

This guide was prepared using the 1990 Dell Yearling edition, © 1977. Other editions may differ.

SYNOPSIS

Chap. 1: In 14th-century London, 10-year-old Robin de Bureford lies bedridden in his noble family's great home. Robin's father, a knight, is away serving the King in the Scottish wars; Robin's mother is away serving the Queen as a lady in waiting. All his life Robin has been told what his place in society will be: as the son of a nobleman, Robin too will become a knight. But just as he was about to go to Sir Peter de Lindsay and begin service as a page a month ago, Robin fell ill and lost his ability to move his legs. Today, the house seems strangely silent. That evening, a monk, Brother Luke, appears in Robin's bedchamber. He explains that the servants have all died or run away because of the plague. After feeding Robin and cleaning him up, Brother Luke puts the boy on horseback and leads him to the hospice at St. Mark's monastery. As they set out, Brother Luke notes the long wall around the de Bureford garden and tells Robin, "Always remember. Thou hast only to follow the wall far enough and there will be a door in it." Robin is puzzled by this remark.

Chap. 2: Brother Luke takes good care of Robin at the monastery, but he is very busy all day caring for the many sick and poor people who are also there. To help Robin pass the long hours alone, Brother Luke brings the boy a knife and a piece of wood, and Robin becomes wholly absorbed in carving out a toy boat. Pleased with this new skill (it is the first time he has made anything for himself), Robin next starts work on a cross. When a boy on crutches cheerfully addresses Robin as "Brother Crookshanks," Robin is at first furious but then thinks about how crutches could be useful to him, if he could get strength enough in his legs to support himself somewhat.

Chap. 3: Brother Matthew tutors Robin in carpentry, which the boy finds to be a very satisfying occupation. But when Robin ruins his cross with a sharp chisel, he explodes in anger. Brother Matthew calmly counsels the boy that in order to learn the use of a new tool, he must apply patience and care to the task. Brother Luke continues to massage Robin's legs every day and also starts to teach Robin how to read, saying that learning new skills with his hands and his mind are both doors in the wall. Now Robin understands the image.

Chap. 4: Brother Luke institutes a daily swim for Robin, which exhilarates the boy. It also helps him strengthen his arms, in preparation for the next door in the wall — crutches. Robin's legs, although still bent, are now strong enough to bear the boy's weight, with assistance, and Robin eagerly helps Brother Matthew in crafting the crutches. Still, Robin worries about facing his parents. How will they feel about having a son who cannot fulfill his knightly duties?

Chap. 5: Robin receives a letter from his father saying

that Robin is now to travel to Sir Peter's castle in Shropshire in the care of Brother Luke and the minstrel John-go-in-the-Wynd. Soon, they set off on the 100-mile journey, with Robin traveling on horseback in a chair-saddle and sometimes walking along on his crutches. When the travelers choose the wrong fork in the road that afternoon, they fail to reach the White Swan inn and must make camp for the night by the shelter of a hollow log, which Robin considers a great adventure.

Chap. 6: The following evening, the travelers arrive at the White Hart inn, where they decide to stay in spite of its fearsome look and the ruffians inside, because Robin is cold and stiff and the two horses are tired from the long day's journey. When Robin wakes up in the middle of the night, he hears the two evil-looking men downstairs plotting to rob him and his companions. Robin manages silently to awaken Brother Luke, who alerts John, and the trio escapes out the window. Robin uses his strong arms to lower himself to the ground, and he uses his crutches to trip the pursuing thieves so the trio can get away safely.

Chap. 7: Several days later, beyond Oxford, the travelers enjoy for several hours the foods and activities of a great fair, Robin being especially entranced with it all. On the ninth day of the trip, the trio arrives at last in Lindsay. As they approach Sir Peter's castle, Robin worries. What sort of welcome will he have; what kind of page can he be, on crutches? But Sir Peter and Lady Constance greet Robin warmly. When Robin voices his concerns about being but a sorry page, Sir Peter replies, "Each of us has his place in the world. If we cannot serve in one way, there is always another. If we do what we are able, a door always opens to something else." In the following days, Robin explores the many parts of the castle; he finds everything about Lindsay exciting and interesting. He even acquires a special friend, one of the castle's hounds named D'Ath.

Chap. 8: Robin worries that he will never be able to straighten his back or legs. Brother Luke responds that whether he does straighten or not, Robin has a fine life ahead of him, because of his "lively mind and good wit," along with the strong arms Robin has had the will to develop. "It is better to have crooked legs than a crooked spirit," Brother Luke says. "We can only do the best we can with what we have. That, after all, is the measure of success: what we do with what we have." As the days pass into November, Robin continues his daily swims and also works at crafting himself a small harp like the one John-in-the-Wynd plays so beautifully. But danger threatens from neighboring lords and the Welsh, all of whom covet the strong castle. One day, a heavy fog arises, and under its cover the Welsh attack and take the town and surround the castle, besieging it.

Chap. 9: The fog holds for days. The Welsh can't get beyond the castle's outer walls, and the English inside can't tell how large an enemy force surrounds them. Supplies in

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the castle's larder dwindle, and then the well water begins to dry up. Help must be summoned from neighboring Sir Hugh Fitzhugh. But who can be spared to bring this message? Robin determines he will go. Dressed in rags as a shepherd lad, he slips out the small north door in the castle wall and descends the treacherous ravine in the fog. He swims strongly across the icy river, evades a Welsh guard, and makes his way across the countryside as fast as he can to the cottage where John-in-the-Wynd is visiting his old mother. John rushes to Sir Hugh, who immediately sends soldiers to lift the siege. John returns and then carries Robin through the evening darkness to the town's church.

Chap. 10: Once in the church, John and Robin climb to the bell tower. When Sir Hugh's forces are in place, John rings the church bells to signal the beginning of the attack, and he and Robin watch the successful battle from the tower. With the Welsh routed, John carries Robin in triumph back to the castle, where Sir Peter greets the boy as "Conqueror and true son of thy noble father." Weeks pass, the weather turns cold, and Christmas season approaches. On Christmas Eve day, Robin is overjoyed when he spies the King and Queen and their retinues approaching the castle—his father and mother are with them! His parents greet him with great emotion, seeming to pay no mind to Robin's crutches.

That evening at the great banquet, Robin appears before the King, who rewards Robin for his brave service with a gold-medallion chain and a knighthood. In return Robin performs a carol he has composed on the harp he has crafted. Determined to know the worst, Robin asks his father, "Sir, mind you not that I must go thus, bent over, and with these crutches to help me walk?" His father responds, "The courage you have shown, the craftsmanship proven by the harp, and the spirit in your singing all make so bright a light that I cannot see whether or no your legs are misshapen." Robin's mother, for her part, is comforted that her son will never have to go off to war. At the end of the evening, as Brother Luke carries the sleepy Robin up to bed, he tells the boy he is "Safe with all thy loved ones. 'Tis the Feast of Christmas, and thou has found the door in thy wall."

TIME LINE

- 1066** Normans conquer England; William the Conqueror becomes king.
- 1154-89** Henry II rules England; royal power is increased greatly.
- 1175** Gothic cathedral at Canterbury is begun.
- 1209** Cambridge University is founded.
- 1215** Magna Carta is signed.
- 1264** Oxford begins collegiate system.
- 1271-1307** Edward I is king of England.
- 1276-84** English invade and conquer Wales.
- 1296** English invade and annex Scotland.
- 1307-27** Edward II is king.
- 1314** Scots defeat English at Bannockburn.
- 1327-77** Edward III is king.
- 1328** England acknowledges Scottish independence.
- 1330s-1346** Border wars between England and Scotland end with Scottish defeat.
- 1335** Earliest known mechanical clock is built in Milan, Italy.
- 1337-1453** Hundred Years' War is fought between England and France.
- 1340** Geoffrey Chaucer is born.

