Red Riding Hood

We all know the story of Red Riding Hood, but which version do we know? The origins of the Red Riding Hood story can be traced back to long before the earliest 17th Century printed version came to be. All across Europe and Asia there are different versions of the Red Riding Hood story handed down through oral storytelling traditions, many are significantly different from the currently known Brothers Grimm inspired version.

Even the name of the story differs from place to place; the Norwich Puppet Theatre production is called Red Riding Hood but you may have come across versions using the title Little Red Riding Hood or even Little Red Cap. The story was told orally in France as early as the 14th century as well as in Italy, where a number of versions exist, including La finta nonna (The False Grandmother). It has also been called The Story of Grandmother and The Grandmother’s Tale. In Asia, Great Aunt Tiger is a very old story found in various forms in China, Japan, and Korea, the story has clearly contributed to the development of the modern Red Riding Hood tale.

Many of the early oral based variations of the tale differ from the currently known version in several ways. The antagonist is not always a wolf, but sometimes an ogre or a ‘bzou’ (werewolf). The use of a werewolf character possibly has resonance with events of the time,
most notably with the case of Stubbe Peeter (Peter Stumpp) 'The Werewolf of Bedburg’, a German man who was accused of being a serial killer and cannibal. He confessed that he could take on the form of a werewolf and was executed in 1589 for enticing men, women and children to their deaths. Though this case is the most sensational, it was certainly not unique. Werewolf trials were very commonplace, as were witch trials at this time.

There are often more gruesome elements in the earliest Red Riding Hood stories which are missed out of more recent versions of the story, for example the wolf or bzou character usually leaves the grandmother’s blood and meat for the girl, who then unwittingly eats her own grandmother!

In more recent (post 17th Century) versions, the Red Riding Hood character is often very passive and easily outsmarted by the wolf. It is usual for a woodcutter character to become Red Riding Hood’s rescuer to conclude the tale.

In contrast to the cautionary tale style adopted by modern interpretations, many of the earliest oral folk tale renditions (particularly versions of The Grandmother’s Tale) have greater character depth, focussing more on the initiative of Red Riding Hood and less on the cautionary aspects. In these tales, a much more canny heroine is portrayed and a collection of strong female characters dominate the tale, there is no need for a ‘woodcutter’ character to come to the rescue. The Red Riding Hood character in these versions sees through the wolf (disguised as Grandmother) and tries to escape by pretending that she needs to go to the toilet! She makes her escape with no help from any older character, instead she uses her own cunning. The Norwich Puppet Theatre production draws on many of these ideas to portray a shrewd and stronger Red Riding Hood character. She does get a little help near the end of the story when it comes to finishing off the wolf, but how that comes about will be revealed when you watch the show!

**Printed variations of the story**

**Perrault**
The earliest known printed version was known as Le Petit Chaperon Rouge and had its origins in 17th century French folklore. It was included in the collection Tales and Stories of the Past with Morals. Tales of Mother Goose (Histoires et contes du temps passé, avec des moralités. Contes de ma mère l'Oye), in 1697, by Charles Perrault. As the title implies, this version is overtly moralised.

This, is the presumed original version of the tale and was written for late 17th century French court of King Louis XIV. It is believed that Perrault introduced the idea of the 'Red Cape’ or at least greatly emphasised this detail.

The Perrault story tells of a village girl being deceived into giving a wolf the information he needs to find her grandmother's house. The wolf eats the old woman and then lays a trap for the girl. The girl is asked to climb into the bed and is then promptly eaten by the wolf, where the story ends. The wolf emerges the victor and there is no happy ending. It is a morality tale, warning girls and women that wolves may lurk in every guise.
Charles Perrault even explains the 'moral' at the end so that no doubt is left to his intended meaning:

"From this story one learns that children, especially young lasses, pretty, courteous and well-bred, do very wrong to listen to strangers, And it is not an unheard thing if the Wolf is thereby provided with his dinner. I say Wolf, for all wolves are not of the same sort; there is one kind with an amenable disposition – neither noisy, nor hateful, nor angry, but tame, obliging and gentle, following the young maids in the streets, even into their homes. Alas! Who does not know that these gentle wolves are of all such creatures, the most dangerous"!

