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In A Dark Wood



Synopsis

No one has ever bested Geoffrey, the Sheriff of Nottingham--until the day a new villain appears in the forest. Cunning, treacherous, and, against all expectations, a man to respect, his name is Robin Hood. Their deadly game of cat and mouse begins--and the Sheriff's life will never be the same. Acclaimed young adult author Michael Cadnum's subtle, evocative prose is sure to leave readers spellbound."A stunning tour de force, beautifully written, in which Michael Cadnum turns the legend of Robin Hood inside out....In a Dark Wood may well become that rare thing--an enduring piece of literature." --Robert Cormier, author of *The Chocolate War* * A Puffin Novel * 256 pages* Ages 14 up

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Customer Reviews

Grade 9 Up?Geoffrey, Sheriff of Nottingham, is informed by the king's steward that a local highwayman must be eliminated. This outlaw, Robin Hood, is only a minor nuisance to Geoffrey. The sheriff is much more concerned about his strained relationship with his wife; his affair with the Abbess; his anger at the mimicking Fool; his confusion over his feelings for his young squire, Hugh; and his desire to appear strong and courageous to the people he leads. First tricked, then captured, and later rescued by Robin Hood and his band, the man learns that courage is more than torturing a miscreant and that love is more than lust. At the end of the novel, he is able to accept the mocking of the mute Fool for the apt criticism that it is, and publicly declare that courage is not necessarily physically winning. The medieval setting is clearly and accurately realized. There is no softening of the explicitness of the sexual encounters and it takes a strong stomach to read the sections of the

torture and subsequent hanging of a declared thief. The sections in which Hugh grapples with his feelings for Geoffrey, and in which Hugh fights Robin Hood to defend Geoffrey's honor make this book accessible to young adults. However, the frank portrayal of adult sexual desire make this a difficult book to offer to teens. Because it is Geoffrey's story, and not Hugh's, it is an adult novel that includes a sympathetic teenage character. Wendy D. Caldiero, New York Public Library Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Gr. 7[^]-10. Can't the mighty sheriff of Nottingham outmuscle Robin Hood? Absolutely not, as the legends have told us for centuries. And once again, the kind and wily outlaw holds sway. Now we have the story told mainly from the point of view of the sheriff, Geoffrey, and his erstwhile young squire, Hugh, who wants nothing more than to honor his master by proving himself in the hunt for the crafty ruler of the forest. By the close, everyone ends up proving his honor and restraint by letting peace rule in the land. Cadnum's style evokes medieval days and ways richly--and graphically. Brutal hunts, a bear attack, torture scenes, and hanging descriptions fill the pages. The encounters between Robin Hood and the sheriff are particularly well done and suspenseful. Although the characterizations get a little wooden and the complicated descriptions become labored, this will please historical fiction fans and lovers of medieval lore. Anne O'Malley --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

A somewhat philosophical novel giving the sheriff's viewpoint of Robin Hood. It gives a realistic picture of the era, when torture was routine and common people could be abused with little recourse (the Magna Carta dealt with nobels' rights). King John orders the sheriff to deal with Robin Hood, whom the sheriff had been ignoring as a petty nuisance. The sheriff has other problems closer to home than the king's highway, including his personal love life, wandering pigs, local thieves, and tax collections. The sheriff's encounter with Robin Hood causes him to get religion. There is no Maid Marian in this novel - in fact Robin Hood's band tends to be unattractive, grubby social outcasts. The novel digresses into detailed descriptions of torture. That type of sidelight gives the novel, at best, a PG-13 rating.

