

# Jesse James, a Famous Outlaw

Read the story.

**Language Objectives**  
Distinguish between fact and opinion. Write a short essay based on research.

Jesse James is one of the most famous outlaws in United States history. He robbed banks and trains from the late 1860s to the early 1880s.

Jesse James and his brothers fought for the South in the American Civil War. They did not fight in the regular army, though. The Jameses joined outlaw gangs that attacked Northern forces. When the South lost the war, the James brothers were angry. They started robbing Northern banks and railroads to show their hatred for the North. They also wanted money they didn't have to work for. They traveled with other outlaws, robbing and running away.

Most people were afraid of Jesse James. They thought he was a violent and dangerous man. Other people thought he was smart. For

more than ten years, he and his brother, Frank, and the other members of their gang robbed banks and trains, and they always got away. Their luck did not last, though.

In the 1870s, some members of the gang finally got caught. Only Jesse and Frank escaped. The brothers decided to hide for a while. After three years, however, they and their new gang started to rob banks again.

The United States government offered a large reward to the person who killed Jesse James. Robert Ford, a new member of the James gang, wanted the reward. He shot and killed Jesse James in 1882. Sheriffs and policemen all over the country were relieved that the time of Jesse James and his gang was over.

**A** Now label each of the following sentences *Fact* or *Opinion*. The first two are done for you.

1. Jesse James robbed banks and trains. Fact
2. Jesse James was a hero. Opinion
3. Jesse James fought for the South in the Civil War. \_\_\_\_\_
4. United States criminals are the most violent in the world. \_\_\_\_\_
5. Jesse James was right to rob from the North. \_\_\_\_\_
6. Jesse James and his gang robbed banks and trains for many years. \_\_\_\_\_
7. The James brothers were cowards. \_\_\_\_\_
8. The James brothers hid from the police for three years. \_\_\_\_\_
9. Robert Ford killed Jesse James in 1882. \_\_\_\_\_
10. Robert Ford was wrong to kill Jesse James. \_\_\_\_\_



**A Train Robbery**

**B** Outlaws are people who think they are outside the law and are free to break the law. They may be considered heroes by people who share their ideas. Robin Hood is a legendary English outlaw of 800 years ago. Search the Internet or look in an encyclopedia to find out more about Robin Hood, and write a short essay about him. Tell why he is called "legendary."

**SKILL OBJECTIVES:** Reading a biography; building vocabulary; distinguishing between fact and opinion. Before reading the story (aloud or silently) introduce the concept of an outlaw. Students will want to talk about some "bad guys" they know from literature, television, the movies, or their own experiences. Go over new vocabulary such as *hero*, *gang*, *cowards*, etc. *Part A:* Before assigning the page for independent work, do the first two items orally to be sure students remember the difference between fact and opinion. If they are having problems, do all ten sentences together. *Part B:* Encourage use of the Internet, if available, or an encyclopedia to learn about Robin Hood.

Source: Judy DeFilippo and Charles Skidmore, *Skill Sharpeners 2*