

Little red riding hood essay

[Life, Relationships](#)



Perrault In Bruno Bettelheim's " Little Red Riding Hood" Bettelheim analyzes both the Grimm brother's and Charles Perrault's version of the classic tale.

Bettelheim focused greatly on how children view things in their subconscious mind. In the subconscious mind a child is aware of the mature aspects of life, that an adult already knows. By being subconsciously aware this child is growing up into their surroundings. Bettelheim says " Little Red Cap has to be cut out of the wolf's stomach as if through a Caesarean operation; thus the idea of pregnancy and birth is intimidated. With it, associations of a sexual relation are evoked in the child's unconscious". When the child reads this part of the story they do not stop and think of giving birth.

However, in their subconscious the child is aware that pregnancy does occur. By having the wolf live it it teaching the child not to be afraid of birth as it is often something a young woman will eventually face. When coming across the wolf, Little Red Cap tells the wolf exactly where she is going. Bettelheim says " even a four-year-old cannot help wondering what Little Red Cap is up to when, answering the wolf's question she gives the specific directions on how to get to her grandmother's house".

Even a young child is aware of the fact that this is dumb to give such specific directions to a stranger. Having this in the story though allows the child to use their mind to ask subconsciously ask questions. The child might think to themselves why would Little Red Cap give directions. Little Red Cap is a lot about the wolf being a seducer. Bettelheim says " the story holds a great unconscious attraction to children, and to adults who are vaguely reminded by it of their own childish fascination with sex". When the child is reading the

story they are not consciously thinking about sex, however certain aspects of the story a child may begin to question as they begin to go into puberty. This includes the scene of Little Red Cap getting into bed with her naked grandmother which is actually the wolf. The child may not know what sex is yet, but is still fascinated with this concept.

Bettelheim says that “ the child needs to form a strong working alliance with the parent of the same sex, so that through identification with the parent and conscious learning from him, the child will grow successfully into an adult”. Here it is evident that gender roles have a large significance on the relationships children will form. Little Red and her grandmother work together to overthrow the wolf. Since they are of the same sex they are able to work together to kill the wolf, having in trust in one another. Talking about the conscious and unconscious mind Bettelheim says “ fairy stories speak to our conscious and our unconscious, and therefore do not need to avoid contradictions, since they these easily coexist in our unconscious”.

Bettelheim is saying that if something does not make sense in the physical world it can be explained in that imaginative world. It is important for a child to use both of these as they grow up in order to understand the world.