Hansel and Gretel

The whole story, to read aloud



Once upon a time, at the edge of a great forest, there lived a poor woodcutter with his two children, Hansel and Gretel, and their stepmother. They were so poor that one night, there was nothing left to eat.

Hansel and Gretel were too hungry to sleep, and they heard their stepmother whispering. “Tomorrow, we will take the children deep into the forest, and leave them there. They will never find their way home.”

“No, wife!” said the woodcutter. “How can I leave my children alone in the forest?” “Then all four of us will go hungry!” said the stepmother.

“Oh, Hansel! What will become of us?” cried Gretel. “Don’t cry, Gretel,” said Hansel. “I will find a way.”



When everyone was asleep, Hansel crept outside. White pebbles glittered in the moonlight like silver coins, and he filled his pockets.

Next morning, as they walked into the forest, Hansel dropped the pebbles, one by one, along the path.

The children were left alone. But when the moon rose, the pebbles shone, and Hansel and Gretel followed them all the way home.

But soon, there was nothing to eat again. This time, the stepmother locked the door, and Hansel could not get out. So on the way into the forest, Hansel crumbled his bread, and dropped the crumbs along the path.



“Sit by the fire, children,” said the stepmother. “We’ll come back for you this evening.” But nobody came back.

When the moon rose, they looked for the crumbs. But the birds of the forest had eaten every one.

“Hansel, we’re lost!” said Gretel. “Don’t be afraid, Gretel,” said Hansel. “We shall soon find the way.” They walked all night, and all the next day, deeper and deeper into the woods.



On the third day, a snow-white bird sang to them from a branch. Then it flew away, and they followed it... to a little house made of gingerbread and cake, with windows of clear sugar!

“Look, Gretel! I’ll have a piece of the roof!” said Hansel. “And I’ll try the window!” said Gretel.

“Nibble, nibble, gnaw, who is nibbling at my little house?” called a voice. “The wind, the wind, the heaven-born wind!” said the children.



Suddenly, the door opened, and out crept a very, very old woman, leaning on a crutch. “Oh, you dear children! Come in, and stay with me. No harm shall happen to you.”

She gave them milk and pancakes, apples and nuts. Then she tucked them into two little beds, with clean white sheets.

But the old woman was really a wicked witch. She had built her house of gingerbread to catch children. “I have them! They shall not escape me again!”



In the morning, she grabbed Hansel, and shut him up in a cage. “Get up, lazy thing!” she cried to Gretel. “Cook something good for

your brother. When he is fat, I will eat him!" So poor Gretel cooked, and cried, and cooked.

"Hansel, stretch out your finger, so I may feel if you will soon be fat!" But clever Hansel held out a little chicken bone instead. The witch's eyes were so dim, she thought it was his finger. "Still so thin!"

Four weeks went by, and Hansel stayed thin. At last, the witch lost her patience. "Fat or thin, tomorrow I will cook him!"



"Creep in, Gretel, and see if the oven is hot enough for the bread." But Gretel knew what the witch was planning. "I don't know how. How do I get in?"

"Silly goose! The door is big enough. Look, I can get in myself!" The witch poked her head into the oven... and Gretel gave her a great push, slammed the iron door, and bolted it shut! And that was the end of the wicked witch.

"Hansel, we are saved! The wicked witch is gone!" cried Gretel. Hansel sprang out like a bird from a cage, and they hugged and danced for joy.

"These are far better than pebbles!" said Hansel. Hansel filled his pockets, and Gretel filled her apron, and they set off for home.



They ran and ran through the woods, until at last, the trees began to look familiar. And there was their father's house! They ran straight into his arms. Their father had not had one happy hour since they were gone. And the unkind stepmother had gone away, never to come back.

Gretel emptied her apron, and pearls and jewels rolled across the floor. They never went hungry again. And they all lived together, happily ever after.

Talk About It

1. What did Hansel drop on the path?
2. Who ate the bread crumbs?
3. What was the little house made of?
4. How did the pebbles help Hansel and Gretel get home?
5. Why did Hansel hold out a chicken bone?
6. How did Gretel trick the witch?

The storybook video and easy readers for children: printablescholar.com/classic-tales/hansel-and-gretel/