- 1346** English archers kill thousands of French knights at Crecy.
- 1348-50** Black Death kills up to half of English population.
- 1356** English capture French king at battle of Poitiers.
- 1381** English peasants' revolt.
- c. 1382** John Wycliffe translates Bible into English.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Marguerite de Angeli was a very popular and prolific author and illustrator of children's books in the United States during the 1940s and 1950s, and she continued publishing into the 1970s. She broke ground in children's literature by writing about minorities—ethnic, religious, regional—and was one of the earlier writers of historical fiction for young people, with both *The Door in the Wall* and *Black Fox of Lorne* set in the Middle Ages. De Angeli was born Marguerite Lofft in Lapeer, Michigan, in 1889 and moved with her family to Philadelphia in 1902. Her father, a photographer, struggled to support his wife and six children. Although finances were tight, de Angeli grew up in the middle of a warm, loving family circle, and many of her books focus on happy, secure children nurtured by concerned and loving parents. As a child, de Angeli loved to read and draw. After leaving high school in 1904, she became a choral singer and soloist for various churches in the Philadelphia area. She rejected an opera career in favor of marriage to John Daily de Angeli in 1910. While living in Detroit in 1916, de Angeli had her first and only art lessons.

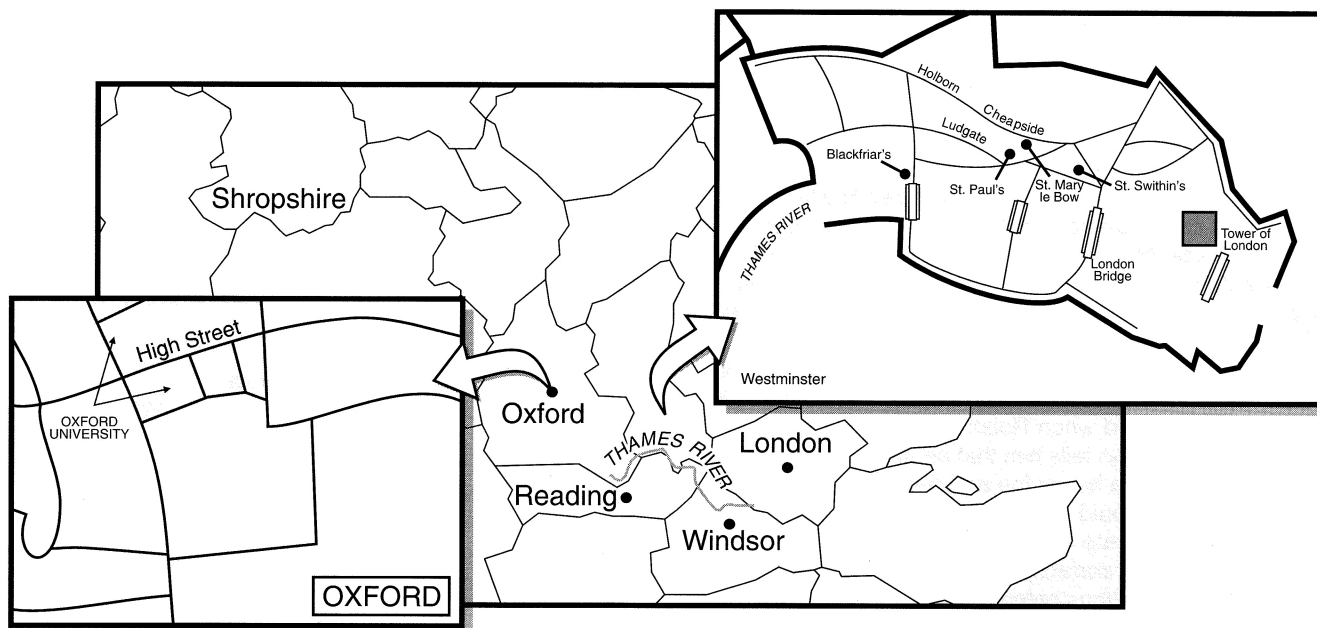
In 1918 the couple settled in New Jersey, and a neighbor, the well-known illustrator M. L. Bower, mentored de Angeli as she worked on her drawing skills. De Angeli got her first commission in 1922 and went on to produce illustrations for magazines and children's books, carving out patches of time for artwork while caring for her home and five children. In 1935, an editor asked de Angeli to write and illustrate a book for six-year-olds, which became *Ted and Nina Go to the Grocery Store*, with the characters modeled after two of de Angeli's own children. In 1936, de Angeli wrote her first book about a regional minority, the Pennsylvania Dutch, called *Henner's Lydia*.

She continued in this vein with *Thee, Hannah!* about a Quaker girl; *Yonie Wondernose*, again about a Pennsylvania Dutch child; *Elin's Amerika*, about Swedish immigrants in colonial Delaware; and *Up the Hill*, about a Polish family in Pennsylvania. *Bright April* (1946) was truly ground-breaking; it was the first modern children's book about a black child's encounter with racial prejudice. De Angeli set several of her regional books in past times and wrote other historical fiction about the United States as well. She turned to a completely different setting—medieval England—with *The Door in the Wall* (1949). De Angeli illustrated all of her books for children, using various media such as pen and ink, watercolor, and oils. Two of her books, *Yonie Wondernose* and *Book of Nursery and Mother Goose Rhymes*, won Caldecott Honor awards.

CRITICS' CORNER

While Marguerite de Angeli's popularity has faded, her books still hold great appeal for young readers, expressing as they do in both words and pictures universal childhood feelings and experiences in spite of differences in eras, ethnicities, or regions. Most of her tales are gentle, uncomplicated stories about happy children in loving families. *The Door in the Wall* is a more ambitious, complicated novel. Its inspir-

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ing theme of learning to cope with a disability and do the best with what we have is fully developed through both character and action, and de Angeli integrates historical detail and dialogue seamlessly into the flow of the novel. Young readers find themselves learning much about medieval life as they follow Robin's journey toward maturity, self-acceptance, and fulfillment.

Critics had high praise for *Door*, which won the 1950 Newbery Medal. *Dictionary of Literary Biography* describes Robin as "one of de Angeli's best-developed male characters" and the novel itself as "probably the most inspiring story for children that de Angeli wrote." *The Chicago Sunday Tribune* called it "A stirring and poetic tale. Children will love it too, for the pageantry of the day, the authentic sense of the period." *The New York Times* admired *Door* as "an enthralling and inspiring tale of triumph over handicap. Unusually beautiful illustrations, full of authentic detail, combine with the text to make life in England during the Middle Ages come alive." *The New Yorker* commented, "A poignant story, full of action, and a strongly painted canvas of the times as well." *Atlantic* added, "The life of the times is faithfully and interestingly drawn, the people are real, and the illustrations lovely. As for the plot, we read it with breathless interest."

