

Saxon Meets Norman



Eager to find shelter from the coming storm, Gurth and Wamba round up the pigs.

- Preview:**
1. Read the name of the story.
 2. Look at the picture.
 3. Read the sentence under the picture.
 4. Read the first four paragraphs of the story.
 5. Then answer the following question.

You learned from your preview that Gurth and Wamba were

- a. Saxon lords.
- b. rich kings.
- c. knights in armor.
- d. servants of Cedric of Rotherwood.

Turn to the Comprehension Check on page 10 for the right answer.

Now read the story.

Read to find out who the pilgrim turns out to be.

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Dark clouds cracked with lightning and began to cover the pink western sky. Thunder rolled down through the green hills of Sherwood Forest. A strange pair of companions drove a herd of pigs before them. They were eager to escape the coming storm. Both were servants of Cedric of Rotherwood, the Saxon lord whose lands bordered the forest.

Gurth, the herdsman, wore a tunic, or jacket, of rough goat skin from neck to knee. He carried a long knife and hunting horn in his belt. His face was fierce and he growled when he spoke.

His companion was small of build and light hearted. He was Wamba, the jester. He wore a cloth tunic of bright purple and a short red cloak with yellow lining. He wore silver bracelets and a stocking cap into which tiny bells were sewn. They jingled to his light, prancing steps.

Wamba carried a make-believe wooden sword in his belt. The little sword seemed to make fun of a world ruled by kings, princes and knights in armor with frightening swords and battle-axes of iron.

As they made their way, Gurth spoke. "Since William and his cruel Normans took this land from us, we have known nothing but trouble."

"Yes, my friend, and matters are worse with good King Richard captured by his enemies on his way home from the Crusade. He's in an Austrian prison. His brother, Prince John, rules in Richard's name, but he's no friend to Saxons. His Norman followers rob from us and throw us off our lands. Even our good master Cedric must soon fall to them."

As they spoke, men on horses came near to them. "I am Prior Aymer of Jourvaux Abbey. We seek lodging for the night. Please direct us to Rotherwood."

"Be quick about it," roared a knight in armor, riding at Prior Aymer's side. "We have no time to waste on Saxon servants."

Gurth grew red in the face. His

hand slid to the handle of his knife. "Now, what if we refuse?" he growled.

"Saxon dog. I'll split you open," said the knight, reaching to undo his great, broad sword.

"Now, now," said Prior Aymer, "here are a few coins for good directions, my children."

"Along this path, an hour's ride, you will come to a fork at the large oak tree. Take the left fork and in another hour you will be at Rotherwood," said Wamba. At that, the party of Normans rode off.

"Well done," laughed Gurth. "The left fork will put them deep in the bog. They'll be tramping around all night. Ho, Ho on you, knight in rattling armor."

Coming to the fork, the party of Normans found a pilgrim resting beneath the great oak tree. He was wrapped around in a long, gray, woolen cloak. A walking stick lay at his side. A large cross hung at his chest. A wide hat cast a shadow hiding his face.

"I am Brian de Bois Guilbert, Knight of the Holy Templar. We seek lodging at Rotherwood. Shall we take the left or right fork?"

"By all means, the right fork. The left leads to a bog. I will lead you there, for that's where I'm going tonight," said the pilgrim.

At Rotherwood, Cedric, in his dining hall, scowled at the thought of feeding Normans. But by custom, he had to. Cedric was a strong, handsome man of 60 years. Blue eyes blazed in a wide face beneath a head of thick, blond hair that fell to his shoulders.

The Norman party entered the great dining hall and took their places at the table. Lady Rowena was last to enter. She was a Saxon princess with blond hair and green eyes. Cedric was her protector.

The lord of Rotherwood was a fiery man. He and his guests soon began arguing over the courage and skills of Saxon and Norman warriors.

As tempers flared, Isaac of York, a Jewish merchant said to have great,

but secret, wealth, entered the hall seeking lodging for the night. Because Jews of the time were badly treated, Isaac entered with fear. He was an older man with gray hair and a beard framing a narrow, handsome face.

Bois Guilbert shouted loudly at the frightened old man, saying he would not eat at the same table with Isaac.

"Then you will leave this hall and go hungry, Knight Templar," said Cedric. "Any man who comes in peace, whether he be Christian, Jew, or Moslem, is welcome at my table."

Bois Guilbert fell back into his seat grumbling, and busied himself eating.

The quarrel soon started again. As Bois Guilbert boasted of the courage of Norman knights in the Crusade, the pilgrim stood and spoke.

"You talk bravely here, Sir Knight, but in the tournament you and your knights lost to King Richard and a band of Saxon knights."

"A loose strap, pilgrim, and a well-aimed lance by one called Ivanhoe caused me to fall from my horse. But he'll meet his end at the point of my lance if he dares meet me again."

"I'll accept that challenge for him," said the pilgrim.

"And I give my word that Ivanhoe will meet you in tournament," Rowena said, shocking all. For Ivanhoe was the title of Wilfred, Cedric's son. Wilfred was Rowena's true love.

But Cedric would not recognize Wilfred as his son. Wilfred had pledged loyalty to Richard, the Norman king. And he fought at his side in the Crusade.

As the meal ended, Bois Guilbert found Isaac. "Watch out, merchant," he hissed.

Leaving, the pilgrim heard Bois Guilbert speaking to his guards. They would seize Isaac on the road the next day and steal his gold.

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COMPREHENSION CHECK

Choose the best answer.

Preview Answer:

d. servants of Cedric of Rotherwood.

1. Good King Richard was captured by his enemies on his way home from
 - a. Jourvaulx Abbey.
 - b. Rotherwood.
 - c. an Austrian prison.
 - d. the Crusade.
2. While Richard was away in prison, who ruled the land?
 - a. Cedric of Rotherwood
 - b. Wamba, the jester
 - c. Prince John
 - d. Prior Aymer
3. Prince John was very cruel to
 - a. the Saxons.
 - b. the Normans.
 - c. Brian de Bois Guilbert.
 - d. all the Knights Templar.
4. Prior Aymer and his fellow Normans came upon Gurth and Wamba and asked directions to Rotherwood. Then, Wamba gave them directions that would lead them to the bog. Next, the party of Normans came upon
 - a. Cedric of Rotherwood.
 - b. a pilgrim resting beneath a great oak tree.
 - c. Isaac of York.
 - d. King Richard.
5. Wamba had given the Normans the wrong directions because
 - a. he didn't know the way.
 - b. he liked to play tricks on people.
 - c. he didn't like the Normans.
 - d. he did not get along with Prior Aymer.
6. At the great dining hall at Rotherwood, Bois Guilbert said he would not
 - a. eat at the same table with Isaac.
 - b. eat at the same table with Saxons.
 - c. sit next to Lady Rowena.
 - d. sit next to Cedric.
7. Jews of the time were treated
 - a. with respect.
 - b. kindly.
 - c. badly.
 - d. like children.
8. Lady Rowena promised Bois Guilbert that Ivanhoe would
 - a. split him open.
 - b. challenge him in the tournament.
 - c. become King of England one day.
 - d. put him in prison.
9. Another name for this story could be
 - a. "The Cruel Rule of Prince John."
 - b. "Dinner at Rotherwood."
 - c. "Rowena's Love for Ivanhoe."
 - d. "The Great Wealth of Isaac of York."
10. This story is mainly about
 - a. the poor way the Normans treated the Saxons.
 - b. Cedric's love for Isaac.
 - c. Rowena's love for Ivanhoe.
 - d. Bois Guilbert's plan to steal Isaac's gold.

Check your answers with the key on page 67.

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