

Simply Charlotte Mason presents

Great Book Discussions

— Sir Walter Scott's —

Ivanhoe



By Linda Burklin

Great Book Discussions gives you and your high school student a guide to enjoying and discussing great works of literature. Your student will go beyond traditional literary analysis with open-ended narration questions and deep discussions of character and plot.

Each guide in the *Great Book Discussions* series provides

- An introduction to the work of literature studied
- A suggested reading plan
- Cultural notes to set the context
- Discussion questions and narration prompts on a high school level
- A final exam

Suitable for individual or group use, *Great Book Discussions* makes it simple to add high school literature to your home school or co-op.



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Great Book Discussions: Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe*

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Materials Needed

- *Ivanhoe* by Sir Walter Scott
- Internet-connected device
- Dictionary
- Book of Centuries (or another timeline tool)
- Book of Mottoes (or a blank journal to begin one)

How to Enjoy Great Book Discussions

You can learn a lot by reading and narrating a great book. You can learn even more when you discuss the story with someone else, because the other person may notice things that you overlooked and offer a different perspective on what you read.

This guide will walk you through both: reading for yourself and discussing what you read. Here's how to use it.

Step 1: Before You Begin the Book

- Familiarize yourself with the Introduction: read Putting the Work into Context and research Things to Look Up.

Step 2: As You Read Each Section

- Get acquainted with the Characters You Will Meet in These Chapters.
- Use a dictionary to define any unfamiliar Words to Look Up.
- Make entries in your Book of Mottoes.

A Book of Mottoes is a journal in which you can record sentences or passages that you particularly like from your reading. Perhaps you admire how the author worded a particular thought or description, or maybe you appreciate the wisdom one of the characters gave. Keep your journal handy as you read and copy those favorite passages into it.

Step 3. After You Read Each Section

- Answer the Questions about the Characters.
- Complete the Narration Exercise either orally or in writing.

- Discuss with at least one other person the Things to Think About and Discuss. Decide together whether to use some or all of the questions.
- Review the Culture Notes to expand your understanding of the time period in which the book is set.

Step 4: When You Finish the Book

- Think about and answer Some Final Questions either in written form, as a final exam, or as a continuation of your discussion.

Reading Schedule for *Ivanhoe*

The suggested reading schedule below is based on about 30 minutes of reading per day. Feel free to adjust it to a pace that is comfortable for you and allows you to enjoy the story.

The most important thing to notice about the reading schedule is where each section begins and ends. Some sections will be longer than others, as they follow the story and align with how the plot unfolds. You may want to put a small sticky note in your copy of the book to mark where each section ends to remind you to pause in your reading and come back to this guide.

Section 1: The Gathering at Rotherwood, Chapters 1–6

Day 1: Read the Introduction to *Ivanhoe* in this guide, then read *Ivanhoe*, chapter 1.

Day 2: Read *Ivanhoe*, chapter 2.

Day 3: Read *Ivanhoe*, chapter 3.

Day 4: Read *Ivanhoe*, chapter 4.

Day 5: Read *Ivanhoe*, chapter 5.

Day 6: Read *Ivanhoe*, chapter 6.

Day 7: Complete the After You Read narration and discussions.

Section 2: The Tournament and Banquet at Ashby, Chapters 7–15

Day 8: Read *Ivanhoe*, chapter 7.

Day 9: Read *Ivanhoe*, chapter 8.

Day 10: Read *Ivanhoe*, chapter 9.

Introduction to *Ivanhoe*

Putting the Work into Context

Ivanhoe was written by Sir Walter Scott in the year 1819—more than 200 years ago. Sir Walter Scott was a Scottish novelist, born in Edinburgh in 1771. The King of England and Scotland at the time was George III, who would soon lose the thirteen colonies in America. As an infant Walter suffered from a medical condition that caused him to be lame in one leg. This kept him out of school in his early years, so he was educated at home by various relatives. By the time he was a young man, he could walk thirty miles in one day, despite his lameness.

His first profession was as a lawyer, although this work didn't particularly interest him. He also volunteered as a quartermaster for a regiment of dragoons, as his lameness prevented him from military action. At the same time, he traveled around southern Scotland meeting people and gathering traditional Scottish ballads, many of which had never been written down. These he eventually published as the two-volume *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*. In 1799 he was appointed the Sheriff-Depute (a type of judge) for Selkirkshire, so those responsibilities were added to the rest.

