



# Hansel and Gretel

Learning from Mistakes, Discipline

A story from a collection of fairy tales compiled by the Brothers Grimm.

The story is about two siblings who get lost in a forest and come across a gingerbread house. However, they have no idea yet that there is a danger waiting for them: an evil witch.



🕒 17 min

😊 3+

**Once upon a time, there was a little house** on the edge of a deep, dark forest. A very poor family lived in it. The father was a lumberjack, and the mother was a seamstress. They had two children named Hansel and Gretel. The father wasn't home very often. He had to go to the king's forest to chop down trees to make bridges for the kingdom. And as we all know, chopping down enough trees to build a proper bridge can take **a very long time**. To save money, he would sleep on the ground in the forest. To stay in the dark forest at night all alone he had to be incredibly brave. Luckily he was a lumberjack, and they are very brave indeed. Every night, he would start a **big fire to drive away** the wild animals with leaping flames that crackled and danced in the dark. But even this didn't feel nearly enough sometimes, such as when he heard the cry of a pack of hungry, **howling wolves**. As payment for his hard work, the lords let him take as much wood from the forest as he needed so that his family wouldn't freeze in winter and could have enough heat to cook their dinner.

While father was away, mother would make clothes for the wealthy. She was an excellent seamstress, but because they couldn't afford to buy a sewing machine, she had to sew by hand. Her fingers were all pricked as she often had to sew at night, by the light of the dim lamp. The needle would slip and **prick her finger** when she couldn't see properly in the flickering light. During the day, mother took care of the household and kids. Everything fell upon her shoulders when father **was in the forest**. Like her husband, she got no money in return for the beautiful clothes she made, but the wealthy would let her take leftovers from feasts, and so the family had food.

Hansel and Gretel helped their parents with everything. Hansel carefully mended their old cooking pots by patching up the holes, because they didn't have any money for new ones. **He dreamt of visiting every town** and village he could reach on foot, and making his fortune mending pots. He would

travel the world, and maybe even make some money to bring back home. Gretel mostly cleaned and helped mother in the kitchen. Her dream was to make cakes and pies and sell them at the fair. But she was still too young for it. Sometimes the kids even had time to play in the meadow by the forest. They played hide-and-seek and tag, and when the sun set, they liked to listen to the familiar **hooting of an owl** that watched them every day from its favourite tree.

One day, Father fell very sick. A week passed and he still couldn't get up from his bed. Soon they started to run out of firewood and it got cold in the house all at once. The family couldn't even cook. Hansel couldn't stand seeing his parents so worried but he didn't know how to help.

**One morning he decided**, "This time I'll go to the forest for the wood so that we don't all freeze to death." Mother wouldn't hear of it. Hansel could get lost, she said, and never find his way back home. It was too dangerous! Father agreed: Hansel was not old enough to go into the forest alone.

Gretel didn't hesitate and quickly said, "If Hansel goes, I'll go with him. Together, we'll be safer, and I can pick some forest berries and mushrooms. We can dry them and eat them through the winter!"

After a long conversation, their parents agreed to let them go into the forest.

"Don't worry, Mama, we'll be back home by sunset," Hansel assured her worried mother, as she hugged her goodbye. And so the siblings set out to the forest. Jolly crickets' **chirping in the grass** made them company all the way long. In the forest, Hansel collected wood while Gretel picked the wild strawberries growing right by the path. There were so many of them, but the further they grew from the path, the bigger they were, so Gretel had to leave the path to get the best ones. Suddenly, she realised that she was all alone, deep in the forest, and very scared.

"Hanseel, Hanseel!" **she cried out.**

Hansel could hear Gretel calling him from far away. He dropped all the wood from his back onto the ground and rushed off in search of his sister. The

song of crickets started to fade because not even they dared to go that deep into the forest. Then, as if on purpose, all of a sudden the sun hid behind the clouds and it started **raining heavily**.

“Hansel? Hansel!” The boy could still hear desperate cries coming from somewhere in the depths of the forest.

Hansel’s desperate search wasn’t a success for a long time. The rain finally stopped, but the sun had gone away, and in its place shone only the pale light of a full moon. By the time he found Gretel, the sky was **completely dark**. Luckily, there was at least some moonlight shining through the trees so they could see their feet. They were tired and starving, and they wandered through the forest, trying to find the way back home.

Suddenly, they noticed a flashing light in the distance. It looked exactly like the little lamp they had **in their kitchen back home!** Excited, they ran toward it, but as they got closer, they learnt that the building it was coming from was in fact nothing like their house, but instead was a strange little cottage covered in gingerbread. They could smell the sweetness all around, and of course you can imagine what that smell would do to hungry kids! They immediately started breaking off pieces and hungrily eating them. After a few moments, they heard the sound of the door **squeaking open**.

