

LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD

CHARLES PERRAULT

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

- Charles Perrault, (born January 12, 1628, Paris, France—died May 15/16, 1703, Paris)
- French poet, prose writer, and storyteller, a leading member of the Académie Française, who played a prominent part in a literary controversy known as the quarrel of the Ancients and Moderns.
- He is best remembered for his collection of fairy stories for children, *Contes de ma mère l’oye* (1697; *Tales of Mother Goose*).
- He began to win a literary reputation in about 1660 with some light verse and love poetry and spent the rest of his life in promoting the study of literature and the arts.
- In 1671 he was elected to the Académie Française, which soon was sharply divided by the dispute between the Ancients and the Moderns. Perrault supported the Moderns, who believed that, as civilization progresses, literature evolves with it and that therefore ancient literature is inevitably more coarse and barbarous than modern literature.
- His poem “The Age of Louis the Great”(1687) set such modern writers as Molière and François de Malherbe above the Classical authors of Greece and Rome.
- His chief opponent in this controversy was Nicolas Boileau.
- Perrault’s stand was a landmark in the eventually successful revolt against the confines of the prevailing tradition.



- ▶ In 1695, when he was sixty-seven years old, Perrault lost his post as secretary. It was at this point that he decided to dedicate himself to his children and began writing stories, inspired by the old oral traditions of French and European folklore.
- ▶ He laid the foundations for a new literary genre, the fairy tale, with his works derived from earlier folk tales, published in his 1697 book “Stories or Tales from Past Times, with Morals” subtitled “Tales of Mother Goose”
- ▶ Perrault’s fairy stories in Mother Goose were written to amuse his children.
- ▶ They include “Little Red Riding Hood,” “The Sleeping Beauty,” “Puss in Boots,” and “Bluebeard,” modern versions of half-forgotten folk tales, which Perrault retold in a style that is simple and free from affectation.
- ▶ This "Mother Goose" has never been identified as a person, but used to refer to popular and rural storytelling traditions in proverbial phrases of the time.
- ▶ Some of Perrault's versions of old stories influenced the German versions published by the [Brothers Grimm](#) more than 100 years later. The stories continue to be printed and have been adapted to opera, ballet, theatre, and film.
- ▶ Perrault had written Little Red Riding Hood as a warning to readers about men preying on young girls walking through the forest.
- ▶ He concludes his fairy tale with a moral, cautioning women and young girls about the dangers of trusting men.
- ▶ He states, "Watch out if you haven't learned that tame wolves/ Are the most dangerous of all".
- ▶ Perrault warns the readers about the manipulation and false appearances some men portray: "I say Wolf, for all wolves are not of the same sort; there is one kind with an amenable disposition – neither noisy, nor hateful, nor angry, but tame, obliging and gentle, following the young maids in the streets, even into their homes. Alas! Who does not know that these gentle wolves are of all such creatures the most dangerous!"
- ▶ Indeed, in Perrault's version, the girl gets into bed with the wolf and is devoured, lacking the happy ending found in most current versions of the story.