

Lecture 8

Little Red Riding Hood is a [fairy tale](#) for young children. It is a story about a young [girl](#) and a [wolf](#). The story comes from a [folktale](#) which means that it was a *spoken* story for a long time before it was a written story. It was first written down in the late 1600s. The best-known version (the way the story is told) of *Little Red Riding Hood* is by the [Brothers Grimm](#) and dates from the [19th century](#) (1800s).

Grimm Brothers

Jacob Grimm was born in 1785 and his brother Wilhelm Grimm was born in 1786. Their parents had nine children, so they had seven other siblings. Throughout their lives they basically did the same thing and achieved the same achievements. They both went to the University of Marburg (**Marburg** is a [university town](#) in the [German federal state](#) (*Bundesland*) of [Hesse](#)) and studied law. They were both influenced by the folk poetry collection of Clemens Brentano and Achim von Arnim, so they began to collect folk tales. When their parents died they decided to get jobs as librarians in order to support their younger siblings. In 1812 they published volume 1 of *Children and Household Tales* that contained 86 folk tales. They published another six editions of this. In 1819 they both received honorary doctorates from the University of Marburg and their scholarly work on linguistics, folklore and medieval studies continued, resulting in many publications. From 1829-1830, they both resigned as librarians and accepted positions at the University of Göttingen as librarians and professors. They continued their scholarly work, political activities and dedicated a lot of their time to their own studies and research. Wilhelm died in 1859 and Jacob followed in 1863.

Interpretations

Besides the overt warning about talking to strangers, there are many interpretations of the classic fairy tale, many of them are sexual. Some are listed below.

Natural Cycles

[Folklorists](#) and [cultural anthropologists](#) such as [P. Saintyves](#) and [Edward Burnett Tylor](#) saw "Little Red Riding Hood" in terms of solar myths and other naturally-occurring cycles. Her red hood could represent the bright sun which is ultimately swallowed by the terrible night (the wolf). Alternatively, the tale could be about the season of spring, or the month of May, escaping the winter.

Rebirth

[Bruno Bettelheim](#), in [The Uses of Enchantment](#), recast the *Little Red Riding Hood* motif in terms of classic [Freudian](#) analysis, that shows how fairy tales educate, support, and liberate the emotions of children. The motif of the huntsman cutting open the wolf, he interpreted as a "rebirth"; the girl who foolishly listened to the wolf has been reborn as a new person.

Moral

Children, especially attractive, well bred young ladies, should never talk to strangers, for if they should do so, they may well provide dinner for a wolf. I say "wolf," but there are various kinds of wolves. There

are also those who are charming, quiet, polite, unassuming, complacent, and sweet, who pursue young women at home and in the streets. And unfortunately, it is these gentle wolves who are the most dangerous ones of all.

Meanings

As with many fairy tales, hidden messages can be found in *Little Red Riding Hood*. People have very different *interpretations* (ways of understanding the hidden meanings). There are two main ways that the story of *Little Red Riding Hood* can be interpreted.

The first type of interpretation is about [morality](#). It is about what is right and what is wrong.

The easiest message for children to understand is that it can be [dangerous](#) to trust strangers.

A more adult interpretation is about [sexuality](#). Some people think that the story of the girl being "eaten" is really a [symbol](#) for [rape](#). [Susan Brownmiller](#) wrote a book about it, called *Against Our Will*. Some of the other versions of the story seem to be more about rape than the way that the Brothers Grimm wrote it, which was for children.

Charles Perrault makes his meaning quite clear. At the end of the story he writes:

"From this story one learns that children, especially young lasses, pretty, courteous and well-bred, do very wrong to listen to strangers.... all wolves are not of the same sort.... there is one kind [that is not] noisy, nor hateful, nor angry, but tame, obliging and gentle, following the young maids in the streets, even into their homes. Alas! these gentle wolves are ... the most dangerous!"

