

THE HEART OF ROBIN HOOD

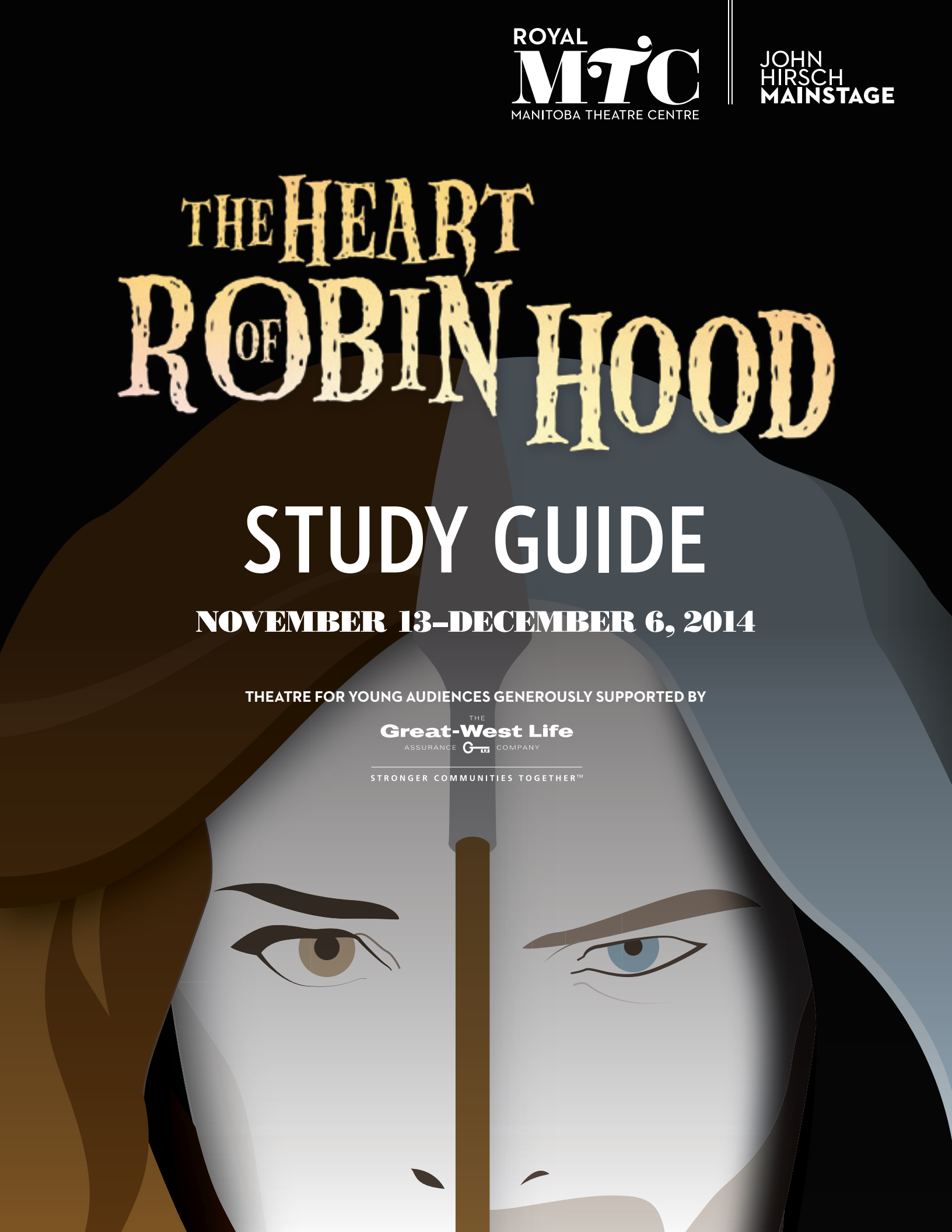
STUDY GUIDE

NOVEMBER 13-DECEMBER 6, 2014

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This guide compiled by Ksenia Broda-Milian for Royal MTC, October 2014.

Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre

Presents

A co-production with **David Mervish** and **Barry and Fran Weissler**

THE HEART OF ROBIN HOOD

By **David Farr**

Songs by Parsonsfield

Director – Gísli Örn Garðarsson
Set Designer – Börkur Jónsson
Costume Designer - Emma Ryott
Lighting Designer – Graeme S. Thomson
Sound Designers – Jonathan Deans & Garth Helm
Music Supervisor - Kris Kukul
Fight Director - Joe Bostick
Dialect Coach – Eric Armstrong
Creative Consultant – Walter Bobbie
Associate Director / Choreographer - Selma Björnsdóttir
Assistant Lighting Designer - George Quan

Associate Sound Designer - Brian Walters
Casting - Stephanie Gorin Casting CDC, CSA
Telsey + Company, William Cantler, CSA/Karyn Casl, CSA
Casting Assistant – Brendan Wilcocks
Company Manager - Charles Chu
Company Management Assistant - Anika Nater
Production Stage Manager - The. John Gray
Stage Manager – Kim Brown
Assistant Stage Manager – Sandra McEwing
Child Chaperone / Apprentice Stage Manager – Janine Nater

THE CAST

Robin – Gabriel Ebert
Marion – Izzie Steele
Prince John – Euan Morton
Pierre – Christian Lloyd

Sarah Summers – Anna Bartlam*
Friar / Robert Summers / Guard / Bishop – Richard Clarkin
Little John – Jeremy Crawford
Will Scathlock – Zachary Eisenstat
George LeBrun / Guy of Gisborne / Duke of York – Paul Essiembre

Horse / Henchman / Wild Boar – Troy Feldman
Makepiece / French Lord – Martin Lulien
Jethro Summers – Tristan Mackid~
Lady LeBrun / French Lady / Rebecca Summers – Katelyn McCulloch
Sarah Summers – Meguire McRae-King*
Alice – Sarah Schenkkan
Much Miller – Stephen Michael Spencer
Plug the Dog / Nun – Darcy Stewart
Jethro Summers (A) – Tate Yap~

* Anna Bartlam and Meguire McRae-King will share the role of Sarah Summers

~ Tristan Mackid and Tate Yap will share the role of Jethro Summers

PARSONSFIELD

Mandolin/Banjo/Vocals - Antonio Alcorn
Vocals/Banjo/Guitar/Saw - Chris Freeman
Bass/Vocals/Glockenspiel - Harrison Goodale

Drums/Percussion/Vocals - Erik Hischmann
Guitar/Pump Organ/Vocals - Max Shakun

THEATRE ETIQUETTE

“The theater is so endlessly fascinating because it's so accidental. It's so much like life.” – Arthur Miller

Arrive Early: Latecomers may not be admitted to a performance. Please ensure you arrive with enough time to find your seat before the performance starts.

Cell Phones and Other Electronic Devices: Please **TURN OFF** your cell phones/iPods/gaming systems/cameras. We have seen an increase in texting, surfing, and gaming during performances, which is very distracting for the performers and other audience members. The use of cameras and recording devices is strictly prohibited.

Talking During the Performance: You can be heard (even when whispering!) by the actors onstage and the audience around you. Disruptive patrons will be removed from the theatre. Please wait to share your thoughts and opinions with others until after the performance.

Food/Drinks: Food and hot drinks are not allowed in the theatre. Where there is an intermission, concessions may be open for purchase of snacks and drinks. There is complimentary water in the lobby.

Dress: There is no dress code at the Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre, but we respectfully request that patrons refrain from wearing hats in the theatre. We also strive to be a scent-free environment, and thank all patrons for their cooperation.

Leaving During the Performance: If an audience member leaves the theatre during a performance, they will be readmitted at the discretion of our Front of House staff. Should they be readmitted, they will not be ushered back to their original seat, but placed in a vacant seat at the back of the auditorium.

Being Asked to Leave: The theatre staff has, and will exercise, the right to ask any member of the audience to leave the performance if that person is being disruptive. Inappropriate and disruptive behaviour includes, but is not limited to: talking, using electronic devices, cameras, laser pointers, or other light- or sound-emitting devices, and deliberately interfering with an actor or the performance (tripping, throwing items on or near the stage, etc.).

