1.

Longbow Girl

This story is set in the past. Merry Owen is a young girl who loves archery. Here, she is taking part in a competition against a group of adult archers who have never met her before. She has to shoot an arrow into a target of black and white circles on a board. There are two rounds in the competition.

Merry stepped forward. She was dimly aware of applause, of jeers, of shouts, but nothing intruded above the roaring of blood in her ears. She positioned herself behind the line, rolled her shoulders and took a few deep breaths.

‘We're all ready when you are,’ said the marshal, as if it were a great joke.

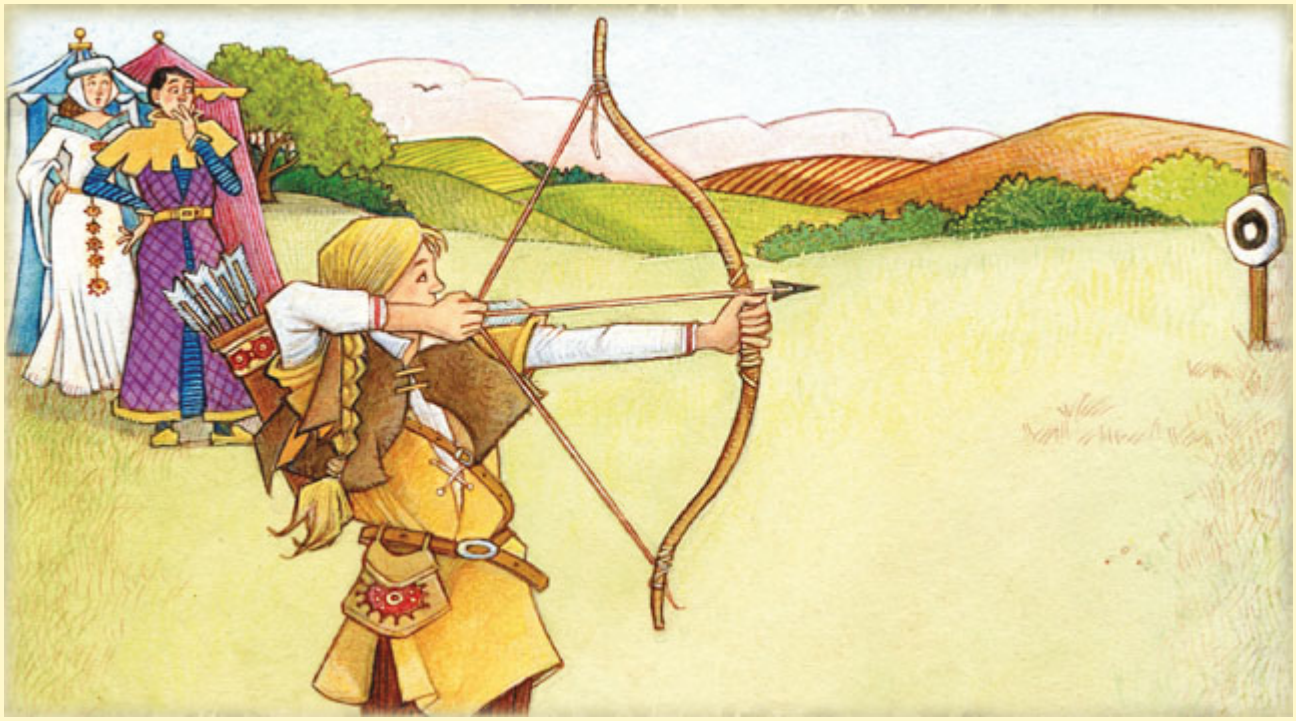
Merry selected an arrow, eyed her target. She felt a cool focus flood her veins.

‘Ready your bow!’ cried the marshal.

Merry took her stance, then, listening to the commands of the marshal, she nocked* her arrow, bent from her waist, marked the target, drew back her bow and loosed. The crowd had fallen silent. The only sound she could hear was the whisper of her bowstring and the hiss of her arrow. It seemed to take long seconds to fly home to its target. Merry saw it hit and lodge in the black ring, just left of the white centre.