GENERAL OBJECTIVES

1. To become familiar with various aspects of life in medieval England
2. To gain an understanding of how society was organized under the feudal system
3. To explore the ways in which a person can overcome adversity and learn to cope with a disability
4. To consider the value of developing patience and self-control
5. To evaluate the concept of achieving success by doing the best with what you have
6. To analyze the nature of courage
7. To discuss the process of moving toward maturity and seeking your place in the world

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. To identify the "doors in the wall" that enable Robin to compensate for his disability and lead a full life
2. To trace Robin's growth in maturity from petulant child to acclaimed young knight
3. To understand why Robin's parents and Sir Peter accept Robin fully even though Robin cannot fulfill the usual duties of a feudal knight
4. To identify the ways in which Brother Luke helps Robin regain his strength and spirit
5. To examine the author's use of dialogue and historical details to enhance the novel's medieval setting
6. To learn about the impact of bubonic plague on medieval societies and people
7. To understand the details in the novel about the Roman Catholic faith, which played a pervasive part in the lives of medieval people
8. To absorb details about castle architecture and castle life
9. To learn details about the role and lifestyle of medieval monks

LITERARY TERMS AND APPLICATIONS

To enhance students' appreciation and understanding of the novel, present them with these terms.

coming-of-age novel: a work of fiction in which the main character moves into and/or through adolescence and develops at least the beginnings of maturity. In this novel, Robin progresses from his childish anger and petulance about having lost the use of his legs to a mature acceptance of his condition and an active engagement in developing a full and active life that incorporates his disability. The tangible recognition of Robin's arrival at manhood is his knighting as Sir Robin.

dialogue: the speeches of characters in a novel or play. In this novel, the author uses dialogue to add to the medieval flavor of the setting. Brother Luke, for example, uses "thee" and "thine" and "hast" and "wilt." Syntax is distinctly medieval, too, as in "Think you he is a good man?" and "But how came

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thou here? How didst escape the sentry?"

extended metaphor: a metaphor is a comparison between two things that on the surface are not alike, without using *like* or *as* to make the comparison. An extended metaphor carries a comparison between one thing and another throughout a novel or story. In this novel, the metaphor of a "door in the wall" is repeatedly applied to various ways to overcome adversity or, specifically, ways in which Robin can adapt to and transcend the physical limitations of his disability—for example, by learning to read and write, by developing woodworking and musical skills, by using crutches, in general by doing the very best with what he has.

foreshadowing: hints or suggestions about something that will occur later in a novel. The siege of the castle in this novel is foreshadowed when Robin visits the top of the keep and Adam the bowman tells him that an army could approach the castle unseen in a heavy fog and suggests several possible enemies who would want to do that. And when Robin recites on two separate occasions the directions to John's mother's cottage, we correctly sense that Robin will be making use of those directions before the novel's end.

historical novel: a narrative that presents an imaginative series of events occurring in an actual historical setting. The characters may be both fictional and historical; in this novel, the characters are fictional but are modeled after authentic types of medieval people, such as a young page, a monk, a minstrel, various peasants, and the lord and lady of a manor. The author of a historical novel often does considerable research to incorporate accurate everyday historical detail into the novel, as de Angeli did for this book. *Door* is full of colorful details about everyday life in medieval towns, cities, countryside, and castle, and the author has imbued the characters' dialogue with a medieval flavor (see above).

SETTINGS

The overall setting is medieval England during the reign of Edward III (1327-1377). The novel opens in the large de Bureford home in London, with Robin seeing in his head the bustling life of the streets that he hears outside his bedroom. Brother Luke then arrives and brings Robin to the monastery of St. Mark's, where Robin (along with the reader) becomes familiar with various aspects of a medieval monastery, including the kitchen, scriptorium, gardens, almonry, cloisters, courtyard, refectory, carpenter shop, and chapel. In a brook next to the monastery, Brother Luke teaches Robin to swim. For nine days, Robin, Brother Luke, and John-go-in-the-Wynd travel across the English countryside from London through Oxford and on to Lindsay castle in Shropshire. They cross through fields, villages, and forests, spend some time at a country fair, enjoy the appearance of students at Oxford, foil would-be thieves at a wayside inn, board one night at a peasant woodman's cottage, and finally reach Lindsay.

Robin is entranced with the castle, and with him we explore all its ins and outs, including the great hall, the top of the keep, the watchtowers, chapel, belfry, kitchens, store-rooms, armory, dungeons, stables, and workshop. Robin continues his daily swims in the adjoining river. The castle is surrounded by fields and forests, with hills beyond, from which the Welsh creep close under cover of fog and lay siege. Robin saves the day by making a dangerous and arduous trip from the castle, down a ravine, across the river, and then across fields, woods, and a stream to reach the cot-

tage of John-in-the-Wynd's mother. Then John and Robin return to the nearby town and climb up the church's bell tower to sound the signal for the counterattack. The novel ends in the castle's Great Hall, with Robin knighted by the King and reunited with his parents at the great feast.

CROSS-CURRICULAR SOURCES

For more information about medieval life, castles, the Black Death, and other subjects and issues deriving from the novel, consult these sources.

Books

John Burke, *Life in the Castle in Medieval England*

Conrad Cairns, *Medieval Castles*

Mike Corbishley, *The Middle Ages*

James Daugherty, *The Magna Charta*

James Cross Giblin, *When Plague Strikes: The Black Death, Smallpox, AIDS*

Christopher Gravett, *Castle and Knight*

Barbara A. Hanawalt, *The Middle Ages: An Illustrated History*

Linda Honan, *Picture the Middle Ages*

Sarah Howarth, *Medieval People, Medieval Places, and The Middle Ages*

Andrew Langley, *Castle at War: The Story of a Siege*

David Macaulay, *Castle and Cathedral*

Gwyneth Morgan, *Life in a Medieval Village*

Eileen Power, *Medieval Women*

Antoine Sabbagh, *Europe in the Middle Ages*

Sheila Sancha, *The Luttrell Village: Country Life in the Middle Ages* and *Walter Dragon's Town: Crafts & Trade in the Middle Ages*

Martin Windrow, *The Medieval Knight*

Terrance Wise, *Medieval European Armies*

Computer Software

Castle Explorer (Dorling Kindersley/DK Multimedia)

Feudalism: Decisions, Decisions (Tom Snyder)

The Middle Ages (History Through Art series, Clearvue) (also available as VHS video)

Internet

"Castles of Britain" <www.castles-of-britain.com/>

"Castles on the Web" <www.castlesontheweb.com/>

"Collection: Medieval and Anglo Saxon Recipes" <www.cs.cmu.edu/People/mjw/recipes/ethnic/historical/med-anglosaxon-coll.html>

"Information Topics"

<tqjunior.advanced.org/4051/instruct.htm>

"King Edward's Conquest of Wales,"

<www.thehistorynet.com/MilitaryHistory/articles/1999/0299_text.htm>

"Middle Ages" <www.learner.org/exhibits/middleages/>

"The Robin Hood Project"

<www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/rh/rhhome.stm>

"Some Important Events in the Fourteenth Century"

<www.siue.edu/CHAUCER/14thcent.html>

Videos

The Black Death (History's Turning Points series, Ambrose)

The Black Death: March 27, 1361 (Timeline series, Maryland Public Television)

Braveheart

Castle and Cathedral (with David Macaulay) (Unicorn)

Conscience in Conflict: A Man for All Seasons (condensed version, Learning Corporation of America)

The Crusades: October 2, 1187 (Timeline series, Maryland Public Television)

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El Cid (with Charlton Heston and Sophia Loren)
Medieval England: The Peasants' Revolt (Learning Corporation of America)
Medieval Times: 1000-1450 (United Learning)
The Torchbearers: Bridging the Dark Ages (Encyclopedia Britannica)

THEMES AND MOTIFS

A study of the central issues and situations in *The Door in the Wall* should include these aspects.

Themes

- overcoming adversity (accepting and compensating for a disability)
- developing patience and self-control
- doing your best with what you have
- acting with courage
- finding your place in the world
- coming of age

Motifs

- feudal system
- medieval life
- Roman Catholicism
- ravages of plague
- wood-carving
- musical skills and instruments
- medieval monasticism
- castle architecture and life
- medieval wars and local conflicts
- physical therapy and rehabilitation

MEANING STUDY

Below are words, phrases, or sentences that have a particular meaning in the novel. Explain each as it relates to the book. Use the page numbers given in parentheses to reread the term in context if you wish.

