



Video/DVD Reviews

The Adventures of Robin Hood (1938) - PG



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Errol Flynn stars in swashbuckling family delight.

Rating: PG for parental guidance **Studio:** [Warner Home Video](#)
Directed By: [Michael Curtiz](#), [William Keighley](#) **Cast:** [Claude Rains](#), [Basil Rathbone](#), [Olivia de Havilland](#), [Errol Flynn](#) **Running Time:** 102 minutes **Release Date:** 05/01/1938 **Genre:** [Action/adventure](#)

Common Sense Note

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Parents should know that while there's little sexuality and no foul language on display, there's a lot of old-fashioned violence: no blood, but lots of characters are hanged, extorted, skewered with swords and arrows, and generally attacked. The film's villain is an effeminate simperer, pairing villainous deeds with stereotypically gay characteristics, which could in effect demonize both together.

Families can talk about how the film reflected what was happening in the world in 1938. It's a good opportunity to teach kids about allegories -- that is, stories that have both literal and symbolic meaning. Can viewers spot the allegories for issues at the forefront of World War II America, including labor unionism, the Holocaust, and the Great Depression? What does Robin Hood represent? Why is the idea of a resistance important?

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Common Sense Review

Reviewed By: [Heather Boemer](#)

It's almost hilarious these days to watch much older films. The rat-tat-tat quickfire dialogue, the arch, patrician accents, and acting that seems stilted and false can make it hard for younger viewers to enjoy a film like THE ADVENTURES OF ROBIN HOOD. But if they stick it out, they'll be treated to a great story, some unintentionally funny moments, and a window into a distinctly 1930s American sensibility.

That famous swashbuckler Errol Flynn stars as Lord Robin of Locksley, a Saxon nobleman who's enraged at the mistreatment of his people and the world-domination ambitions of his government. When King Richard the Lionheart (Ian Hunter) leaves on a crusade, England falls into the hands of his meglomaniacal and simpering brother Prince John ([Claude Rains](#)), who is only out to fill his pockets with Saxon money. He abuses the people, overtaxes them, and leaves them impoverished and enraged.

Robin takes on their cause as a leader, becoming an outlaw for resisting Prince John's will. Soon, Robin is making a fool of the prince and wooing the beautiful Norman Maid Marion (Olivia de Havilland). But can he win out over John and return King Richard to the throne?

What's fascinating about this *Robin Hood* is that it's less a sweet and cartoonish fairy tale than it is a thinly veiled attack on American capitalism and an absentee leader. When the king returns in disguise and asks Robin whom he blames for the chaos in England, he says, "I blame Richard. His task was here at home defending his own people instead of deserting them to fight in foreign lands." You can't get much more transparent than that.

And the whole robbing-from-the-rich-giving-to-the-poor couldn't be more clear: "To them this is heaven," Robin explains to Marion after ambushing the royal entourage and taking their riches and giving them to the starving Saxons. "Suits for rags, kindness instead of riches, limitless food instead of hunger. Why, they're actually happy." It's hard to imagine a blockbuster movie today offering such lefty sentiments.

Politics aside, it's a rare action movie that doesn't take itself too seriously, and that definitely adds to the fun here. Even during fight scenes, the music is light and upbeat. Compared to other man-against-his-government films like the dour [Shooter](#), *Robin Hood* is refreshing. And don't forget to enjoy the costumes. It's delightful that in Medieval England, Marion still manages to float through Sherwood Forest in a collection of silk, lame, satin, and chiffon ball gowns. You have to admire that in a girl.

People who enjoy this film may enjoy other classics, like *The Prince and the Pauper*, *Captain Blood*, or [Gone with the Wind](#). Or they might enjoy spoofs and take-offs of this film, like [Robin Hood: Men in Tights](#), [The Princess Bride](#), or [Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure](#).

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Content	Share with a friend		
	CS	adults	kids
Sexual Content Robin kisses Marion's hand and the couple kiss three times.			
Violence A lot of sword fighting, ambushes, and people who die from hanging, arrows to the heart, and stabs, but it's all bloodless and not realistic looking. Robin also talks about countrymen being tortured, with ears being cut off, eyes burned with hot irons, and other gruesome attacks. Robin is captured and beaten, falling down a staircase. He's threatened with hanging. There's also talk of assassination. One main character is stabbed and killed.			
Language			
Message			
Social Behavior Prince John extorts and approves the torture of Englishmen because they are Saxon instead of Norman. He plans to overthrow his brother. He's also an effeminate man, pairing villainous deeds with stereotypically gay characteristics.			
Commercialism			
Drug/Alcohol/Tobacco Prince John and his friends drink wine.			

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