Some people who are [feminists](#) (supporters of the rights of women) do not like this story and say that it does not show women in a good way. This is because, through the story, Red Riding Hood does not think or act for herself. She does not do any of the actions of the story; she only does what she is told to do by a [male](#) character, and has things done to her male characters. She does what wolf tells her to do, even though it is against the advice of her mother. She comes near the male wolf when he tells her, against her own fear. She is eaten by the male character. She cannot help herself and is saved only because a strong male character comes along at the right time. Feminists believe that stories like this do not help girls to be independent.

In old French and Italian versions of the story, the girl is independent and clever. She tricks the wolf and escapes without any help.

Lessons in "*Little Red Riding Hood*"

"Little Red Riding Hood" is one of the most famous children's books ever. And like most children's books, it has a moral. The story is about a little girl who wants to visit her grandma. But in order to do this, she must walk through dangerous woods alone. Along the way, she meets the Big Bad Wolf, an animal that would eventually eat her grandma.

- **Don't Talk to Strangers**

Even though Little Red Riding Hood didn't talk to the wolf for very long, what she disclosed to the wolf resulted in her grandmother being eaten. The wolf asked her what she was doing out in the woods. She replied that she was going to her grandma's house. It was at that point that the wolf ran along, ate Little Red Riding Hood's Grandma and then tried to eat her.

Little Red Riding Hood said: "I'm on my way to see my grandma who lives through the forest, near the brook."

Listen to Your Mother

Though Little Red Riding Hood intended to listen to her mother and "go straight to grandma's house," she stopped in the woods along the way to pick some flowers. As she was doing this, the wolf approached her. By disobeying her mother, Little Red Riding Hood put herself in a vulnerable position and the wolf pounced on the opportunity to take advantage of her.

Her mother warned: "Remember, go straight to grandma's house. Don't dawdle along the way and please don't talk to strangers. The woods are dangerous."

Watch Out For Yourself

When Little Red Riding Hood arrived at her grandma's home, she was cautious because her "grandma" looked different. She questioned her grandma and observed her appearance to determine if it is truly her. When she discovered that it wasn't, she ran away and prevented herself from being eaten.

Little Red Riding Hood said: "But Grandmother, what big ears you have. But Grandmother, what big eyes you have. But Grandmother, what big teeth you have."

Don't Send Your Child Into the Woods Alone

If Little Red Riding Hood's mother hadn't sent her daughter into the "dangerous" woods alone, she could have prevented grandma from being eaten. Parents should be careful about what they allow their children to do, the book teaches. Even though the trip to her grandma's house might have been a short one, the woods are the habitat for hungry wolves, and are dangerous.

Lecture 9

"*The Sleeping Beauty*" ([French](#): *La Belle au bois dormant*, "The Beauty sleeping in the wood") by [Charles Perrault](#) or "*Little Briar Rose*" ([German](#): *Dornröschen*) by the [Brothers Grimm](#) is a classic fairytale involving a beautiful princess, enchantment of sleep, and a handsome prince. Written as an original literary tale, it was first published by [Charles Perrault](#) in *Histoires ou contes du temps passé* in 1697.

Author Information - Charles Perrault

The original story of Sleeping Beauty was written in 1696 by Charles Perrault, a French writer who is best known for writing *Little Red Riding Hood*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Cinderella*, and many more fairy tales. Charles was born in Paris to a wealthy family, and studied at some of the best schools. Charles Perrault is best known for setting the foundations of a "new literary genre," fairytale.

What is the moral of Sleeping Beauty?

The moral of Sleeping Beauty might be that life, and growing up, presents unavoidable risks. But perhaps it has no moral. Sleeping Beauty is a fairy tale, not a fable. Fables were meant to be instructive and provide moral guidance. Fairy tales were frequently sometimes just the opposite. They provided entertainment, sometimes of a spooky kind, and while some of them might indirectly provide instruction it was certainly not the purpose.

What is the moral of story *Sleeping Beauty*?

