



Jacquelyn Fallon

Little Red Takes Many Paths

Students compare and contrast different versions of the Little Red Riding Hood story.

SECTION 3 Social Systems

Subjects:

reading,
language arts,
sociology



Approximate lesson time:

1-2 hours



Materials:

Each group needs
a copy of each story
on pages 34-38,
paper and pencil.

STUDENT OBJECTIVES:

At the end of this unit, the student should be able to

1. Describe how children's stories like *Little Red Riding Hood* affect our views of wolves.
2. Demonstrate how traditional stories transmit cultural values.

VOCABULARY:

culture • motif

TEACHER BACKGROUND:

Folktales are stories that pass by word of mouth from one generation to another and from one country to another. Often stories change over time because storytellers adapt them to serve their own purposes.

It wasn't until the 1800s that folklorists began collecting folktales and writing them down for the first time. Once these authors had preserved these traditional stories in books, the stories stopped changing and became a "snapshot" of one particular time and place in that story's evolution. Traditional folktales have no one "correct"

version of a story because they continue to change each time they are passed along. There are often several versions of the same story "motif" or general story type.

By looking at the different versions of a particular story, students can draw inferences about what the author intended to communicate through a particular version of the story.

In general, stories demonstrate the cultural views of the society that created them and passed them on. For cattle farmers in central Europe, wolves were a threat. In other countries, where wolves were more scarce or where abundant wild prey kept wolves from feeding on domestic livestock, the stories that people tell about wolves are much more positive. Stories from other regions, like Finland, Japan or Russia, show much more positive views of wolves. In Japan, wolves are revered for feeding on the deer that would otherwise feed on farmer's crops.



Daniel Cox, naturexposures.com

National Science Education Standards

Unifying Concepts and Processes

*Evidence, models,
and explanation*

*Change, constancy,
and measurement*

The versions presented in this lesson grew out of the farming country of central Europe (Germany and France). In those countries, wolves may have fed on calves and sheep, depriving farmers of money and food. Therefore, stories from that area reflect a dislike for wolves. Stories like *The Three Little Pigs* and *The Wolf and the Seven Goats* also come from central Europe and also reflect negative views of wolves.

By comparing and contrasting different versions of the same story motif, students can infer how that culture probably viewed wolves when the stories were first written down. The “moral” of a story also gives readers a sense of the cultural values that were popular when the writer took the “snapshot” of the story.

ACTIVITIES:

PART 1

1. Instruct students to write down a brief outline of the story of *Little Red Riding Hood* as they know it. Remind students to include as many details as they can think of. Students should work individually for this part.
2. Then, organize students into groups of four. Instruct students to exchange stories and then complete the following questions as a group.

3. Discuss:
 - What story elements appear in all versions of the story?
 - What differences did you find in the different versions of the story?
 - How did each person describe Little Red: her age, her appearance, her attitude?
 - How did each person describe the wolf and its motivation in the stories?

Note: These questions are provided on page 97 for the teacher to copy onto transparency film for use on an overhead projector.

PART 2

1. Divide the students into small groups, and give each group a copy of each of the four stories on pages 34-38.
2. Instruct students to compare the stories by filling in the chart on page 33.
3. Discuss:
 - Describe how the country or time period in which a version of a story gets published might affect how the story is written.
 - Which Little Red Riding Hood character acted the way you would act if you ever encounter a talking wolf who dresses up in grandma’s pajamas?
 - What other species of animals appear as villains in stories? Is it always a predator, or are herbivores (plant eaters) ever cast as villains? What accounts for the trend that you find?

ASSESSMENT:

Students may turn in completed worksheets. Students may also write a one-page essay summarizing the differences between the versions of the *Little Red Riding Hood* story.

EXTENSIONS:

Use the World Wide Web to look up other versions of this story. There are versions of *Little Red Riding Hood*-type stories from around the world. Look for versions from Asia, the Middle East, the African continent and North and South America. What differences do you find in these other versions of this story?

Have students write their own, modern version of *Little Red Riding Hood*. How does it differ from these older versions?

Check your home or public library for multiple versions of this story, and compare the artwork in the various editions. What information does a picture convey?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:**Web sites**

“Little Red Riding Hood” from Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Little_Red_Riding_Hood

“Versions of Little Red Riding Hood,” D. L. Ashliman folktale Web site at <http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/type0333.html>

Other resources

“The Mountain Wolf’s Gift: Wolf Tales From Around the World” audio CD. Contains nine traditional wolf folktales depicting wolf characters that are wise, foolish, tricky or helpful.

