A Robin Hood Play
The Full English

The Full English was a unique nationwide project unlocking hidden treasures of England’s cultural heritage by making over 58,000 original source documents from 12 major folk collectors available to the world via a ground-breaking nationwide digital archive and learning project. The project was led by the English Folk Dance and Song Society (EFDSS), funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and in partnership with other cultural partners across England.

The Full English digital archive (www.vwml.org) continues to provide access to thousands of records detailing traditional folk songs, music, dances, customs and traditions that were collected from across the country. Some of these are known widely, others have lain dormant in notebooks and files within archives for decades.

The Full English learning programme worked across the country in 19 different schools including primary, secondary and special educational needs settings. It also worked with a range of cultural partners across England, organising community, family and adult learning events.

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A Robin Hood Play

Introduction

This version is adapted from a play printed in *The Mummers Play* by R.J.E. Tiddy. The play was written down in 1868 from a John Couling, a member of an old family in Kempsford, Gloucestershire. These mummers went out to the large houses at Christmas time, knocked on the door and requested “Please let the Mummers act.” The performers would walk round and round with the audience surrounding them.

Costume

The mummers’ costume was described as hats of paper decorated with plumes or coloured ribbons hanging down and each man carried a sword. The character Tom Pinny, who also played Father Christmas, wore a mask leaving part of his face bare which was painted red! He wore a fool’s cap and carried an instrument which he pretended to play as a fiddle. He was also made to appear a hunchback with straw stuffed up inside his coat and he carried a can to collect the money.

Characters

- Arthur Abland (a tanner)
- Robin Hood
- Little John
- Doctor
- Tom Pinny
A Robin Hood Play - script

Arthur Abland (a tanner)

A room a room brave gallants all
Please give me room to rhyme
This merry, merry Christmas time
Activity of youth and activity of age
Such life was never seen upon the stage

As I was walking one Summer’s morning
Through the forest merry greenwood
To view the red deer
Then I saw bold Robin Hood

(Enter Robin Hood)

As soon as Robin Hood did me spy
Some sport he thought to make
He bid me fan he bid me stand
And he bid me thus for to spake.

Robin

Who art thou bold fellow,
Who comes so boldly here
Now to be brief though looks a thief
Come to steal the Kint’s deer.
I’m the keeper over this forest
And the King put me in trust
To mind the red deer
That run here and run there.
So stop you Good fellow I must

Arthur

If you are keeper over this forest
And has any great command
I don’t care a fig for you looking so big
So mind yourself where you can.

Robin

Let us measure staves, bold fellow
Before we begin our play
I won’t have my staff half a foot longer than thine
Else that will come to foul play
Arthur

My staff is eight foot and a half
And growed straight on a tree
An eight foot staff will knock down a calf
And I’m sure it will knock down thee

(They fight)

Robin

Oh, hold our hands,
Oh, hold our hands
And let our quarrels fall
We shall beat our bones all to a meat
And get nowhere at all
If you will leave your tanning trade
And bide in greenwood with me,
My name’s Robin Hood and
I swear by the wood
I will give you both gold and fee

(Enter Little John)

Little John

What is the matter master
I pray you to me tell
You stand with your staff all in your hand
I’m afraid things aren’t too well

Robin

That man that bid me stand
Is the tanner by my side;
He’s a bonny blade
And a master by trade
And he swears he’ll tan my hide

Little John

If you be so big and stout
You and I will have a bout

(They fight and Little John knocks down Arthur)

Robin

A thousand pounds I’ll freely give
If Arthur Abland’s life we can save

(enter Doctor on a Tom Pinny’s back)

Doctor

Hold my horse, Jack
Tom Pinny  Yes Sir, I’ve got him fast by the tail

Doctor  Rack him up with a faggot
      Give him a bucket of ashes to drink
      (rattling a pill box)
           See Sirs, here comes the Noble doctor
           Both stout and good
           And with my hand and my skill
           I will stop his blood

Robin  What country do you come from?

Doctor  From Italy, Tittaly, France, and Spain
       And then twice round the world again

Robin  What can you cure?

Doctor  All sorts of diseases – just what the pill pleases
       The heart corn and smart corn’
       The itch, the snitch, the palsy and the gout
       The pain within and the pains without

Robin  What else can you cure?

Doctor  Horses, cows, sheep and pigs
       And so walk in Master Cleverlegs

Tom Pinny (from without)
       What’s the matter with my legs more than your own?

Doctor  Walk in Tom Pinny

Tom Pinny  Tom Pinny’s not my name

Doctor  What is your name?

Tom Pinny  Master Tom Pinny, a man of great fame
       Doesn’t know my name?
Here come I as can’t be hit
With my great head and my little wit
My head’s so big and my wit’s so small
I’ve come to try to please you all

Robin What can you cure?

Tom Pinny A magpie with the tooth ache

Robin How do you do that

Tom Pinny Cut off his head and throw his body into a ditch.

Robin What country do you come from?

Tom Pinny I come from the country
Where they knits horses shoes
And spins steel iron bars
And thatches pigsties with pancakes.
Have you got any?

Doctor Bellows, if you please missus!
(Takes a pair of bellows and blows into Arthur’s mouth.)
Rise up bold Arthur Abland and
Give the Ladies and Gentlemen
A dance before you go away

(They all dance and Tom Pinny sings into his fiddle)
So here I am, a rub a dub, dub,
On my shoulder I carries my club
In my hand an empty can
Don’t you think I’m a jolly old man.
Now my boys well dance apace
Hump back and hairy wig
Now me boys, we’ll dance a jig.

The End
Unlocking hidden treasures of England's cultural heritage

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