

Teacher's notes

Braveheart

by Randall Wallace



SUMMARY

Braveheart is based on the life of William Wallace, one of Scotland's greatest national heroes, and is set in the 13th century. The English King Edward I invades Scotland and makes himself its ruler. Many Scots want to fight back but need leadership, and find it when William Wallace turns from peaceful farmer to rebel, after an English sheriff kills his wife. He gathers an army of a few thousand men and not only defeats the English but takes the war into their own country. But the murderous King Edward is not a man to be stopped so easily, and the Scottish nobles are too afraid of him, and too jealous of each other, to support William for long. Even though William wins the love and secret help of the King's daughter-in-law, Princess Isabella, he cannot stand against England and his own countrymen as well. When the English return to Scotland, all William has left is his courage and integrity.

ABOUT RANDALL WALLACE

Randall Wallace was born and brought up in Tennessee, in the southern United States. His family had originally come from Scotland and Ireland, and were farmers, like the family of William Wallace, although he does not know for certain whether he comes from the same family as the Scottish hero or not.

He first came across the story of William Wallace when he visited Scotland and saw the statue of him that guards the entrance to Edinburgh Castle, along with that of Robert the Bruce. To research the story, he travelled through Scotland and England, visiting places associated with William's life. He also read as much as he could about him. Little is known for certain, but there are many legends, and the writer used these and his own imagination to tell the story, both in the novel and the screenplay which he also wrote.

Braveheart is Randall Wallace's fifth novel. He now lives in Southern California with his wife and two sons.

BACKGROUND AND THEMES

It is not known for certain when William Wallace was born, but it was probably in the late 1260s or early 1270s. At this

time Scotland was ruled by its own King, Alexander III, but English kings had wanted to rule their neighbouring country for many years. When Alexander III died in 1286, leaving no sons to follow him, there was disagreement in Scotland about who should be the next ruler. For a while, the crown went to Alexander's infant granddaughter Margaret, while six Guardians ruled in her name. But in 1290, Margaret died, and there was no obvious heir to the throne. This plunged Scotland into a period of confusion in which there were thirteen competitors for the crown. These included the old Earl of Annandale, the chief of the powerful Bruce family.

With these events the King of England, Edward I, saw the chance of extending his rule into Scotland. After first trying to choose the Scots' king for them, he invaded in 1296. Although some Scottish nobles fought, many did nothing, as they were afraid of ending on the losing side. Some even fought for the English, for the sake of revenge on other Scottish families. These included the Bruces, who had another reason for helping the English: they wanted King Edward to place one of them on the throne. (There is no evidence, however, that Robert the Bruce actually helped defeat Wallace at the Battle of Falkirk, as in the book.)

However, the ordinary people of Scotland had nothing to lose. The behaviour of the English forces towards them was terrible, and they were ready to fight. All they needed was a leader, and when William Wallace killed the local English Sheriff, Hesselrig, for murdering his wife, he soon found he was at the head of a rebellion. The Scottish War of Independence had begun.

After Wallace's victory at the Battle of Stirling Bridge in 1297, against a far larger English army, the people gave Wallace the title 'Guardian of Scotland', and he even led his forces into England. However, he lost later battles, resigned his Guardianship and went to France, where some say he tried to gain the French King's help. The English captured him in 1305, when he was betrayed by Scots nobles, and he was cruelly executed in London.

However, Wallace had given the Scots courage. He had also taught them to value their freedom and their independence above all else. Although the English were in

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power again, the Scots were ready to fight. In 1306, Robert, the new head of the Bruce family, had himself crowned King of Scotland and led another revolt. During many battles, Robert the Bruce proved himself to be a military genius. Under his leadership, in 1314, at Bannockburn, the Scots defeated the largest army England had ever put into battle. Scotland won its freedom for the next 400 years.

ABOUT THE FILM

'Braveheart' was one of the most popular films of 1995. Nearly three hours long, it cost about \$53 million to make, and has been compared to the great historical epics of the 1960s, such as 'Spartacus', 'El Cid' and 'Lawrence of Arabia'. It stars Mel Gibson as Wallace, French actress Sophie Marceau as Princess Isabella, and Patrick McGoohan as King Edward I. Gibson also directed and produced the film.

'Braveheart' was shot partly in Scotland and partly in Ireland, where 2,000 members of the Irish army were used as extras in the film's very realistic battle scenes.

Communicative activities

The following teacher-led activities cover the same sections of text as the exercises at the back of the reader, and supplement those exercises. For supplementary exercises covering shorter sections of the book, see the photocopiable Student's Activities pages of this Factsheet. These are primarily for use with class readers but, with the exception of discussion and pair/groupwork questions, can also be used by students working alone in a self-access centre.

ACTIVITIES BEFORE READING THE BOOK

- Put students into small groups. Ask them to discuss the following:
The film of *Braveheart* was more popular than most films about history. Why was it so popular? Was it because of the exciting story? Was it because of Mel Gibson?
- In small groups, or for homework, students find out the difference between Great Britain, the United Kingdom and the British Isles.
- Put students into small groups. Ask them to look up *independent* in their dictionaries. Ask them to discuss: Is it always better for a country to be independent?