The CD is available from storyteller Kevin Strauss, <http://www.naturestory.com>.

LITTLE RED TAKES MANY PATHS

Overhead Master for Part One

What story elements appear in all versions of the story?

What differences did you find in the different versions of the story?

How did each person describe Little Red: her age, her appearance, her attitude?

How did each person describe the wolf and its motivation in the stories?

NAME: _____



WORKSHEET FOR PART TWO

Little Red Takes Many Paths

	Story 1	Story 2	Story 3	Story 4
Story name				
Source				
Year				
Description of girl				
Distinctive garment, how she got it?				
What instructions did she get from her mother?				
What is she carrying?				
Where does grandmother live?				
What does she think of wolf upon meeting him?				
How does the wolf get to grandmother's ahead of her?				
What's the situation upon Red's arrival?				
How does the story end?				
What's the "moral" of the story?				

Little Red Riding Hood

Charles Perrault (Victorian Era France)

This story version was collected some time between 1500 and 1600. The version was edited and published during the "Victorian Era," a time in Europe when writers often adapted stories to teach clear moral lessons to children. What lessons do you see and hear in this story?

Once upon a time there lived in a certain village a little country girl, the prettiest creature who was ever seen. Her mother was excessively fond of her, and her grandmother doted on her still more. This good woman had a little red riding hood made for her. It suited the girl so extremely well that everybody called her Little Red Riding Hood.

One day her mother, having made some cakes, said to her, "Go, my dear, and see how your grandmother is doing, for I hear she has been very ill. Take her a cake, and this little pot of butter."

Little Red Riding Hood set out immediately to go to her grandmother, who lived in another village.

As she was going through the wood, she met with a wolf, who had a very great mind to eat her up, but he dared not, because of some woodcutters working nearby in the forest. He asked her where she was going. The poor child, who did not know that it was dangerous to stay and talk to a wolf, said to him, "I am going to see my grandmother and carry her a cake and a little pot of butter from my mother."

"Does she live far off?" asked the wolf.

"Oh, I say," answered Little Red Riding Hood, "it is beyond that mill you see there, at the first house in the village."

"Well," said the wolf, "I'll go and see her too. I'll go this way and go you that, and we shall see who will be there first."

The wolf ran as fast as he could, taking the shortest path, and the little girl took a roundabout way, entertaining herself by gathering nuts, running after butterflies, and gathering bouquets of little flowers. It was not long before the wolf arrived at the old woman's house. He knocked at the door: tap, tap.

"Who's there?"

"Your grandchild, Little Red Riding Hood," replied the wolf, counterfeiting her voice, "who has brought you a cake and a little pot of butter sent you by mother."

The good grandmother, who was in bed because she was somewhat ill, cried out, "Pull the bobbin, and the latch will go up."

The wolf pulled the bobbin, and the door opened, and then he immediately fell upon the good woman and ate her up in a moment, for it been more than three days since he had eaten. He then shut the door and got into the grandmother's bed, expecting Little Red

Riding Hood, who came some time afterwards and knocked at the door: tap, tap.

"Who's there?"

Little Red Riding Hood, hearing the big voice of the wolf, was at first afraid, but believing her grandmother had a cold and was hoarse, answered, "It is your grandchild Little Red Riding Hood, who has brought you a cake and a little pot of butter mother sends you."

The wolf cried out to her, softening his voice as much as he could, "Pull the bobbin, and the latch will go up."

Little Red Riding Hood pulled the bobbin, and the door opened.

The wolf, seeing her come in, said to her, hiding himself under the bedclothes, "Put the cake and the little pot of butter upon the stool, and come get into bed with me."

Little Red Riding Hood took off her clothes and got into bed. She was greatly amazed to see how her grandmother looked in her nightclothes, and said to her, "Grandmother, what big arms you have!"

"All the better to hug you with, my dear."

"Grandmother, what big legs you have!"

"All the better to run with, my child."

"Grandmother, what big ears you have!"

"All the better to hear with, my child."

"Grandmother, what big eyes you have!"

"All the better to see with, my child."

"Grandmother, what big teeth you have got!"

"All the better to eat you up with."

And, saying these words, this wicked wolf fell upon Little Red Riding Hood and ate her all up.

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.