Brothers Grimm
In the 19th century two separate German versions were retold to Jacob Grimm and his brother Wilhelm Grimm.
The brothers turned the first version in to the main body of the story and the second into a sequel of it.

The story entitled Rotkäppchen (Red Cap) was included in the first edition of their collection Kinder und Hausmärchen (Children's and Household Tales) in 1812. The earlier parts of the tale follow Perrault's variant so closely that it is almost certainly the source of the tale. However, the Brothers Grimm modified the ending; this version has the little girl and her grandmother saved by a huntsman who is after the wolf's skin. This ending is identical to that found in the tale The Wolf and the Seven Young Kids.

The second part featured the girl and her grandmother trapping and killing another wolf, this time anticipating his moves based on their experience with the previous one. The girl did not leave the path when the wolf spoke to her, her grandmother locked the door to keep it out, and when the wolf lurked, the grandmother had Little Red Riding Hood put a trough under the chimney and fill it with water that sausages had been cooked in; the smell lured the wolf down, and it drowned.

The Brothers further revised the story in later editions and it reached a final and better known version in the 1857 edition of their work.
The Brothers Grimm popularised many fairy tales for children. This often meant that they censored many of the tales, removing the explicit or potentially controversial elements.

Charles Marelles
Andrew Lang included a variant of the Red Riding Hood tale, called "The True History of Little Goldenhood" in The Red Fairy Book (1890). He derived it from the works of Charles Marelles.
This version explicitly states that the story has been told incorrectly in earlier versions. In this tale, the girl is saved, but not by a huntsman. When the wolf tries to eat her, its mouth is burned by the golden hood she wears, which is enchanted.
Further reading and useful links

Below are some of the texts used as research materials by the Red Riding Hood creative team.

*The Path of Needles or Pins: Little Red Riding Hood*, by Terri Windling

This is a fantastic essay all about the origins of the Red Riding Hood Tale. Copy the link below into your web browser bar to go straight to the essay on line, there are some great images to accompany the essay on this page too.


*The Trials And Tribulations Of Red Riding Hood*, by Jack Zipes

Bringing together 35 of the best versions of the tale, Zipes uses the tales to look at the socio-political history of folktales and to explore questions of Western culture. Copy the link below into your web browser bar to view more details about this book.

http://books.google.co.uk/books/about/The_trials_tribulations_of_Little_Red_Ri.html?id=ar eW3sCQf1YC&redir_esc=y

*The Cat Massacre*, by Robert Darnton

Particularly interesting is the essay ‘Peasants tell tales’ which provides some great insights into the origins of fairy and folk tales.

Website links:


The University of Pittsburgh run a great website offering information about a wide selection of folktales-

http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/folktexts.html#a

Appendices

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Appendix 1: The Grandmother’s Tale

A woman had finished her baking, so she asked her daughter to take a fresh galette and a pot of cream to her grandmother who lived in a forest cottage. The girl set off, and on her way she met a bzou [a werewolf].
The bzou stopped the girl and asked, "Where are you going? What do you carry?"
"I'm going my grandmother's house," said the girl, "and I'm bringing her bread and cream."
"Which path will you take?" the bzou asked. "The Path of Needles or the Path of Pins?"
"I'll take the Path of Pins," said the girl.
"Why then, I'll take the Path of Needles, and we'll see who gets there first."

The girl set off, the bzou set off, and the bzou reached Grandmother's cottage first. He quickly killed the old woman and gobbled her up, flesh, blood, and bone - except for a bit of flesh that he put in a little dish on the pantry shelf, and except for a bit of blood that he drained into a little bottle. Then the bzou dressed in Grandmother's cap and shawl and climbed into bed.
When the girl arrived, the bzou called out, "Pull the peg and come in, my child."
"Grandmother," said the girl, "Mother sent me here with a galette and a cream."
"Put them in the pantry, child. Are you hungry?"
"Yes, I am, Grandmother."
"Then cook the meat that you'll find on the shelf. Are you thirsty?"
"Yes, I am, Grandmother."
"Then drink the bottle of wine you'll find on the shelf beside it, child."
As the young girl cooked and ate the meat, a little cat piped up and cried, "You are eating the flesh are your grandmother!"
"Throw your shoe at that noisy cat," said the bzou, and so she did.
As she drank the wine, a small bird cried, "You are drinking the blood of your grandmother!"
"Throw your other shoe at that noisy bird," said the bzou, and so she did.
When she finished her meal, the bzou said, "Are you tired from your journey, child? Then take off your clothes, come to bed, and I shall warm you up."
"Where shall I put my apron, Grandmother?"
"Throw it on the fire, child, for you won't need it anymore."
"Where shall I put my bodice, Grandmother?"
"Throw it on the fire, for you won't need it anymore."

