

# Outlaw: The Story of Robin Hood

Robin looked around him. They were coming out of the trees on every side, dozens of them, on horseback, on foot. His father was entirely surrounded. There was no reaching him, no helping him.

'Robin, in your mother's name, will you go!'

He ran. He ran like a hare runs, as his father had taught him, weaving, dodging, swerving and he was fast too, but not fast enough. He felt a horse pounding behind him, and another was charging directly towards him. He threw the knife because it was all he could think of. It took the rider coming at him in the throat. He swerved away, not even looking back to see him fall, and made for the trees. One glance back now, and Robin saw his father pinioned by his arms, spitting defiance in the face of his captors, the blood running down his face. Then two riders were coming after him, swords drawn. He had no more knives left to throw. There was nothing to do but run. He plunged into the forest where it was thickest, where he knew horses would have to slow to a walk. He scrambled up gullies, forded streams and found at long last the safety of a cave, one of the secret hideaways known only to his father and himself.

He lay back against the rock in the dark dank of the cave and tried to regain his breath and collect his thoughts. It was only now that he cried, for it was only now that he understood that he was an orphan and quite alone in the world. Worse, he had run away and abandoned his own father.

A voice spoke to him from the mouth of the cave. 'They did not kill him.' It was a girl's voice. She stood silhouetted against the light, a willowy figure, a bow in her hand, a quiver of arrows on her back. 'They did not kill him,' she repeated. 'We saw them. They took him away.'

Filled with sudden hope, Robin started to his feet. 'Are you sure?' He came towards her, and then stopped dead.

'I am Marion.' She was a young woman and not a girl at all. 'And I wish you would not stare at me like that.'

Her hair was white, not silver like an old person's, not fair as his mother's had been, but white, pure white. Her eyes seemed to glow red in the early morning sun. 'You're an Outlaw, aren't you?' he breathed.

'We all are,' said Marion quietly, and she turned and ran off. Robin followed. As he emerged from the cold of the cave, he saw that the valley below him was filled with people, all of them gazing up at him and silent. Some had long white hair to their shoulders like the young woman. Some looked like children first, but they were not. They were dwarfs. Every one of them was dressed in the green of the forest. There were hunchbacks in amongst them, and it was one of these, the tallest, a hunting horn in one hand, that stepped forward and spoke up. 'Your father was a good man. He fed the hungry. He fed the poor. We saw him. We watched him. We know everything and everyone that moves in the forest. We have to. Now he is gone and you are one of us. Like us, you are an Outlaw.'

*Outlaw: The Story of Robin Hood* by Michael Morpurgo

## Questions

- 1 *'spitting defiance in the face of his captors'*

In this sentence, the word *'defiance'* is closest in meaning to:

frustration      exhaustion      rebellion      command           [1 mark]

- 2 What colour does the extract say an old person's hair is? [1 mark]

- 3 Decide whether each statement about the extract is true or false. [1 mark]

	True	False
Robin is described as running like a horse.		
Marion is a young woman.		
The story takes place in the early evening.		
The people in the valley are all dressed in green.		

- 4 Why did Robin feel that once he was in the cave, he was safe from the men? [2 marks]

- 5 How did Marion know who Robin was and who he was crying over? [2 marks]

- 6 Do you think Robin will be accepted by the outlaws? Give reasons for your answer. [2 marks]

- 7 At first Robin thinks Marion is a child. Where else in the extract does run on writer describe people who seem like children at first? Copy the sentence or sentences. [1 mark]

- 8 *'the dark dank of the cave'*

Why do you think the writer chose these words to describe the cave? [2 marks]

- 9 *"'You're an Outlaw, aren't you?" he breathed.'*

What does the word *'breathed'* suggest about how Robin feels about meeting an outlaw? [1 mark]

- 10 Early in the extract, Robin believes he has become an orphan. Does he still think this at the end of the extract? Give a reason for your answer. [1 mark]