Talkbacks: All Tuesday evening performances and final matinees at MTC feature a talkback with members of the cast following the show. While watching the performance, make a mental note of questions to ask the actors. Questions can be about the story, the interpretation, life in the theatre, etc.

Enjoy the show: Laugh, applaud, cheer and respond to the performance appropriately. Make sure to thank all the artists for their hard work with applause during the curtain call.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

David Farr is a contemporary playwright, born in Surrey, England, whose plays have been performed across Europe and in Israel, the United States, and Canada. He has written adaptations of Kafka and Brecht as well as an extensive list of original works. *The Heart of Robin Hood* was written for and first performed by the Royal Shakespeare Company, where Farr became Associate Director in 2009. His directing career includes work with many theatres, including positions as Joint Artistic Director at the Bristol Old Vic, Artistic Director of the Lyric Theatre Hammersmith, Artistic Director of London's Gate Theatre, and work at the Almeida Opera, the National Theatre of Czech Republic, and Gavella Theatre Zagreb. In addition to theatre, Farr also writes for film; he has scripted several episodes of the British television series *Spooks* and he wrote the screenplay for the 2011 feature film *Hanna*.



Farr has a special interest in bringing young people to theatre. The first play he saw was at the age of 15 in Guildford with his father, and had a life-changing experience seeing two plays at The Royal Court two years later; he became excited about reaching audiences and giving them that same feeling. In a 2011 interview, Farr said he believes “there are certain barriers that theatre used to represent and it’s important that we get rid of those...there’s a certain modernity of storytelling [to be used]” (Frizzell).

CHARACTERS



In the forest

Robin Hood – Brooding and complicated, a hardened outlaw hiding his heart.

Little John – Goes from mistreated servant to one of Robin’s devoted followers.

Will Scathlock and Much Miller – Robin’s men.

Friar – A corrupt monk we meet mid-robbery.

George and Lady LeBrun – A wealthy couple, robbed by Robin.

Gabriel Ebert in rehearsal for *The Heart of Robin Hood*. Photo by Cylla von Tiedmann.

In the court

Marion – Clever, beautiful, and compassionate, she discovers Robin’s noble spirit.

Alice – Marion’s sister who pines to be married.

Pierre – Our guide to the story, a servant who joins Marion on her adventures.

Makepeace – Marion and Alice’s kindly guardian while their father is on Crusade.

Prince John – Dangerous and power-hungry, in charge during the King’s absence.

Guy of Gisborne – Villainous right-hand man to the prince.

Duke of York – Marion and Alice’s father who fights for the true king.

In the town

Robert and Rebecca Summers – Persecuted peasants and loving parents.

Jethro Summers – Brave 12-year-old who is protective of his sister.

Sarah Summers – Jethro’s sister, stricken silent by fear when taken prisoner.

Plug – The Summers family’s dog who accompanies the children.

Various townspeople, nuns, and a confessor.

Winnipeg's own Tristan Mackid and Meguire McRae-King in *The Heart of Robin Hood* during rehearsals.

Photo by Cylla von Tiedmann.



PLOT

The play begins with the introduction of Pierre, a member of the court of the Duke of York, who promises to tell us the tale of how Robin Hood found his heart. The rest of the play unfolds as a flashback.

In a storm, a wealthy couple are mistreating their servant when Robin, Will, and Much appear and rob them. After the couple are chased off, the servant, Little John, takes an oath to join Robin’s band – under the condition that he never bring women into the group, as Robin says that they cause storms in men’s hearts.

