

Module 1

Little Red Riding Hood by Agha Shahid Ali

Little Red Riding Hood is a poem by Agha Shahid Ali. It reworks a children's story of Little Red Riding Hood and gives it a new meaning. In this poem Agha Shahid Ali gives the idea how villains and heroes are created. How stories make us believe certain things that we need to rethink.

The original story is as under:

Once upon a time, there was a little girl who lived in a village near the forest. Whenever she went out, the little girl wore a red riding cloak, so everyone in the village called her Little Red Riding Hood. One morning, Little Red Riding Hood went to visit her grandmother as it had been awhile since they'd seen each other. As she was on her way suddenly, a wolf appeared beside her.

Then she realized how late she was and quickly excused herself, rushing down the path to her Grandma's house. The wolf, in the meantime, took a shortcut. The wolf, a little out of breath from running, arrived at Grandma's and knocked lightly at the door.

The wolf let himself in. Poor Granny did not have time to say another word, before the wolf gobbled her up! The wolf let out a satisfied burp, and then poked through Granny's wardrobe to find a nightgown that he liked. He added a frilly sleeping cap, and for good measure, dabbed some of Granny's perfume behind his pointy ears.

A few minutes later, Red Riding Hood knocked on the door. The wolf jumped into bed and pulled the covers over his nose. "Who is it?" he called in a cackly voice.

Almost too late, Little Red Riding Hood realized that the person in the bed was not her Grandmother, but a hungry wolf.

She ran across the room and through the door, shouting, "Help! Wolf!" as loudly as she could.

A woodsman who was chopping logs nearby heard her cry and ran towards the cottage as fast as he could.

He grabbed the wolf and made him spit out the poor Grandmother who was a bit frazzled by the whole experience, but still in one piece. The grandmother was saved and the wolf got killed.

1. What does the poet mean by the expression : 'grant me my sense of history'?

By saying 'grant me my sense of history' Agha Shahid Ali means that there is no single history and that history like fiction can be seen through many perspectives. The entire plot and the meaning of the story changes depending on who is telling their version of story. In the poem the children's story is retold this time from the perspective of the wolf who is a villain in the original story. We're very much accustomed to the nature of fairy tales and how their plots unfold. There is an innocent main character with a large heart. An evil figure comes to his life and ruins everything and he has to put things back the way they were. It's quite black and white but these days, fairytales are

being adapted in a way that make the colors blur creating this gray area whether the antagonist was truly and simply evil or if he had another side to the story.

2. Why didn't the wolf gobble her up right there in the jungle?

The Wolf did not gobble Red Robin Hood right there in the Woods. Agha Shahid Ali wants to bring in focus how we are conditioned to think in a particular way. By bringing the fact to focus that the Wolf did not eat Red Ridding Hood Ali wants to bring to focus that the plot of the story is important. Where do we start the story and where do we end it also changes the meaning of the story. It also changes the way in which we make us rethink who the villain is and who the hero is.

3. How does the Woolf Justify the ending of the fairy tale?

By retelling the fairy tale Ali brings a new perspective before the readers who have grown up listening to the story. The message behind the fairy tale is reworked and retold. Ali brings in the perspective of the Wolf. Little Red Riding Hood is actually about young girls (Red) who fall victim to predators or men (Wolf) and the danger this leads them. It shows that it is in fact the men who act the kindest (in the story, when Wolf dresses as Red's grandmother) are the most dangerous predators of all. While it is interesting how new works bring a gray area to classic works, it's also important to note that Wolf did more harm and committed more mistake than Red ever did. The persona says that he did it for posterity but readers also know that he did it because of hunger and temptation. He says "But I'm no child-molester though you'll agree she was pretty." The fact that the persona ended it in this note and even noticed it in the first place means that desire was definitely a factor into his actions in the fairy tale. The poem has a very casual, defensive, and matter-of-fact tone that uses logic to defend himself and the mood follows suit making readers really think about who is right and wrong in the classic fairy tale.

Match the following :

Attorney-General

Eye -Opener

Self-Assured

Bull's -Eye