1. ...he would learn all the ways of knighthood. He would learn how to be of service to his liege lord. (Chap. 1, p. 7)
(As the son of a noble father in the feudal system, Robin's destiny is to become a knight, just as his father did before him. In return for a king's or lord's grant of the use of a portion of his land to a knight, the knight owed military aid and certain other services to the lord, who in turn owed protection and justice to the knight. During the 1100s, the code of chivalry developed, which required knights to act bravely, fight fairly, keep their word, and treat other members of the nobility—even enemies—courteously and gallantly. Boys usually began training in the ways of knighthood at the age of seven or eight.)
2. "...I obey the wish of the Queen to be her lady in waiting." (Chap. 1, p. 8)
(Medieval noblewomen also owed service, in their case to the queen or to a princess, to act as an attendant when requested. Robin's mother is away attending Queen Maud, at the Queen's request.)
3. ...the pleasant mixture of Norman French and good English words that were becoming the fashion. (Chap. 1, p. 10)
(The French Normans conquered England in 1066, and William the Conqueror, the country's new ruler, replaced many English nobles with French-speaking Norman ones. Although the Anglo-Saxon populace resisted Normanization of their language and culture, blending

inevitably occurred. Eventually, Anglo-Saxon and Norman French blended to become today's English language. That process is underway in this novel, set in the 14th century, as Robin's mother and others of her social class speak a mixture of Norman French and Anglo-Saxon.)

4. In the doorway stood a monk...."I am Brother Luke, a wandering friar." (Chap. 1, p. 12)
(Medieval monks were churchmen who lived apart from the everyday world and dedicated themselves to fasting, prayer, and self-denial. Commonly they lived together in monasteries, where everything—including the clothes the monks wore—belonged to the community, not to the individual monks. In addition to praying and maintaining their monastery as a self-sufficient community, monks often acted as social workers, helping the poor, the sick, and the disabled. They might run hospitals, poorhouses, and orphanages. Monks, also known as friars, were addressed as Brother. Brother Luke has heard about Robin's plight and has arrived to care for the boy.)
5. "Tethered in the courtyard is a jennet ready saddled." (Chap. 1, p. 16)
(A jennet is a small Spanish horse. A tether is a rope or something similar used to fasten an animal to an object in order to limit the animal's range of movement. Brother Luke, knowing about Robin's inability to walk, has brought a jennet with him to the de Bureford home and has left it tied in the courtyard while he prepares Robin for the short trip to the monastery.)
6. There were hundreds of people within the hospice....The outer court was far away at the other side of the monastery (Chap. 2, p. 19)
(Brother Luke brings Robin to the monastery of St. Mark's, where the monk cares for Robin while also performing his many other tasks. As noted above, groups of medieval monks often lived in a monastery, which was a largely self-sufficient community with many gardens and workrooms. Monks in the scriptorium of medieval monasteries helped preserve knowledge by hand-copying books, which is also one of Brother Luke's tasks. Monasteries also acted as inns for travelers and often provided medical services, food, and clothing to local poor people. Part of St. Mark's monastery is a hospice, which in medieval times was a lodging place for travelers or poor people, usually run by members of a religious community. During the current plague, the monks of St. Mark's have taken into their hospice those in the parish afflicted by the plague who need the monks' care.)
7. "Good eve, Brother Crookshanks!" (Chap. 2, p. 24)
(“Shanks” is another term for legs. The boy doesn't know Robin's first name, so he addresses him as “Brother.” For Robin's last name, the boy follows the medieval practice of sometimes naming a person after a personal oddity—“Crookshanks” for crooked legs. Brother Luke explains to Robin that the boy meant no harm by using the name “Crookshanks.”)
8. ...he found a chisel. (Chap. 3, p. 27)
(A chisel is a wedgelike tool with a sharp edge at the end of the blade, used for cutting wood or stone. Brother Matthew instructs Robin to use a chisel to cut out the half joints for his cross. When the chisel slips, Robin's

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cross is ruined. Brother Matthew uses the boy's angry outburst to teach a lesson about patience and self-control.)

9. a minstrel (Chap. 3, p. 30)
...singing a lay which John-go-in-the-Wynd picked out on the harp. (Chap. 5, p. 49)
(A minstrel was a medieval musician who sang or recited accompanied by musical instruments, which he might play himself. Robin and Brother Luke are joined on their journey by the minstrel John-go-in-the-Wynd, who sings and accompanies himself with a small harp, a stringed instrument. Robin admires John's playing and the harp music, and determines to make himself a harp after the trio arrives at Lindsay castle. A lay is a song, especially a narrative one, a type of song popular in medieval times.)
10. Brother Luke's tonsured [head] (Chap. 3, p. 31)
(A medieval monk characteristically shaved the crown of his head, leaving a fringe of hair all around. The shaved area is the tonsure. The book's drawings illustrate clearly Brother Luke's tonsured look.)
11. They had brought cattle and sheep, dairy butter and cheese, whatever had been their portion after giving what was due to the lord of the manor (Chap. 7, p. 63)
(People who lived on and worked the land of a feudal lord, who lived in the fief's manor, owed to the lord a portion of all that they produced in return for use of the lord's land. Now the people of the countryside are bringing part of what remains to them of their produce to trade with at the big fair.)
12. "For how shall I be an esquire or even a page?" (Chap. 7, p. 66)
(Just as he fell ill, Robin was supposed to have gone to the castle of Sir Peter de Lindsay to begin the training that would teach him how to be a knight. Robin was to have started the first, preliminary stage of this training as a page to Sir Peter, learning knightly manners and beginning to learn skills in handling weapons. When a page reached his early teens, he became a squire, a personal assistant to a knight. He would take care of the knight's armor, horses, weapons, and clothing, and he would continue to train in the use of weapons and in courtly manners. When the knight decided the squire was ready, he would bring the squire with him into battle, where it was the squire's job to prove himself worthy of knighthood, which would then be conferred in an impressive ceremony like the one Robin goes through when receiving his knighthood from the King.)

COMPREHENSION STUDY

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is important, and you should be ready to defend your answers by referring to passages in the book.

Questions 1-4 (Literal Level)

1. Why does Robin find himself home alone at the beginning of the novel? Why do the monks take care of Robin? Why does Robin leave the monastery and go to live at Sir Peter's castle?
(As the novel opens, Robin's father is away fighting for the English King in the war against the Scots. Robin's mother is away tending the Queen as a lady-in-waiting,
- at the Queen's request. Now the servants have all died of the plague or run away from London to try to get away from the plague. Brother Luke has heard about Robin's plight and knows that Robin's father has made donations to the monastery. So the monk comes to the house to take care of Robin and bring him to the hospice at the monastery, where the monks follow their calling by caring for the sick, the poor, and the disabled. The monks follow their custom by continuing to care for Robin as long as he remains without anyone else to do so. Finally, Robin goes to Sir Peter's in accordance with the original plans, which call for Robin to serve as Sir Peter's page as part of his learning process to become a knight.)
2. What valuable things do the monks provide and teach to Robin?
(First, they give him physical care, food, and shelter. Brother Luke acts as physical therapist, rubbing Robin's bent and shrunken legs and later teaching the boy to swim and making sure he swims every day to build his strength. The monks also teach Robin valuable skills that Robin didn't previously have: wood carving, reading, and writing. Very importantly, the monks teach Robin by example how to be patient and how to relieve his frustrations about his condition by concentrating on developing his new skills and remaining strengths.)
3. What do you learn from the novel about the structure of medieval society—the feudal system—and the naming of people?
(The feudal system forms the basic structure of medieval society. At the top are the King and Queen, along with other royalty. Serving the King and Queen are members of the nobility—knights and their ladies. Knights are pledged to serve the King, along with their armed forces who in turn are pledged to serve the knights. Sons of knights are expected in their turn to become knights, serving first as pages for another noble family. Commoners may live in towns and run small businesses or work as servants, or they may be small land-holders, as John-in-the-Wynd becomes. Serfs and peasants live on the lands of a nobleman; they owe the lord a portion of their work and also of what they produce. Clergy, such as monks and nuns, are a separate branch of feudal society and provide services to those in need; in their monasteries, they also preserve learning and create books. People are named for either their physical characteristics [Robin Crookshanks, for example] or for the locale they are from [John de Bureford] or for what they do [Chaucer for a shoemaker].)
4. How does Robin save himself, Brother Luke, and John-go-in-the-Wynd during their journey from London to Lindsay? How does Robin save Sir Peter's castle and the people inside it from the attackers?
(When the travelers stay overnight at the White Hart inn, Robin hears the two ruffians downstairs plotting to rob him and his companions. Robin is able to move himself across the sleeping chamber silently on his strong arms to wake up Brother Luke and warn him. After the trio escapes from the second-story window, with Robin successfully letting himself down the cloak using his arm strength, Robin trips the pursuing would-be thieves with his crutches, sending them sprawling in a tangle that allows Robin, Brother Luke, and John time to get clean