Source: Andrew Lang, The Blue Fairy Book (London, ca. 1889), 51–53. Lang's source: Charles Perrault, Histoires ou contes du temps passé, avec des moralités: Contes de ma mère l'Oye (Paris, 1697).

Little Red Cap

Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm (Germany)

This is the version of Little Red Riding Hood that most people are familiar with. The Grimm brothers collected their stories from both the common folk of farmers and the more educated classes.

Once upon a time there was a sweet little girl. Everyone who saw her liked her, but most of all her grandmother, who did not know what to give the child next. Once she gave her a little cap made of red velvet. Because it suited her so well, and she wanted to wear it all the time, she came to be known as Little Red Cap.

One day her mother said to her, "Come Little Red Cap. Here is a piece of cake and a bottle of wine. Take them to your grandmother. She is sick and weak, and they will do her well. Mind your manners and give her my greetings. Behave yourself on the way, and do not leave the path, or you might fall down and break the glass, and then there will be nothing for your sick grandmother."

Little Red Cap promised to obey her mother. The grandmother lived out in the woods, a half hour from the village. When Little Red Cap entered the woods, a wolf came up to her. She did not know what a wicked animal he was, and was not afraid of him.

"Good day to you, Little Red Cap."

"Thank you, wolf."

"Where are you going so early, Little Red Cap?"

"To grandmother's."

"And what are you carrying under your apron?"

"Grandmother is sick and weak, and I am taking her some cake and wine. We baked yesterday, and they should give her strength."

"Little Red Cap, just where does your grandmother live?"

"Her house is a good quarter hour from here in the woods, under the three large oak trees. There's a hedge of hazel bushes there. You must know the place," said Little Red Cap.

The wolf thought to himself, "Now there is a tasty bite for me. Just how are you going to catch her?" Then he said, "Listen, Little Red Cap, haven't you seen the beautiful flowers that are blossoming in the woods? Why don't you go and take a look? And I don't believe you can hear how beautifully the birds are singing. You are walking along as though you were on your way to school in the village. It is very beautiful in the woods."

Little Red Cap opened her eyes and saw the sunlight breaking through the trees and how the ground was covered with beautiful flowers. She thought, "If I take a bouquet to grandmother, she will be very pleased. Anyway, it is still early, and I'll be home on time."

And she ran off into the woods looking for flowers. Each time she picked one she thought that she could see an even more beautiful one a little way off, and she ran after it, going farther and farther into the woods. But the wolf ran straight to the grandmother's house and knocked on the door.

"Who's there?"

"Little Red Cap. I'm bringing you some cake and wine. Open the door for me."

"Just press the latch," called out the grandmother. "I'm too weak to get up."

The wolf pressed the latch, and the door opened. He stepped inside, went straight to the grandmother's bed, and ate her up. Then he took her clothes, put them on, and put her cap on his head. He got into her bed and pulled the curtains shut.

Little Red Cap had run after flowers and did not continue on her way to grandmother's until she had gathered all that she could carry. When she arrived, she found, to her surprise, that the door was open. She walked into the parlor, and everything looked so strange that she thought, "Oh, my God, why am I so afraid? I usually like it at grandmother's." Then she went to the bed and pulled back the curtains. Grandmother was lying there with her cap pulled down over her face and looking very strange.

"Oh, grandmother, what big ears you have!"

"All the better to hear you with."

"Oh, grandmother, what big eyes you have!"

"All the better to see you with."

"Oh, grandmother, what big hands you have!"

"All the better to grab you with!"

"Oh, grandmother, what a horribly big mouth you have!"

"All the better to eat you with!" And with that he jumped out of bed, jumped on top of poor Little Red Cap, and ate her up. As soon as the wolf had finished this tasty bite, he climbed back into bed, fell asleep, and began to snore very loudly.

A huntsman was just passing by. He thought it strange that the old woman was snoring so loudly, so he decided to take a look. He stepped inside, and in the bed there lay the wolf that he had been hunting for such a long time. "He has eaten the grandmother, but perhaps she still can be saved. I won't shoot him," thought the huntsman. So he took a pair of scissors and cut open his belly.

He had cut only a few strokes when he saw the red cap shining through. He cut a little more, and the girl jumped out and cried, "Oh, I was so frightened! It was so dark inside the wolf's body!"

Little Red Cap

(continued)

And then the grandmother came out alive as well. Then Little Red Cap fetched some large heavy stones. They filled the wolf's body with them, and when he woke up and tried to run away, the stones were so heavy that he fell down dead.

