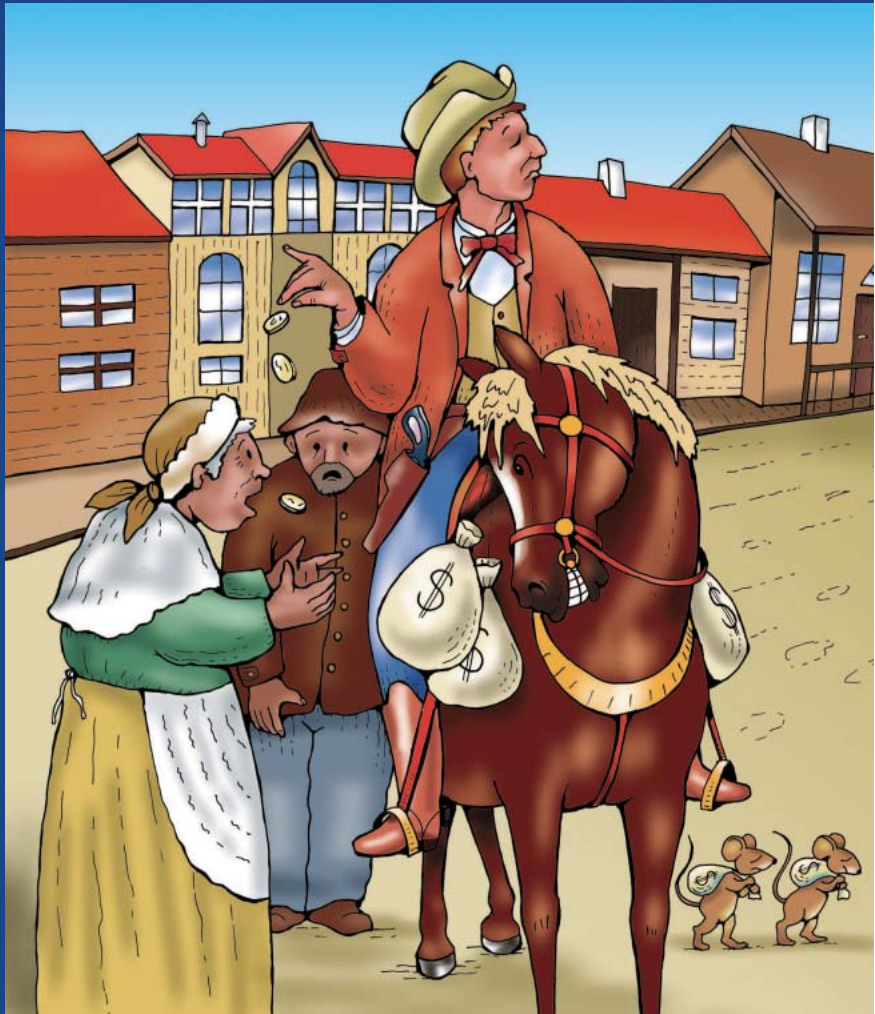


JESSE JAMES, THE OUTLAW

W. B. LAWSON



FELBERG ENGLISH READERS

JESSE JAMES, THE OUTLAW

Simplified edition of a story by
W. B. LAWSON

ELEMENTARY LEVEL

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*“Jesse James was a lad,
Who killed many a man
He robbed the Glendale train.*

*He took from the rich
And he gave to the poor
He'd a hand, a heart, and a brain.”*

(Fragment of a popular folk ballad)

PROLOGUE



Of all the legendary **characters** of the American West, few have attracted so much fascination as Jesse James. An American Robin Hood or a cold-blooded killer? Perhaps a little of both.

