As a child, one will undoubtedly come across the story of Robin Hood, whether it be from a storybook or from the classic Disney retelling. If one goes searching for this story, they can find it “scribbled in the margins of medieval manuscripts, gamboling through the cheap chapbooks of early modern literary markets, entombed in turgid Victorian prose, referred to in many modern journalistic headlines; the forest of the Robin Hood electronic network reports new sightings of the good outlaw almost every day” (Knight xi). Nonetheless, this well-known tale has been circling the world for centuries, and will most likely continue its journey through the ages. The spread of its popularity can be contributed to many different reasons, but almost certainly, the foremost explanation comes from the fact that many people throughout society’s generations enjoy the idea of a man who will fight for those who cannot do so for themselves.

This idea of Robin Hood stems from the initial depiction of him, which can be seen as early as the 1370s, although it is believed that his story originates even earlier than this (“Robin Hood”). In his first appearances, Robin is not necessarily an honorable man. In fact, he is quite the contrary and is known as “a violent yeoman (a servant in a noble household) who steals from the dishonest and helps those whom he pleases” (Chandler). “Robin Hood is a shady guy … operating on the margins of society and of scholarship, refusing to adhere to
simple definitions. Robin Hood is an outlaw who defends his king… and a prankster who enforces morality. He is a murderer, a thief, and a hero” (Rogers). This early depiction of Robin Hood as a vicious low-class servant is quite different from the one most people are familiar with, and while this Robin Hood may not be the better known version of himself, it is clear that his character has some of the same qualities as that of the popular version such as stealing from people and giving that shanghaied money to others. Although Robin’s personality may change from his origins, there are characteristics of the story that do not, these being the appearance of Robin Hood’s merry men, the Sheriff of Nottingham, and Sherwood Forest. A Gest of Robyn Hode, one of the oldest, enduring texts originally printed between 1492 and 1534, is “long and intricate … [running as long as] 456 stanzas divided into eight fits” and included within it, are many references to the aforementioned unchanging characteristics within the story (Singman 14). For example, a passage within A Gest of Robin Hode states, “The sherif dwelled in Notingham; -- He was fayne he was agone; -- And Robyn and his mery men -- Went to wode anone,” which shows the obvious allusions to the merry men and the Sherriff of Nottingham (A Gest of Robin Hode). Essentially, this is the basis for the modernized versions of Robin Hood in one “powerful scenario: outlaws, greenwood, merry men, longbows, [and] inept officers of justice…” (Shippey).

What could be considered one of the first modern texts of Robin Hood is Robin Hood and Little John, written by Pierce Egan during the early nineteenth century (Chandler). It was incredibly successful during its time and recreated Robin Hood and his Merry Men into the vigilantes that they are known as today. This so-called makeover led to the creation of a new trend which allowed for the legendary story to expand its boundaries from simply literature to
an array of several other mediums such as plays, operas, and songs that sparked the beginning of Robin Hood’s influence on popular culture (Chandler).

By the twentieth century, Robin Hood’s impact on popular culture had broadened farther than it ever had before, especially when looking at the newest form of entertainment: film (Chandler). The film versions of this story began around 1908, but it wasn’t until 1938 when *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, starring Errol Flynn, did the epic story truly arise in popularity (Chandler). Because of this, Hollywood was able to completely change the character that had originally been a violent lower-class servant to a brave and dashing heroic character. They transformed Robin Hood from the man who took from whomever he pleased and gave to whomever he wanted to the man who gallantly stole from the rich to give to the poor. It is in this moment that Robin Hood truly became the vigilante that he is known as today.