Love and goodness conquer all.

What is the setting of the story *Sleeping Beauty*?

The setting of the sleeping beauty is the in a **far away land**...

Who is the villain in *Sleeping Beauty*?

The wicked fairy who curses the baby princess is the villain in *Sleeping Beauty*.

The Goose Girl is a [German fairy tale](#) collected by the [Brothers Grimm](#). Since the second edition published in 1819, *The Goose Girl* has been recorded as Tale no. 89.

It was first published in 1815 as no. 3 in vol. 2 of the first edition of their *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (Children's and Household Tales—Grimms' Fairy Tales). It was translated into English by Margaret Hunt in 1884. [Andrew Lang](#) included it in [The Blue Fairy Book](#).

Fairy tales often share common characteristics—the use of the number three, magical elements, transformations, misleading appearances, and the conquest of good over evil. Additionally, the hero or heroine is often infallible. Which elements did Shannon Hale decide to incorporate into *The Goose Girl*? Which ones did she omit? Why do you think so?

One of the major themes of the *Goose Girl* is **accepting each other's differences**.

Another theme is **discrimination**.

Lecture 10

Babes in the Wood is a traditional children's tale, as well as a popular [pantomime](#) subject. It has also been the name of some other unrelated works. The expression has passed into common language, referring to inexperienced innocents entering unawares into any potentially dangerous or hostile situation.

Traditional tale

The traditional children's tale is of two children [abandoned](#) in a wood, who die and are covered with leaves by [robins](#).

First published as an anonymous [broadsheet ballad](#), printed by [Thomas Millington](#) in [Norwich](#) in 1595 with the title "The Norfolk gent his will and Testament and how he Committed the keeping of his Children to his own brother who dealt most wickedly with them and how God plagued him for it". The tale has been reworked in many forms; it frequently appears attributed as a [Mother Goose](#) rhyme.

The ballad tells of two small children left in the care of an uncle and aunt after their parents' death. The uncle gives the children to [ruffians](#) to be killed, in order to acquire their inheritance. The children, wandering alone in the woods, die, and are covered by leaves by the birds. Unlike many morality tales, the story ends there; no [retribution](#) is described as happening to the uncle.

The Queen Bee is a German [fairy tale](#) collected by the [Brothers Grimm](#).

The Queen Bee is an updated retelling of the fairy tale about seeking fortune, breaking a spell and discovering the identity of the real prince with the help of ants, ducks, and a regal Queen Bee, with role reversals and undercurrent themes of both the value of education and being kind to animals.

The story teaches some basic and profound lessons. It blends classic fairy tale magic with modern ideas...while still allowing the girl most deserving of praise to marry her fairy tale prince. The book also has a nice reversal of roles, with the heroine saving the enchanted prince...Gwen receives her just reward not because she is the most beautiful girl in the land but because she is genuinely good, intelligent and respectful of her fellow creatures."

This is the timeless folktale of a young prince who undoes the terrible spell on a castle by accomplishing three impossible tasks with the help of some small creatures he saved from cruelty.

Yet the impossible becomes possible with the help of small creatures he rescued from torment.

Vocabulary

- wasteful - extravagant, not used in a thoughtful manner
- dwarf - a little man
- ant-hill - place where ants live (made of dirt)
- to suffer someone - impose upon someone to do, or experience something
- hollow - empty in the middle
- trunk - base of tree
- stables - structure that houses horses
- marble - hard, decorative mineral that is often used in the construction of beautiful buildings
- wicket - small door or gate
- bed-chamber - bedroom
- eldest - the oldest
- tablet - slab of stone upon which something important is written
- disenchanted - freed from a magic spell
- moss - green plant growth often found on trees, in the grass, etc. usually found in damp places
- foretold - something that has been predicted before

tiresome - very tiring

heap - mixed-up pile of things

brink - on the border

syrup - sweet, thick liquid

spell - magic charm