A sweet little old lady came out and said, “My dear little children, why won’t you come in and rest for a bit? You look lost and tired”

“Thank you, kind lady, but we can’t,” said Hansel. “Mama and papa must be so worried about us, we need to rush home”

“In the middle of the night? Don’t be silly! Stay here overnight and then you can set off in the morning” The old lady smiled and waved them into the house.

Hansel and Gretel were knackered, so they had no choice but to agree and follow the old lady into the cottage. As soon as they lay down in bed, they fell fast asleep.

But when Hansel woke up in the morning, he looked around, surprised to see that he wasn't in a bed anymore, but locked in a cage! Through a small hole in it, he could see Gretel cleaning. The sweet old lady wasn't sweet, after all, but a mean **old witch**. Hansel heard her scream at Gretel to sweep faster and better, and after a few minutes tell her to bring Hansel food.

Gretel quietly approached the cage and whispered, "Hansel, it's even worse than you think! I heard the witch mutter to herself that she wants to fatten you up and then throw you in her oven and roast you and eat you. And I'm supposed to serve her and do everything she orders me to do."

Hansel tried **rattling the door of the cage**, desperate to get out as fast as possible. However, the cage was too strong and he couldn't move the door even a little bit.

"I have to go," Gretel whispered through the cage. "But when the witch returns, she'll want you to stick out a finger to see if you're fat enough yet. Stick out this bone I brought you instead."

And that is exactly what happened. After a while, the witch came to the cage and told Hansel to stick out his finger. Hansel held out the thin bone. The witch pinched it, shook her head, and ordered Gretel to bring him more cakes. For weeks and weeks, Hansel ate plenty but only showed the witch the little bone he got from his sister. The witch didn't notice because the cage was in a dark chamber, so she never realised that Hansel was **fooling her**.

One day, the witch lost her patience and ordered Gretel to make a strong fire in the oven.

Gretel already sensed what was going on, so she immediately rushed to her brother.

"Oh, Hansel, this is very bad indeed!" she whispered. "The witch wants to roast you and eat you tonight!"

"Don't be afraid, Gretel. I'll make something up," Hansel said.

When the oven was burning hot, the witch came into the chamber and **opened Hansel's cage.**

"Hello, Hansel, dear. Why don't you come with me so I can show you something," she said, sweetly.

Hansel obeyed her and crept out. There was already a **crackling fire in the oven** and some kind of sauce bubbling **in a pot on the stove.**

"Hansel, my sweet, why don't you climb up and put some more wood in the stove so we can warm the room up a little," she said, slyly.

Hansel tried to climb up to the door several times, but each time he slipped and fell on purpose.

"I can't seem to do it," he said to the witch. "Can you show me how to climb up there?"

The witch grumbled something to herself, took a log, climbed up to the door, and then, right when she was about to throw it on the fire, Hansel and Gretel pushed her into the oven. The oven banged shut and rumbled, flames shot out **of the chimney**, and, with a loud popping sound, the witch disappeared along with her magic.

The happy children whooped and jumped on the old wooden floor in celebration. Suddenly Hansel broke an old board and his leg got stuck.

"Wait, I'll get you out," Gretel said, and started pulling on Hansel's leg as hard as she could.

Once they had managed to free his leg, they noticed a **hiding space under the floor.** They tore off even more boards, which were quite loose already, and then they saw it. The witch had a secret cellar under the floor and there was a chest hidden in it! It was very heavy, but together they managed to pull it out, and when they **opened it**, the whole cottage lit up from the light sparkling off the glittering and gleaming jewels inside. The children had never seen such beauty in their lives. Gold coins, pearls, rings, and all kinds

of treasure. They took as much as they could carry and left to find their way home. When they saw their old friend, the owl, hopping from tree to tree, as if showing them the way, they decided to follow.

“The wise old owl is bound to know where home is,” the children thought. And they were right. After a while, Hansel thought the forest looked familiar. Then they saw their own house and ran to it as fast as they could. They hugged their parents **over and over**.

“Mama, can you bring a bowl from the kitchen?” Hansel asked.

His mother didn’t understand why he would need an empty bowl. But she went to the kitchen, took a bowl and put it on the table. The children walked to the table, smiling, and **poured all the treasure** they had found in the witch’s lair into the bowl.

Mama and Papa were shocked, but after Hansel and Gretel told their parents the whole story, they all knew that their family was extremely lucky. **Hansel and Gretel had saved themselves** by beating the witch with their smarts, and saved the family with the found treasure to boot!