**The View of the Vigilante**

In the present context, a vigilante can be defined as one who takes the law into their own hands in order to right a wrong, even if it means crossing lines that law enforcement would find illegal (Newby). Robin Hood is the perfect example of such a character and is definitely one of the earliest versions of a vigilante. His infamous activities throughout his many stories have allowed for him to become an archetype of sorts for other characters that have been created. These “characters are found in the traditions of many groups. Sometimes, like the forest archer, they are figures of fiction. -- These figures are celebrated in folklore, romanticized in the mass media, and commodified in the tourism and heritage industries” (Seal).
There are many such modern examples of vigilantes in popular culture today such as Batman, the Guardians of the Galaxy, and the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, each of which have gained extraordinary popularity throughout the course of several years. The popularity of the modern day vigilante has spread for many reasons, the main being that "vigilante justice is a national fantasy – perhaps an international, human fantasy" (Holston). To be able to redefine the boundaries of what is good and what is evil in this world despite the ever-surrounding guidelines of society, but doing it in a manner that can bring about justice for those who desperately need it is incredibly appealing to the human nature. Simply put, “just because the vigilante’s actions are performed outside of institutional social structures does not mean they cannot be incorporated into the social structure or at least treated by the institution as acceptable” (Newby). This reasoning is exactly why the popularity of Robin Hood and movies/television shows featuring a vigilante as the main character have risen.

**Heroes Wear Hoods**

Although there are many fictional vigilantes in popular culture such as Batman, a prime example of the influence that Robin Hood has had on the rise of vigilantism in fiction is that of the comic book character Green Arrow. He is a vigilante who “fights crime using archery, martial arts and technology” much like Robin Hood minus the technology (“Green Arrow (Oliver Queen)”). Basically, Green Arrow is the modern-day version of Robin Hood. Recently, in October of 2012, a show by the name of *Arrow* aired on the CW, and it is based off of the comic book version of Green Arrow. It has become a tremendously popular show from the beginning, and its popularity is undeniably based off of society’s love for a good vigilante.
Nonetheless, when exploring the stories of both *Robin Hood* and *Arrow*, there are undeniable similarities between the two. Many of the tenants that are found within *Robin Hood* are also seen in *Arrow*. For example, Robin is both good with a bow and arrow and is extremely athletic, just as the main character, Oliver Queen, is in *Arrow*. Not only this, but in every Robin Hood story, Robin has his Merry Men, the men that help Robin with his plight in providing for the poor. This is also exemplified within *Arrow* in that The Hood/The Arrow/Oliver Queen has a team of six people called Team Arrow (“Oliver Queen”). This team is comprised of Oliver’s closest friends and family, and they fight alongside him in order to destroy the corruption, specifically that of the political kind, in their city. The fact that Team Arrow is fighting to end political corruption is very similar to the idea that Robin Hood and his Merry Men try to protect the poor from the greedy hands of the Sherriff of Nottingham and his rich superiors. Another prime comparison between the two stories is the setting in which each of them take place. Robin Hood and his men mainly fight and take refuge within Sherwood Forest, and in *Arrow*, Oliver and his team fight in the concrete jungle known as Starling City (“Oliver Queen”). This city is fundamentally the Sherwood Forest of modern times, and it is the goal of Team Arrow to keep their city protected just as it is Robin’s and his Merry Men’s goal to do the same with Sherwood Forest. The final comparison between the two stories can be seen when looking at the character of the Sheriff of Nottingham. In *Arrow*, the character with whom the Sheriff of Nottingham most compares with is Quentin Lance. Quentin is the captain of the police force in Starling City and, even though Quentin is not necessarily evil, he will do anything it takes to stop the Arrow including issuing a city-wide manhunt for him (“Quentin Lance”). In a related manner, the Sheriff of Nottingham will stop at nothing to hunt down Robin Hood. He scours the villages and tries to
bribe people, with money, into telling him where Robin Hood is located. The reason as to why this comparison can be debated is the fact that unlike the Sheriff of Nottingham who does not focus his attention on protecting the people because he simply cares about money, Quentin truly does care about his city and wants what is best for it. In this case, he believes the Arrow creates more of a catastrophe than he does in solving actual problems and wants to see the city rid of him. These comparisons, though they are brief, clearly show how Robin Hood has impacted the modern-day fictitious vigilante and how he has played a role in shaping one of popular culture’s well-liked shows.

