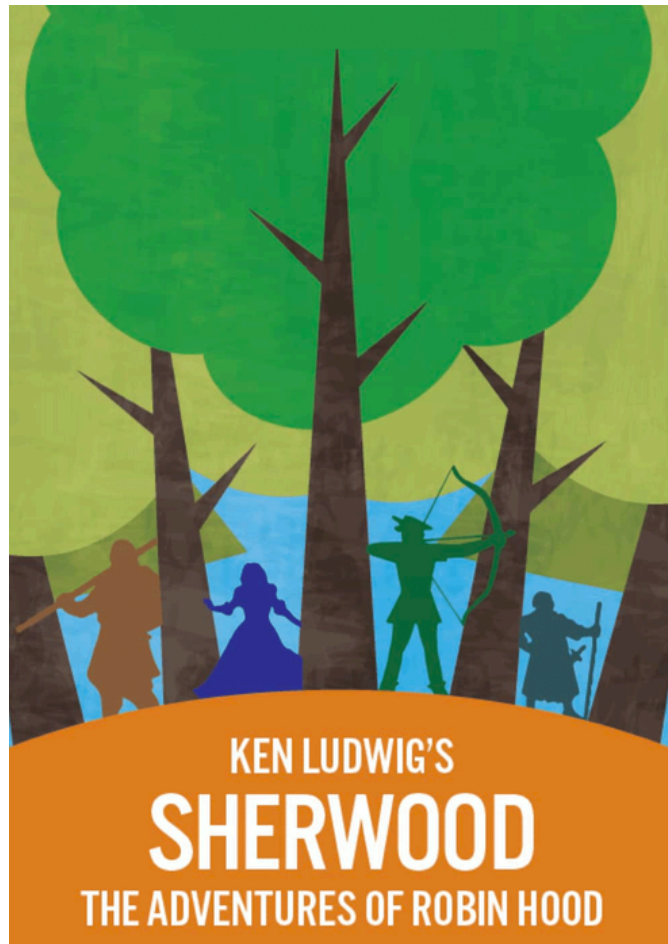



Ken Ludwig's
SHERWOOD
THE ADVENTURES OF ROBIN HOOD
STUDY GUIDE



Directed by Laura Kepley

SHERWOOD: THE ADVENTURES OF ROBIN HOOD



Dear Educators,

Welcome to Season 53 at Alabama Shakespeare Festival! We are thrilled you are joining us for this production, and we hope your visit to the State Theatre of Alabama will prove to be transformational for you and your students. Please also check out our companion guide, as you'll find additional helpful information there as you're planning your trip to visit us!

The amount of effort it takes to coordinate a trip from the classroom to the theater is not lost on us. Thank you for recognizing the value of live theatre for your students! We at ASF believe in the transformative power of the arts and its ability to educate, entertain, and inspire.

ASF is committed to supporting educators in the classroom. By engaging with this play and all others in our regular season, teachers will be able to address several standards in the state and national curriculum. We hope that all study materials and lesson activities are useful for classroom educators, though not exhaustive.

Viewing a performance at Alabama Shakespeare Festival and participating in the post-performance discussion can serve as a powerful springboard for positive classroom discourse, detailed and specific writing, and rich individual student exploration. Below you will find just a few of the possibilities for aligning your study of our productions to National Core Arts and Alabama Course of Study literacy standards.

See you at the theater!

ASF Education Team

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ALABAMA COURSE OF STUDY:

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS

[ELA21.W.6.1] Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

[ELA22.W.6.2] Write informative or explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

[ELA15.RI.6.5] Analyze how a particular sentence, paragraph, chapter, or section fits into the overall structure of a text and contributes to the development of the ideas.

[ELA16.RI.6.6] Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and explain how it is conveyed in the text.

[ELA12.RI.9-10.3] Analyze how the author unfolds an analysis or series of ideas or events, including the order in which the points are made, how they are introduced and developed, and the connections that are drawn between them.

[ELA4.RL.11-12.4] Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful. (Include Shakespeare as well as other authors.)

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS *cont.*

[ELA5.RL.11-12.5] Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.

[ELA7.RL.11-12.7] Analyze multiple interpretations of a story, drama, or poem (e.g., recorded or live production of a play or recorded novel or poetry), evaluating how each version interprets the source text. (Include at least one play by Shakespeare and one play by an American dramatist.)

NATIONAL CORE ARTS ANCHOR STANDARDS

TH.Re7.1 Perceive and analyze artistic work.

TH.Re8.1 Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.

