



Will in Scarlet

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This reimagining of the Robin Hood legend tells the story of the young boy behind the bandit hero's rise to fame.

Will Shackley is the son of a lord, and though just thirteen, he's led a charmed, protected life and is the heir to Shackley House, while his father is away on the Third Crusade with King Richard the Lionheart.

But with King Richard's absence, the winds of treason are blowing across England, and soon Shackley House becomes caught up in a dangerous power struggle that drives Will out of the only home he's ever known. Alone, he flees into the dangerous Sherwood Forest, where he joins an elusive gang of bandits readers will immediately recognize.

How Will helps a drunkard named Rob become one of the most feared and revered criminals in history is a swashbuckling ride perfect for anyone who loves heroes, villains, and adventure.

Will in Scarlet Details

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Author : Matthew Cody

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From Reader Review Will in Scarlet for online ebook

Tammy says

I enjoy a tale retold from a different point of view, and lore is, by nature, fictional. I'm a little put off by this one because too much of what has traditionally been Robin's story has been given to a relatively minor character in the old tales. It's a good read and stands on its own, but I'm siding with Robin Hood.

Jessica says

I adored absolutely everything about Will in Scarlet. That, my friends, is getting harder and harder for me to say. It's not often anymore that a book completely sweeps me off my feet. That it enchants me so wholly, that I'm saddened when it ends. Matthew Cody's brilliant reimagining of Robin Hood did just that, and I'm thrilled! Let the gushing commence.

First off, this is a much different take on the Robin Hood tale. While all the essential elements are there, the reader is taken on a new journey into Nottinghamshire courtesy of our plucky young hero, Will. A noble heir, Will's life has thus far been filled with little more than boring lessons and quests to steal goodies from the larder. He never dreamed he'd be caught up in anything exciting, much less something that would threaten his very being. This is what I loved about Will. He's so honest about everything. Not afraid to admit when he is in over his head, not ashamed to tackle his fears, and he has a big heart under all that mischievous outer boyishness. Yes friends, at the center of this boy beats the heart of a leader.

Better yet, his unlikely companions turned out to be just as well-built and vibrant as Will himself. The "Merry Men" are a rag-tag group of peasants, displaced from their lands due to unfair taxes and leans. Faced with the choice between toiling for nothing and robbing the rich? Well, you can guess what they chose. I loved that Matthew Cody brought these characters to life. "Little" John, King Richard, and the Sheriff all make their debuts, with a rich cast of additional characters around them. My favorite though, is Rob. Can you guess who he will end up to be? See, in Cody's story Robin Hood is but a story yet to be told. This is all about the boy who brought him into existence.

I know this review is getting long, but I need to gush about Much, the Miller's "Son" before I finish. In the original tale we have our Maid Marian. The apple of Robin Hood's eye, and nearly the only woman of any importance in the story. In Will in Scarlet our Marian comes in a much different form. I don't want to spoil, so I won't say anything concrete. Just know that Much is a fabulous character. I was so ridiculously happy to see this character hold their own right next to Will. I'm a happy bookworm.

So if this rambling review has proven anything, it should be that I have much to say about Will in Scarlet. All good things in fact! I was looking forward to reading something that would prompt me to write a glowing review, and I'm so ecstatic to have found it. Thank you Matthew Cody. You've made me a fan of Will and his Merry Men. I only hope there is more around the corner!

Mississippi Library Commission says

What makes a person a legend? Why does the world remember some and others fade away? Is it all just collective forgetfulness and wishful thinking? Matthew Cody explores the Robin Hood character in a whole

new light in *Will in Scarlet*: what if Robin Hood weren't actually Robin Hood at all? We had a ball reading this one; it's always fun to see old friends in a new way.

Brenna says

Will in Scarlet is an imaginative retelling of the Robin Hood legend from a new perspective--that of the young Will Scarlet, a boy of fourteen who's growing up as merry old England is falling apart under the rule of Prince John Lackland.