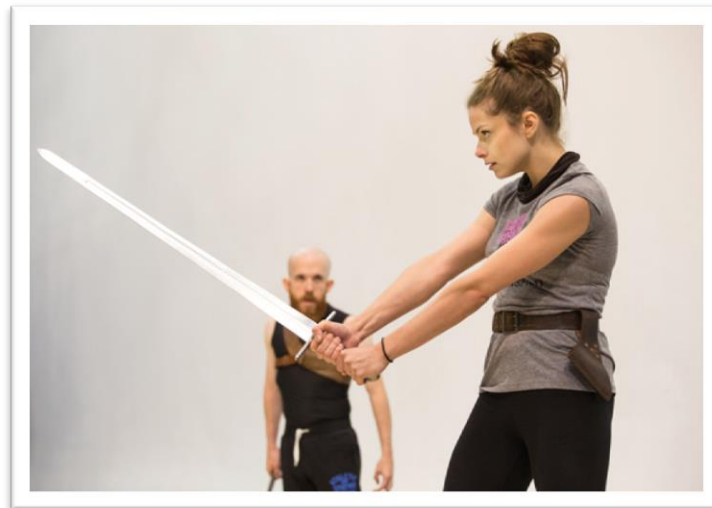
In the castle of the Duke of York, Marion and her sister Alice discuss prospects of marriage. Marion does not wish to marry, but Alice needs her to in order for her own marriage to take place. The sisters find out that their father, who is on Crusade, will be delayed in returning and that control of the land has been transferred from King Richard to his brother, Prince John. Marion decides that for the year her father will be away, she will hide in the woods with Robin Hood’s men – who she hears only take from the rich, which Pierre calls romantic nonsense – and she insists Pierre come with her.

In the forest, Robin and his men are in the midst of robbing a corrupt monk when Marion appears and asks to join them. Robin tells Marion to go home, killing the monk in his anger. She realizes that his behaviour is not as noble as she had heard and leaves.

Prince John arrives at the castle with Guy of Gisborne and announces his new tax to support the Crusades. Alice is enamoured with the prince but Marion dislikes him and disguises herself as a man to avoid the prince's advances. She declares that she will become the noble outlaw that Robin Hood is not and takes Pierre (in disguise as "Big Peter") back to the forest.

We are next introduced to a peasant family in Castleton: Jethro, Sarah, their father, and their dog Plug. The children have found out that the Prince's men are demanding taxes and harassing the townspeople. When their father leaves to get help, the men arrive and threaten the family that they will pay "one way or another", kidnapping the children to be imprisoned and executed.

Meanwhile Robin is surprised to find that an outlaw called Martin (Marion in disguise) is robbing his targets before he can. They fight, and Robin is about to kill Marion/Martin, but is interrupted by a woman from the town asking for Martin's help. Much, Will, and Martin convince Robin to spare his rival's life until the children are rescued.



Jeremy Crawford & Izzie Steele in rehearsals for *The Heart of Robin Hood*. Photo by Cylla von Tiedmann.

Jethro and Sarah's father has been executed and the children will be, too, unless they publicly swear allegiance to Prince John. Jethro refuses and Sarah is taken up to the executioner – who reveals himself to be Robin in disguise! The outlaws fight the soldiers and bring the children back to the forest; Sarah, traumatized, is unable to speak. Robin reveals to Martin that, though he has avoided women, meeting Marion last week has begun to change him. Once he is asleep, Marion confesses her love of Robin to Plug, overheard by Sarah.

Back in York, a letter arrives from Marion's father explaining that Prince John's new tax is not to help the crusading king but for his own purposes. Gisborne and John punish Makepeace for revealing this information by cutting out his tongue, and go back into the forest after the children to make an example of them. Numerous soldiers, townspeople, and even Marion's sister Alice join the search. Robin encounters Alice, who explains that she is looking for her sister in order for Marion to be married. Marion realizes that the only way to save the children is to give Prince John what he wants – her hand in marriage, in exchange for their lives. The prince gleefully arranges for their wedding to take place in three days.

Jethro and the still-silent Sarah remain in the forest with Robin. Much comes to the camp with news of the impending wedding, which shocks both Robin and Pierre. They devise a plan to reach Marion during her confession at the church at sundown, leaving Pierre with the children. Despite the children's pardon, Gisborne arrives to kill Jethro and Sarah but, with the help of Plug, they all escape.

At the cathedral, Robin and his men trick the Confessor and chase him and the nuns away. Robin disguises himself as the Confessor to trick the prince, but reveals himself to Marion, asking where he can find her "brother, Martin" who Robin believes is being tortured by Gisborne. Marion tells the men to come to the castle at midnight. Meanwhile, Jethro and Sarah wander through the cold forest and are comforted by the ghosts of their parents, who tell them to go to the cathedral for Sarah to find her voice.