TH.Re9.1 Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work.

TH.Cn10.1 Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.

TH.Cn11.1 Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural and historical context to deepen understanding.

Copyediting by **Leigh Owen**
 Senior Marketing Manager

PLOT

“We felt the need to fight injustice and want, and to make the world more kind...”

Ken Ludwig’s bold and exciting retelling of a well-known 14th century legend follows the endearing journey of Robin Hood and his merry band of followers who become heroes of the people and take on the ruthless powers that be. The play opens in the town square in Nottingham, England in 1194 where Sir Guy of Gisbourne and the Sheriff of Nottingham rule with oppression, enforcing the commands of Prince John while King Richard is away on a crusade. The men are prepared to hang the prisoner Robin Hood for his “foul transgressions” against the laws of England. Just before all hope is lost, and Robin Hood is hanged, Friar Tuck appears and addresses the audience, asking them to vote to determine Robin’s fate. Tuck guides the audience back in time to the beginning of the Robin Hood story — his eventful birth.

As time rolls along, young Robin is forced into outlawry after opposing the corrupt leadership of Prince John and his enforcers. He gathers a band of rebels in Sherwood Forest, including Little John, Friar Tuck, and Deorwynn, a peasant girl whose father (Much the Miller) is killed by Sir Guy. Robin Hood’s resistance against the Sheriff and Sir Guy intensifies. He robs from the rich to aid the poor and openly challenges Prince John’s authority. Maid Marian, an old friend initially loyal to Prince John, begins to question her allegiance after witnessing the suffering of the people. She reconnects with Robin and ultimately joins his cause. After Robin Hood is captured and sentenced to death, his band, along with an unexpected ally — King Richard, who has returned in disguise — rescues him at the very last moment, bringing the audience back to where the play began. King Richard reveals his identity, arrests Prince John’s corrupt enforcers, and restores justice to England. Robin and Marian solidify their bond, and the merry men — and women — celebrate their well-earned victory.

Think about it: Robin Hood’s actions throughout the play were in direct violation of the law of Medieval England. Do you think his methods of robbing the rich to aid the poor were justifiable? Why or why not?

CHARACTERS

Robin Hood — Born Robin of Locksley, a skilled archer who transforms from a carefree nobleman into a determined outlaw fighting against tyranny.

Maid Marian — A feisty adventuress who steals Robin’s heart. She finds herself caught in a troubling love triangle.

Friar Tuck — One of Robin Hood’s men. A gravel-voiced, tough-as-shoe-leather man of conviction and irony. Acts as a narrator of sorts.

Little John — Not quite so little. A brawny fighter widely regarded as the strongest man in Sherwood Forest. He befriends Robin.

Deorwynn — One of Robin Hood’s women. A 16-year-old peasant girl whose father, Much the Miller, is killed by Sir Guy. Love interest of Little John.

Sir Guy of Gisbourne — A dangerous man of unpleasant aspect.

The Sheriff of Nottingham — A cowardly bumbler who tries to keep up with Sir Guy. A sidekick of sorts.

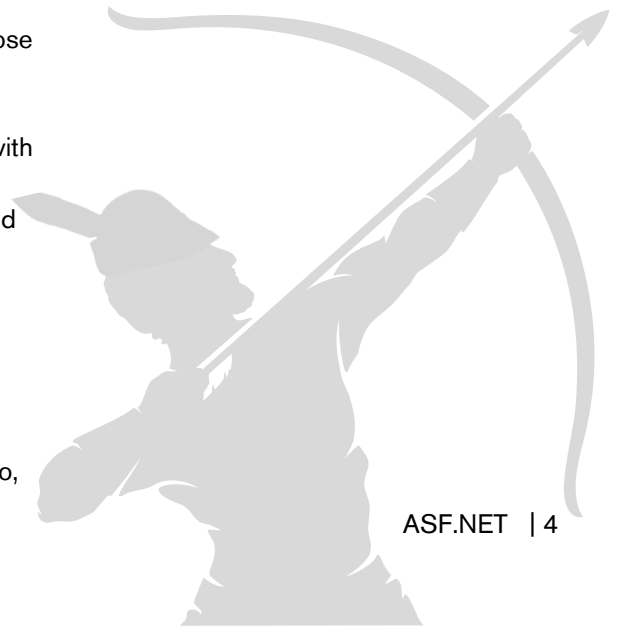
Prince John — A dangerous, calculating, and seemingly courteous man said to have usurped the throne of King Richard. A little too self-centered for his own good.

