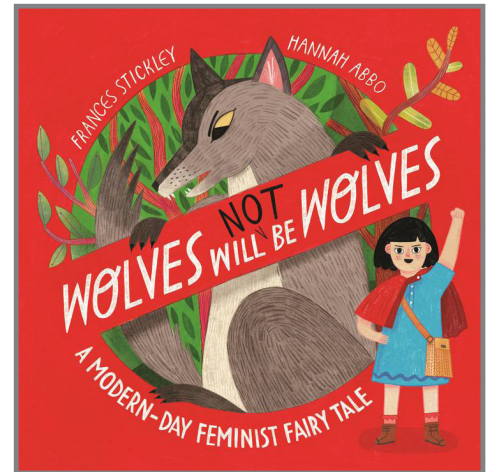


# Wolves Will (not) Be Wolves: A Modern-day Feminist Fairy Tale

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**SCIS:** 5487924

**ISBN:** 9781800789180

**RECOMMENDED FOR:** Lower Primary

## SYNOPSIS

The wild woods are waiting, and Little Red wants to have an adventure, but weighed down by the King's Decree to 'Be Good' and warnings from other fairy tale characters that the Big Bad Wolf is about, Little Red's journey suddenly seems fraught.

On meeting Goldilocks, Hansel and Gretel and the Three Little Pigs, Little Red quickly goes from curious to furious as she wonders why she needs to alter her behaviour when the Big Bads are free to wander anywhere. Little Red's campaign gathers pace as beloved fairy tale characters join her in a march to reject the 'Rules for Being Good' and finally take back the woods.

This witty picture book introduces a serious subject to children, encouraging them to challenge the cautionary tales which are sewn into the fabric of storytelling. Although we are now well-versed in feminist fairy tales, a seed of caution remains rooted in our stories, parenting and laws, but what if we started challenging this narrative for our children? What if the onus of responsibility is shifted onto the villain?

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Frances is a former primary school teacher who first realised her love for writing with the poem, *My Dad's Milkfloat*, aged six. She is a trained children's literacy specialist and she won the Bloomsbury and National Literacy Trust short story prize in 2017. Her debut books, *Love you Always* and *What will you Dream of Tonight?* were published by Nosy Crow in 2019.

## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Hannah Abbo is a self-taught illustrator from the UK, currently living and working in Lisbon, Portugal. She lives with her partner and child, and their (slightly) overweight cat. When she's not drawing, she loves making ceramics in a local studio, visiting the botanical gardens, and baking bread.

## STUDY NOTES

- Use social scripts that look at simple, age-appropriate situations and ask students to discuss 'who is responsible?' Start with an example: Tom leaves his favourite toy out on the table. Anna puts her favourite toy in her drawer. Sam takes Tom's toy to keep for himself. Who is to blame for the toy going missing? Children might typically suggest that Tom is at fault for not being careful with his things. Indeed, in a situation where toys get lost or broken without

someone else's wilful involvement, it would make sense to encourage Tom to change his behaviour. But here, Sam is the one at fault. Tom should be able to leave his toy in full view because Sam knows right from wrong. Only Sam is responsible for his actions.

- What if Sam said to Tom that, 'I'm going to take your toy if you don't put it away? Who is to blame now when Sam takes Tom's toy? Even if someone tells you that they're going to do something that you believe is wrong, it is still their responsibility as to what they do. If someone says something like this, they are making a threat. A threat is a way that people try to share the responsibility for their bad choice, but it doesn't change who is responsible for their actions.
- Being good often means being fair. We can feel the warmth inside ourselves when we know that we've done something good. But sometimes, being good is seen as the same as doing what you're told. What if someone is telling us to do something that we feel is wrong? Is it good to follow that rule? Rules are often there to keep us safe.
  - 'Stay on the path' would be a very important rule for Little Red if there was a rushing river on the other side! But what if the rules limit our freedom? Rapunzel followed a rule, 'never to leave the tower', but was that to keep her safe or was it to keep her trapped?
  - Think of three rules that are very important to you—rules that are fair and keep you safe.
- You've probably discovered that all of the different rules for Little Red can be replaced with just one rule for the Big Bad Wolf (don't eat Little Red!), which just goes to show that it's up to the person responsible for making a bad choice to change their behaviour. After all, even if Little Red followed all of her rules, it wouldn't do a thing to change the wolf's behaviour! If Little Red decided not to follow any of the rules and she was gobbled up by the wolf, whose fault would it be?
- Have you ever heard the phrase 'boys will be boys'? What do you think it means? In the past, people had a very fixed idea about what a boy should be and what a girl should be. These ideas have sometimes proved very harmful for both boys and girls; it can be difficult growing up with people telling you how you should behave based on whether you're a boy or a girl. How does this phrase make you feel as a girl/boy? What kinds of adjectives have you heard to describe how 'boys will be boys'?
  - Have a go at rewriting this rule. Think of three adjectives to fit with the phrase 'boys will be boys' that better suits your personality or the personality of boys and men that you know. Maybe we can do the same with 'girls will be girls'? Boys will be boys! Graceful, sensitive, funny. Girls will be girls! Brave, assertive, messy! Or better yet, 'People will be people.' Kind, considerate and respectful.
- There are some wonderful placards and signs in this book. Can you design some signs for protest against the wolf? What rules do you think he should follow from now on? You might want to think about Little Red, but you could also make a sign from another character's point of view. For example, the Three Little Pigs might be keen to encourage the wolf not to blow down houses anymore.

AUTHOR OF NOTES  
**CAROLYN WALSH**