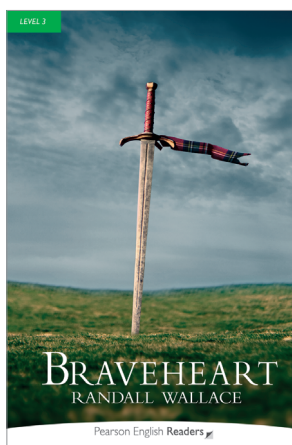


# Braveheart

Randall Wallace



## About the author

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 doesn't 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.

## Summary

*Braveheart* is based on the life of William Wallace, one of Scotland's greatest national heroes, and is set in the thirteenth 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.

## Chapter 1

In 1276, The English King, Edward I, called a truce. The Scottish nobles who came to this truce meeting without weapons were all killed. The seven-year-old William Wallace saw the bodies. His father and brother got killed when attacking the English. After the funeral, his uncle took William as a child into his care, promising to teach the boy how to use the sword after he learned how to use his head.

## Chapter 2

William grew up and returned to his village, and he secretly got married to Murrion. After Murrion was killed by the English, William became a rebel. He gave the Scottish people courage to fight for their freedom, and his triumph at the Battle of Stirling made him into a legend.

## Chapter 3

William Wallace took the fighting into England, but the Scottish nobles didn't help him because they put themselves first whereas Wallace put the Scottish people first. He was defeated at the Battle of Falkirk, which was devastating for Wallace.

## Chapter 4

The Princess Isabella and Wallace shared a tryst, and she conceived Wallace's child. Wallace was betrayed by the Scottish nobles and handed over to the English. He was put to cruel torture in London and he was executed in front of a crowd.

## Background and themes

**Scottish history:** The novel is based on the early part of the Scottish War of Independence.

In the 1260s 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.

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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.

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.

**Brave heart:** Wallace gives the Scots courage. While the Scottish nobles are busy looking after themselves, Wallace puts all his energy into fighting for Scotland and its people.

**Freedom and independence:** Wallace teaches the Scottish people to value their freedom and their independence above all else. Wallace makes Robert the Bruce, who in fact becomes the King of Scotland later on, ashamed of his homage to English.

After Wallace's death, Robert the Bruce was ready to make his contribution to reassert the independence of Scotland. In 1306, Robert the Bruce had himself crowned King of Scotland and led another revolt. Under his leadership, at the Battle of Bannockburn in 1314, the Scots defeated the largest army England had ever put into battle. Scotland won its freedom for the next 400 years.

**The thistle:** The thistle, a pale purple flower like an artichoke, is the national symbol of Scotland, and this flower is used effectively in the story, describing not only Wallace's love for his wife but his loyalty to Scotland.

**Secret love:** Even though it is not historically correct, the story shows that Princess Isabella secretly loves William Wallace and helps him. Being ignored by her effeminate husband, she wishes to conceive Wallace's child. Her wish is granted.

### 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 impressive battle scenes.

*Braveheart* won the Academy Award for Best Picture in 1995. Although this film is a fantastic epic adventure, it has some inaccuracies, such as Wallace's affair with Princess Isabella and the Battle of Stirling (there is no bridge in the battle scenes).

It is said that *Braveheart* has had an effect on today's Scottish movement for complete independence.

## Discussion activities

### Chapter 1 The Boy, pages 1–3

#### Before reading

1 **Guess:** Have students look at the picture on the cover.

*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			

Ask students to keep the list of words they've chosen so that they can come back to it later on.

2 **Get ready:** Have students read the Introduction and ask the following questions.

- *Who is the man in the picture on the front cover?*
- *What did he do?*
- *What is this story about?*

3 **Discuss:** Put students into small groups. Ask them to discuss the following:

*The film Braveheart was very popular. Why was it so popular? Was it because of the exciting story? Was it because of Mel Gibson?*

#### After reading

4 **Discuss:** Have students work in pairs to discuss how they would feel if they were young William Wallace, using the following questions.

- *You saw many bodies, tied by the neck. How do you feel?*
- *Your father and brother got killed. How do you feel?*
- *A little girl gave you a flower of Scotland. How do you feel?*

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### Chapter 2 The Rebel, pages 3–23

#### Before reading

- 5 **Get ready:** Have students look at the map on page vi. Ask them to find the following places on the map: London, Edinburgh, Lanark, Stirling and France. Tell them that these places will come up in the story. Ask them if they know anything about these places.

#### After reading

- 6 **Discuss:** Check that students understand the rule of 'first night': the 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. Have them discuss the following question.  
*What effect does the rule of 'first night' have on William and Murrin? How do they have to act?*
- 7 **Check:** Ask students to find out the name of the national flower of Scotland. Have students work in pairs. Tell them to find the four times in Chapters 1 and 2 when the flower of Scotland is used to describe the relationship between William and Murrin.
- 8 **Retell:** Have students go back to the map on page vi. Have them work in small groups to retell what happened in each place. Find these places on the map opposite page vi: London, Edinburgh, Lanark, Stirling and France.

### Chapter 3 First Lord of Scotland, pages 23–33

#### While reading (Stop reading at page 26, line 13)

- 9 **Pair work:** Put students into pairs. Have them imagine that they are Edward. Have them describe what happens on the day Longshanks kills Peter and nearly kills Edward. Have them discuss how Edward feels for Peter and for his father. Ask some pairs to share their descriptions with the rest of the class.
- 10 **Discuss:** Have students work in small groups to discuss the following questions.
- *What will Longshanks do now? Will he make a truce with the Scots?*
  - *Who will he send?*
  - *Why does he send this person?*

#### After reading

- 11 **Discuss:** Have a whole-class discussion using the following question.  
*Why does Robert the Bruce fight with the English at the Battle of Falkirk?*
- 12 **Role play:** Put students into pairs. Have them act out the conversation between Longshanks and Isabella: Isabella tells Longshanks about her meeting with Wallace. Longshanks tells her what he plans to do.
- 13 **Discuss:** Put students into small groups. Ask them to discuss how battles at the time of Wallace are different from battles now.

### Chapters 4 Brave Heart, pages 33–38

#### After reading

- 14 **Discuss:** Put students into small groups. Have them discuss the following questions. Later, ask them to share their opinions with the class.
- *Why does William throw a jacket over his horse's head before it jumps out of Mornay's castle?*
  - *William sees Murrin in the crowd in London before he dies. Why do you think this happens?*
- 15 **Check:** Have students go back to the list of words from Activity 1. Ask them if they have changed their mind about the words that describe William Wallace.

#### Extra activities

- 16 **Discuss:** Put students into small groups. Ask them to look up 'independent' in their dictionaries. Have them discuss the following question.  
*Is it always better for a country to be independent?*
- 17 **Describe:** Have students work in small groups and look at the map on page vi. Ask them to describe what happened at Stirling and Falkirk in the story.
- 18 **Research:** The map shows the Battle of Bannockburn, 1314, but the book doesn't tell us about it. In small groups, or for homework, students find out what happened there, and write two or three sentences about it.
- 19 **Discuss:** According to the Introduction, Mel Gibson said, '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 or similar today?*
- 20 **Project:** Have students work in groups to find out the history of Scotland around the time of William Wallace. Have each group make a presentation on the result of their research.