

Real and Fake

A Rewrite of the Well-Known Fairy Tale “Little Red Riding Hood”

Kai Su¹

Writing across the University of Alberta, 2020
Volume 1, Issue 1, pp. 29-34
Published November 2020

Introduction

This paper is an example of an assignment that called for a rewrite of a traditional fairy tale for a different audience. In no more than 500 words, students had to re-imagine a fairy tale of their choice and make grammatical and rhetorical choices that would speak to their chosen audience. Next, students had to describe their writing process and indicate what they learned about their language and genre knowledge as a result of their rewrite.

“Real and Fake” is a rewrite of “The Little Red Riding Hood.” The student, Kai Su, decided to turn it into a horror story.

Keywords: Rewriting, peer review, fairy tale, audience



This work is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 4.0. To view a copy of this license, visit <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0>.

¹ Correspondence: ksu2@ualberta.ca.

Part 1: The Story

Little Red Riding Hood woke up on the edge of a swamp. “Where am I?” she asked herself. Looking around with frightened eyes, she found herself trapped in a grimy swamp, surrounded by various creepy shapes of dying trees and overgrown weeds.

Even though she was still weak from waking up, Little Red Riding Hood forced herself to stand up so that she could escape from this wicked swamp. All of a sudden, she remembered something. Before losing awareness, she had been stooping in an alluring forest to pick up flowers. The flowers were for her sick Grandma. A basket fell to her feet, which had food and wine that her Mom had prepared for Grandma.

She lifted the cover above the basket and became grossed out. Everything – the wine, the eggs, and the cake – were all rotten. More than twenty maggots lay on the bad food and sucked the juice greedily. The sky began to get dark, and the wind screamed. “No, I can’t stay here any longer. Grandma must be worried that I still haven’t arrived yet,” she said to herself. In the midst of the breeze, she trembled like a falling leaf.

Only a scattering sunset appeared over the ground, resulting in the sky becoming a chilling dark blue. Little Red Riding Hood could not think properly because she was too frightened. She walked and walked toward Grandma’s cottage, without drinking even one drop of water. When she almost gave up, hopefulness arrived. Like a light at the end of the tunnel, there appeared to be a warm glow that pulled her toward it. How lucky! It turned out the house behind the light was actually Grandma’s. Little Red couldn’t wait to get there. She just wanted Grandma’s comfort. Familiar fence, familiar yard. She was home now.

The door had been left unlocked, and she heard the sound of the inside. Grandma was talking to someone, and they seemed to have a pleasant conversation. “Who is that?” she was curious. Then she heard a sweet voice inside, “Dear Grandma, here is the cake and wine.” Little Red Riding Hood couldn’t be more astonished by this calling “Grandma.” Without thinking, she straightly rushed inside. Grandma was lying on the bed. “Grandma!” Little Red Riding Hood called aloud, with tears on her face. But Grandma didn’t even see her. “Why?” she asked desperately. “Grandma, the cake is cut into small pieces. Please try them,” said the sweet voice from the kitchen. Little Red Riding Hood turned her head around and saw herself: the same outfit, the same appearance, the same everything. The other Little Red Riding Hood went to Grandma’s bed without paying any attention to the other Little Red Riding Hood. She wanted to prevent the fake one from lying to her Grandma, but she could not do anything. Finally, she gave up trying and slumped on the floor. The other little Red

Riding Hood turned her head around and looked into her eyes with a weird smile. The face was not her face, but one of a wolf.

Part 2: The Story of the Story

In my understanding, rewriting a piece of literature is not just a matter of deleting and switching words. The foundation of a good rewriting should be built on the creator's thorough reading comprehension. Then the work should sharply showcase the writer's creativity. To rewrite for the chosen audience – horror fans – I changed the old genre and made considerable adaptations upon the structure, the timeline, and other writing aspects. When conducting the massive engineering in writing, I was concerned that if I changed the original text too much, readers would question the new story's rationality. Why not just start a brand-new work? What is the connection between the two versions? Due to the original story's dark nature, I was inclined to continue to complete the story in the genre of horror.

