

Tales of Wolves and Little Girls

The fairy tale “Little Red Cap” and the short story “The Werewolf” use very similar themes and morals which are interpreted through the characters’ actions and introduced with common literary devices. In the fairy tale transcribed by the Brothers Grimm, the reader confronts a subtle life lesson that is usually taken for obvious and granted: do not trust strangers, even if they don’t look or sound dangerous. In “The Werewolf”, written by Angela Carter in 1997, a different yet similar moral is brought up: even those who are close to you can harm you. Both stories are derivatives of the oral tradition fairy tale that dates from the 16th century. The fairy tale “Little Red Cap” tells the story of a little girl who was sent to bring goods to her grandmother’s house. On her way there, she encounters a wolf that strikes up a conversation and manages to find out where she’s heading to by asking questions that blatantly reveal his intentions. In the short story, a young girl sets out to visit her grandmother and a wolf attacks her right away. The girl manages to cut off his paw and her grandmother turns out to be the werewolf that attacked her. In both stories, there are quite a few distinctive literary devices: allegory, antithesis, and ambiguity.

First and foremost, allegory and antithesis can be found in both tales. The wolf is a symbol for someone that can harm you when you’re young and innocent, either physically or mentally. In “Little Red Cap”, the girl is physically attacked by the wolf, and eaten. We can see that she does not endure severe mental injury after the huntsman saves her because she went back later in the story to bring more goods to her grandmother. Whereas in “The Werewolf”, the girl doesn’t go through physical harm but probably does live in a state of fear and trauma for the rest of her days. The last phrase

from the story is “Now the child lived in her grandmother's house; she prospered.”

(Carter 1) The reader can't know if she prospered mentally or physically. The fact that a person so close to her was a danger to her probably had a huge impact on her way of thinking about relatives. The antithesis persists with the protagonist being hurt by a stranger in one story and by a very close relative in the other.

Secondly, throughout both pieces, ambiguity makes the reader feel its presence. In "The Werewolf", the reason the grandmother turns out to be a werewolf is unknown. In "The Little Red Cap", one can ask himself how and why the huntsman randomly appeared. For instance, the reader can suppose that the huntsman has a certain vendetta against the wolf since he says “So I've found you at last, you old sinner” (Grimm 2). Authors love introducing ambiguity into their stories because it gets the reader thinking. The more a reader reflects upon the story when reading, the more interesting and meaningful the tale becomes. Overall, ambiguity is an excellent literary device to implement into one's writing as displayed in both analyzed stories.

In conclusion, the pieces examined brought forward many literary devices. However, they are used so briefly that it is nearly impossible for one to analyze them thoroughly. Some stand out particularly well, which lets the reader think about them while reading. By analysing them, one can notice the minor similarities subtly hidden in-between the differences. All in all, the stories' themes are very similar but they differ in morals, actions and values.

Works Cited

Carter, Angela. *The bloody chamber and other stories*. London: Vintage, 1995. Print.

Grimm, Jacob, Wilhelm Grimm, Lisbeth Zwerger, and Elizabeth D. Crawford. *Little Red Cap*. New York: William Morrow and, 1983. Print.