

The Little Red Hen

Storyteller Notes

This story is deceptively simple. Its refrain-based plot hangs on a process which is probably unfamiliar to most of its young audience – the complete life story of a loaf of bread! I prevent the exposition interrupting the story by integrating it with the visual descriptions, for example, the grain growing “tall and golden” or the working of the windmill.

The signs used for the animal characters are Makaton, a simple sign language with which your Foundation stage children may already be familiar through children's centre groups or television programmes such as *Something Special*. Each animal also has a character voice for its one repeated phrase, making each character richer and more memorable without slowing the pace by adding description – something used to even greater effect in *Chicken Licken*. The rhyming of each animal with its own phrase will help your children to remember the refrain quickly, and could become a game for retelling the story with characters of their own creation -what might other farmyard animals say?

I chose to conclude with a question rather than an explicit ending, which allows your children to explore the moral (i.e. should the Little Red Hen's friends be punished or forgiven?) without feeling that they have chosen the 'wrong' answer. This is one of the beauties of traditional tales: they invariably have multiple versions anyway, and lend themselves to further reworking. When telling other tales, asking for your children's solutions – even in the middle of the story – can throw fascinating light both on their opinions and their expectations of a traditional tale.

Written by Amy Robinson

Amy is a professional storyteller. Previously a primary school teacher, Amy now tours schools and theatres in the UK with her storytelling colleague, Chip Colquhoun. Find out more at www.snailtales.org