The girl repeats this question for her skirt, her petticoat, and her stockings. The bzou gives the same answer, and she throws each item on the fire. As she comes to bed, she says to him, "Grandmother, how hairy you are!"

"The better to keep you warm, my child,"
"Grandmother, what big arms you have!"
"The better to hold you close, my child."
"Grandmother, what big ears you have!"
"The better to hear you with, my child."
"Grandmother, what sharp teeth you have!"
"The better to eat you with, my child. Now come and lie beside me."
"But first I must go and relieve myself."
"Do it in the bed, my child."
"I cannot. I must go outside," the girl says cleverly, for now she knows that it is the bzou who is lying in Grandmother's bed.

"Then go outside," the bzou agrees, "but mind that you come back again quick. I'll tie your ankle with a woolen thread so I'll know just where you are." He ties her ankle with a sturdy thread, but as soon as the girl has gone outside she cuts the thread with her sewing scissors and ties it to a plum tree. The bzou, growing impatient, calls out, "What, have you finished yet, my child?" When no one answers, he calls again. "Are you watering the grass or feeding the trees?" No answer. He leaps from bed, follows the thread, and finds her gone.
The bzou gives chase, and soon the girl can hear him on the path just behind her. She runs and runs until she reaches a river that's swift and deep. Some laundresses work on the river bank. "Please help me cross," she says to them. They spread a sheet over the water, holding tightly to its ends. She crosses the bridge of cloth and soon she's safe on the other side.

Now the bzou reaches the river, and he bids the women help him cross. They spread a sheet over the water — but as soon as he is halfway across, the laundresses let go. The bzou falls into the water and drowns.

**Appendix 2: Le Petit Chaperon Rouge by Charles Perrault**

Once upon a time there lived in a certain village a little country girl, the prettiest creature who was ever seen. Her mother was excessively fond of her; and her grandmother doted on her still more. This good woman had a little red riding hood made for her. It suited the girl so extremely well that everybody called her Little Red Riding Hood.
One day her mother, having made some cakes, said to her, "Go, my dear, and see how your grandmother is doing, for I hear she has been very ill. Take her a cake, and this little pot of butter."
Little Red Riding Hood set out immediately to go to her grandmother, who lived in another village.
As she was going through the wood, she met with a wolf, who had a very great mind to eat her up, but he dared not, because of some woodcutters working nearby in the forest. He asked her where she was going. The poor child, who did not know that it was dangerous to stay and talk to a wolf, said to him, "I am going to see my grandmother and carry her a cake and a little pot of butter from my mother."
"Does she live far off?" said the wolf
"Oh I say," answered Little Red Riding Hood; "it is beyond that mill you see there, at the first house in the village."
"Well," said the wolf, "and I'll go and see her too. I'll go this way and go you that, and we shall see who will be there first."
The wolf ran as fast as he could, taking the shortest path, and the little girl took a roundabout way, entertaining herself by gathering nuts, running after butterflies, and gathering bouquets of little flowers. It was not long before the wolf arrived at the old woman's house. He knocked at the door: tap, tap.

"Who's there?"
"Your grandchild, Little Red Riding Hood," replied the wolf, counterfeiting her voice; "who has brought you a cake and a little pot of butter sent you by mother."

The good grandmother, who was in bed, because she was somewhat ill, cried out, "Pull the bobbin, and the latch will go up."

The wolf pulled the bobbin, and the door opened, and then he immediately fell upon the good woman and ate her up in a moment, for it been more than three days since he had eaten. He then shut the door and got into the grandmother's bed, expecting Little Red Riding Hood, who came some time afterwards and knocked at the door: tap, tap.

"Who's there?"
Little Red Riding Hood, hearing the big voice of the wolf, was at first afraid; but believing her grandmother had a cold and was hoarse, answered, "It is your grandchild Little Red Riding Hood, who has brought you a cake and a little pot of butter mother sends you."

