



## 6<sup>th</sup> Grade - Robin Hood Plays

### --- SAMPLE ---

The Robin Hood stories offer the quintessential dramatic experience for sixth graders. They are historically interesting; they contain drama, camaraderie, physical challenges, humor, and a strong moral message. The stories are diverse and may be strung together in a variety of ways to meet the needs of individual classes. I wrote the first edition of this play in 1985, for my first class, and have added, removed, and changed scenes and characters four times for the next four classes. Some of the characters and scenes have been in all the versions of the play, but other scenes have only been used by one group.

Because there is an alternate story line in the play, incorporating a traveling band of minstrels, any number of students can have engaging parts, and many different kinds of circus, tumbling, and magic tricks may be incorporated into the minstrels' scenes. All sorts of musical numbers may also be incorporated into the scenes when the minstrels are on stage. This part of the play may be tailored to highlight the individual skills of students in the group. This play also includes two characters, forest dwellers, who act as narrators throughout the story. Although the play is long, I am including two complete versions, each one using a different set of narrators and incorporating different scenes and stories. The stage direction for the physical comedy in each version is also a bit different.

The stage should have a back curtain with a painted forest and lots of real and/or fake trees and plants that characters can hide behind. A front curtain is handy but not required, but there needs to be a backstage area, hopefully allowing characters to enter and exit on both sides of the stage. An exit behind the audience would also be helpful. To provide examples of how a curtained and uncurtained stage area may be used, I have written stage directions that could work with either situation. There are many props needed for the play, and it would be worthwhile to go through the script with the students and decide together on the props.

I put certain students in charge of taking notes when I gave direction during rehearsals and had other students in charge of keeping track of props and costumes. Costumes for the men and women in Robin's band will be in the forest colors of browns and greens. All of them will be wearing leggings, dark socks, dark colored shirts and tunics. Robin will have his very well-known hat, and members of his band will also dress in hats. Many of them will carry simple wooden bows and quivers, which the students love to make. Little John, of course, carries his wooden staff. The minstrels should be dressed in very colorful costumes, tunics and leggings. They can also wear patterned, thigh high socks over their tights. Their hats should be typical minstrel hats, some sporting small bells. They all should have pouches and sashes wrapped around their belts that hold the props needed for their acts. Stage lights are very helpful to create the different moods, but they are not crucial.

## Robin Hood and the Folk of Old Sherwood Forest

### Cast Notes

There are many ways to cast these plays, and some of the characters, especially the minstrels, will develop their characters' personalities only after a particular student receives their role. In one production, one of the minstrels became very shy and would only sign her lines while another spoke for her; in another version a minstrel signed while speaking her own lines. Still other versions had minstrels playing off each other; one was very melancholic, while another was quite impatient, while another found it impossible to keep still. Still other minstrels created mischief in the audience - the possibilities are endless, and great fun to develop.

By sixth grade, most of the students love the challenge of learning their lines and developing their characters and have great ideas that can be incorporated into the production. I suggest spending a few months putting the play together, using extra classes and morning exercise time, so the social fabric of the class can really expand as you rehearse. If your school has a circus program, that teacher can help to develop routines for the minstrel scenes. In these junior high grades, the students should have enough time to learn lines and develop their characters without the stress of having just one block to pull it all together.

So much growth and change takes place in the group during the work around the play, it is important to give enough time for everything to come to fruition in a joyous way. I would suggest having two or more performances of the play, changing the main characters each time. I always have main characters of different genders and also changed the gender of one of Robin's band in one of the versions I'll offer in this book. There have been as many as ten students in Robin's band and as few as six. I have also preformed the play with as many as ten minstrels and as few as six, and students may play a few different parts if necessary; quick costume changes backstage are a challenge, but also great fun for sixth graders.