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away. Later, at the castle, Robin is able to slip away through a small door in the castle wall, make his way down a steep ravine in the fog, swim across the icy river, fool a Welsh sentry into thinking he's a poor shepherd lad, and complete an exhausting trip across the countryside to the cottage of John-in-the-Wynd's mother, thus getting word to John about the siege so John can summon critical help from Sir Hugh at the neighboring castle. Sir Hugh's armed men make a surprise attack on the Welsh, routing them and lifting the siege of the castle. Robin is the hero of the day.)

Questions 5-7 (Interpretive Level)

5. Brother Luke often speaks to Robin about finding a "door in the wall." In general, what is a "door in the wall" according to Brother Luke? What specific "doors in the wall" does Robin discover in the course of the novel?

(A door in the wall is a way to overcome adversity, a way to emerge from behind the wall that in some way holds a person back. Robin's wall is his physical handicap, his inability to walk or even straighten up completely. Brother Luke first points out the literal doors in walls—in the wall around the de Bureford garden, and the wall about the Tower of London, for example. Later, Brother Luke tells Robin that "reading is another door in the wall," as are Robin's new crutches. When Robin arrives at Lindsay castle, Sir Peter also mentions a door in the wall, telling Robin, "If we cannot serve in one way, there is always another. If we do what we are able, a door always opens to something else." Accordingly, Robin finds ways to serve as page even on crutches, becomes a skilled woodcarver and musician, keeps a lively spirit, develops his strength, and ultimately saves the castle and its inhabitants with his courageous mission as messenger. A literal small door in the castle wall provides Robin with the egress he needs to begin that mission, and another door in the graveyard wall opens to let John and Robin get into the church to sound the attack signal. Finally, Robin finds that his parents still accept and love him—the brightness of his courage, craftsmanship, and fine spirit have created a door that has taken him through the wall of his handicap.)

6. In what ways does Robin change, grow, and mature in the course of the novel?

(At first, Robin is angry and petulant and self-pitying about having lost the use of his legs, for example, lashing out at Dame Ellen when she brings him porridge that he doesn't like and bemoaning his own helplessness. He is also quick with his temper, shouting at the boy who calls him Crookshanks and nearly hitting Brother Matthew with the flung chisel when the cross breaks. He is impatient and quick to give up, declaring he won't try to use the "treacherous" chisel any more. But gradually, by the monks' teaching and example, Robin learns patience as he becomes absorbed in the tasks of learning new skills like woodworking and reading. He also learns to accept his handicap and find ways to compensate for it, discovering doors in his wall, including the woodworking and reading as well as swimming to build strength and learning to use crutches. He is able to put aside his former bitterness about his disability and apply his natural good spirit and strength of character to achieve success in new areas. As Robin's father notes,

by the time Robin is reunited with his parents he no longer looks like a child; he now has "the look of a youth.")

7. Sir Peter and Robin's father accept Robin fully as a member of noble society even though Robin can't fulfill his feudal obligations to become a knight. Why do Sir Peter and Sir John do this?

(Both men admire the way in which Robin has compensated for his handicap and triumphed over it. Robin has done his best with the cards he's been dealt. When they first meet, Sir Peter tells Robin, "Each of us has his place in the world. If we cannot serve in one way, there is always another." Robin has clearly found many ways to serve, including saving the castle from the siege, so Sir Peter greatly admires the boy and hails him as "true son of thy noble father." Sir John, Robin's father, tells the boy, "The courage you have shown, the craftsmanship proven by the harp, and the spirit in your singing all make so bright a light that I cannot see whether or no your legs are misshapen." Again, Robin's accomplishments make him a worthy member of noble society, in his father's eyes.)

Questions 8-10 (Critical Level)

8. How does the author use dialogue to give the novel a flavor of medieval times?

(Examples will vary. Especially with Brother Luke, the author uses old forms of speech, such as "thou," "thy," "hast," "didst," and "yonder." The syntax of the dialogue is often different from modern speech, as in "I know not" and "Think you my mother will know me when she sees me thus?" The speeches are often formal and rhythmic, too, as in "We have long awaited your coming, dear child, and now we are most happy that you have safely arrived" The medieval-style expressions and syntax aren't overwhelming or distracting, though. The characters' speech flows easily and seems quite natural.)

9. Most critics who have reviewed this novel have commented on the fine illustrations. What do the illustrations contribute to your appreciation of the novel?

(Answers will vary. The illustrations provide visual detail of aspects of a historical period that students may not be terribly familiar with, helping them to visualize things such as medieval clothing styles, towns, buildings from inns to cottages to castles, monks, musical instruments, and weapons.)

10. The author uses many details about medieval life to make the period really come alive in the novel and also to carry the story forward. For any one chapter in the novel, what are those historic details?

(Choices of chapter will vary. For example, in Chapter 1, we learn about the structure of feudal society when Robin thinks about his obligations to become a knight and about his parents' service to the King and Queen. Robin sees scenes of medieval people from the sounds he hears in the street outside. The plague, a familiar feature of medieval life, is spreading through London. The house servant is called Dame Ellen, another servant is Jon-the-Cook, and the messenger is John-the-Fletcher, all medieval-style names. Robin remembers the mix of Norman French and English that his mother speaks. The interior of Robin's house resembles a church of the

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times. Brother Luke conveys Robin to the monastery on horseback, along cobbled streets, and he dresses Robin in medieval-style clothing for the short trip. The dialogue spoken by Dame Ellen, Robin, and Brother Luke has a distinctly medieval flavor, too.)

Questions 11-13 (Creative Level)

11. Write a second letter from Robin to his father telling about his life at Lindsay castle.
12. Create the scene when Robin, having become ill, discovers that he has lost the use of his legs.
13. Write a series of entries in a journal kept by Brother Luke relating to Robin.

ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

Art

1. Create a model or scale drawing of St. Mark's monastery, including the various parts of it mentioned in the novel, such as the scriptorium, almonry, gardens, monks' cells, cloisters, courtyard, refectory, kitchen, carpenter shop, and chapel.
2. Create a floor plan or model of Lindsay castle, including the various parts of it mentioned in the novel, such as the great hall, keep, watchtowers, outer and inner baileys, drawbridge, moat, portcullis, chapel, belfry, kitchens, storerooms, armory, dungeons, stables, workshop, and sleeping rooms.
3. Create an illuminated manuscript page like one Brother Luke would have drawn in the monastery's scriptorium.
4. Fashion some clothes that would be typical of the Middle Ages for a peasant, a monk, a page, a minstrel, a lord, and a lady.
5. Draw and diagram the parts (interior and exterior) of a Gothic church.
6. Create a poster about knightly life, including such items as a knight's armor and weapons, a knight's horse equipped for battle, and a joust.

