

# RED RIDING HOOD - STORY ARC & CHARACTER ARC

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Understanding the STORY ARC to understand the CHARACTER ARC

## EXPOSITION (Who, What, Where, When)

Who - Little Red Riding Hood or Little Red, who always wears a red hood or cap made by her Grandmother. She is deeply loved by and deeply loves her Grandmother. She is given the responsibility of taking food and drink to her sick Grandmother through what is labeled in the story as a fairly risky walk through the (where) "woods". "Don't talk to strangers" says her mother as she foreshadows the inciting incident that puts her own, and her Grandma's life at great risk. This character starts as a responsible, naive, helpful youth, ready to help someone she loves. Her **OBJECTIVE**: No matter what happens, help Grandma.

## RISING ACTION (INCITING INCIDENT/EVENT)

Red meets "the wolf" half way to Grandma's house. If the wolf had a name, we might care more about the character, but the intention of the story is to keep the wolf threatening. The wolf is also the ANTAGONIST to Red's PROTAGONIST. The Antagonist is in the story to change the protagonist. (In the end the wolf makes Red more aware of herself, her intuition and the world around her, helping her develop a heroic character arc.)

## RISING ACTION (EVENT)

Perhaps because the wolf is hungry the wolf cosies up to Red and uses charm and opportunity to befriend her believing Red is weak because she is trusting and kind. Red confides in the wolf and even confesses that she must unlatch the door herself as her Grandmother is ill in bed. Red offers The Wolf some of Grandmother's food, but the wolf declines, stating they have something much better planned for later and wouldn't want to fill up on treats. The wolf distracts Red by pointing out the beautiful flowers off the path, and wouldn't those blooms be perfect for Grandmother?

## RISING ACTION (EVENT)

The temptation of the flowers could also be considered the **OBSTACLE**. Red must work through her desire to stop and smell the roses and stay on task to help her Grandmother. With Red distracted by the glorious flowers, the wolf gallops off to Grandmother's house and mimics Red's voice and gives personal information to gain entrance, lifts the latch, heads straight for the bed and swallows Grandma whole.

## CLIMAX

The wolf pivots for a moment, realizing Grandma and her glasses and outfit are in the belly and comes up with appropriate Grandma wear as a disguise to fool Red, then jumps athletically into the bed, just as Red is at the door, announcing herself and lifting the latch. As Red approaches Grandma's bed she notices something is different (in what we would call a red flag in today's world) and asks the wolf the three famous questions that also tie into the senses. Oh Grandma what big eyes you have, to which the wolf replies: "All the better to see you with my dear". Then, oh Grandma what big ears you have! "All the better to hear you with my dear" where at this point Red should have been looking and listening a lot deeper.

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**CLIMAX (Continued)** Finally Red says: “Oh Grandmother, what a big mouth you have, which causes the wolf to put their mouth to work and either swallow Red as well, or attack her in such a way that she must retaliate or rely on someone to save her.

## **FALLING ACTION (EVENT)**

The story varies here, depending on which one you read. Either Red gets swallowed up by the wolf and rescued by a “passing” woodcutter or laundress’, which means she is the “saved” victim or damsel in distress who learns from her mistakes (Gosh, I’ll never do that again! Sorry Grandma!) or she saves herself by slaying the wolf - and takes a hero’s journey (Now I understand the ways of the wolf! I have saved us both Grandmother, and perhaps others who would have fallen victim to the wolf, and we are bonded even deeper than before. Boom!)

## **DENOUEMENT/RESOLUTION/END**

Grandma is saved and strangely enough no worse for the wear. If Red has done the saving she has transitioned from a naive youth to a responsible, strong and aware human who is now more deeply connected to her Grandmother, self and community. She has learned lessons about “veering off the designated path”, talking to strangers and listening to her mother.

## **MARY COMMENTS**

You may see I took some liberties with this story and filled in some of the parts with my imagination. That’s the fun part! By understanding the character arc (a naive and seemingly weak youth helping her Grandmother and easily distracted too “slayer of wolves” believes more deeply in their senses, themselves and how to navigate a sometimes dangerous world, we begin to be able to play and understand a character’s journey as an actor and a reader.