Born in Kearney, Missouri on September 5, 1847, the son of a Baptist **minister**, he fought in the Civil War on the side of the **Confederacy**. Some say it was the cruel treatment from **Union** soldiers that turned brothers Frank and Jesse to a life of crime. A year after the war they robbed the first bank in peacetime. For the next 15 years, the James boys robbed trains and banks, building a legend. Jesse married his own first cousin, Zerelda, who bore him two children, Jesse Edwards and Mary. She was buried in the same grave alongside her man. Jesse reached his Waterloo in 1876 when his gang tried to rob the bank at Northfield, Minnesota. All except Frank and Jesse were either killed,



lad facet, gość; the Glendale train pociąg kursujący do miejscowości Glendale; *character postać, bohater (książki, filmu itp.); minister duchowny; the Confederacy* Konfederacja Stanów Południa w wojnie secesyjnej w USA (1860-65); *Union* Stany Północne w wojnie secesyjnej



wounded, or caught. With a \$10,000 reward on his head, Jesse moved to St. Joseph, Missouri, called himself Mr. Howard and started to lead a **respectable** life. The reward attracted the Ford brothers, though. And on April 3, 1882, Robert Ford killed Jesse with a single bullet to the back of the head. Jesse was a good father and family man, religious in his own way. It has never been definitely decided whether he stole from the rich and gave to the poor, or just kept it all.



reward *nagroda*; respectable *godny szacunku*

CHAPTER ONE

In the Robber's Nest a bullet **whistled** by my left ear. Bang!

"Won't you stop now?" shouted a voice behind me. Three horsemen rode up to me. They had just ridden out of the gate of a lonely farmhouse. They were three Chicago detectives, who looked like horse traders—Hawes, Jewell, and Whittaker by name. They were looking for Jesse and Frank James, the notorious train robbers and bandits. And they had just visited old Mrs. James' farmhouse, in the hope of finding the two **outlaws**. There was a reward of ten thousand dollars for the **capture** of the bandits.

"Who and what are you, old man?" asked Hawkes, "and why didn't you stop when I first called out to you?"

"I take no orders from you or anyone else," I answered angrily. "I am a medical man, of Booneville, on my travels. Now, sir, who the hell are you?"

I looked back at the farmhouse and noticed the **Widow** James looking at us from the **porch**. Rather than answer my question, Jewell said, "I'm sorry we've been unable to see Jesse James as yet." But when he looked back, he suddenly cried out:

"Here are Jesse and Frank James now, right upon us!"

He spoke truly. Two horsemen, followed in a short distance by a third, had followed us noiselessly on the soft ground. Now they were only a few steps away from us.

"Put up your hands!" shouted Jesse James, as we came to a **halt**.

"Put up your hands," echoed Frank James.

Paralyzed with sudden panic, Jewell and Whittaker did as told at once. Hawes, however, decided to **die hard**, if die he must.

"Not if I know it!" he said, took out his revolver, and fired. His bullet passed through the neck of the third horseman named Curly Pitts, who fell from his **saddle**. At the same moment Hawes

whistle czas. *gwizdać*, rzecz. *gwizd*; **outlaw** *złoczyńca*, *wyjęty spod prawa*; **capture** rzecz. *schwytanie*, czas. *schwytąć*; **widow** *wdowa*; **porch** *ganek*, (amer.) *weranda*; **halt** *stop*; **die hard** *nie dać się łatwo zabić*; **saddle** *siodło*

fell dead, with Jesse James' **bullet** in his heart. Then Whittaker went down, shot dead by the two robber brothers. Jewell, at this, suddenly turned his horse and galloped away as fast as he could. Frank James went after him.

"Who are you?" Jesse James asked.

"I am a doctor of Booneville," said I, "and if you are Jesse James, I bring you a **message** from a dying woman—Blanche Rideau."

His face changed: "Dying—Blanche Rideau!" he said. "However, there's no time for softness now. If you're a doctor, see what you can do for my friend Curly."

I at once got off my horse and began to examine the **wounds** of the fallen robber. In the meantime, Frank James returned empty-handed. I succeeded in **reviving** Curly Pitts. His face was paper-white. He could not speak yet, but with my assistance got on his horse.

"If someone takes care of his wound soon, he will be all right," I said.

"Mother will do that," said Jesse jumping into the saddle. "Mister, you'll go with us."