History and Social Studies

1. Write a biography of King Edward III of England, during whose reign the events of this novel take place. Be sure to include information about significant events in English political, social, economic, and intellectual life during these times.
2. Report orally or in writing about the ongoing conflict between Scotland and England during the 13th, 14th, and 15th centuries.
3. On a map of England, trace the journey Robin, Brother Luke, and John make from London to Lindsay castle.
4. Create a chart of medieval occupations that are mentioned in the novel, telling what a person who practices each occupation does and what place in medieval feudal society that person occupies. Visuals would enhance your chart.

Language Arts

1. Roman Catholicism permeated medieval culture. Make a list of the many terms relating to Catholic beliefs and practices that are mentioned in the novel, such as devotions, Ave, breviary, priory, Our Lady, and missal, and explain each one in its medieval context.
2. Similarly, make a list of terms relating to medieval life that are unfamiliar in modern life, such as quill, parchment, jerkin, and stocks, and define each one in the con-

text of the novel.

3. Find some dialogue in a favorite book and then rewrite it in the style of medieval speech, using this novel's dialogue as a model.
4. Nominate your favorite young adult novel for the Newbery Medal, telling why it deserves this honor.
5. Read other books about the Middle Ages (see **Related Reading**). Then write your own description of life as you might experience it then, or write a short story about a young person living in those times. (Also **Social Studies**)
6. Think about the ways in which being illiterate adversely affects a person's life. Check yourself through a day's activities, noting each instance when being unable to read or write would hinder you in each activity. Then investigate local literacy programs to find out what resources are available in your community for people who want to learn to read.

Mathematics

1. Calculate the length of Robin, Luke, and John's journey from London to Lindsay. Determine from the novel how many days they traveled, and then calculate their average rate of speed.
2. Create charts or graphs that show population changes in England and/or Europe during years of bubonic plague epidemics.

Music

1. Play some medieval music for the class, both instrumental and vocal. If possible, demonstrate how to play some medieval-style instruments such as the harp and lute.
2. Using examples, define the lay, ballad, and carol.
3. Compose your own carol for a special holiday, accompanied on an instrument of your choice.
4. Play portions of a recording of monks' chants (for example, *Chant*).

Science/Health

1. Report orally or in writing on the Black Death (bubonic plague)—its causes, its symptoms, and the impact plague epidemics had on medieval Europe.
2. Using scale drawings, demonstrate how a sailboat uses features such as rudder, keel, masts, sails, and lines in combination with water and wind to achieve propulsion.
3. Create a visual presentation of the changes in the night sky and visible constellations in your area, explaining why the changes occur and telling the stories behind some of the constellations.
4. Report on physical therapy techniques and other modern treatments available to people who have lost the use of limbs as Robin has. Or, invite a rehabilitation expert or physical therapist into class to speak about and demonstrate this.
5. Demonstrate how to use flint and steel to make a fire, explaining the scientific processes that are occurring.
6. Create an illustrated field guide to the flora and fauna of the English countryside that are mentioned in the novel. (Also **Art**)
7. Using a diagram or a model, demonstrate and explain the scientific principles on which the catapult is based.

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STUDENT INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES

1. Emulate Robin's woodworking skills by creating something yourself out of wood and displaying it in class.
2. Robin loved the Punch and Judy show at the fair. Stage a puppet show for a group of younger children with puppets you have purchased or made yourself.
3. Create a classroom display of medicinal herbs, with information about their uses in medieval times and today. (Caution: Some herbs used in medieval times are no longer considered safe to use in the ways they were once used.) Or, create a windowsill herb garden of medieval herbs.
4. With classmates, act out dramatic scenes from the novel—for example, the scene at the White Hart inn as the would-be thieves are thwarted.
5. Robin is enthralled with the view from the top of the castle keep. Take photographs of familiar places in your area from upper-story windows and outlooks, and create a class display with them.
6. Borrow a pair of crutches and spend a good part of one day getting around with them. What difficulties do you encounter with everyday activities?
7. Practice writing with a quill dipped in ink, then demonstrate this skill (and the difficulties of doing it well) to classmates.
8. Join classmates in dressing as a medieval person and demonstrating the skills of your trade or occupation, like baking bread or milling grain.
9. Prepare a medieval meal with classmates, including some foods mentioned in the novel such as porridge, peasant bread, cheese, pasty, bannock, honey cakes, dried herring, fruits, bacon, and pudding (although you will probably skip the whole suckling pig and goose roasted with feathers on). (For ideas, check out the Recipes site listed in Cross-Curricular Sources above.)
10. For a more ambitious activity, stage a medieval fair with classmates.
11. Nominate someone you know or admire for knighthood and write the speech you will deliver at the knighthood ceremony declaring the reasons why this person is a deserving knight.
12. John-go-in-the-Wynd tells Robin, "Anyone can *not* do it." Apply this saying to your own life. Has there been a time when you tried to do something even though you weren't sure you could succeed? Is there something you've been afraid or hesitant to try that this saying could encourage you to go ahead with?

ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT

1. Draw up a list of the characters in the novel. Beside each name, write a description of the person, note the person's place in medieval society, and describe the role that person plays in the events of the novel.
2. Describe the relationships between Robin and various adults in the novel who guide and help him. What does each adult add to Robin's life and development? What are Robin's feelings toward each of these people?
3. List and explain the various "doors in the wall" that Robin finds and goes through in the course of the novel.
4. One critic said about *The Door in the Wall*, "As for the plot, we read it with breathless interest." Another critic

said, "There should be sustained interest, mounting tension, but the plot bogs down and wears thin." What is your opinion about the pace and interest of the plot? Do you agree or disagree with either of these critics?

OTHER WORKS BY MARGUERITE DE ANGELI

Fiction for young readers (self-illustrated):

Black Fox of Lorne (1956)
Book of Nursery and Mother Goose Rhymes (1954)
Bright April (1946)
Butter at the Right Price (autobiography, 1971)
Copper-Toed Boots (1938)
Elin's Amerika (1941)
The Empty Barn (1966)
Fiddlestrings (1974)
Henner's Lydia (1936)
Jared's Island (1947)
Just Like David (1951, reissue 1967)
The Lion in the Box (1975)
Marguerite de Angeli's Favorite Hymns (1963)
Petite Suzanne (1937)
Skippack School (1938)
A Summer Day with Ted and Nina (1940)
Ted and Nina Go to the Grocery Store (1935)
Ted and Nina Have a Happy Rainy Day (1936)
The Ted and Nina Story Book (1965)
Thee, Hannah! (1940)
Turkey for Christmas (1944)
Up the Hill (1942, reissue 1970)
Whistle for the Crossing (1977)
Yonie Wondernose (1944)