Additional Characters:

Heloise, Midwife, Robert, Master Bladen, Master Godwin, Alize, Roderick, Fawkes, Margery, Blind Man, Monks, Tankred, Father Goph, Bajka, Gaspar, Much the Miller, Simon, Ansgot, Soldiers, Foresters, Jacques, Etienne, Mateo, Diego, Maximilian, Matthias, Archers, and Executioners

SETTING

Sherwood Forest and the town of Nottingham, England. The year 1194.





Archer – A person skilled in the use of bow and arrow.

Barons – High-ranking nobles who owned land and had power under the king.

Caterwauling – Loud shrieking, howling, or crying.

Country Matters – A phrase used in Shakespearean times as a euphemism for romantic topics.

Creme de la creme – An idiom meaning “the best of the best” or the “very best.”

Dismember – To cut off a person's limbs.

Dolt – An old-fashioned insult meaning a fool or idiot.

En garde! – A French phrase meaning “on guard,” used in fencing.

Foresters – People who work or live in the forest, sometimes as guards or hunters.

Friar – Belonging to a religious order.

Gibbet – A gallows or structure used for public executions.

Longbow – A powerful type of bow used for shooting arrows.

Mace and Chain – A medieval weapon consisting of a spiked ball attached to a chain.

Peasant – A poor farmer or laborer in medieval society.

Quarterstaff – A long wooden pole used as a weapon in medieval combat.

Regent – Someone who rules in place of a king or queen when they are absent.

Rustic humor – A term for simple, sometimes crude, jokes about country life.

Saxons – Germanic people who lived in what is now Germany, Denmark, and the Netherlands.

Seneschal – A medieval official in charge of a noble's household.

Serfs – Medieval peasants who were tied to the land and worked for nobles.

Sword Exhibition – A demonstration or practice of sword-fighting techniques.

Tarry a moment – An old-fashioned way of saying “wait a moment.”

The Crusades – Military expeditions initiated by the medieval papacy to free the Holy Lands from Moslem control.

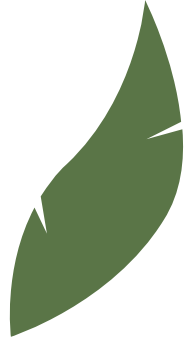
Touché – A French word meaning “touched,” used to acknowledge a clever point in a debate.

Treason – The crime of betraying one's country, especially by attempting to overthrow the government.

Usurped – Taken power or position illegally or by force.

Valiant – Possessing or acting with immense bravery, boldness, or courage.

Yeomen – Farmers or commoners who owned land, often skilled with bows.



Ken Ludwig has had six shows on Broadway, seven in London's West End, and many of his works have become a standard part of the American repertoire. His 32 plays and musicals have been performed in over 30 countries in more than 20 languages and are produced throughout the United States every night of the year. *Lend Me a Tenor* won two Tony Awards and was called "one of the classic comedies of the 20th century" by *The Washington Post*. *Crazy For You* was on Broadway for five years and won the Tony and Olivier Awards for Best Musical.

In addition, he has won the Edgar Award for Best Mystery of the Year, two Laurence Olivier Awards, two Helen Hayes Awards, and the Edwin Forrest Award for Contributions to the American Theater. His plays have starred, among others, Alec Baldwin, Carol Burnett, Tony Shaloub, Joan Collins, and Hal Holbrook. His stage version of *Murder on the Orient Express* was written expressly at the request of the Agatha Christie Estate and had its European premiere at the Chichester Festival Theatre in June of 2022. His play, *Dear Jack, Dear Louise*, won the 2020 Charles MacArthur Award for Best New Play of the Year.



His newest plays include *Lend Me A Soprano*, premiering at the Alley Theatre in fall 2022; *Moriarty*, opening at Cleveland Play House in spring 2023; *Pride and Prejudice, Part 2: Napoleon at Pemberley*; and *Lady Molly of Scotland Yard*. His book *How To Teach Your Children Shakespeare*, published by Penguin Random House, won the Falstaff Award for Best Shakespeare Book of the Year, and his essays are published in the *Yale Review*. He is a graduate of Harvard and Cambridge and is a frequent guest speaker for groups as varied as the Oxford-Cambridge Society, the Jane Austen Society of North America, the Folger Shakespeare Library, and the Baker Street Irregulars.

For more information, visit his website at www.kenludwig.com.

PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTES FROM THE SCRIPT:

[*Sherwood*] is a play with a very real story to tell about courage, about finding yourself within yourself, and about showing compassion and generosity for those in our society who are most in need. As Robin puts it after Deorwyn is captured and he vows to save her, "We travel together. That's the bargain we make in life. We're here for each other. Rich, poor, English, foreign. That's our bargain for living." Overall, the piece should feel like a thrilling romantic adventure with a generous heart.

Historically, the story of Robin Hood emerged little by little from a scattering of medieval ballads in the 14th and 15th centuries. In Shakespeare's day, two Elizabethan plays by a man named Anthony Munday expanded the story. Then, Sir Walter Scott added new aspects to the legend in *Ivanhoe* in 1820. Finally, the legend as we know it today was consolidated by Hollywood. There were some early silent films in the 1920s. Then came the Errol Flynn masterpiece in 1938. Since that time, there have been dozens of new iterations, the beloved Disney animation of 1973 among them.

My hope is that future producers of *Sherwood* will continue to be inspired by the story of this band of outlaws who stood for all that was honorable in life, and that, together, we can add a new chapter to this timeless legend.

THE ICONIC OUTLAW AT THE MOVIES: ROBIN HOOD TALES ON SCREEN

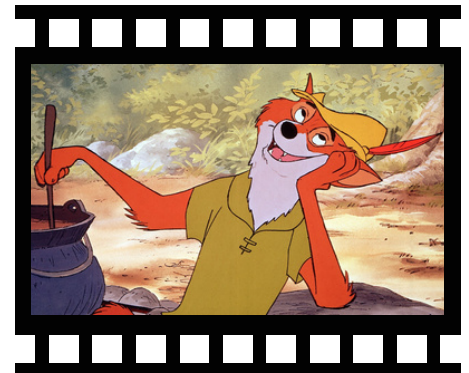
Many popular adaptations of the Robin Hood legend have been retold on television and in film. Take a look at some of the movie adaptations listed below from the past few decades.



The Adventures of Robin Hood (1938)
Starring Errol Flynn and Olivia de Havilland. The film was originally poised to be shot in black-and-white, but was ultimately colorized via Technicolor.



The Story of Robin Hood (1952)
Starring Richard Todd and Joan Rice. This was Disney's first Robin Hood film. Some scenes were shot in the *real* Sherwood forest.



Disney's Robin Hood (1973)
Classic Animated feature starring Brian Bedford and Monica Evans. It was the first adaptation to include anthropomorphic animals rather than humans.



Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves (1991)
Starring Kevin Costner and Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio. Despite mixed critical reviews, it was a blockbuster hit grossing \$390.5 million world-wide.



Robin Hood (2010)
Starring Russell Crowe and Cate Blanchett. The screenplay was re-written multiple times by different writers before Universal Pictures greenlit it for production.



Robin Hood (2018)
Starring Taron Egerton and Eve Hewson. Director Otto Bathurst delayed filming an entire year in order to get Taron Egerton (who was working on another film at the time) to star as Robin.



Think about it: Suppose *you* were asked to write the next Robin Hood film or stage adaptation. What would you change to make your idea fresh for a new audience? How would the story end? Would you add a twist? Write it. Share it!

Medieval life has often been described as a division of three orders: those who prayed, those who fought, and those who labored.

THE FEUDAL SYSTEM

What is **feudalism**? Feudalism was the economic, political, and social system of medieval Europe. An example of feudalism is someone farming a piece of land owned by a lord and agreeing to serve under the lord in war in exchange for getting to live on the land and receiving protection. The social order: King, Nobles/Lords, Knights, Peasants/Serfs.

WOMEN IN SOCIETY

Contrary to the glamorous depictions of fairytales, women in the Middle Ages had very few rights. They were subservient to their husbands. The social standing of a woman's father or husband determined the respect she received. The amount of schooling they received depended on their social status. The code of chivalry idealized women, but did not bring them any autonomy.

COURTLY LOVE

During this time, men believed adoring a lady — not necessarily one's wife — would make a knight more brave and noble. Courtly love was regarded as very respectful. A knight might wear his lady's colors in battle or write poetry or songs for her, but the lady was required to remain pure and essentially "just out of reach."

MANNERS & CHIVALRY

What is **chivalry**? Chivalry was a system of ideas and social codes that governed society in the Middle Ages. Manners were extremely important. Chivalry was a knight's code of conduct, emphasizing bravery, loyalty, honor, and courtesy, particularly in battle and toward women. Respect for authority was essential, with peasants deferring to nobles and everyone expected to honor the Roman Catholic church.