Returning to camp, the men find the children gone and a torn piece of Pierre's sleeve from Gisborne's attack. The men are surprised when Robin orders them to search for Jethro and Sarah, but he has come to realise that he has been too strict and has not cared enough for the weak. At the same time that Robin has an epiphany that one cannot live apart from all other people as he has tried to do, Gisborne enters and is defeated in a fight.

Little John manipulates Gisborne's body like a puppet back at the castle, convincing the prince that the children are dead and Robin's band captured. Satisfied, Prince John leaves and Marion enters, embracing Robin. She realizes that they are there to see Martin and goes to disguise herself as her alter ego. Robin repeats his mantra about women causing storms in the hearts of men, trying to convince himself that he is not in love with Marion. When Martin returns, Robin confesses this love, but Prince John's soldiers capture him and his men.

On the morning of Prince John's wedding to Marion, the prisoners are being marched to Norfolk. Pierre approaches the soldiers, pretending to be a past victim of Robin's seeking revenge. The soldiers are happy to lend him weapons to use on Robin but Pierre turns on the soldiers instead and they rush to interrupt the wedding.

At the church the ceremony is proceeding as planned until the bishop asks for anyone who knows why the marriage should not occur to step forward. Using her voice for the first time since her capture, Sarah does, revealing what she heard in the forest: that Marion loves Robin. The men arrive and a fight

ensues. Robin is about to kill the prince but Marion asks for mercy, saying that she saw Robin's heart from the day she met him. The Duke of York, Marion's father, arrives in the nick of time with his soldiers and declares Prince John under arrest in the name of the king. Though Robin is untitled and common, Marion's love for him convinces the Duke to accept Robin into their family. Robin explains that the prince was defeated with the help of Martin of Sherwood, who he greatly admires, and asks Marion to get him. She returns half dressed in her Martin disguise. Robin now knows the full extent of Marion's bravery and goodness, and asks her to marry him in the greenwood. The family and friends all go to the forest for the wedding, concluding the story of how Robin Hood discovered his heart.

CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND

The Legend of Robin Hood

Robin Hood and his exploits have captured peoples' imaginations for centuries. While it is unknown whether any real one person was the basis for the stories in the 13th century, Robin served as a stock outlaw character who could carry out many adventures. From the year 1262, records of "Robehod" and "Little John" were appearing as people began to use the names as aliases, which shows that by this point the stories were already very well-known. However, we do not know the content of those tales, which were set down in writing starting in the early 1500s.

These early stories were told in rhyme and may have been chanted or recited. They would have been told in town halls, taverns, and gatherings. Play texts have also been found, with records of performances as early as 1426, and evidence of many productions starting in 1475.

The first published "rymes" of Robin Hood introduced some of the concepts, such as a band of merry men, that persist to this day. There are eight surviving rymes, though more probably circulated at the time. Five of these rymes were brought together in *The Gest of Robyn Hode*, which was the first piece that attempted to string together the stories into a narrative: Robin Hood and the Knight, Robin Hood and the Sheriff, Little John and the Sheriff, Robin Hood and the King, and The Death of Robin Hood. The three other rymes were Robin Hood and the Monk, Robin Hood and the Potter, and Robin Hood and Guy of Gisborne. In these rymes we see the different sides of Robin: as a fighter and killer, a trickster, a fount of restorative justice, a courteous figure, a man from a common background. In *The Heart of Robin Hood*, we see another take on Robin's journey to possessing several of these qualities.



In the earliest published stories, Robin Hood appealed to the gentry as well as commoners. They can be seen as articulating the popular political outlook that challenged authority. There were “elements of both chivalric romance and lewd ribaldries among them. The elements are bound together by a concern of putting wrongs right” (Pollard) – this play examines the character of Robin Hood and offers a take on how the aspect of righting wrongs could have become important to him.