First, the “Little Red Riding Hood” is never just a children's literature read for pleasure. It is rooted in a dark oral tradition with many negative interpretations throughout history, such as implying rape and abduction. Furthermore, in my opinion, the story has the potential for turning into dark and horrific when removing fairy tale conventions like simple language and happy endings. For instance, the image of the Little Red can be altered. In the fairy tale, at least in the version that I have read, Little Red is intentionally depicted as pure and adorable. The writer portrays her prettiness time and again. No matter where she lives, and no matter what she wears, she is always bound to the word “pretty.” However, the notion of “pretty” in horror can mean something else entirely. In the genre of horror, including films, literature, and fiction, the usage of “pretty” children can be manipulated into one that gives the audience a menacing feel. Considering the audience's preference, I abandoned the emphasis on her cuteness in the original text. Then I tried to accentuate her fearfulness and helplessness to entertain the new audience. Lastly, I chose to rewrite the story into horror because I wanted to construct a contrast between the old and new versions for the audience. The contrast that I have constructed is hope against despair. By doing this, I have created a version of the “Little Red Riding Hood” that leaves the readers in fear of the unknown.

When it comes to writing, I have difficulties expressing my ideas. The first obstacle that I encountered was that I didn't create a successful climax until the end. In other words, the new plot was too plain. I asked four people to listen to my ideas and/or read my new story, and they all expressed the same concern that my story was not scary enough. When revising, I rewrote the plot occurring at the end again by adding a suspension before the truth is revealed. In my earlier rewrite, Little Red didn't stop at the door and did not hear the

voice from the inside; instead, she directly entered the house and found that the wolf was lying on the bed. From others' feedback, I learned that this arrangement was not as effective as I expected, and as a result, the plot became too straightforward. Therefore, in the final version, I decided to highlight the process of the little girl's mental change – from happy to astonished, then frightened – in preparation for the coming of the last scene.

Another difficulty I had while creating the story was to re-style the fairy tale language into a scary tone. The language of fairy tales is simplified and undetailed because it is written for children. The benefit of applying this style is to emphasize the events and actions over the characters' emotions, which suits a juvenile audience. Young readers tend to avoid works with abundant fantastic and difficult words, and as a result, they can follow with the events more thoroughly. However, in writing a horror story, I needed the language to be more concise and descriptive to depict the scenes and the characters' images. If I just simply wrote, "Little Red is trembling because she is cold," the power of language would be weakened as the sentence barely shows any emotions. Therefore, I made it more detailed and sensational in the final version by adding "in the midst of the breeze, she trembled like a falling leaf." Moreover, I attempted to use as many scary words as possible in the story, such as "grimy," "dying," and "dreadful." These words can effectively compound a pessimistic and intense atmosphere, so I believe that horror fans will like this modification.

I also want to discuss some significant changes I made and some parts that I preserved. A distinctive structural change I want to point out is replacing the original linear timeline with a theme-focused arrangement. For children audiences, the simplest way to tell a story is from the beginning and proceeding with the time-sequential order to the end. However, this arrangement doesn't have enough room to play with suspense, which is an essential element in the horror genre. Consequently, I deleted this tedious and typical fairy tale style opening, which usually begins with "there once was a" and the main character's name. I believe this introduction in the fairy tale is unnecessary for plot development. Therefore, the new introduction that I created begins with a scene where the little girl is enfolded by fear amidst a strange and mysterious swamp. Rather than keeping the original introduction, I changed it to one that has suspense. With the plot's development, the readers will learn the beginning of the event through the little girl's memory.

Meanwhile, I did not change the third-person point of view and the past tense. In this genre, a third-person point of view was not the best choice for me. If I used the first-person point of view, the readers could feel the Little Red's fear better because they were allowed inside her head, watching the story unfold through her eyes. But I still applied the most objective point of view, as it is the easiest way to write and provide the most information. As to the tense, there was no need to change it from the past to the present because I did not make any change about the setting or time.

Overall, this project has taught me that rewriting other people's work requires the writer to balance deleting and adding information. Because I had the story in my mind, sometimes I couldn't make a fair judgement about what I wrote. Reading the text aloud helped me get a better sense. Other people's feedback helped me the most in terms of how the story flows. Furthermore, I wish to acknowledge my instructor's support during my creation process. In writing both sections of the assignment, my instructor provided a lot of precious suggestions, and I valued them extremely. For example, when I struggled with the new story's plot, she shared many excellent horror concepts, like werewolves, full moons, and dark nights. Even though I didn't use them in the final version, they inspired me and pushed me onto the right path. I also acknowledge my friends' and classmates' advice in peer review. When the story was immature and had many mistakes that needed to be fixed, my classmates were willing to read it and give me their feedback. I feel that there is a sense of responsibility as a writer to uphold feedback from readers. As soon as my ideas start to take off from a piece of paper, I have to be ready for any questions and concerns the readers may have.

This page intentionally left blank