

## **The Telling of Tales**

(based on Little Red Riding Hood)

"And they lived happily ever after," finished Romy. The group stirred and clapped her story. Gretchen clapped too and pulled her blanket round her. Someone added a log to the fire. "Time for one more story," said Asta.

The flames hissed and a shadow swirled across the floor as old Fritzi pushed the door open and limped back in from the privy. "I've got one," she said, her voice matching the creaky door hinge.

No one spoke as Fritzi made her way across to the story-telling circle. Gretchen peeped up at her as the gaunt old woman found a place. Fritzi was looking right back with unfriendly eyes. Gretchen looked away quickly and snuggled up close to her mother. "What have I done now?" she wondered.

The story started well enough:

Once upon a time there was a little girl, who lived in a village on the edge of a big forest. The people there were woodsmen and hunters. They kept a few sheep and a cow or two and grew vegetables. They looked after each other and enjoyed stories of an evening.

There were a few chuckles, as the villagers recognised their lives.

In the village lived a mother, a father and their little girl, who they loved very much. The little girl had a grandmother too, but she lived in a neighbouring village. The grandmother made the girl a pretty red hood, the sort you wear if you're lucky enough to go riding in a cart. When the girl went out in the winter, she had not only a warm woollen cloak but also a red hood to keep her ears warm. Her father teased her and called her Little Red Riding Hood - and soon everyone did.

The old woman tweaked her shabby shawl closer to her throat as a gust of wind rattled the shutters and blew under the door. Gretchen caught one or two people glancing at her.

One day the mother asked Little Red Riding Hood to take a basket with some baking and a jar of her best chicken soup to Grandmother, who was ill.

"Go on the path that skirts the forest and don't talk to anyone you don't know," instructed her mother. "I'll see you at lunchtime."

Little Red Riding Hood put on her cloak and her hood for the wind was chilly that day and off she went. Not far along the road she met a woman and a man coming out of the forest. The woman was holding a bunch of pretty blue flowers.

"Good day to you, little girl," said the woman. "What pretty flowers you have in these parts!" Little Red Riding Hood smiled and waved to them as she went by but, remembering what her mother had told her, she didn't talk to them.



A little further down the path she thought to herself that her grandmother would like some pretty woodland flowers like the ones the woman had. It would be something extra to go with the baking and mother's best chicken soup. She decided to go into the forest, just a little way, to pick some. "And then I'll come straight back on to this path," she thought, for she hadn't entirely forgotten what her mother had told her.

Little Red Riding Hood turned off on to the next path into the forest but there were no flowers growing just there, so she decided she'd go just a little further and then a little further until she was quite deep in the forest. There she found a glade where an old tree had fallen and light could get in. The most beautiful flowers were growing there and Little Red Riding Hood, happy in the sunlight, ran around picking a great bunch.



"Good morning, little girl," said a big deep voice behind her. Her heart leaping, Little Red Riding Hood turned round. Behind her stood a big - a very big - a huge - an enormous wolf. "I said, 'Good morning, little girl,'" said the wolf.

"G-g-good morning, sir," said Little Red Riding Hood, quite forgetting what her mother had told her.

"Where are you off to on this fine day?" asked the wolf jovially.

"To see my grandmother on the edge of the forest," said Little Red Riding Hood. "She lives next to the mill just over that way," she added, for she'd recognised where she was from when she'd been through the forest with her father. Indeed, she could hear the ring of the foresters' axes in the distance. "I'm taking some baking for her and some chicken soup and these flowers."

"How kind!" said the wolf. "Shall I walk with you?"

"Oh, no, sir, thank you," said Little Red Riding Hood, remembering at last what her mother had told her. "I can quite well walk by myself and I expect you have wolf things to be getting on with."

"Well, there is one wolf thing I could be doing," said the wolf, chuckling to itself in a rather sinister way. "Good day to you," it said and it loped off into the trees.

Little Red Riding Hood turned and ran as fast as her legs would carry her. The branches seemed to reach out and catch at her clothes as she ran helter-skelter along the path but at last she stood on the sweet green grass at the edge of the forest. She took several big, deep breaths and put her hand up to straighten her hood. Oh no! It was missing! Little Red Riding Hood looked back along the gloomy path. She couldn't see it. She wondered whether to go back for it. "But I might meet the wolf again. Anyway, I'm running late and Mother expects me back for lunch," she thought. So she set off again with tired legs and a heavier spirit than she had had when she'd started out that morning.



Fritzi paused in her story, coughing and re-settling herself in her seat. Gretchen stared into the fire. She didn't dare look at Fritzi. "I haven't seen **your** hood for a while," whispered Gretchen's mother. "I wonder where it is."

Before Gretchen had to answer, Fritzi continued:

Little Red Riding Hood got to her grandmother's cottage and knocked on the door.

"Come in," said a rather croaky voice.

"Poor Grandmother," thought Little Red Riding Hood. "She must have a terrible cold." The girl pushed open the door and went in.

"Hello, Grandmother," she said, taking off her cloak and going over to the bed to show her grandmother the good things she had brought. Little Red Riding Hood looked at her grandmother doubtfully. Although the old lady was wearing her usual nightdress and shawl and had her nightcap and reading glasses on, she didn't look her usual self at all.

"Grandmother, what big eyes you have," said Little Red Riding Hood.

"All the better to see you with, my dear," croaked her grandmother in a strange voice.

"And what big ears you have," said Little Red Riding Hood, as her grandmother's nightcap slipped.

"All the better to hear you with, my dear," said her grandmother.

"And what big hands you have," said Little Red Riding Hood.

"All the better to catch - I mean hug - you with, my dear," said her grandmother.

"And what big teeth you have," whispered Little Red Riding Hood, her eyes huge in her face.

"All the better to eat you with," roared the wolf, leaping out of Grandmother's bed and gobbling her up, every last bit.

"And that is the end of that tale," said old Fritzi, looking round the faces in the circle and pausing at Gretchen's. She got up and stumped over to the door. Off she went into the night to her own cottage.

Asta, too, looked at Gretchen's face.

"Except," she said, taking up the tale...

...that Little Red Riding Hood's father happened to be passing nearby and thought he would call in on his mother-in-law and see how she was that day.

A traditional tale retold by © Pip Harrison 2014 for <http://languageisheartosay.com>  
First published at <http://www.tes.co.uk/teaching-resource/Traditional-tale-Little-Red-Riding-Hood-6426859/>

See other version at: <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/31431/31431-h/31431-h.htm>



Hearing snoring, the father peered through the window. He saw the wolf lying on the bed asleep with Little Red Riding Hood's cloak and basket nearby on the floor.



The woodsman gripped his axe, quietly opened the door and crept inside.

With one blow he killed that wicked wolf and with another more precise stroke he opened the animal up. There inside was Little Red Riding Hood alive and well, for that greedy beast had swallowed her down whole.

"Oh, Father, it is so good to see you," said Little Red Riding Hood. "It was so dark and scary in there. And smelly too! Quick, we must get Grandmother out as well."

They lifted the grandmother out of the wolf – and she too had not been chewed one bit. They wrapped her in blankets and caught a ride on the log cart all the way home.

And, do you know? After that, Little Red Riding Hood always heeded what her mother told her. Every single day. And Little Red Riding Hood and her family lived happily ever after.

Asta smiled at Gretchen as she finished the story and Gretchen smiled back. As everyone wished each other good night and went to the door, Asta secretly handed Gretchen her red hood. Gretchen's eyes flew to Asta's face. Asta put a finger to her lips. "You mind your Mum!" she whispered and Gretchen nodded as she followed her mother out into the night and towards home.