Think about it: Think about the social class system in society during this time and what you know so far about the Robin Hood legend. How might the "law of the land" impact this story? In this adaptation, Robin's merry band includes some pretty strong women fighters. How might this challenge the social structure of the time? Explain.

THE REAL PRINCE JOHN: ENGLAND'S MOST HATED MONARCH

King John of England (reigned 1199 to 1216) has widely been regarded as one of the worst kings in English history.



King John of England. National Portrait Gallery.

Prince John, the infamous villain of the *Robin Hood* tales, is loosely based on the real-life **King John of England**, one of Europe's most notorious monarchs. His historical reputation is just as grim as his fictional portrayal.

John's rule was marked by heavy taxation of both England's nobility and peasants, making him deeply unpopular. His military failures, including disastrous campaigns in France, weakened England's power. While his older brother, King Richard the Lionheart, was away on crusade, John attempted to seize the throne by conspiring with the king of France. After Richard's untimely death and many questions regarding succession, John was officially crowned king, but his reign quickly became known for cruelty and political incompetence.

In an era when chivalry often dictated mercy, John was notorious for his brutal treatment of enemies, including starving prisoners to death. Within five years of his reign, he had lost significant continental territories, including Normandy. Facing rebellion, he was forced to negotiate with his opponents and make major concessions, which was a significant blow to English powers.

Despite his many failures and transgressions, King John is perhaps best remembered for sealing the **Magna Carta** in 1215 — the first document to put into writing the principle that the king and his government was not above the law. Though he did so under pressure from rebellious barons, this document became a cornerstone of constitutional law and has since inspired many democratic movements. However, John soon reneged on the agreement, sparking a bloody civil war. His reign remains one of the most criticized in English history, and he is widely despised by medieval chroniclers. John's legacy is a cautionary tale of poor leadership, but the unintended impact of the Magna Carta has ensured his place in history.

Think about it: Although King John's nefarious actions damaged his reputation, he is best remembered for an unintended act of leadership—the signing of the Magna Carta. Do you think he deserves credit for this contribution, even though it was forced upon him? Should a person with a largely negative legacy be remembered for a single positive act? Explain.

THE WORLD OF THE PLAY: COSTUME & SCENIC ELEMENTS

SHERWOOD: THE ADVENTURES OF ROBIN HOOD



Scenic rendering of ASF's production of *Sherwood: The Adventures of Robin Hood*. Scenic Design by Jeff Behm

Robin Hood



Maid Marian



Prince John



Costume renderings of ASF's production of *Sherwood: The Adventures of Robin Hood*. Costume Design by Alexa Behm

Think about it: Take a look at the scenic and costume renderings for *Sherwood*. Knowing that the purpose of these design elements is to add meaning while fulfilling the needs of the story, what specific details or choices do you notice here that serve the storytelling?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

PRE-SHOW DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Many versions of the legend of Robin Hood have been told dating all the way back to the early 14th and 15th centuries. What do you already know about Robin Hood and his adventures? Why do you think this is such an enduring tale? Explain.
2. In ASF's production of Ken Ludwig's *Sherwood*, eight actors will take on the roles of over 30 characters. How do you think the production team might pull this off? What might be challenging for the audience by telling the story this way? Explain.

POST-SHOW DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. After seeing the play, think about the actions Robin and his band of outlaws take to stand up to oppression. How does Robin Hood's sense of "justice" differ from that of Prince John and his enforcers? Explain.
2. What qualities made Robin Hood a good leader? How did he inspire loyalty in his followers? Does Prince John demonstrate any good leadership qualities or is he purely a villain? Explain.
3. What if Robin Hood lived today? How would he fight injustice in the 21st Century?

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

I. On your feet: Living Pictures in Sherwood's Forest! In groups of 5 to 6 students, choose four plot points from the play to retell in tableau. Remember, a **tableau** is a still image that tells a story. Each group should create four still images that clearly retell their chosen plot points. (Ex. Robin Hood is born. He gathers a band of rebels in the Sherwood forest. Robin is held prisoner and is about to be hanged. Robin is rescued by his friends.) Practice moving from image to image. Think about big, bold, specific choices that make the events of the story clear to the audience. Use the space and around you and levels to add dimension. Each tableau should look like a snapshot from the play. Share. Discuss.

Variation: Teachers you may use whatever strategy you like best to divide the students into groups. To help them complete this activity quickly, you may choose to have everyone follow the same four points listed above (every group will come up with different images, and that's OK). Give the groups a chance to practice on their own, then pair off your groups to perform for each other. You may then invite one or all groups to share their tableaus with the whole class if time allows.