The wolf cried out to her, softening his voice as much as he could, "Pull the bobbin, and the latch will go up."

Little Red Riding Hood pulled the bobbin, and the door opened.

The wolf, seeing her come in, said to her, hiding himself under the bedclothes, "Put the cake and the little pot of butter upon the stool, and come get into bed with me."

Little Red Riding Hood took off her clothes and got into bed. She was greatly amazed to see how her grandmother looked in her nightclothes, and said to her, "Grandmother, what big arms you have!"

"All the better to hug you with, my dear."
"Grandmother, what big legs you have!"
"All the better to run with, my child."
"Grandmother, what big ears you have!"
"All the better to hear with, my child."
"Grandmother, what big eyes you have!"
"All the better to see with, my child."
"Grandmother, what big teeth you have got!"
"All the better to eat you up with."

And, saying these words, this wicked wolf fell upon Little Red Riding Hood, and ate her all up.

Moral:
Children, especially attractive, well bred young ladies, should never talk to strangers, for if they should do so, they may well provide dinner for a wolf. I say "wolf," but there are various kinds of wolves. There are also those who are charming, quiet, polite, unassuming, complacent, and sweet, who pursue young women at home and in the streets. And unfortunately, it is these gentle wolves who are the most dangerous ones of all.
Appendix 3: Rotkäppchen by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm

Once upon a time there was a sweet little girl. Everyone who saw her liked her, but most of all her grandmother, who did not know what to give the child next. Once she gave her a little cap made of red velvet. Because it suited her so well, and she wanted to wear it all the time, she came to be known as Little Red Cap.

One day her mother said to her, "Come Little Red Cap. Here is a piece of cake and a bottle of wine. Take them to your grandmother. She is sick and weak, and they will do her well. Mind your manners and give her my greetings. Behave yourself on the way, and do not leave the path, or you might fall down and break the glass, and then there will be nothing for your sick grandmother."

Little Red Cap promised to obey her mother. The grandmother lived out in the woods, a half hour from the village. When Little Red Cap entered the woods a wolf came up to her. She did not know what a wicked animal he was, and was not afraid of him.

"Good day to you, Little Red Cap."
"Thank you, wolf."
"Where are you going so early, Little Red Cap?"
"To grandmother's."
"And what are you carrying under your apron?"
"Grandmother is sick and weak, and I am taking her some cake and wine. We baked yesterday, and they should give her strength."

"Little Red Cap, just where does your grandmother live?"
"Her house is a good quarter hour from here in the woods, under the three large oak trees. There's a hedge of hazel bushes there. You must know the place," said Little Red Cap.

The wolf thought to himself, "Now there is a tasty bite for me. Just how are you going to catch her?" Then he said, "Listen, Little Red Cap, haven't you seen the beautiful flowers that are blossoming in the woods? Why don't you go and take a look? And I don't believe you can hear how beautifully the birds are singing. You are walking along as though you were on your way to school in the village. It is very beautiful in the woods."

Little Red Cap opened her eyes and saw the sunlight breaking through the trees and how the ground was covered with beautiful flowers. She thought, "If a take a bouquet to grandmother, she will be very pleased. Anyway, it is still early, and I'll be home on time." And she ran off into the woods looking for flowers. Each time she picked one she thought that she could see an even more beautiful one a little way off, and she ran after it, going further and further into the woods. But the wolf ran straight to the grandmother's house and knocked on the door.

"Who's there?"
"Little Red Cap. I'm bringing you some cake and wine. Open the door for me."
"Just press the latch," called out the grandmother. "I'm too weak to get up."

The wolf pressed the latch, and the door opened. He stepped inside, went straight to the grandmother's bed, and ate her up. Then he took her clothes, put them on, and put her cap on his head. He got into her bed and pulled the curtains shut.