The three of them were happy. The huntsman took the wolf's pelt. The grandmother ate the cake and drank the wine that Little Red Cap had brought. And Little Red Cap thought to herself, "As long as I live, I will never leave the path and run off into the woods by myself if mother tells me not to."

One week later, Little Red Cap was taking some baked things to her grandmother when another wolf spoke to her and wanted her to leave the path. But Little Red Cap took care and went straight to grandmother's. She told her that she had seen the wolf, and that he had wished her a good day but had stared at her in a wicked manner. "If we hadn't been on a public road, he would have eaten me up," she said.

"Come," said the grandmother. "Let's lock the door, so he can't get in."

Soon afterward the wolf knocked on the door and called out, "Open up, grandmother. It's Little Red Cap, and I'm bringing you some baked things."

They remained silent and did not open the door. The wicked one walked around the house several times and finally jumped onto the roof. He wanted to wait until Little Red Cap went home that evening, then follow her and eat her up in the darkness. But the grandmother saw what he was up to. There was a large stone trough in front of the house.

"Fetch a bucket, Little Red Cap," she said. "Yesterday I cooked some sausage. Carry the water that I boiled them with to the trough." Little Red Cap carried water until the large, large trough was clear full. The smell of sausage arose into the wolf's nose. He sniffed and looked down, stretching his neck so long that he could no longer hold himself, and he began to slide. He slid off the roof, fell into the trough, and drowned. And Little Red Cap returned home happily and safely.

Source: Kinder- und Hausmärchen, 1st ed. (Berlin, 1812), v. 1, no. 26.

The False Grandmother

France

Although this story was published later than both "Little Red Riding Hood" and "Little Red Cap," many elements in this story show it to have been an earlier version of the stories later edited and adapted by Charles Perrault and the Grimm Brothers. It was probably collected in the 1700s.

Once upon a time a girl was walking through the woods with a basket of goodies for her grandmother, when she met a wolf.

"Good day," said the wolf. "Where are you going so early in the morning?"

Now the girl did not know that the wolf was a wicked animal, so she told him that she was going to visit her grandmother, who lived on the other side of the woods. She continued merrily on her way. The wicked wolf ran on ahead and arrived at the grandmother's house before the girl. He crept inside, leaped on the poor grandmother, and ate her up, saving only a pitcher of blood and a piece of flesh. He then climbed into the grandmother's bed and waited for the girl. The girl soon arrived and knocked at the door.

"Just let yourself in," said the wolf, disguising his voice. "You must be hungry from your long walk through the woods. Do eat some of the meat that's on the kitchen table."

And the girl ate from her grandmother's flesh.

"You must be thirsty from your long walk through the woods. Do drink from the pitcher that's on the kitchen table."

And the girl drank from her grandmother's blood.

"You must be tired from your long walk through the woods. Do come to bed with me."

And the girl climbed into bed with the wolf.

She soon saw that it was not her grandmother in the bed with her, and she became frightened. Not knowing how else to escape, she said, "I have to go to the privy."

"You can just do it in the bed," answered the wicked wolf.

"I don't have to go little. I have to go big," said the girl.

"All right," said the wolf, "but hurry right back as soon as you are done."

The girl ran out of the house, and she ran past the privy, and she ran through the woods, and she did not stop until she was safely back at home.

Source: Retold from A. Millien, *Mélusine*, v. 3 (1886–87), col. 428–29.

Little Gold Cap

Ireland

As Little Red Riding Hood spread across Europe, storytellers in each country put their own twist on the tale. This story was first collected in the mid-1800s.

Once upon a time there was a little girl who had hair like midnight and blue eyes that sparkled like the stars. Her name was Lorna, and along with a loving mother and father, she had a grandmother who loved her very much. Grandmother had a wizened face and hair like snow. One day, her grandmother gave Lorna a beautiful golden and fire-colored wool cloak with a silver clasp.

“Wear this cloak, and it will always bring you good luck, Lorna, my dear,” said Grandmother. “I made it from Midsummer sunshine, the most magical beams of all.”

Lorna didn’t know what that all meant, she only knew that her grandmother loved her. But the people in town knew. The old woman was well known as a “wise woman.” If someone needed some good luck or needed a charm for love or rain, they would go to her. They all knew that the cloak had magic in its stitches.