Now I know why all the books are about Robin Hood, instead of the Sheriff of Nottingham. To be honest, I was disappointed in this book. The two things I liked best about it were the title and the original idea: the Robin Hood legend from the Sheriff of Nottingham's view point. It sounded so very

promising. But the plot turned out to be very thin. The characterisation and the descriptions were very good, however, hence the two stars instead of one. The author very vividly paints his characters and their grim medieval lives (in the sheriff's case I would even say 'depressing'). Geoffrey, the Sheriff of Nottingham, is a womaniser and loves beautiful clothes. He broods a lot about several things among which his profession. Because he loves being an administrator, especially the accountant's side of it, but hates to fight. If it wasn't for his preference for torture, he could even be called likeable. He is trapped in a loveless marriage to an adulterous wife with a sharp tongue, who may have become like this due to his playing the field with servant women and an abbess. Hugh, Geoffrey's squire, is a sympathetic young boy, who longs desperately for a word of praise from his lord. They are like a son and father, with - like so many others - a problem with communicating their affection. This is the plot of the first hundred pages. Oh, I'm sorry I forgot to mention one small event: a messenger from the king arrives, telling Geoffrey that the king demands the capture of a certain highwayman, not a ruthless killer, but a prankster who raises toll and calls himself Robin Hood. Reluctantly, Geoffrey takes up this task. After his steward has reported the failure of a few attempts, (and we are halfway through the book now) Geoffrey organises an archery contest to lure this Robin Hood into a trap. The contest, however, is won by Thurstin, the miller's son, a boor with whom Hugh is on bad terms. Now, things seem to get moving, at last. We have come to some of the well-known Robin Hood stories like Robin disguised as a potter, dining with the sheriff and his wife, (and taking the opportunity to beat Thurstin at a game of archery, after all), Robin treating the sheriff on a Sherwood feast. But really the most (and only) exciting part is when poor, misguided Hugh is taken captive by Robin's gang (page 209). As the sheriff and the reader fear, Hugh's life may be in danger, because he is set upon killing Robin, and although Robin would certainly not harm him, his men might. As I said, the characters are believable. I liked the sheriff's wife and I liked Hugh. As for the sheriff himself, I really felt sorry for him at times, but that's where it ends basically. He just isn't the most interesting of characters. So very unlike, for instance, the Sheriff of Nottingham, as presented by Parke Godwin in his splendid novel "Sherwood" and its sequel "Robin and the King". Now, there is a sheriff I like. Although he is not the main character of these books, he is strong, attractive, and at times even sympathetic (except when he is upholding the harsh Norman law). Actually, he ends up as Robin's opponent only because Robin 'chooses' a life outside the law. Well, maybe the fact that they love the same woman has something to do with it, as well. But that, of course, is another book...

A true mystery with more foreshadowing than necessary, but otherwise compelling and, in the end,

justified

It's been awhile since I finished this book. I honestly don't remember many details, but I do remember enjoying it. If you're a fan of Robin Hood stories and want something different from the same old rehash, I would recommend this.

Looking in the mirror, I see you, a song of peace goes, reflecting on a once thought enemy, and that is a powerful thought behind this new look at the Robin Hood myth, from a third person point of view of the Sheriff of Nottingham, that character often seen as crude or oafish or downright nasty and evil. This is a portrait of a very human man; one with passions that occasionally spill over onto women other than his wife; one with anger and fear of failing and despair and yet one as well of human decency. As he is forced into tracking down Robin Hood, who has shamed one of the King's men and perhaps the King himself indirectly, his decency, his humaneness, shines through his desperation, and in so doing, garners the respect of Robin Hood, and the sheriff returns the favor. This, then, is a portrait of emerging maturity and wisdom a double portrait since we also follow his squire's growing too so that by the end, the sheriff and his squire perhaps would have hardly recognized the bedeviled souls they once were but isn't that true of all of us?

This rich and complex story tells the story of Robin Hood, from the viewpoint of Geoffrey, the Sheriff of Nottingham. Geoffrey himself is a complex man. He is a product of his time, taught to reverence God and yet use horrifying violence when necessary. But he feels himself torn; he cannot measure up to the level of purity that his religion demands, and too softhearted to mete out the cruelty that his duty requires. And when that laughing rogue, Robin Hood, wanders into his jurisdiction, Geoffrey finds the thick and comfortable shell that he has built around himself begin to crack. This story is entertaining in a very sophisticated way. The world that the author builds is believable and quite fascinating. I enjoyed that the author made believable characters that seem to have hopped right out of history, rather than modern Americans walking around in medieval England. I also enjoyed watching the characters evolve and change (often painfully) as their world changed around them. Though marked as a teen book, I highly recommend it to readers old and young alike!

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