* nock: to place an arrow against the string of the bow





She chose another arrow, let fly. It lodged in the black ring again, just to the right of the white centre. Then she took out her third arrow, aimed, loosed. Inner white! She was sure of it.

She turned, walked back from the line as the crowd, which had been stunned into silence, started to clap. She didn't smile. Not yet. She just stood and waited. She was aware of the marshal staring at her, mouth hanging open, revealing stumps of discoloured teeth. She just looked at the mountains rising behind the castle, tried to keep at bay the noise and the attention.

‘Well!’ stated the marshal. His voice came out high-pitched. He cleared his throat and started again. ‘Well…it would appear that Merry Owen will go through to round two.’

More noise from the crowd.

Merry walked forward to retrieve her arrows. She passed the marshal. He looked at her with sheer surprise.

‘In round two,’ he declared for her benefit, ‘we move ten yards back and each competitor will take turns so that we might better enjoy the spectacle. So we might better appreciate their skills.’

The atmosphere became even more charged. The men glanced at each other, each thinking, it seemed to Merry, of the ten gold coins, of the fortune awaiting the winner. But for her, there was even more at stake than a purse of gold.

The ten other competitors all took their turns. The clear winner so far had two arrows in the black ring and one in the inner white.

Then it was Merry's turn. She walked forward. The crowd cheered. The men watched. Gone was the air of ridicule, amusement or pity directed her way.

She waited till it fell quiet, then chose her first arrow. She nocked it, drew back her bow to its fullest extension. She needed all its power now to make the extra distance and to maintain accuracy. She felt and sensed the almost unbearable tension in the wood. Please don't break, she prayed silently. Please give me just a few shots more. She let out her breath, loosed the arrow. The bow held strong. The arrow flew to the target. Black circle.

Second arrow. She had to do better. No thinking, no worrying, just instinct and skill. She heard the ancient commands, in her head, in her body and somewhere deep inside that must have been her soul. She pulled in a breath, released it smoothly as she loosed the arrow, as she watched it home in. Inner white! She felt the first flush of euphoria, pushed it down, selected her third and final arrow. She let it fly. Closed her eye, breathed, waited. The crowd roared. She opened her eye, looked at the target. Even from this distance she could see: dead centre of the inner white.

Only then did she smile.

The marshal hurried up to the target, eyed the arrows and smiled back.

‘We have an outright winner,’ he declared. ‘With one first circle and two golds, Merry Owen wins!’

2.

1. Read the first paragraph beginning: *Merry stepped forward...*

   How did Merry try to prepare herself for her turn?

   Write **one** way.

   _____

   1 mark

2. Read the paragraph beginning: *Merry took her stance…*

   The crowd had fallen silent.

   Why was the crowd silent?

   _____

   _____

   1 mark

3. *It seemed to take long seconds to fly home to its target.*

Why did Merry feel as though her arrow took a while to reach the target?

Tick **one**.