ACTIVITIES AFTER READING A SECTION

Chapters 1-2

- Check that students understand the rule of 'first night' (that men who own a lot of land can sleep with a woman who lives on their land on the night of the woman's wedding). Put them into pairs. Ask them to

look up *effect* in their dictionaries. They then discuss: What effect does the rule of 'first night' have on William and Murrin? How do they have to act?

- Ask students to find out the name of the flower of Scotland. Ask students to work in pairs. They find the four times in these chapters when the flower of Scotland is important in William and Murrin's friendship.

Chapter 3

- Put students into pairs. They role-play this conversation between Longshanks and Isabella: Isabella tells Longshanks about her meeting with Wallace. Longshanks tells her what he plans to do.
- Put students into small groups. Ask them to discuss how battles at the time of Wallace were different from battles now.

Chapter 4

Put students into pairs. They role-play a conversation between Isabella and Nicolette. They are discussing the plan for the MacAndrews' farm building and what Isabella hopes will happen between her and William afterwards.

ACTIVITIES AFTER READING THE BOOK

- Put students into small groups. Ask them to look up *hero* in their dictionaries. They then discuss the following. The star of the film of *Braveheart* is Mel Gibson. In what ways is he the perfect hero?
- Put students into small groups. Mel Gibson said of *Braveheart*: 'This story could happen anywhere.' Ask students to answer the following questions: What do you think Mel Gibson means by this? How are wars for independence different today? How are they similar?

Glossary

It will be useful for your students to know the following new words. Most of them are practised in the 'Before You Read' sections of exercises at the back of the book. (Definitions are based on those in the Longman Active Study Dictionary.)

Chapters 1-2

- army** (n) a large number of soldiers fighting together
battle (n) a large fight between two armies
beat (v) to win against somebody
castle (n) a large, strong building; people can't attack the people who are inside
grave (n) the place where a dead person is put into the ground
handkerchief (n) a square piece of cloth for cleaning your nose
noble (n) somebody who belongs to the highest group of people
rebel (n) a person who fights against a ruler or government
spear (n) a long, thin weapon (see below) with a pointed end; it is thrown at somebody to kill them
sword (n) a long, pointed knife
truce (n) this is when two armies agree to stop fighting
trust (v) to believe that somebody is honest or good
weapon (n) soldiers fight with this



Student's activities

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Students can do these exercises alone or with one or more other students. Pair/group-only activities are marked.

Activities before reading the book

- Look at the picture on the front of the book. Which of these words do you think describe the man? Look up any new words in your dictionary.

weak, old, carefully dressed, strong, young, healthy, a fighter, sick, middle-aged, frightening, brave, handsome, kind, cowardly, ugly, adventurous, ordinary, clean, dangerous, good

- When do you think this story happens?
 - about 1200-1300 AD
 - about 1700-1800 AD
 - about 1800-1900 AD
- Read the back cover of the book, and look at the picture again. Who is the man in the picture?

Activities while reading the book

CHAPTER 1

- Close your book. Choose the right ending for these sentences.
 - The Scots have no king because...
 - the English have killed him.
 - the old king had no son.
 - the English king is their king.
 - There has been war between England and Scotland because...
 - the King of England wants to choose the Scottish king.
 - there is no food in Scotland.
 - the Scots want to choose the English king.
- Why is Edward I called 'Longshanks'?
- Look at these names.
Argyle, Hamish, John, Malcolm
Which is William's (a) father? (b) brother? (c) friend? (d) uncle?
- Talk with another student. Look up *effect* (n) in your dictionaries. William is only seven years old when he sees all the dead bodies at the farm building, and then sees the dead bodies of his father and brother. Describe William's feelings at the time. What effect do you think this will have on him?

CHAPTER 2

Page 2 - halfway down page 13

First put the correct word into these sentences. Then put the sentences in the correct order.

people, village, castle, land, evening, farmer, wedding, throat, rebel, ground

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- 'I came home to be a and to have a family.'
- He knew he would fight as a from this day until he died.
- 'Murrin, would you like to go for a ride on this fine ?'
- 'We must give in the Highlands and Lowlands of Scotland to our own nobles.'
- He calmly walked up to Murrin, took out his knife and cut her
- A beautiful young French princess walked through the great rooms of a London
- They watched a young man ride into the
- The party began.
- 'The want us to fight now. They are very angry about this new English rule of "first night".'
- She was walking past when one of them suddenly caught her wrist and threw her to the

At the end of Chapter 2

- Find these places on the map opposite page 1:
London, the Highlands, Edinburgh, Lanark, Stirling, France
- Use the words in (A) and (B) to make two true sentences about each of the people below. Take one word or phrase from (A) and the other from (B) for each sentence. Look at the example:
Isabella is the wife of King Edward's son. She is a beautiful French princess.
 - Isabella
 - Robert the Bruce
 - Lord Mornay
 - Old Campbell
 - Murrin MacClannough
 - Lord Bottoms
 - Prince Edward
 - Stephen
 - Lord Talmadge