Like all Matthew Cody's books, this one is smart and funny. It's an accessible middle-grade read that's both action-packed and meaningful. Beneath all the goofy fun, there's a very serious undercurrent about the nature of identity and how we define ourselves. Most of the characters in the book are in a state of becoming, struggling to find their places. And every once in a while, they see each other clearly: "She understood Will Scarlet at last, and in understanding, he broke her heart. Straight down the middle, cleaved in two."

This is what I love best about Cody's writing--that he can take silliness and mishap and then use them to say something absolutely gorgeous and true. Middle-grade readers deserve to be trusted with such things, and older readers benefit from them as well.

Overall, this is a great read. Some anachronisms are unavoidable, and occasionally something feels just a bit too convenient (e.g., luckily, there happens to be no one in the room when the heroes sneak in), but it's a fun, swashbuckling tale that takes liberties with the Robin Hood story in order to turn it into something bigger--a story about how we all must learn to accept who we are in order to find the heroes within ourselves.

Just finished reading this aloud to my boys, who unanimously agreed that it gets 5 stars

Wendy says

I really enjoy books about famous fictional heroes that aren't actually about the famous fictional heroes.

Will in Scarlet is a Robin Hood story told first and foremost through the eyes of the young lord, William Shackley. Later, the voice of Much, the miller's daughter turned son, is added. Their stories and the paths that lead them to the Merry Men of Sherwood Forest shape the lore around the infamous Robin Hood. But while we get a glimpse into the wanted bandit, it's Will and Much who the reader gets to know and care about, though we do get to see Robin Hood through their eyes. Turns out, the leader of the Merry Men isn't quite what we expect him to be.

It only took me a few pages to really like this story and the characters. I've never really Will Scarlet in a particularly positive light in the various mediums I've previously met him in, but this one sets out to give him heart and soul and easily achieves it. Robin might lead the Merry Men, but Will is the one who gives them their purpose and helps to define the vast division between nobility and the regular folk without being preachy or petulant.

I also liked how the Sheriff of Nottingham, while not necessarily a likable character overall, is one that I could sympathize with to some extent. His actions are given greater reasoning than him simply being a greedy and evil jerk.

This was a fun read, with well thought out characters, lots of interesting action and a fair bit of humour.

Cross-posted to
The BiblioSanctum

Heidi says

I'll admit off the bat that I am a Robin Hood fan. I've read quite a few different Robin Hood stories. Stories with Robin as a boy, a girl, a grown man, or just a cover story for someone else entirely. But this book comes at it from another character altogether. William Shackley is the heir to Shackley Castle and while reluctant to assume lordly duties, expects things to remain as they are until his father returns with King Richard from the Crusades. But when Richard's imprisonment becomes known it changes everything and forces Will and his family to decide who they will be loyal to, John or Richard. A well-intentioned mistake by Will leads to deadly consequences with him on the run. He joins with the Merry Men as a prisoner. But when he leads them to Shackley Castle to get revenge he gets more than he bargained for and discovers that maybe there are more important things than revenge.

Strengths: Will is a believable, interesting character who experiences a large amount of growth through forced circumstances as well as his own choices, good and bad. This was an interesting take on the creation of Robin Hood and how Will influences that. I liked how the sheriff had more depth than in most versions of Robin Hood that I've read. He isn't just a bad guy. I enjoyed the various interactions between the different characters, they seemed genuine. Kids interested in Robin Hood should quite enjoy this version, especially all the humor.

Weaknesses: More historical fiction that I'm not sure how many kids I could get to read. But the fact that it is a Robin Hood story should help. Mark Brewer seemed like an awful modern name to me, although I know the name Mark has been around for a long time, it just sounds modern to me.

Dianne says

Middle grade readers can hitch a ride back in time to merry old England, filled with medieval castles, sword fights and thieves who rob from the rich and give to the poor! Sound familiar? **Will in Scarlet** by Matthew Cody is filled with adventure, danger and larger than life action as a thirteen-year-old boy must flee for his life from his father's castle as it is overrun by treacherous and scheming villains looking to gain power, wealth and favor in the eyes of the crown. Young William is captured by a merry band of thieves in Sherwood Forest. Meet Rob, the leader, Much, the young and daring thief who is a master of disguise, and all the rest of the band of thieves as Will becomes one of them to seek revenge for the crimes against his family.

