SOFTWARE & TECH

Roald Dahl Revolting Rhymes Little Red Riding Hood

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Introduction: A Grimm Twist on a Classic Tale

Few authors have dared to play with the expectations of classic fairy tales as boldly as Roald Dahl. In his masterful collection *Revolting Rhymes*, Dahl turns the saccharine world of the Brothers Grimm upside down with dark humor, sharp rhymes, and unexpected endings. Among the most memorable and subversive retellings in this collection is his take on **Roald Dahl Revolting Rhymes Little Red Riding Hood**. While the original story warns children about the dangers of trusting strangers, Dahl's version delivers a bloody, feminist, and hilarious punchline that has delighted readers for decades. This article will dive deep into this particular poem, exploring its plot twists, thematic underpinnings, literary significance, and why it remains a favorite for both children and adults.

The Plot of Dahl's Little Red Riding Hood

In the traditional fairy tale, Little Red Riding Hood is a naive girl who is deceived by a wolf disguised as her grandmother. She is saved by a huntsman, who cuts her and her grandmother out of the wolf's belly. Dahl, however, begins his poem with a familiar setup but quickly veers off course. His Little Red Riding Hood is no damsel in distress. She enters the cottage, mistakes the wolf for her grandmother (noting the silly granny voice), and then—rather than being eaten—she pulls a pistol from her knickers and shoots the wolf dead. The poem explicitly states: "The small girl smiles. One eyelid flickers. She whips a pistol from her knickers."

But Dahl doesn't stop there. In a further twist, Little Red Riding Hood skins the wolf and uses its fur to make a coat. Even more shockingly, she later encounters another wolf while walking home—and she ends up shooting that wolf as well, adding the new pelt to her collection. The poem concludes with the heroine wearing a "lovely wolfskin coat" and walking proudly through the forest, unafraid. This radical rewriting transforms a victim into a victorious predator, a change that aligns perfectly with Dahl's signature blend of macabre humor and empowerment.

Subverting Fairy Tale Conventions

The Role of Violence and Humor

One of the defining features of **Roald Dahl Revolting Rhymes Little Red Riding Hood**is its use of cartoonish violence. Unlike the sanitized versions many children are told today, Dahl's story does not shy away from blood and death. However, the violence is delivered in such a rhythmic, rhyming, and absurd manner that it becomes comical rather than traumatic. Dahl employs a playful tone, with lines like "She whips a pistol from her knickers" evoking giggles rather than gasps. This approach allows readers to engage with dark themes from a safe, humorous distance, a technique that made Dahl's work both controversial and beloved.

Feminist Subtext: Little Red as a Hero

The most striking aspect of Dahl's version is the agency of the protagonist. Where the traditional Little Red Riding Hood is passive and rescued, Dahl's Red is proactive and resourceful. She carries a weapon, she uses it effectively, and she repurposes the wolf's skin as a fashion statement. This reworking gives young readers, especially girls, a model of cleverness and self-reliance. Dahl subtly mocks the idea that a little girl needs a huntsman to save her—she can save herself, thank you very much. This feminist layer is one reason why the poem remains culturally relevant, often cited in discussions of empowering fairy tale retellings.

Comparison to the Original Story and Other Revolting Rhymes

Dahl's collection *Revolting Rhymes* includes six well-known tales: Cinderella, Jack and the Beanstalk, Snow White, Goldilocks, Little Red Riding Hood, and The Three Little Pigs. Each poem subverts its source material in unique ways. For instance, in his version of "The Three Little Pigs," the wolf is outsmarted by the pig in a surprisingly gruesome manner, and in "Cinderella," the prince is revealed to be a shallow buffoon. However, the Little Red Riding Hood poem stands out because it completely reverses the power dynamic. While other characters in the collection often rely on outside help or luck, Red acts entirely on her own initiative. This self-sufficiency makes the **Roald Dahl Revolting Rhymes Little Red Riding Hood**poem arguably the most empowering in the book.