RELATED READING

Tracy Barrett, *Anna of Byzantium*
Gary L. Blackwood, *The Shakespeare Stealer*
Elizabeth Borton de Treviño, *I, Juan de Pareja*
Frances Hodgson Burnett, *The Secret Garden*
Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*
Ann Cheetham, *The Pit*
Miguel de Cervantes, *Don Quixote de la Mancha*
Marchette Chute, *The Innocent Wayfaring* and *The Wonderful Winter*
Karen Cushman, *Catherine, Called Birdy* and *The Midwife's Apprentice*
Susan Fletcher, *Shadow Spinner*
Elizabeth Gray, *Adam of the Road* and *I Will Adventure*
Cynthia Harnett, *Caxton's Challenge* and *Nicholas and the Wool-Pack*
Erik Christian Haugaard, *The Untold Tale*
Mollie Hunter, *The Ghosts of Glencoe* and *The Stronghold*
Eric P. Kelly, *The Trumpeter of Krakow*
E.L. Konigsburg, *The Second Mrs. Giaconda*
Geraldine McCaughrean, *A Little Lower Than the Angels*
Emily Arnold McCully, *Beautiful Warrior: The Legend of the Nun's Kung Fu*
Scott O'Dell, *The Road to Damietta*
Jane Oliver, *Faraway Princess*
Ann Phillips, *The Peace Child*
Madeleine Polland, *Children of the Red King*
Howard Pyle, *Men of Iron* and *Otto of the Silver Hand*
Zilpha Keatley Snyder, *Song of the Gargoyle*
Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Black Arrow* and *Kidnapped*
Rosemary Sutcliff, *Bonnie Dundee*, *Dawn Wind*, *The Lantern*

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Bearers, Song for a Dark Queen

Geoffrey Trease, *The Red Towers of Granada*

Ann Turner, *The Way Home*

Mark Twain, *The Prince and the Pauper*

Cynthia Voigt, *Jackaroo*

Jill Paton Walsh, *A Parcel of Patterns*

Barbara Willard, *The Lark and the Laurel* (and others in this series)

Diane Lee Wilson, *I Rode a Horse of Milk White Jade*

TEACHER'S NOTES

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Atlantic, December 1949, p. 104.

Booklist, Nov. 1, 1949, p. 85.

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Chicago Sunday Tribune, Nov. 13, 1949, p. 18.

Children's Literature Review, Vol. 1. Detroit: Gale, 1976.

Contemporary Authors, Vols. 5-8. 1st Rev., Vol. 3 New Revision Series, Vol. 122. Detroit: Gale, 1963/69, 1981, 1988.

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Kunitz, Stanley J., and Howard Haycraft, eds. *The Junior Book of Authors*, 2d ed. rev. NY: H.W. Wilson, 1951.

Library Journal, Jan. 1, 1950, p. 50.

Mahony, Bertha M., et al., eds. *Illustrators of Children's Books, 1744-1945*. Boston: Horn Book, 1945.

Miller, Bertha M., et al., eds. *Illustrators of Children's Books, 1946-1956*. Boston: Horn Book, 1958.

The New Yorker, Dec. 3, 1949, p. 175.

The New York Times, Nov. 20, 1949, p. 58.

Silvey, Anita, ed. *Children's Books and Their Creators*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1995.

Something About the Author, Vols. 1, 27, 51, 100. Detroit: Gale, 1971.

Internet Sites:

"Elizabeth Belen Community Gallery",
<leslie.k12.mi.us/~mwhfame/belen.html>

"I'd Better Make It a Good One",
<www.chfweb.com/smith/mdangeli/html>

"Marguerite de Angeli Collection",
<www.lapeer.lib.mi.us/Library/Exhibits/MdA/chrono.html>

"Marguerite de Angeli Discussion List",
<www.egroups.com/list/deangeli-fans>

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VOCABULARY TEST

Match each underlined word with its meaning listed below. Write the letter of the meaning in the space next to the sentence number.

- | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|-------------|
| a. seriously | f. distresses | k. became less severe | p. starving |
| b. with sorrow | g. moved swiftly | l. large & powerful | q. weak |
| c. liberal giving | h. delay leaving | m. small, hard bed | r. pantry |
| d. dirty hut | i. merrymaking | n. ungrateful person | s. agents |
| e. out of line | j. untidy & dirty | o. dreadful person | t. rotten |

- ___ 1. Robin could guess that Wat Hokester had been taken again for selling putrid fish in the market stall.
- ___ 2. "Just wait and see when more victuals are brought thee! Thankless wretch!"
- ___ 3. "But I cannot walk," said Robin woefully.
- ___ 4. "It is somewhat awry, with the bow aslant from the stern, but it hath an air."
- ___ 5. As the days grew warmer, the plague abated somewhat. Fewer people came to the hospital for care.
- ___ 6. "Why not make a puppet for that poor girl child? She dwelleth by Houndsditch in a poor hovel."
- ___ 7. "Besides, it is Midsummer Eve! We shall see the gaiety."
- ___ 8. The rain held off, but dark clouds scudded low, and the wind was searching.
- ___ 9. "Aye, danger enough," said Alan gravely.
- ___ 10. "There are ill-seeming ruffians sitting about the fire, and the goodwife hath a slatternly look, but we have no choice."
- ___ 11. Something like "the minstrel's hefty look" caught Robin's ear, so he held his breath to listen.
- ___ 12. Softly, softly, Robin slid off the pallet, trying not to rustle the straw.
- ___ 13. "There will be no room at the inn, so we must not linger long."
- ___ 14. Finally, when it was so dark they could hardly see the path, Robin pointed out a feeble light.
- ___ 15. "By my faith, if we be not welcome, then the serf is an ingrate."
- ___ 16. They were received in the Great Hall as if they had been emissaries of the King.
- ___ 17. Alan liked sweets, so Robin kept a good supply of honey cakes in his pocket for largess.
- ___ 18. "It grieves me, my son, more than I can tell you to know that you are ill."
- ___ 19. The food in the larder dwindled, and there were many people to be fed.
- ___ 20. "Thou'lt be famished with hunger."

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COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Matching (20 points)

Read each character description. In the list below, find the character who matches the description. Write the letter of the character in the space next to the description number. Use each name only once.

- | | |
|--|-------------------------|
| _____ 1. Serving woman who dies of the plague. | a. Brother Matthew |
| _____ 2. Person who brings news of the siege and a request for help to Sir Hugh. | b. Dame Ellen |
| _____ 3. Robin's father, who is away fighting the Scots. | c. King Edward |
| _____ 4. Hound who attaches himself to Robin. | d. Robin |
| _____ 5. Page boy who saves Lindsay castle and the people in it. | e. Brother Luke |
| _____ 6. Person whom Robin's father serves. | f. D'Ath |
| _____ 7. Person who is often on guard at the top of the castle keep. | g. John-go-in-the-Wynd |
| _____ 8. Monk who teaches Robin how to read, write, and swim. | h. Sir Peter de Lindsay |
| _____ 9. The lord of Lindsay castle. | i. Sir John de Bureford |
| _____ 10. Monk who teaches Robin carpentry skills. | j. Adam the bowman |

Part II: Fill-In (20 points)

Write a word in each blank to make each statement true.

1. Because Robin is the son of a noble family, he will train to become a _____ when he grows up.
2. Robin's mother is away from home serving the _____ as a lady-in-waiting.
3. John-go-in-the-Wynd is a harp-carrying singer known as a _____.
4. Brother Luke takes Robin to live at St. Mark's _____.
5. When a head is tonsured, the crown of the head is _____.
6. The novel's action begins with Robin at his family's home in the English city of _____.
7. Robin tries to make a _____ out of wood but gets very angry when his chisel slips and ruins his project.
8. The _____, or crosses, that Robin and Brother Matthew make allow Robin to walk.
9. Robin, Brother Luke, and John travel to Lindsay castle on foot and on _____.
10. Robin goes to the cottage of John-go-in-the-Wynd's _____ to deliver the message that the castle is under siege.

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Part III: Multiple Choice (30 points)

Underline the choice that correctly completes each of these sentences.