"There's nothing I would like better, Mr. James!" I answered and got back into the saddle too. The way in which I said "Mr. James!" made both brothers laugh shortly. So we went to the lonely farmhouse, leaving the dead men where they were. But we led away their horses with us. We reached the porch, got off our horses, and the Widow James appeared. She was a tall, masculine-looking old woman, with a face showing strength of character. Frank James took the wounded Pitts into the house. Jesse, however, led me to a little rock behind the house. Although the place looked empty, I saw armed men at different parts of the farm.

"Now, stranger, for your story," said Jesse, seating himself on a fragment of rock. "It'll be better for you to tell me the truth."

I took a good look at Jesse now. He was a man of fine proportions, with his red **beard**, short hair, steely blue eyes, and a handsome appearance.

bullet *kula*; **message** *wiadomość, przesłanie*; **wound** *rzecz. rana, czas. ranić*; **revive** *przywrócić przytomność*; **beard** *broda*; **appearance** *powierzchnowość, wygląd*

“I am a medical practitioner of Booneville, to which I came from St. Louis six months ago,” I told him.

“Only six months ago?”

“I have made friends with some of the best families, like that of Judge Rideau. His beautiful daughter, Miss Blanche, was my patient before she died—”

“Died?” shouted the outlaw, jumping to his feet. “You didn’t say before that she was dead,” he half-drew one of his revolvers.

“Just before Blanche Rideau died she told me to find you, even at the cost of my life, and give you this.”

I handed him a small packet, tied with a blue ribbon. He snatched it from me. Some time-yellowed letters and things fell out of it. He turned his back upon me and I heard him kiss the packet.

At this moment I could easily have shot him dead if I wanted to. My plan, however, was to find a way to capture him and his brother alive. So I just took my time. When he again turned to me, he shook my hand.

“Listen to a few words, doctor. Six years ago Blanche Rideau and I were engaged. But the course of our love was interrupted. Otherwise I’d be a reformed man now. And it was the fault of Judge Rideau’s brother. He’s a rich bank president somewhere up in Minnesota now. But I’ll get even with him!” In a moment he said in a changed voice: “Did any message go with the packet?”

“Yes, she asked me to get you to reform.”

The outlaw laughed. “Look at me, doctor. All the world’s hand is against me and my hand is against all the world. Let them come and take me!”

“With half the country people your well-wishers, you stand a pretty good chance,” said I.

He gave a short laugh.

“Come with me, doc. In fact, you can’t do otherwise now. It’s one of our rules never to allow a newcomer to go out of our company until **dead sure** of his loyalty. You shall accompany our band while we stay in this part of the country. You can then

draw, drew, drawn tu: *wyciągnąć*; **ribbon** *wstążka*; **snatch** *wyrwać*; **engage** *zareczyć się*; **otherwise** *w przeciwnym wypadku, inaczej*; **get even** *wyrównać rachunki*; **dead sure** *zupełnie pewny*

judge whether or not you can get me to reform. That was the dying prayer of poor Blanche Rideau, right?”

I followed him to the house. Inside we found a fine dinner awaiting us, with the Widow James and two black servants waiting on us. We sat down with Frank James, Curly Pitts and two other men. Jesse introduced them to me as his companions. After dinner Jesse said, “There are two dead men out there on the road. That may cause us trouble if we don’t hurry.”

In a few minutes, all six of us got in the saddle, and we neared the road in about an hour. Then we heard a whistle somewhere far off in the forest on the opposite side of the road. Soon we saw two young fellows riding across the road toward us. They led a horse, upon whose back was a man, his hands and legs tied. To my secret horror, I saw that it was Langman, the fifth Chicago detective. Minutes before we met Jesse and his brother, Hawes and Whittaker had spoken about him. Luckily, he did not **recognize** me.

“Did you find this one as I ordered, Cutts?” said Jesse.

“The Lamb here did,” the young man answered with a gesture toward his companion. The **latter**, Larry the Lamb spoke:

“I **tracked** him to the telegraph office in the town. He sent off two telegrams to Chicago. One of them to the name you **mentioned**. An hour later we knocked him from his horse. And here he is!”