Filled with historical facts, fancy and rich imagination and color, **Will in Scarlet** is not a flowery version of the lives of these thieves, but more a tale of a young man's personal growth through adversity as he sees the world as it really is for those not as fortunate as he had been and his determination to make life easier on the less fortunate. That he can exact his own brand of revenge becomes almost secondary to his desire to see justice done.

Matthew Cody's fast-paced and crisp writing style will capture the younger reader's mind and fill their

imaginations with pictures of the past and how difficult life was for all, while giving them a hero they can relate to. His characters have their own charm, they have flaws, but in the end, doing the right thing and making the best of what life has handed them is a lesson learned.

This ARC edition was provided by NetGalley and Random House Children's Books in exchange for my honest review.

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My Rating: 5 Stars

Available from: Amazon / Barnes & Noble

For more reviews check out Tome Tender's Book Blog or find us on Facebook.

Eva says

Actual rating: 3.5

Favorite part was everything before Will fell in with the Merry Men. But I did like the book as a whole. Really dug the author's versions of Little John and Rob/Robin Hood. I NEED BACKSTORY THOUGH. Because Robin and Marian are my literal OTP and I neeeeed details!!!

Soup says

ARC via NetGalley

Solid and ultimately relatively* satisfying retelling of how Robin Hood came to be. Robin Hood isn't a new topic for YA or adult fiction and, unsurprisingly, nothing new is created here. There's the trope of the boy-on-the-verge-of-manhood, the well-trod trope of the girl-pretending-to-be-a-boy-in-Robin's-band (this time it's Much), and of course the noble-who-discovers-his-privilege-is-built-on-the-backs-of-the-starving-poor. All these common themes are carried off relatively easily (the exception, perhaps, is the weird insistence that Much's eyes (almond-shaped and green, like her mother's) threaten to give her true gender away. I know people like to say the eyes are the window to the soul, but this is the first time I've heard of what I've come to call LADY EYES!). Other more traditional elements of the Robin Hood saga are left out (Robin is not noble born and Maid Marion is a tragic footnote to his life that he will not discuss). Their removal improves the narrative on the whole, although I would have likewise cut the sporadic attempts to create a one-sided romantic subplot with Much and Will.

As other reviewers (most notably Ryan Hancock, read his review here:

<http://www.goodreads.com/review/show/...>) have mentioned, the decision to start each chapter with a quote from the chapter that follows is a poor one. At best these quotations give away the plot of the next chapter; at

worst they make the author seem weirdly self-impressed. At no point do they add to the narrative.

*I say 'relatively' because my first impression upon finishing the book was something along the lines of 'well, that was nice.' Five minutes later, however, I was wondering why it was we heard nothing about so many characters that were supposedly incredibly important to Will (including his best friend *and his parents*). Ultimately I decided answers to these questions weren't necessary and didn't exactly make the epilogue seem wasted or abrupt, but the fact that they are never mentioned again (particularly Will's parents) is certainly perplexing.

Josephine (biblioseph) says

The 13 year old heir of Shackley Manor, William isn't eager to leave his days of mischief and play behind. But one fateful night, when December's cold is so deep that wolves are pushed to desperation, Will Scarlet becomes Lord William, Wolf-slayer. Leading the entire serfdom doesn't seem so terrible, even if it is a bit boring. As questions come to the castle from a pretender testing his uncle Lord Geoffrey for his loyalty. Will knows that King Richard and his father will be home soon, putting an end to the talk. But as Lady Katherine says to her son, 'England is plots within plots'.

Attempting to make the best of his diplomacy lessons, Will is instead embroiled in the very plots against the king, putting not only his father's life in danger, but his own! Tragedy strikes and those loyal to the crown are forced to flee for their lives, Will separated from his mother and is nearly killed by bandits in the notorious Sherwood Forest, the home of wolves and worse.

Nursed back to health by a small boy, Much the Miller's Son, and the drunkard Rob - they all have secrets they would rather keep. Among the Merry Men of Gilbert the White Hand, Will is as likely to be killed as held for ransom, so he concocts a tale to let him live long enough to get his revenge. What he doesn't count on is the world he is shown and the friendships he makes along the way. In the end saving not only himself, but the people whom he has come to care for.