1. Robin's mother speaks a combination of Norman (German, Spanish, French, Italian) and English words.
2. Before a young man can become a knight, he first serves as a page and then a(n) (esquire, prior, minstrel, armorer).
3. The jennet that accompanies Robin, Brother Luke, and John is a (knight, hound, horse, flagon).
4. This novel is set during (ancient, medieval, modern, future) times.
5. Robin and his parents are reunited during the holiday season of (Easter, Midsummer Eve, Thanksgiving, Christmas).
6. The (Scots, Welsh, French, Irish) put Lindsay castle under siege.
7. Robin compares his legs to (rods of iron, a pair of hounds, sturdy oak trees, bent sausages).
8. A scriptorium is a common feature of a (monastery, castle, market square, peasant cottage).
9. At the White Hart inn, Robin, Brother Luke, and John narrowly escape (vicious dogs, the plague, a sudden flood, would-be robbers).
10. Robin loves the Punch and Judy (minstrel, dance, puppet, magic) show at the country fair.
11. Robin flings away the (porridge, chisel, kitten, prayer book) that Dame Ellen brings him.
12. Robin worries that he will never again be able to (swim, read, straighten, pray).
13. "Friar" is another term for a (vassal, reeve, minstrel, monk).
14. Robin slips away from the besieged castle through the castle's (drawbridge, door, belfry, stable).
15. The enemy army is able to sneak up to the castle and surround it because of (traitors in the village, a thick fog, friends in the village, the castle guard's carelessness).

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. What are the ways in which Brother Luke helps Robin?
2. What are the steps in becoming a knight, and what are the characteristics of a knight?
3. Why does Robin worry about Sir Peter and his father accepting him after his illness? How does Robin earn their acceptance?
4. Describe life in a medieval castle.

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COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Matching (20 points)

Read each quotation. In the list below, find the character who spoke the words. Write the letter of the character in the space next to the quotation number. Use each name only once.

- | | | | |
|--------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| a. Brother Matthew | d. Robin | g. John-go-in-the-Wynd | i. Sir John de Bureford |
| b. Dame Ellen | e. Brother Luke | h. Sir Peter de Lindsay | j. Lady de Bureford |
| c. Lady Constance | f. Welsh guard | | |

- ____ 1. "You've grown! Your eyes no longer outrace your chin as do a child's. You've now the look of a youth!"
- ____ 2. "Wicked boy! No more will I serve thee. Scarce able to stand have I been this day, yet have I been faithful."
- ____ 3. "By your leave, I would like to visit my old mother, who lives not far away."
- ____ 4. "Art tha' but a shepherd boy, then? Come, lad, and warm tha'self by the fire. Be not frightened. We'll not hurt thee."
- ____ 5. "I wish to see my godfather Sir Peter de Lindsay. Will he want me now to stay with him?"
- ____ 6. "We have long awaited your coming, dear child, and now we are most happy that you have safely arrived."
- ____ 7. "See you here. This is where the blow struck my head. There is a dent as large as a basin."
- ____ 8. "Always remember. Thou hast only to follow the wall far enough and there will be a door in it."
- ____ 9. "As for me, what a comfort it will be to know that wars will never claim you. And you can come home now."
- ____ 10. "It is not the tool that is at fault, but thine unskilled hands."

Part II: Short Answer (20 points)

Write a one- or two-word answer to each of the following questions.

1. Who is the author of this book?
2. Robin's father has gone away to fight in the wars against what country?
3. What deadly disease is killing many people in London?
4. What musical instrument, like the one John-go-in-the-Wynd plays, does Robin make and learn to play at the castle?
5. What does Crookshanks mean?
6. What country is the setting for this novel?
7. What skill does Robin practice in the river, even when it gets cold?
8. What is Robin's official position, or job, at Sir Peter's castle?
9. What title does Robin earn in recognition of his heroic deed?
10. What does John-go-in-the-Wynd use to sound the signal for the attack on the enemy that has surrounded the castle?

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Part III: Multiple Choice (30 points)

Underline the choice that correctly completes each of these sentences.

1. Brother Luke's calling in life is to serve as a (reeve, nun, knight, monk).
2. When he ruins his wooden cross, an angry Robin flings away his sharp (saw, crutch, chisel, shoe).
3. Robin loses the use of his (legs, eyes, arms, speech) for a while because of his illness.
4. The King of the nation during the events of this novel is (Edward III, Louis XIV, Henry VIII, Ferdinand I).
5. Robin's mother serves the Queen as a(n) (abbess, esquire, dame, lady-in-waiting).
6. A bannock is a type of (fish, food, peasant, church).
7. Robin, Brother Luke, and John stay one night at the White Hart, which is a(n) (country village, castle, inn, monastery).
8. For his first woodworking project, Robin carves himself a (doll, toy boat, harp, shield).
9. (Singing, metalworking, jousting, reading) is one of Robin's "doors in the wall."
10. Robin uses (his crutches, a chain, a sword, a club) to stop the would-be robbers from chasing him, Brother Luke, and John.
11. (Denis, Fletcher, D'Ath, Nance) is the hound who is especially attached to Robin.
12. Robin spends a lot of time watching the surrounding countryside from the top of the castle's (bailey, keep, portcullis, moat).
13. To deliver his message to send help to the castle, Robin has to go down a ravine and then cross a (mountain, moat, jousting field, icy river).
14. Robin composes a (carol, poem, speech, short play) and performs it for the King.
15. Robin's reward for his heroic mission to take a message out of the besieged castle is (a large lot of land, his own castle, knighthood, the King's daughter as a wife).

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. What various activities do monks perform in a medieval monastery?
2. How does Robin earn his knighthood?
3. What "doors in the wall" does Robin find to help himself?
4. What part does John-go-in-the-Wynd play in the novel?

THE DOOR IN THE WALL

ANSWER KEY

VOCABULARY TEST

- | | | | |
|------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. t | 6. d | 11. l | 16. s |
| 2. n | 7. i | 12. m | 17. c |
| 3. b | 8. g | 13. h | 18. f |
| 4. e | 9. a | 14. q | 19. r |
| 5. k | 10. j | 15. o | 20. p |

COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Matching (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. b | 6. c |
| 2. g | 7. j |
| 3. i | 8. e |
| 4. f | 9. h |
| 5. d | 10. a |

Part II: Fill-In (20 points)

- | | |
|--------------|--------------|
| 1. knight | 6. London |
| 2. Queen | 7. cross |
| 3. minstrel | 8. crutches |
| 4. monastery | 9. horseback |
| 5. bald | 10. mother |

Part III: Multiple Choice (30 points)

- | | |
|------------------|---------------------|
| 1. French | 9. would-be robbers |
| 2. esquire | 10. puppet |
| 3. horse | 11. porridge |
| 4. medieval | 12. straighten |
| 5. Christmas | 13. monk |
| 6. Welsh | 14. door |
| 7. bent sausages | 15. a thick fog |
| 8. monastery | |

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Matching (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. i | 6. c |
| 2. b | 7. h |
| 3. g | 8. e |
| 4. f | 9. j |
| 5. d | 10. a |

Part II: Short Answer (20 points)

- | | |
|-------------------------|------------------|
| 1. Marguerite de Angeli | 6. England |
| 2. Scotland | 7. swimming |
| 3. plague | 8. page |
| 4. harp | 9. knight |
| 5. bent legs | 10. church bells |

Part III: Multiple Choice (30 points)

- | | |
|--------------------|------------------|
| 1. monk | 9. reading |
| 2. chisel | 10. his crutches |
| 3. leg | 11. D'Ath |
| 4. Edward III | 12. keep |
| 5. lady-in-waiting | 13. icy river |
| 6. food | 14. carol |
| 7. inn | 15. knighthood |
| 8. toy boat | |

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.

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