At a gesture from the leader, Cutts and the Lamb got off their horses. They cut Langman’s ties and took him from his horse. Next they **bound** him with his back to a tree by the roadside.

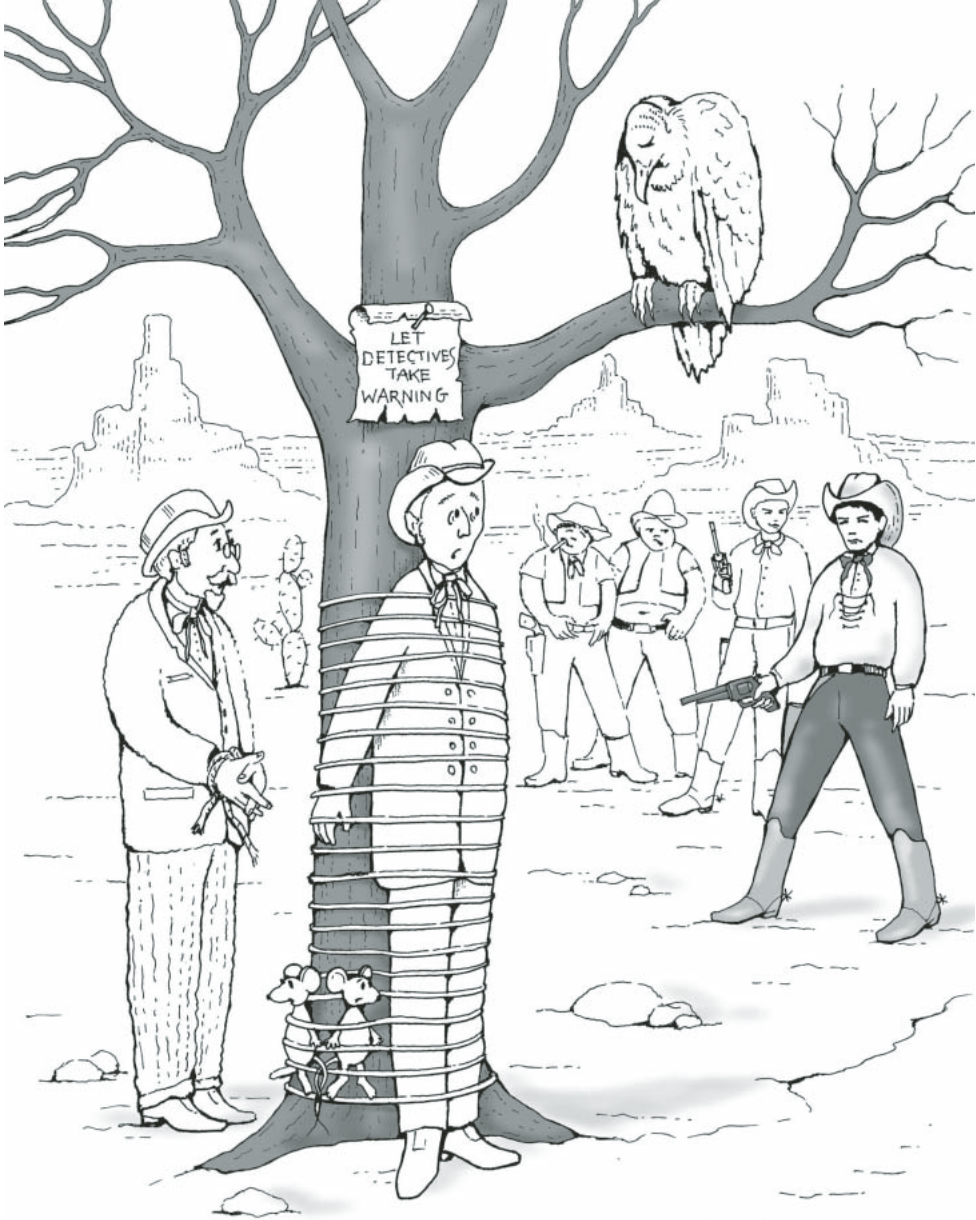
“Got anything to say, detective?” called Jesse.