He married in 1797, and he and his wife, Charlotte, went on to have five children. In 1805 he published his long poem, "The Lay of the Last Minstrel," his first work to bring him success as a writer. Other famous works of his include *Rob Roy*, *The Lady of the Lake*, and *Waverley*.

Section 1

The Gathering at Rotherwood

Chapters 1–6

As You Read

Read *Ivanhoe*, chapters 1–6. Be sure to watch for any sentences that you'd like to remember. Record them in your Book of Mottoes either as you find them or after you are finished reading.

Characters You Will Meet in These Chapters

- Gurth the swineherd (Saxon thrall of Cedric; *thrall* means *slave*.)
- Wamba the jester (also a thrall of Cedric; also a Saxon)
- Prior Aymer of Jorvaulx (jer-VOH) Abbey (a Norman cleric)
- Brian de Bois-Guilbert (bwah gheel-BER) (a Knight Templar and a Norman)
- Cedric the Saxon (a Franklin or freeborn landowner)
- The Palmer (a pilgrim who had visited the Holy Land and brought back relics)
- Lady Rowena (Saxon aristocracy)
- Isaac of York (a Jew)

Section 1: The Gathering at Rotherwood

Words to Look Up

Use a dictionary to define any unfamiliar words below.

- extirpate
- refractory
- slough
- murrain
- Eumaeus
- epicurean
- voluptuary
- jennet
- Saracen
- seneschal

Note: A “scrip” in this context is a small bag or wallet which hangs from the belt.

After You Read

Questions about the Characters

1. Why do you think Gurth and Wamba gave the Prior’s party the wrong directions to Rotherwood?
2. Why did Cedric refuse to go out to meet his guests, as would have been expected in that culture? What purpose did his vow serve?
3. How do you explain how Isaac the Jew was treated when he arrived at Cedric’s hall?

Narration Exercise

Describe the scene at Rotherwood and Cedric’s treatment of the guests who sought shelter there.

Things to Think About and Discuss

In chapter 4, there is a quote reading: “Nothing could be more gracefully majestic than his step and manner, had they not been marked by a predominant air of haughtiness, easily acquired by the exercise of unresisted authority.” Explain what you think this means. Can you think of any examples from real life?

Genre: Historical Fiction

Historical fiction features made-up stories that are set at a definite time and place in the past and often involve real historical people as secondary or even primary characters. This story takes place near the end of the reign of King Richard I of England, also known as King Richard the Lionheart, who reigned from 1189–1199. Although king of England, Richard did not speak English and is believed to have spent less than six months in England during his reign. His true power base was in France. King Richard as represented in this story is a much nobler man than the real historical figure was. However, his brother Prince John is portrayed more accurately.

Culture Notes

- This story is set in the late twelfth century, barely a hundred years after the Norman Conquest of 1066, when France, led by William the Conqueror, conquered England. This is important to know, because, as a result of the Norman Conquest, the English aristocracy at this time was actually Norman/French (including the king). The Saxons, once the conquerors themselves, have now become the oppressed “common folk,” and, at least in this story, they still harbor a deep resentment toward their Norman overlords. The irony here is that, six hundred years earlier, the Saxons were the invaders and oppressors of the native Britons.

Section 1: The Gathering at Rotherwood

- This was also a time when the Catholic church was continuing to initiate Crusades. The character of Brian de Bois-Guilbert has just returned from the Third Crusade, which was initiated in part by the English King Richard I and took place from 1189 to 1192. Saladin was the Muslim sultan from whom they were trying to take control of Jerusalem, the holy city. Brian was a knight Templar, belonging to an order of warrior monks. The Knights Hospitaller are also mentioned (and also referred to as the knights of St. John). These knights, like the Templars, had many warriors, but were also famous for running hospitals and ministering to pilgrims and the poor. As you read about the prior and Sir Brian, remember that both men took vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience.
- The reference to Vortigern is appropriate. Legend has it that in the fifth century, the daughter of Saxon invader Hengist (also named Rowena) seduced the British king Vortigern, thus prompting him to give up the kingdom of Kent in exchange for her hand in marriage, which was a disastrous move for the security of Britain.
- The introduction of the character of Isaac brings with it the rampant antisemitism which was a feature of medieval European society and which continued well into the modern age. Jews were often considered subhuman and therefore not deserving of even the most basic courtesy. No one considered it shocking to treat a Jew shamefully. One justification for this horrific attitude was that in Biblical times Jews had crucified Jesus Christ and had then persecuted his followers—Christians.