Will in Scarlet is an unusual retelling of the popular Robin Hood myth; a notorious bandit who stole from the rich and gave to the poor. After all, we're introduced to the man by one of his younger accomplices, Will Scarlet, when Robin's almost entirely given up. What Will brings is more than a mission, because when the young boy's eyes are opened, he brings the honorable thieves back to Sherwood forest, and begins cracking the glass walls he's been living behind his entire life.

Matthew Cody's retelling is also a bit bloodier and political than the Disney classic of the same myth, but it succeeds in balancing historical accuracy with a good feel for words and fun. But for all the contrivances of bad guys and murder and pillaging, there was quite a lot of fun to be had. The story is one of action and rebellion, Will's story is one of social reform and, dare I say it, usurping the entire system when you have nothing to lose. And that might be a hard selling point, but one that I feel really enticed me. After all, stealing from the rich, giving to the poor, living in a selfless community, sounds a lot like... And he's scarlet? Maybe that was just a coincidence, said the naïve intern.

While the strings were almost all nicely tied up in the end, this reader can't help hoping that Matthew Cody is already working on a sequel. The only complaint: how short it was. I want more, Matthew Cody! In fact, I liked the proof eBook I was provided with by Net Galley so much that I'm going to preorder a hardback as well. Here's to hoping my brother will stand some cajoling to read over the holidays.

If you've read this, tell me why you liked or disliked it! Tell me whether you think there was some smooching, and whether that detail about the Italian chair maker was really necessary. If you haven't read this: how have you taunted, teased and tricked your non-bookworm acquaintances to read? I need some new tactics.

272pp. Random House. 8th Oct. 2013

((Copied from my blog cause I'm lazy and this book was awesome. Yo. Go there to read more of my shenanigans auroralector.blogspot.com))

Stephanie says

Fans of Robin Hood will enjoy this retelling.

Lanie says

so good, although i think some more work could have gone into the cover art. its not eye grabbing enough. i know, i know, one should never judge a book by its cover, but that is pretty much impossible and we all know it. i loved will he was realistic and much was so awesome. she reminded me of scarlet from the Scarlet but much less . . . well, bitchy. it was a nice spin on the story, if a common one. all hood stories now a days seem to contain a girl disguising her self as a boy. heres a few:

1. the outlaws of sherwood
2. rowan hood: outlaw girl of sherwood forest
3. bbc's robin hood
4. beyond sherwood forest

just a few and that's not even my full list (not that i've made a list)..... so yeah, not new but the author totally pulled it off here.

there was a good plot, good charcters, and even a rival band! i always wonder about the other outlaws that had to have shared to forest but never joined robin.

which brings me to Rob the Drunk. poor man. i wanted to know what happened to him so badly! that alone could've kept me reading. i hope there's a sequel. there was enough of an opening.

Lisa says

Matthew Cody has created a new Robin Hood tale. This story about William Shackley, who comes to be known as Will Scarlett, is presented with a new perspective. There is little of the romantic notion we hold about Robin Hood to be found in this tale. Instead this is a story about how England might have been during those feudal times, and the brutality of life is quite clear. A band of Merry Men living in a forest is not exactly the picture Cody paints in his story.

We meet Will while his is still learning to become a leader of men. His uncle has been acting as regent while Will's father fought in the Crusades with King Richard. The family is expecting a happy holiday season

when they learn that King Richard and all his men have been captured and are being held in foreign lands. Suddenly, the bright future that Will expected to be his future is turned upside down and he is left virtually homeless and without any family connection.

As Will sorts out his own grief, plans revenge, and learns to survive in Sherwood Forest he comes to learn so much more about real life in England under a King or Lord of the manor. It certainly isn't a pretty sight, but friendship becomes the binding tie in Will's life. Yes, he becomes an outlaw and oddly enough it is Will who offers the idea of stealing from the rich to give to the poor. Some readers will not recognize the sullen, drunken Rob as our romantic hero Robin Hood. However, by the end of the book Will determines his future and we see that Rob is quite capable of being an honest outlaw and leading his band of Merry Men.