“May my blood be on your heads!”

“One!” said Jesse, at the same time shooting the man through the body. “Two!” said Frank James, his pistol speaking with equal precision. “Three!” called out the next in line, firing his pistol.

They kept coolly counting and shooting until one hundred shots had been emptied into the body. Then Jesse wrote something

recognize *rozpoznać*; **latter** *drugi z dwóch*; **track** *śledzić coś, kogoś*;
mention *wspomnieć*; **bind, bound, bound** *przywiązać*



They kept coolly counting and shooting until one hundred shots had been emptied into the body.

on a piece of paper with a pencil. Cutts put it up over the head of the dead man. The piece of paper read as follows:

LET DETECTIVES TAKE WARNING! The James Brothers

Then the outlaw leader gave a signal, and we all galloped up the road. Upon coming to a crossroads, Cutts and the Lamb rode off in one direction; the others in another. I alone accompanied Jesse and Frank up **into the depths** of a forest road that seemed to lead nowhere.

Finally, the road brought us to a large **clearing**. There stood one of the largest and most comfortable-looking **cabins** I had ever seen. Among those who came out to meet us were two beautiful, even refined-looking, young women. To my surprise, I discovered they were the wives of my companions. I was introduced to them and the rest simply as ‘doc.’ It was now sunset. After supper I was glad to accept the bed offered me in a little room in the back of the house. I **slept soundly**, but awoke several times during the night. Whenever I did so I knew that I was watched.

“Don’t worry, sister. Just wait till I rob a passenger train or a rich bank. That’s all. Then we’ll go to Texas for peace and quiet. Run into the house now, and I will soon join you.”

Such were the words I **overheard** spoken in the garden just outside my window when I awoke for the last time. The voice was that of Jesse James, finished by a sound like a kiss. I heard a happy little laugh and footsteps of a man going away. In the morning I rose, dressed, and went to look for Jesse.

“Good morning, Mr. James,” said I, as I came upon him at the farthest side of the clearing.

“Doc, I believe I can trust you.”

“I know you can,” said I.

warning *ostrzeżenie*; (into the) depths (*w*) *głęb*; clearing *polana*; cabin *chata*, (sleep) soundly (*spać*) *twardo*; overhear *posłuchać*

“How would you like to go into Independence today? Today is the last of the big **county fair**. Try to find out what the public thinks of Frank and me. Will you promise to come back here—alone—say at this time tomorrow morning and report? I may even meet you there this afternoon.”

“Openly?”

“I never went **disguised** in my life,” said Jesse coolly.

“Would you take such a risk?”

“Yes, I would with this at hand!” and he put his hand on one of his revolvers. “Come, it’s time for breakfast.”

CHAPTER TWO

Directly after breakfast I rode away. An hour’s gallop brought me in **sight** of Independence. But during that hour’s ride I thought quite a lot. Half of my Booneville story was true. The things from the dying Blanche Rideau were authentic. But I had never practised as a doctor. And I had received the letters and other things from Judge Rideau himself. He was a friend of mine. He gave me the things in the hope that they would help me in bringing these criminals to **justice**. Now they trusted me. If they discovered the truth, one can imagine what would happen. I was literally holding my life in my hands. I was risking everything.

I found the town of Independence **excited** over what had happened the day before. The first person to recognize me was Jewell. It was on a side street soon after I **put up** my horse at the hotel.

“Stranger, you here and alive? How did those James devils let you go?”

“Am I a detective?”

“But think of Hawes and Whittaker and the body of Langman found bound to the tree. I thought they’d murdered you too.”

county fair wielki jarmark w hrabstwie; **disguise** rzecz. przebranie, czas. przebrać (się); **sight** widok; **justice** sprawiedliwość; **excited** podniecony; **put up** tu: przenocować