**An Ageless Archer**

This progression of Robin Hood has so impacted society that John Chandler, the author of “Robin Hood: Development of a Popular Hero” and contributor to The Robin Hood Project created by the University of Rochester, states:

> Over his long career, Robin Hood has been adopted — and adapted — into nearly every aspect of popular culture. --Robin has truly become an icon of popular culture, appearing in toys, comics, jewelry, [movies, and television]. -- Despite his connection to a specific period in English history, Robin’s appeal goes far beyond the limitations, and his continued life as a popular, legendary hero is assured. (Chandler)

This quote perfectly exemplifies the influence in which Robin Hood has had and will continue to have in a society who, without doubt, will continue to enjoy the story of the man who stole from the rich to give to the poor. The man who fought for those who could not fight for themselves. The man whose adventurous spirit led him to win many a battle with just a bow
and arrow and the help of his Merry Men. And most importantly, the man who created the example for the ever-loved role of the vigilante.
Works Cited


This was just the text of A Gest of Robin Hode. It did have some useful background information that was interesting to look over. It also contains several other texts that contain Robin Hood within them.


This article was extremely helpful and very informative. It gives an introduction to Robin Hood, and then talks about him and his progression from century to century. It also discussed the effect Robin Hood had, especially when looking at media.


This page gave background on Green Arrow as the comic book figure and not the one seen in Arrow. It contains much information on this character including his origin story, what comic books he can be seen in, and the different stories that Green Arrow had a part in.


This article discussed early and recent cases of real-life vigilantism. It also discussed the image of The Avengers as to whether or not we can call them superheroes or if they lean more towards the side of vigilantism.

This book discusses many of the earlier versions of Robin Hood, including *The Gest of Robin Hode*. It also discusses the origins of Robin Hood and whether or not he could possibly have been a real person.

Newby, Brian. “Watchful Guardian or Dark Knight? The Vigilante as a Social Actor.”


This gives a common definition of a vigilante, and it also talks about societies views on vigilantes. Not only this, but it also discusses real-life examples of vigilantism, and it gives reasons as to why the rate of vigilantism has risen over the years.


This Wikia page is strictly on the character from the television show *Arrow*, Oliver Queen. It includes a thoroughly detailed report of his life and an account of everything that has happened to him throughout the show.


This Wikia page is strictly on the character from the television show *Arrow*, Quentin Lance. It includes a thoroughly detailed report of his life and an account of everything that has happened to him throughout the show.


This is a brief overview of the early history of Robin Hood presented by the University of Cambridge. It poses many questions about the origins of Robin Hood and whether or not he was a real person as many historians theorize. It also raises questions about the audience that the story of Robin Hood has drawn in.

This is a literary journal review of a book, but it contains some very helpful information about Robin Hood. It discusses the social and political connotations of Robin Hood in literature and in reality. It also talks about Robin Hood in his earliest forms as a yeoman.


This journal article mainly discusses the idea of Robin Hood as a real-life figure. It also talks about Robin Hood became the example for what is known as the social bandit, and the ideas behind the Robin Hood principle.


This journal article is a review of a series of books by Stephen Lawhead that are characterized by Robin Hood. It also confers the ideas that Robin Hood, in his earliest form, was not necessarily the most honorable character.


This book talks about the earliest forms of Robin Hood. It discusses the origins of both the fictional and possible real-life character of Robin Hood. It gives different sections
from the different tales of Robin Hood, and it even contains maps and such for visual aid.
Free glossaries at TranslationDirectory.com. English words of Old Norse origin. English provenance = c 1205 CE (as ææe, an early form of the word resulting from the influence of Old Norse on an existing Anglo-Saxon form, ææ). are. awkward. the first element is from Old Norse æflugr ("=turned-backward"), the '-ward' part is from Old English weard. axle. æxl ("=ox tree"). Below is a list of old sayings and where they came from. However, sometimes it is impossible to say for certain how an old saying originated. Sometimes we can only give the most likely explanation. A. Achilles heel. In Greek mythology Thetis dipped her son Achilles in the mythical River Styx. Anyone who was immersed in the river became invulnerable. However, Thetis held Achilles by his heel. Since her hand covered this part of his body the water did not touch it and so it remained vulnerable.