

Readers Theater Fairy Tales
Hansel and Grettel Adapted from
The Blue Fairy Book by Andrew Lang

Characters Narrator 1, 2, 3, 4
Wood Cutter
Step Mother
Hansel
Grettel
Witch

Narrator 1

Once upon a time there dwelt on the outskirts of a large forest a poor woodcutter with his wife and two children. The boy was called Hansel and the girl Grettel. He had always little enough to live on, and once, when there was a great famine in the land, he couldn't even provide them with daily bread.

Narrator 2

One night, as he was tossing about in bed, full of cares and worry, he sighed and spoke to his wife.

Wood Cutter

What's to become of us? How are we to support our poor children, now that we have nothing more for ourselves?"

Step Mother

I'll tell you what, husband. Early tomorrow morning we'll take the children out into the thickest part of the wood. There we shall light a fire for them and give them each a piece of bread. Then we'll go on to our work and leave them alone. They won't be able to find their way home, and we shall thus be rid of them.

Wood Cutter

No, wife, that I won't do. How could I find it in my heart to leave my children alone in the wood? The wild beasts would soon come and tear them to pieces.

Step Mother

Oh! You fool. Then we must all four die of hunger, and you may just as well go and plane the boards for our coffins.

Hansel and Grettel

Narrator 3

She wouldn't leave him alone until he agreed.

Wood Cutter

But I can't help feeling sorry for the poor children.

Narrator 4 The children, too, had not been able to sleep for hunger, and had heard what their step-mother had said to their father. Grettel wept bitterly and spoke to Hansel.

Grettel

Now it's all up with us.

Hansel

No, no, Grettel, don't fret yourself. I'll be able to find a way to escape, no fear.

Narrator 1

And when the old people had fallen asleep he got up, slipped on his little coat, opened the back door and stole out. The moon was shining clearly, and the white pebbles which lay in front of the house glittered like bits of silver.

Narrator 2

Hansel bent down and filled his pocket with as many of them as he could cram in. Then he went back and said to Grettel:

Hansel

Be comforted, my dear little sister, and go to sleep. God will not desert us.

Narrator 3

At daybreak, even before the sun was up, the woman came and woke the two children.

Wife Get up, you lazy heads! We're all going to the forest to fetch wood.

Narrator 4

She gave them each a bit of bread.

Step Mother

There's something for your lunch, but don't you eat it up before, for it's all you'll get.

Narrator 1

On the way to the wood Hansel crumbled the bread in his pocket, and every few minutes he turned around and stood still, dropping a crumb of bread on the ground

Wood Cutter

Hansel, what are you stopping and looking about you for?

Hansel

I'm looking back at my little kitten, which is sitting on the roof waving me a farewell.

Step Mother

Fool! That isn't your kitten, it's the morning sun glittering on the chimney.

Narrator 1

But Hansel gradually threw all his crumbs on the path. The woman led the children still deeper into the forest farther than they had ever been in their lives before. Then a big fire was lit again.

Step Mother

Just sit down there, children, and if you're tired you can sleep a bit.

We're going into the forest to cut down wood, and in the evening when we're finished we'll come back to fetch you.

Narrator 2

At midday Grettel divided her bread with Hansel, for he had strewn his all along their path. Then they fell asleep, and evening passed away, but nobody came to the poor children. They didn't awake till it was pitch dark, and Hansel comforted his sister.

Hansel

Only wait, Grettel, till the moon rises, then we shall see the bread-crumbs I scattered along the path. They will show us the way back to the house.

Narrator 3

When the moon appeared they got up, but they found no crumbs, for the thousands of birds that fly about the woods and fields had picked them all up.

Hansel

Never mind, you'll see we'll find a way out

Narrator 4

But all the same they did not. They wandered about the whole night, and the next day, from morning till evening, but they could not find a path out of the wood. They were very hungry, too, for they had nothing to eat but a few berries they found growing on the ground. And at last they were so tired that their legs refused to carry them any longer, so they lay down under a tree and fell fast asleep.

Narrator 1

When they woke they saw a beautiful little snow-white bird sitting on a branch, which sang so sweetly that they stopped still and listened to it. When its song was finished it flapped its wings and flew on in front of them.

Narrator 2

They followed the bird and came to a little cottage that was made of candy. It had walls of bread and was roofed with cakes, while the window was made of transparent sugar.