Maid Marian (or Marion) is an important character in the play, but historically she only entered Robin Hood stories in the mid-16th century. By this point, May Games, which were seasonal festivals, incorporated Robin as a character – some say that the Green Man, or Wild Man, who had been a part of the games for years, may also have inspired characteristics of Robin. The character of Marian was introduced to these games, and it seemed only natural to cast her as the lover of Robin Hood. Shortly after she was incorporated into the legend, Robin began to be spoken of as a dispossessed earl; when this version of events became popular, Marian was spoken of as the daughter of a nobleman, and the plot was transposed into the reign of Richard I, the context in which we most often hear the stories today (including *The Heart of Robin Hood*).

There were many influences in the character of Robin, and while nobody as yet can prove the real existence of such a man, his popularity transcended lines of class in the Middle Ages, bringing people together in their love of the stories. Today we are still fascinated by Robin’s qualities and adventures – Wikipedia lists over sixty television shows and movies featuring the character – and that, hundreds of years later, audiences will still flock to see and hear stories about Robin Hood.

Major Oak – this giant tree, 10 metres (33 feet) across, is in the heart of Sherwood Forest and rumoured to be where Robin’s band slept. It is so big that it now has to be supported by scaffolding! A giant oak tree is a prominent piece of the set for *The Heart of Robin Hood*.



England in the Middle Ages

The feudal system dominated Europe in the time the Robin Hood stories came to be set. Based on land ownership, the system was like a pyramid of status, from kings to nobles to knights to peasants, who could be free men or villiens who owed work to a noble. Many peasants tilled the land but could also serve lords, helping to manage their estates. Craftspeople and occupations such as potters, butchers, and millers were common as well. England was divided into counties or shires, presided over by sheriffs. Religion was a vital part of everyday life at the time, with the king believed to be ruling by divine right. This did not however mean there was no rebellion. The throne changed hands with violent fights and assassinations several times between 1066 and 1154, when Henry II, father of Richard I, was crowned. Upon Henry's death in 1189, Richard (known as The Lionheart) became king and immediately left on Crusade for several years. (It is in this period that *The Heart of Robin Hood* is set.) The era was characterized by a huge gap in wealth between the ruling classes and the peasants as well as volatile political and economic circumstances. This period of unrest, which only began to stabilize in the fifteenth century, could explain why stories of a noble outlaw who fought for freedom and to help his people were especially popular.



GLOSSARY

Apostate – Someone who has renounced a religious belief or principle. Prince John calls Sarah one while trying to convince people she is related to the devil and not to be trusted.

Blunderbuss – An early gun, invented around the 16th century. This was after Richard I's reign, when this play is set – an example of a playwright adding elements from different time periods to advance the plot of a play and for dramatic effect!

Confession – In this case, a Christian ritual of acknowledging one's sins or wrongs in order to be forgiven.

Crusade – Jerusalem was seen as a holy city by different faiths: Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. Pilgrims visited the Muslim-controlled city regularly. A series of wars occurred as European Christians tried to claim control of the city. In 1187, a sultan, Saladin, captured Jerusalem, which prompted Richard I of England to plan what was called The Third Crusade or The King's Crusade with Phillip II of France and Frederick I Barbarossa of the Holy Roman Empire. This crusade lasted from 1189 to 1192, and ended with Richard and Saladin creating a treaty that left Jerusalem under Muslim control but allowed access to Christian pilgrims and merchants.

Duke – A title of European nobility. This was usually the highest rank below Prince or King. The female equivalent is “duchess.”

Earl – A title of British nobility, equivalent to a Count. Earls administered a shire or province on the king’s behalf. Eventually this representation to the king was taken over by sheriffs.

Fiefdom – Circumstance in which tenant farmers were bound to plots of land, and had to obey the will of the landlord. Marion’s father wrote to her that King Richard allowed John authority over Marion’s family’s lands.

Flail – a medieval weapon consisting of a striking head (sometimes with spikes) attached to a shaft with flexible material, such as leather, rope, or chain. Also called a mace and chain or ball and chain.

Greensward – Grass-covered ground.

Lute – A stringed instrument common in the medieval times.

Mead – An early alcoholic beverage made with fermented honey.

Monk – A man who lives a life fully devoted to religion. However, the monk in this play may not be as devoted as he says.

Outlaw – Someone outside the protection of the law, stripped of their possessions, and banished from society as punishment for a serious crime. There were rewards for killing

outlaws, and only the king could reverse the sentence with a pardon.