One day Lorna’s mother asked her to take her grandmother a loaf of soda bread and buttermilk and a piece of simnel cake for dessert.

“I think you’re old enough to walk to your grandmother’s cottage alone, but mind your manners and remember to ask her how she is doing. Say “please” and “thank you” if she offers you faerie cakes and tea. Don’t dawdle on the way, and don’t talk to people you don’t know,” said her mother.

“Yes, mum,” said Lorna, and she set off, feeling very proud that her mother was letting her go at all.

Now her grandmother lived on the far side of a dark wood. It seemed a little scary, but Lorna tried to be brave. Then she heard a voice say, “Lorna, where are you going?”

Lorna turned to see a great black wolf stepping out of the shadows. The wolf licked his lips and thought of gobbling her up, but then he saw some farmers walking down the road. The wolf slipped back into the shadows once again.

“So you know my name, then,” said Lorna.

“Yes, I know all about you, and your family,” said the smooth-talking Wolf.

“Really? So you know my grandmother then, I’m going to visit her now,” said Lorna.

“Oh really, is that the grandmother who lives in the village?” said Wolf.

“Oh no, my grandmother lives at the bend in the river, and I’m taking her bread and buttermilk and cake,”

said Lorna. She didn’t know that it was bad luck to hear a wolf speak.

“Really,” said Wolf, “well on the way, be sure to look at all the beautiful flowers along the way.” And then he was gone.

Wolf took a shortcut through the woods to grandmother’s house. He knocked on the door. Toc! Toc! Toc!

No answer.

He knocked harder. TOC! TOC! TOC!

Nothing.

So he stood on his hind legs, pushed the latch, and opened the door. When he sneaked inside, he saw that no one was home. The bed lay unmade with the nightcap sitting on the pillow.

“Hmmm, I had hoped to eat up grandma first, but now I have the most delightful plan,” thought Wolf.

Wolf pulled all the blinds to darken the cottage and put on the nightcap and pulled the covers up to his chin.

When Lorna arrived and knocked on the door, a hoarse voice said “Come in.”

“Grandmother, do you have a cold? I’ve brought you some treats,” said Lorna.

“It’s just a little cold,” said Wolf, “but the light hurts my eyes. So come in and leave your basket and cloak on the table. Come closer so I can see you.”

Lorna put her basket on the table, but she didn’t take off her cloak. She kept the golden hood tight around her head. Something didn’t feel just right. In the darkness, “grandmother” didn’t look just right.

“Grandma, what big arms you have,” said Lorna.

“All the better to hug you with, come closer,” said Wolf.

Lorna inched a bit closer. “Grandma, what big ears you have,” said Lorna.

“All the better to hear you with, Lorna. But I am getting old, and it is harder and harder to hear. Come closer.”

Lorna inched closer. She got that prickly feeling on the back of her neck. Something was wrong. “Grandma, what big teeth you have,” said Lorna.

“All the better to EAT you with!” yelled Wolf, and he jumped from the bed.

Lorna ducked her head, crying “Mama, Mama!”

As Wolf bit down, all he caught was the hood. But then he fell back into the bed, howling and shaking his head as if his mouth were on fire. It was that

Little Gold Cap

(continued)

gold and fire-colored hood that had burned his tongue right down Wolf's throat. That hood really was magic, and now Wolf was paying the price for his trickery.

Wolf, blinded by tears and his throat on fire, rolled off the bed and tried to find the door, howling as if all the dogs in the county were on his heels. Just then, Grandmother arrived, carrying her herb sack over her shoulder. Seeing the wolf, she grabbed a fire poker and beat the wolf as he ran out the door. She chased him into the river, where the fast current took the wolf out to sea.

Then Grandmother went back to the cottage and helped Lorna calm her nerves and have a cup of tea. "Well, now without my little golden hood, where would you be now, my darling? In the belly of the wolf, no doubt."

And then to restore heart and legs to the child, she made her eat a good piece of simnel cake and drink a good draught of tea. Then she walked Lorna home. They talked all the way, and Lorna promised that she would never again talk to a wolf.

Lorna kept her word, and never again did she talk to wolves. And her grandmother's magic stayed with her. When she grew old and passed away calmly in her bed, the cloak transformed her into a delicate yellow flower, the boulián. In good weather, you can see these flowers dancing in the fields by the road.

Source: Joanne Asala, Celtic Tales of the Strange (New York: Sterling, 1997). Retold by Kevin Strauss.