was not an Anglo Saxon nobleman, but a common **5** _____; they say that his real name was "Robert Hod", and that he only fought against his personal enemies, in particular the Sheriff of Nottingham, not against the Normans.

Many old stories said that Robin lived in Yorkshire. However, later stories had him living in Sherwood Forest, near Nottingham; and today, Robin's name is definitely attached to the city of Nottingham, and to Sherwood Forest.

Finally, what about the "merry men" that we meet in today's stories and films? **6** _____ Tuck, Little John and the others? And what about the beautiful **7** _____ Marian"? It appears that these secondary characters have no historic base.

Nevertheless, at least one real person was the **8** _____ for the stories of Robin Hood; and that person must have had friends. Perhaps there was a big man called John, and a fat friar too. Perhaps there was even a beautiful young lady called Marion. Let's imagine these people really existed – because in truth, they probably did, somewhere, at some time.

In Nottingham, Robin is now a very popular character. Visitors to the city can learn all about him at the **9** _____ of Robin Hood" exhibition, where Robin and his adventures are brought to life; and in Sherwood Forest, "the Major Oak", a massive old tree, is said to be Robin Hood's tree.

Maybe Robin never lived at all in the past; but too bad! His spirit is certainly alive today.

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