She really wanted to know the result. ☐

She was not strong enough. ☐

The crowd was starting to feel worried. ☐

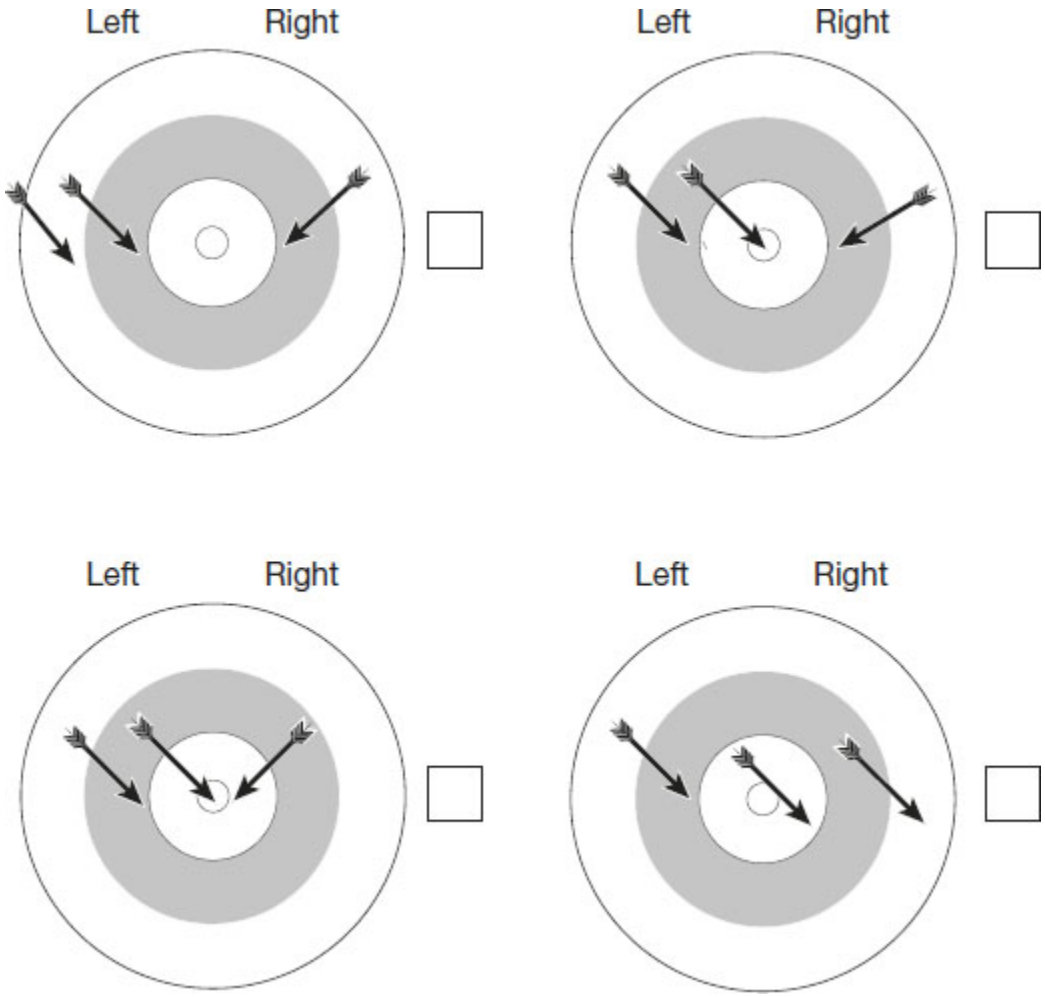
The bow was too old to shoot well. ☐

1 mark

4. Read the paragraph beginning: *Merry took her stance…* to the paragraph ending: *… She was sure of it*.

Which target shows where Merry's arrows landed in the **first round** of the competition?

Tick **one**.



1 mark

5. *She turned, walked back from the line as the crowd, which had been stunned into silence, started to clap.*

Why was the crowd *stunned*?

_____

1 mark

6. Read the paragraph beginning: *She turned…*

Merry did not smile straight away.

Why not?

_____

_____

1 mark

7. Look at page 2.

Write **two** pieces of evidence that show the marshal was shocked by Merry's first round.

1. _____

2. _____

2 marks

8. Read the paragraph beginning: *'In round two,'...*

(a) In what way was round two different from the first round?

Write **one** way.

_____

1 mark

(b) Why were the rules changed after the first round?

Write **one** reason.

_____

1 mark

9. Read the paragraph beginning: *She waited till…*

What made Merry worry that her bow might be close to breaking?

_____

_____

1 mark

10. Look at page 10.

Only then did she smile.

Why was Merry happy at this point in the text?

Write **two** reasons.

1. _____

_____

2. _____

_____

2 marks

11. Merry won the competition because she was an experienced archer.

How can you tell that she was experienced?

Write **two** ways, using evidence from the text to support each answer.

An example has been done for you.

Reason	Evidence
She had the strength to do it.	She was able to pull the bow back to its fullest extension.
_____ _____	_____ _____ _____
_____ _____	_____ _____ _____

3 marks

12. How can you tell that the marshal had changed his opinion of Merry by the end of the story?

_____

1 mark

13. *'We have an* ***outright*** *winner,' he declared.*

Which of the following is closest in meaning to *outright*?

Tick **one**.

lucky ☐

predictable ☐

disappointing ☐

clear ☐

1 mark