Pastoral – Relating to the countryside; usually associated with traits of charm, simplicity, serenity, peace, and calm.

Retinue – A group accompanying an important person, like an entourage. They are “retained” in service of this person. John seeks to add to his retinue; Robin’s is his Merry Men.

Sherwood Forest – A royal forest in Nottinghamshire, England, reserved for the king to hunt deer and boar. In the year 1200, it covered 19,000 acres (7,800 hectares) and was one of the largest forests in the country. Today approximately 450 acres remain. Outlaws, thieves, and political rebels were known to take refuge in forests like Sherwood.

Tempest – A violent storm. Robin believes that women cause tempests of strife and confusion in a man.

Treason – The crime of betraying a nation including helping a country’s enemies. In this play, the prince and sheriff called anyone against them traitors.

Yeoman – A class of people above the labourers, but below the gentry. Yeomen could be landowners, attendants, officials, or guards and were probably often occupied in cultivating land.

York – A city in northern England. At the time this play is set, it was the largest and most important city in England after London.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

A common element in *The Heart of Robin Hood* is disguise. Can you name some other writers or historical figures throughout history who presented themselves as someone else? Why might they have done so? (History/Social Studies, ELA)

The story of Robin Hood was traditionally told in the form of a ballad, and music plays an important role in this production. Compose a ballad telling one of your favourite stories. (ELA, Music)

There are eight well-known rymes of Robin Hood. In the Middle Ages, plays based on these rymes were popular forms of entertainment. Present one of these traditional stories in the form of a play, or dramatize a new adventure featuring Robin Hood and other characters from the stories. To go further, you could research how these plays would be performed in ages past and add elements of the period to your piece. (ELA, Drama)

Write a journal or create a scrapbook about the events of *The Heart of Robin Hood* from the point of view of a character in the play. Consider how their status, lifestyle, and personality would influence their take on events. (ELA, Art)

Research living conditions and historical events in the time of Richard I and, using this information, compose a newspaper featuring articles about different events in the timeline of the play, such as the crusades, Prince John's takeover, Robin's thievery, and so on. Show different perspectives on these incidents. (History/Social Studies, ELA, Art)

Learn about the styles of art historically associated with the Middle Ages (painting, stained glass, sculpture, tapestry, etc.) and illustrate a moment from the play. (Art)

In this play and many retellings of Robin Hood, Prince John holds the power and takes advantage of the poor. Robin reacts against this first by fending for himself and then by connecting with his community to help them. Research an historic or current example of a group struggling for power. (Social Studies, Global Issues)

Sherwood Forest is the central setting of the play and is integral to the legends. Look into how forests play into folklore and tales from all over the world. (Social Studies, ELA)

The cast of *The Heart of Robin Hood* often play multiple roles within the production. How do they use their voices and bodies to show these different characters? What other devices help to convey this? Devise a piece/tell a story featuring multiple characters played by the same actor and portray each differently. (Drama)

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Attending the play *The Heart of Robin Hood* and discussing it or completing some of the suggested activities will fit into the Learning Outcomes for Middle and Senior Years in the Manitoba Curriculum.

ELA

- Experiment with language and form
- Extend understanding
- Experience various texts
- Appreciate the artistry of texts
- Create original texts
- Attentive Listening and Viewing

DRAMA

- Students generate and use ideas from a variety of sources
- Students perform and share their own drama
- Students experience and develop awareness of drama from various times, places, social groups, and cultures (The learner develops understandings about people, practices, and perspectives from the world of the dramatic arts in various times, places, social groups, and cultures)

MUSIC

- Students generate and use ideas from a variety of sources in creating music
- Students experience and develop awareness of a variety of musical genres, styles, and traditions
- Students experience and develop awareness of music from various times, places, social groups, and cultures

SOCIAL STUDIES

- Grade 7: Cluster 2 – Global Quality of Life
- Grade 8: Cluster 4 – Transition to the Modern World
- Grade 11: Understand the Ethical Dimensions of History
- Grade 12: Global Issues and Western Civilization – A Historical Review of its Development

REFERENCES AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

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