### Minstrels

Silas  
Simon  
Isobel  
Goneril  
Roslinda  
Edmund

### Robin Hood's Band

Much  
Gilbert  
Peter  
Will  
Scarlet  
Robin Hood  
Little John  
Doctor

Pilgrim  
Friar Tuck  
Maid Marion

Beggar  
Woman  
Sheriff's Wife  
Sheriff of Nottinghamshire  
Guards  
Merchant  
Cobbler  
Farmer  
King Richard the Lionhearted

Townspeople  
Lizzie  
Gran  
Sheriff's Guards

### **ACT I, SCENE 1**

(The play opens as Medieval music plays in the background. The stage is a forest scene, with woods painted on a back curtain and plants scattered around the space. An old woman and a young child appear from backstage. The elderly woman is looking around fearfully.)

GRAN:

Hurry, Lizzie, my girl. Work with haste to gather our wood. Look lively girl, before the men of Black Hugo cross our path. (They both look around fearfully.)

LIZZIE:

Ay, just hearing his name doth fill my heart with dread. But, Gran, look around, just for a minute. At high noon, in this time of summer, the very forest seems to be sleeping. Gran, can's't ye hear the hum o' insects and the sweet chirping of the chickadees? I wish we could stay in these gentle woods forever!

GRAN:

I know child, but these woods are not ours to wander in, and if the foresters 'o Guy of Gisborne find us taking their wood, we'll be bringing trouble to thy poor Mum's house.

LIZZIE:

Listen Gran; dost thou hear the sound of bells? Maybe some minstrels pass this way.

GRAN:

Quick now, Lizzie, behind these trees, for there is naught to tell us who approaches. Hurry now and hush, and put ye the wood under the brush.

(Gran and Lizzie hide behind one of the trees on the stage. Jolly singing is heard off stage and some very colorfully dressed minstrels appear from the back of the audience. Some run on, some cartwheel down the aisle, some tumble into place. Lizzie runs out to meet them when they arrive on the stage.)

SILAS:

(Bowing deeply, while the other minstrels follow suit or fool around with each other.)

We bid you a good day, gentle folk,

Two lovely maids alone in the wood?

Thou art with luck that peaceful minstrels find ye and not the Lord's men.

LIZZIE:

(Very excited.)

Can ye sing for us, and tell tales, and do tricks, and tell us the news of the land?

(Everyone laughs.)

GRAN:

Lizzie girl, ye doth ask too much of these fine folk.

SIMON:

Nay, good woman, that is the life we lead,

So pray young mistress, listen well so our tales you'll heed.

ISOBEL:

We indeed travel through this land from village to town,

We bring our songs and good cheer to wipe away a frown.

(As each minstrel speaks others are miming gestures along with the words.)

GONERIL:

(A bit melancholically.)

Our time in England be dark and cold,

Smiles are few and rare to behold.

Most of our folk live under a yoke of misery,

Work and toil be the lot of even the free.

(He signs his lines as he speaks them.)

SILAS:

And what, may we ask, of the folk who are not quite free?

SIMON:

Endless work and toil their lot be!

GONERIL:

(He signs all his lines, as he also speaks, or you can have someone else speak for him as he signs, for the rest of the play.)

Ye must excuse us for tidings so grim.

All of us have known hunger, and we have seen the sad faces of those lads and lasses who work for the lords and ladies of the great houses....

ISOBEL:

(cuts Goneril off, and pushes him aside.)

Goneril, desist from thy melancholic orations!

God grants us grace and good companions.

Fair ladies, we beg thy pardon,

Our wish is to entertain thee and drive away fear and worry.

Let us share merriment.

Can ye not agree?

LIZZIE:

Oh Gran, may we please stay longer?

GRAN:

Methinks it would do no harm to linger a bit longer.

(Lizzie claps and hugs Gran.)

SILAS:

Then watch now our antics and see if you dare,

Frown and act glum when we've not a care!

(The minstrels juggle and throw the flying ribbons. Some can be juggling silks, some beanbags, some doing whatever works for your group. Goneril can be pretending to juggle in a very careful and dramatic way.)

ROSLINDA:

Now, sit and be still for we have a rousing tale to share,

A story so jolly, it will drive away despair.

GONERIL:

Even in these dark times heroes may arise,

That none but the evil and greedy may despise.

ISOBEL:

One such man lives right close to here,

Somewhere in this forest of Sherwood,

Though we know not exactly where.

SIMON:

Robin Hood they call him and more,

For he robs from the rich and gives back to the poor.