The Poetic Style and Language

Dahl's choice to write in rhyming couplets enriches the reading experience. The meter is bouncy and accessible, mimicking the narrative style of children's poetry while introducing sophisticated vocabulary and unexpected phrasing. For example, Dahl writes: "The wolf began to lick his lips / And thought, 'I'll have a tasty sip.'" The simple rhyme scheme makes the story easy to memorize and recite, increasing its appeal to young audiences. At the same time, Dahl uses words like "wicked" and "deceitful" to add a layer of moral commentary. Moreover, the poem's rhythm builds tension and then releases it with the sudden, shocking resolution—a classic comedic technique. The language is deliberately crude in places (like the mention of "knickers"), which adds to the irreverent tone that children adore and some adults find cheeky.

Themes and Lessons: What Children (and Adults) Can Take Away

- Self-reliance over victimhood: The story teaches that you don't need a hero to save you—you can be your own hero. This is a powerful, timeless message for readers of all ages.
- Questioning authority: Dahl encourages readers to look critically at traditional stories and ask, "What if the girl fought back?" This critical thinking skill is invaluable in analyzing narratives both fictional and real.
- Humor as a coping mechanism: By wrapping dark events in laughter, Dahl demonstrates how humor can defuse fear and make difficult topics approachable.
- Consequences for predators: In Dahl's world, the wolf does not get away; he is shot and turned into a coat. This satisfies a deep sense of justice that children naturally crave.

While some parents may worry about the violence, many educators argue that Dahl's version provides a safe outlet for exploring danger and power. The poem never feels truly sinister because the heroine is always in control. Indeed, **Roald Dahl Revolting Rhymes Little Red Riding Hood**is often used in classrooms to discuss narrative perspective, character agency, and the art of parody.

Cultural Impact and Legacy

Since its publication in 1982, *Revolting Rhymes* has become a staple of children's literature. The Little Red Riding Hood segment has inspired stage adaptations, an animated television special in 2016 (produced by

Magic Light Pictures), and countless lesson plans. The image of Little Red Riding Hood with a pistol has become iconic—a symbol of the disruptive power of parody. This retelling has also influenced other authors and filmmakers who have since created their own spirited fairy tales, from a generation of writers who refuse to treat classic stories as sacred texts.

In the 2016 animated adaptation, the poem was brought to life with narration by Dominic West and illustrations that capture Dahl's whimsical yet dark tone. The short film won acclaim for its faithful, energetic rendition of the text. It introduced a new generation to the joys of **Roald Dahl Revolting Rhymes Little Red Riding Hood**, proving that even decades after its first printing, the story has not lost its bite.

How to Read Revolting Rhymes with Children

If you are a parent or teacher considering sharing this poem with children, approach it as an opportunity for discussion. The violence is not graphic in a realistic sense—it is presented through rhyme and cartoonish imagery. Still, it's wise to read the poem together and talk about why Dahl chose to write it this way. Ask questions like: *"How is this Red different from the one in the original story?"* or *"Why do you think she makes a coat out of the wolf?"*Such discussions deepen comprehension and critical thinking. The poem is best suited for children ages 5 and up, though older readers will also appreciate the sarcastic humor and literary references. Adults may catch subtle jabs at the traditional fairy tale's morality, making it a crossover hit for family reading time.

Conclusion: Why This Retelling Endures

Roald Dahl's *Revolting Rhymes* offers a brilliant, irreverent antidote to the saccharine fairy tales we know by heart. The **Roald Dahl Revolting Rhymes Little Red Riding Hood**poem, in particular, showcases everything that makes Dahl's work timeless: clever wordplay, subversive storytelling, a fierce heroine, and an unapologetic sense of fun. By giving Red a pistol and a confident smirk, Dahl rewrites not just the story but also the cultural narrative about what little girls can do. The wolf, once a symbol of terror, becomes a mere fashion accessory in the hands of a resourceful child. Whether you revisit this poem as a nostalgic adult or discover it for the first time with a young reader, it remains a thrilling reminder that sometimes the best tales are the ones that don't end happily ever after—they end with a bang.

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