(A) a rebel from Ireland
a young, handsome Scottish nobleman
Hamish's father
Old MacClannough's daughter
the wife of King Edward's son

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a fat English nobleman
King Edward's son
the head of the English army
a friend of Robert the Bruce

- (B) prefers his friends to his wife
asks William to be a rebel, like him
wants to be King of Scotland
is a beautiful French princess
marries William secretly
comes with soldiers to Helen's wedding
is the head of the Scots army at Stirling
fights with William at the Battle of Stirling
runs from the Scots at the Battle of Stirling

CHAPTER 3

Page 23 - halfway down page 26

- Join these beginnings and ends of sentences with *because*.
 - The Scottish people are very proud of William Wallace...
 - William cannot be King of Scotland...
 - William is very angry...
 - The nobles are surprised...
 - Edward thinks the Scots will be weak...
 - Edward wants to kill his father...
- the nobles are fighting among themselves about choosing a King.
 - they won't be able to find enough food in winter.
 - William says he will beat the English on their own land.
 - he won the Battle of Stirling.
 - he has killed his only friend.
 - he is not a nobleman.
- Imagine that you are Edward. You are writing your diary. Write about what happens on the day your father kills Peter and nearly kills you. Describe your feelings for Peter and for your father. Then compare your description with other people's descriptions.
- Talk with another student. What will Longshanks do now?
 - Will he make a truce with the Scots?
 - Who will he send?

Page 26 - end of chapter

- Are these sentences right or wrong?
 - William is surprised when he sees Isabella at York.
 - Isabella likes William.
 - Hamilton always tells Isabella the truth.
 - William talks to Isabella because he's afraid of her.
 - The Scottish nobles give William a lot of help to fight the English.

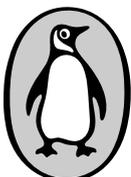
- Choose the right endings for these sentences.
 - William attacks York because...
 - the Governor of York has been killing Scottish people.
 - the English attacks always start from there.
 - Edward Longshanks is there.
 - Isabella sends Nicolette to tell William about Edward's plans because...
 - she's having William's baby.
 - she likes William and realizes that she told him things that were not true.
 - she hates Edward and wants to use William against him.
- Talk with another student.
Why does Robert the Bruce fight with the English at the Battle of Falkirk?
- Look back at your answers for Chapter 3, pages 23-26, question 3. Were you right? Why does Longshanks send Isabella?

CHAPTER 4

- Can you remember what happens in this chapter? Close your book. Then number the sentences below. What happens first? What happens second? etc....
 - Isabella tells King Edward that she has a plan to catch William.
 - The English kill William in London.
 - William goes to France and Italy to get help.
 - At the MacAndrews' farm, William and his men burn the killers who have been sent by Edward.
 - Isabella tells King Edward that she's going to have William's child.
 - William kills Lord Mornay.
 - William meets Isabella at her castle in Scotland.
 - William goes to meet the Scottish nobles.
- Why does William throw a jacket over his horse's head before it jumps out of Mornay's castle? Discuss your ideas with other people.
- William sees Murrin in the crowd in London, before he dies. How is this?

Activities after reading the book

- Look at the map at the beginning of the book. Choose five places and write a sentence about each. Say what happened at each place in the story.
- Look at your answer to Activities Before Reading the Book, question 1. Have you changed your mind about the words that describe William Wallace?
- The map shows the Battle of Bannockburn, 1314, but the book does not tell us about it. Find out what happened there, and write two or three sentences about it.



Mel Gibson's "Braveheart" is a full-throated, red-blooded battle epic about William Wallace, the legendary Scots warrior who led his nation into battle against the English in the years around 1300. It's an ambitious film, big on simple emotions like love, patriotism and treachery, and avoids the travelogue style of so many historical swashbucklers: Its locations look green, wet, vast, muddy and rugged. Braveheart was named the worst film to ever win an Oscar by Empire magazine in 2005. Getty Images. 28. Cut! While most people were led to believe that Braveheart was in reference to William Wallace, the nickname actually belonged to Robert the Bruce whose heart was literally carried into battle after his death. Obviously after this death. Obviously. There is plenty to criticise in Braveheart. Mel Gibson's accent is worse than mine after 8 years in London, it is somewhat historically inaccurate, it is cheesy, and it is certainly full of Hollywood schmaltz. But you know what? Braveheart is an ambitious and well made war epic. I've wanted to watch this for a long time now and I went into this with pretty high expectations. Although this film has its flaws the entertainment value is very high and I genuinely enjoyed every moment of this even if it feels slow at times. Braveheart Wiki is a free, community-made encyclopedia about all things from the movie Braveheart. From actors to battles, characters to locations, we have it all. See something that needs to be added? Go for it! Any bad grammar on a page? Fix it. Braveheart Wiki is collaborative, and anyone can... Oops. This item is no longer available, but now that you're here, explore the Braveheart Wiki!