Hansel

I'll eat a bit of the roof, and you, Grettel, can eat some of the window.

Narrator 4

As they began to eat the house they heard a shrill voice called out from the room inside:

Witch

Nibble, nibble, little mouse, Who's nibbling my house?

Grettel

Tis Heaven's own child, the tempest wild.

Narrator 2

Suddenly the door opened, and an ancient woman leaning on a staff hobbled out. Hansel and Grettel were so terrified that they let what they had in their hands fall, but the old woman shook her head.

Witch

Oh, ho! you dear children, who led you here? Just come in and stay with me, no ill shall befall you.

Narrator 3

She took them both by the hand and let them into the house, and laid a most sumptuous dinner before them—milk and sugared pancakes, with apples and nuts. After they had finished, two beautiful little white beds were prepared for them, and when Hansel and Grettel lay down in them they felt as if they had got into heaven.

Narrator 4

The old woman had appeared to be most friendly, but she was really an old witch who had waylaid the children, and had only built the little bread house in order to lure them in. When anyone came into her power she killed, cooked, and ate him, and held a regular feast-day for the occasion.

Narrator 1

Now witches have red eyes, and cannot see far, but, like beasts, they have a keen sense of smell, and know when human beings pass by. When Hansel and Grettel fell into her hands she laughed maliciously, and said jeeringly:

Witch

I've got them now; they won't escape me.

Narrator 2

Early in the morning, before the children were awake, she rose up, and when she saw them both sleeping so peacefully, with their round rosy cheeks, she muttered to herself: Witch That'll be a dainty bite.

Narrator 3

Then she seized Hansel with her bony hand and carried him into a little stable, and barred the door on him. Then she went to Grettel, shook her till she awoke.

Witch

Get up, you lazy-bones, fetch water and cook something for your brother. When he's fat I'll eat him up.

Narrator 4

Grettel began to cry bitterly, but it was of no use. She had to do what the wicked witch said. Every morning the old woman hobbled out to the stable.

Witch

Hansel, put out your finger, that I may feel if you are getting fat.

Narrator 1

But Hansel always stretched out a bone, and the old witch, whose eyes were dim, couldn't see it, and thinking always it was Hansel's finger, wondered why he fattened so slowly. When four weeks had passed and Hansel still remained thin, she lost patience and determined to wait no longer.

Witch

Hi, Grettel, be quick and get some water. Hansel may be fat or thin, tomorrow I'm going to eat him.

Narrator 2

Oh! How the poor little sister sobbed as she carried the water, and how the tears rolled down her cheeks!

Grettel

Kind heaven help us now! If only the wild beasts in the wood had eaten us, then at least we should have died together.

Witch

Just hold your peace, it won't help you.

Narrator 3

Early in the morning Grettel had to go out and hang up the kettle full of water, and light the fire.

Witch

First we'll bake. I've heated the oven already and kneaded the dough.

Narrator 4

She pushed Grettel out to the oven, from which fiery flames were already issuing.

Witch

Creep in, and see if it's properly heated, so that we can shove in the bread.

Narrator 1

For when she had got Grettel in she meant to close the oven and let the girl bake, that she might eat her up too. But Grettel perceived her intention. Grettel I don't know how I'm to do it. How do I get in?

Witch

You silly goose! The opening is big enough. See, I could get in myself.

Narrator 3

The witch crawled toward it, and poked her head into the oven. Then Grettel gave her a shove that sent her right in, shut the iron door, and drew the bolt. Grettel fled, and left old woman to her fate.

Narrator 4

Grettel flew straight to Hansel and opened the little stable-door.

Grettel

Hansel, we are free; the old witch is gone.

Narrator 1

Then Hansel sprang like a bird out of a cage when the door is opened. How they rejoiced and jumped for joy! They went in the old woman's house and found, in every corner of the room, boxes with pearls and precious stones.

Hansel

These are even better than pebbles. I will fill my pockets full with them.

Grettel

I too will bring something home. I will fill my apron full.

Hansel

But now, let's go and get out of this forest.

Narrator 1

When they finally made it home they burst in the house and hugged their father. The man had not passed a happy hour since he left them in the wood, but the woman step-mother had passed away.

Narrator 2

Grettel shook out her apron so that the pearls and precious stones rolled about the room, and Hansel threw down one handful after the other out of his pocket. All their troubles were ended, and they lived happily ever afterward.