

Little lustful riding hood



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The story of “ Little Red Riding Hood” contains many aspects that surprised me upon reading the tale again as adult. In fact, taking a look at most of the classic fairy tales that are told to children at a later time in life often reveals different meanings that were not suspected when the stories were initially heard as a child. Many instances make you wonder if the stories are appropriate for children. The story of “ Little Red Riding Hood” is no exception. The components and morals of this fairy tale vary by version, time period, and author, but they all contain subliminal meanings that allude to inappropriate messages. The versions of “ Little Red Riding Hood” as told by Brothers Grimm and Charles Perrault differ significantly in meaning and have two very different purposes in children’s literature.

Perrault’s version of “ Little Red Riding Hood” is intended to be entertainment for children. Zohar Shavit expresses in his essay that the “ amusement perception served as a basis for Perrault’s version” (Shavit 322). With entertainment being the main focus, Perrault left out many of the more grotesque descriptions from the original tale in order to reach a younger audience. Though the story lacks these direct descriptions, I agree with Shavit and his belief that Perrault’s account contains many hints to these suggestive elements. These depictions reference her beauty and the color red being her symbol.

The many references about Little Red’s beauty were aspects of “ Little Red Riding Hood” that caught my attention after reading the story again as an adult. The very first line reads, “ Once upon a time there was a village girl, the prettiest you can imagine” (Tatar 11). Again, in his moral conclusion of the story, Perrault states that “ pretty, well-bred, and genteel girls” are

wrong to listen to strangers (Tatar 13). His emphasis on Little Red's physical beauty and how he referenced it many times stood out to me as I felt like he was condemning her for what occurred just because of her appearance.

The other aspect that caught my attention when reading the story as an adult was the choice of the color red to represent Little Red. The color red indicates promiscuity, love, and lust. As a child, I obviously never viewed Little Red as a promiscuous character, nor did I even realize the fact that the color red actually had importance. Perrault's version states that the red hood made by the grandmother "suited the child so much that everywhere she went she was known by the name Little Red Riding Hood" (Tatar 11). After reading the story again and knowing what the color red represents, that line made me think that Little Red was possibly was the town harlot. It was a deliberate choice of the authors to choose the color red rather than a different one. The color red is just one of the aspects of these stories that victimizes an innocent girl.

These aspects that caught my attention by victimizing Little Red contribute to the overall genre because of how common it is to see women oppressed in these classic fairy tales. Putting the focus on Little Red's beauty rather than her cunning nature to get out of a dangerous situation limits her character as a whole and is a commonality among many fairy tales. For example, it is repeated that Snow White is the fairest in the land rather than noticing her hard work ethic. It is obvious that part of the genre of this story is the victimization of Little Red in her inability to sense an unsafe situation.

The moral is directly given in the end of Perrault's version of " Little Red Riding Hood". It states that young girls are wrong to trust people and it isn't uncommon for them to end up in danger if they do. A big point to be made about Perrault's moral is that no matter what, it is ultimately the girl in question's fault for what happens to her. Whether it be her appearance or her too trusting nature

In contrast to Perrault's version being intended for entertainment, Brothers Grimm's version " Little Red Cap" was originally written for adults, not children (Shavit 327). This version has many direct and explicit details, which proves that it was originally intended for adults. Even with these references, Brothers Grimm's account is considered the " educational" version out of all the " Little Red Riding Hood" tales, which is why the story transformed into more of a children appropriate telling (Shavit 322). One reason why Brothers Grimm's version is more suited for children is because it ends with a happy ending; ultimately, the lives of Little Red Cap and her grandmother are saved. I agree with Shavit in that another reason why Brother Grimm's is better suited for children is because that version emphasizes the process of reward and punishment. It is stressed that by the end of the story, Little Red Cap would have learned a lesson (Shavit 329). This idea of a lesson being learned is a more appropriate message for children compared to the victimization of Little Red in Perrault's version.

The overall genre is proved by another aspect of Brothers Grimm's version that caught my attention. It is how the story ends. The tale comes to a close with Little Red Cap directly stating to herself, " Never again will you stray from the path and go into the woods, when your mother has forbidden it"

(Tatar 16). This caught my attention because it is rare for a character in a fairy tale to directly state a lesson that he/she learned; usually, it is a lesson that the reader understands but the character may not. But it is this aspect that contributes to the overall genre of the fairy tale because it proves that it was educational.

The larger message in Brothers Grimm's version is exactly what Little Red Cap states in the end: one should obey their parents and follow their directions/orders precisely. Little Red Cap's mother gives her specific directions: "...when you're out in the woods walk properly and don't stray from the path... And when you enter her room, don't forget to say good morning..." (Tatar 14). Little Red Cap promises to her mother that she will do just as she says. But, she doesn't listen. She faces dangerous situations that could have been avoided if she listened to or obeyed her mother.

Shavit's points support my idea that though both versions are useful for children, they're useful for very different reasons and vary significantly in meaning. Perrault's purpose of his version is merely entertainment compared to Brothers Grimm's version whose purpose is to educate. Though they differ greatly, Brothers Grimm's version and Perrault's version share a common theme that Little Red is responsible for the violence she received. Both versions of this classic tale contain aspects that surprised me revisiting these stories as an adult.

Work Cited

Tatar, Maria Ed. *The Classic Fairy Tales*. New York.: W. W. Norton., 1999. Print.

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