II. At your desk: Wanted Posters! Choose a character from Robin Hood's band of outlaws (Robin, Maid Marian, Deorwynn, Little John, etc.), use the worksheet (page 12) or a digital platform to create a wanted poster to be placed around the Sherwood Forest. Be sure to include a sketch of the character. This can be hand-drawn, printed, digital artwork, etc. Briefly describe the crimes the character committed, list a reward amount if found, and include at least one quote you can remember from the play that best represents the way the character is viewed by others. Share with your class. Discuss.

Variation: Teachers you may choose to have students create their posters using paper resources/supplies OR create them digitally. Hang the finished pieces in a "Sherwood's Most Wanted" art gallery and have the students view and respond to each other's work. This can be done by giving each child two sticky notes, have them write down an observation, then stick them to two other classmates' work. Be mindful to guide this activity and give clear instructions regarding student feedback. Discuss.

Teachers: You will find additional activity sheets attached below! Use them however you like. Email us at education@asf.net if you find these helpful or have other ideas for additional resources.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

Create Your Own Wanted Poster pg. 12

Anticipation Activity pg. 13

Responding to Live Theatre: Critical Response pg. 14

ADDITIONAL ONLINE RESOURCES

About Ken Ludwig

www.kenludwig.com

The Real Robin Hood

<https://www.history.com/topics/european-history/robin-hood>

The Legend of Robin Hood - Nottingham Castle

<https://www.nottinghamcastle.org.uk/the-legend-of-robin-hood/>

Robin Hood and His Historical Context

https://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/middle_ages/robin_01.shtml

About Robin Hood - Sherwood Forest

<https://visitsherwood.co.uk/about-robin-hood/>

What Was Life Like in Medieval Society? - INTERACTIVE

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zwyh6g8#zh8rbqt>




Directions: Create your own wanted poster. Choose a character from Robin Hood's band of outlaws (Robin, Maid Marian, Deorwynn, Little John, etc.). Use the space in the frame to create a sketch of the character, then fill in the prompts below.

WANTED

Character Sketch:

CRIMES COMMITTED:



Three horizontal lines with arrows at both ends for writing crimes committed.

REWARD:

One horizontal line with arrows at both ends for writing reward.

CHARACTER NAME/QUOTE:

Two horizontal lines with arrows at both ends for writing character name or quote.

ANTICIPATION ACTIVITY: AGREE or DISAGREE (MIDDLE SCHOOL, HIGH SCHOOL) PRE-SHOW

Before you see the show, respond to the following statements as honestly as possible by circling your response. Then, explain your answer with an example.

SA – Strongly Agree, A – Agree, D – Disagree, SD – Strongly Disagree

STATEMENT #1: It is never justifiable to break the law.

SA | A | D | SD

Explain your answer with an example:

STATEMENT #2: Always stand up for what you believe is right, even if you stand alone.

SA | A | D | SD

Explain your answer with an example:

STATEMENT #3: People who choose not to stand up against tyranny are part of the problem.

SA | A | D | SD

Explain your answer with an example:

A variation of this activity: “Four Corners.” Make signs with the SA, A, D, and SD labels. Then, ask the students to stand in the middle of the classroom. Repeat each question aloud (or create new ones) and allow them to move to the corner of the room that best represents their opinion. Discuss.

RESPONDING TO LIVE THEATRE (HIGH SCHOOL) POST-SHOW

SHERWOOD: THE ADVENTURES OF ROBIN HOOD

CRITICAL REVIEW

Directions: Imagine you are the official theatre critic for this production at ASF! For each area of the production, give thoughtful and honest feedback. Be specific and answer each prompt using complete sentences. Use the back of the page if necessary.

I. Playwright/Story

Use the space below to discuss elements of the story. What worked well? Did anything strike you negatively?

II. Performance/Acting

Use the space below to give constructive feedback about the actors' performances in the production. Was there a performer whom you particularly enjoyed? What could have been better?

III. Directing

Use the space below to discuss the overall direction and interpretation of this production. Remember, nothing happens by accident. Did anything surprise you?

IV. Technical Elements

Use the space below to discuss the lighting, sound, scenery, and costumes for this production. Were you transported to a different time/place? Did these elements effectively serve the story? Explain.



ALABAMA
SHAKESPEARE
FESTIVAL

UP NEXT: HAMLET BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

APR 17–MAY 4



HAMLET

Find SchoolFest Performance Schedule and More Info at:
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