The book read like a movie, and I could easily see vivid scenes while I enjoyed the flowing dialog between characters. This is a tale of danger, action, deception and triumph. This could easily turn into a series of some sort, and works well as a companion to the more classic versions of Howard Pyle's original Robin Hood. I recommend this book for readers ages 10 and up, and I plan to have a copy in my own school library upon publication.

Liviania says

I enjoy fairytales and folklore retold, so of course I'm a fan of the Robin Hood legend. Luckily, people retell it all the time. (See current Robin Hood books SCARLET and LADY THIEF by A.C. Gaughen.)

Matthew Cody's WILL IN SCARLET takes several liberties with the legend, to good effect. It doesn't just feel like a checking off of rote setpieces. The eponymous Will is actually William Shackley, a noble heir displaced by the machinations of Guy of Gisbourne. The first bit, about Will's backstory, goes on a bit too long. It is good for getting to know Will and his skills, however.

Things really get going when Will comes across the Merry Men - but not as we know them. Some dude named Gilbert is in charge and Rob is a drunkard in a tent claiming to be a good fighter. The revelation of Rob's abilities will surprise no one, but the hints of his backstory are curious. Something went horribly awry with this Rob and Maid Marian, to the point that her name is verboten. I can only hope that there's a sequel and that she appears.

It is a bit of a tradition for modern Robin Hood retellings to have a crossdresser in order to up the female quotient. In this case, Much the miller's son is actually the miller's daughter. She wants to help Will, but not at the cost of her own secrets or her life. Honestly, it's very reasonable of her. Meanwhile, Will is struggling with his desire for revenge.

WILL IN SCARLET is a retelling that doesn't tread too closely to the original, but still contains the important elements. There's plenty of contrast between the lives of the nobles and the peasants, which Will does note. His time with the bandits, unsheltered, just might allow him to implement real changes if he regains his rightful place. There is quite a bit of fighting and some death, which might push WILL IN SCARLET towards the upper end of middle grade. Much and Will's relationship hints at attraction, but there is no romance.

I felt that WILL IN SCARLET had a fairly open ending, and thus think it might not be a standalone. The Merry Men's first clash with the law comes to a conclusion, but I think there's plenty of meat for a sequel. I know I'll read it if there is one.

Val says

There are so many Robin Hood tales that have been written over the years. Will in Scarlet stands out as a great book for middle graders. The book tells the story of Will Scarlet like you have never seen him before.. a rich noble. His story is the main focus of the book in this coming of age Robin Hood tale.

Told in more of a historical fiction fashion, we get a glimpse of life for both Nobles and peasants during the crusade. While King Richard is off fighting an almost endless war his people are starving and his brother Prince John is bleeding the country dry. Will is oblivious to these adult troubles would rather spend his days stealing from the castle store rooms and wrecking havoc with friends. He is forced to grow up when the treacherous Sir Guy ignites a political quarrel that forces Will into exile. He finds himself at the mercy of Sherwood forest and the villainous "Merry Men".

All the tradition characters are present in this book- Little John, Rob the drunk, the Sheriff of Nottingham and Much the girl disguised as a boy. Instead of a tale told strictly about Robin himself we get a wonderful story of Will Scarlet and Much. Will struggles with revenge, loss and seeing how the world really works from the eyes of the common man. He develops deep friendships and learns what his role is in the grand scheme of life.

I really liked this book and getting to read the perspectives of both Will and Much. Most of the female characters in Robin Hood books are only there for the romance aspect. Much is a much needed female protagonist that is spunky and strong willed. Their story is something that middle grade readers will be able to enjoy and relate to as both characters are forced to make sometimes hard choices that will define their lives.

There is laughter heartache and lots of adventure that both boys and girls will enjoy. The story is rich and engaging and reads almost like a movie. It is a book that you won't quickly put down, especially towards the end. I cannot wait to add this to our collection and I know my students who love action and adventure will eat this up. This is one of the best takes on the Robin Hood story for younger readers in recent memory. I hope to see more by this author in the future.