Little Red Cap had run after flowers, and did not continue on her way to grandmother's until she had gathered all that she could carry. When she arrived, she found, to her surprise, that the door was open. She walked into the parlor, and everything looked so strange that she thought, "Oh, my God, why am I so afraid? I usually like it at grandmother's." Then she went to the bed and pulled back the curtains. Grandmother was lying there with her cap pulled down over her face and looking very strange.
"Oh, grandmother, what big ears you have!"
"All the better to hear you with."
"Oh, grandmother, what big eyes you have!"
"All the better to see you with."
"Oh, grandmother, what big hands you have!"
"All the better to grab you with!"
"Oh, grandmother, what a horribly big mouth you have!"
"All the better to eat you with!" And with that he jumped out of bed, jumped on top of poor Little Red Cap, and ate her up. As soon as the wolf had finished this tasty bite, he climbed back into bed, fell asleep, and began to snore very loudly.
A huntsman was just passing by. He thought it strange that the old woman was snoring so loudly, so he decided to take a look. He stepped inside, and in the bed there lay the wolf that he had been hunting for such a long time. "He has eaten the grandmother, but perhaps she still can be saved. I won't shoot him," thought the huntsman. So he took a pair of scissors and cut open his belly.
He had cut only a few strokes when he saw the red cap shining through. He cut a little more, and the girl jumped out and cried, "Oh, I was so frightened! It was so dark inside the wolf's body!"
And then the grandmother came out alive as well. Then Little Red Cap fetched some large heavy stones. They filled the wolf's body with them, and when he woke up and tried to run away, the stones were so heavy that he fell down dead.
The three of them were happy. The huntsman took the wolf's pelt. The grandmother ate the cake and drank the wine that Little Red Cap had brought. And Little Red Cap thought to herself, "As long as I live, I will never leave the path and run off into the woods by myself if mother tells me not to."

They also tell how Little Red Cap was taking some baked things to her grandmother another time, when another wolf spoke to her and wanted her to leave the path. But Little Red Cap took care and went straight to grandmother's. She told her that she had seen the wolf, and that he had wished her a good day, but had stared at her in a wicked manner. "If we hadn't been on a public road, he would have eaten me up," she said.
"Come," said the grandmother. "Let's lock the door, so he can't get in."
Soon afterward the wolf knocked on the door and called out, "Open up, grandmother. It's Little Red Cap, and I'm bringing you some baked things."
They remained silent, and did not open the door. The wicked one walked around the house several times, and finally jumped onto the roof. He wanted to wait until Little Red Cap went home that evening, then follow her and eat her up in the darkness. But the grandmother saw what he was up to. There was a large stone trough in front of the house.
"Fetch a bucket, Little Red Cap," she said. "Yesterday I cooked some sausage. Carry the water that I boiled them with to the trough." Little Red Cap carried water until the large, large trough was clear full. The smell of sausage arose into the wolf's nose. He sniffed and looked down, stretching his neck so long that he could no longer hold himself, and he began to slide. He slid off the roof, fell into the trough, and drowned. And Little Red Cap returned home happily and safely.
Appendix 4: The True History of Little Golden-hood by Charles Marells

You know the tale of poor Little Red Riding-Hood, that the wolf deceived and devoured, with her cake, her little butter can, and her grandmother. Well, the true story happened quite differently, as we know now. And first of all the little girl was called and is still called Little Golden-Hood; secondly, it was not she, nor the good grand-dame, but the wicked wolf who was, in the end, caught and devoured.

Only listen. The story begins something like the tale.

There was once a little peasant girl, pretty and nice as a star in its season. Her real name was Blanchette, but she was more often called Little Golden-Hood, on account of a wonderful little cloak with a hood, gold- and fire-colored, which she always had on. This little hood was given her by her grandmother, who was so old that she did not know her age; it ought to bring her good luck, for it was made of a ray of sunshine, she said. And as the good old woman was considered something of a witch, everyone thought the little hood rather bewitched too.

And so it was, as you will see.

One day the mother said to the child, "Let us see, my Little Golden-Hood, if you know now how to find your way by yourself. You shall take this good piece of cake to your grandmother for a Sunday treat tomorrow. You will ask her how she is, and come back at once, without stopping to chatter on the way with people you don't know. Do you quite understand?"

"I quite understand," replied Blanchette gaily. And off she went with the cake, quite proud of her errand.

But the grandmother lived in another village, and there was a big wood to cross before getting there. At a turn of the road under the trees, suddenly, "Who goes there?"

"Friend wolf."

He had seen the child start alone, and the villain was waiting to devour her; when at the same moment he perceived some woodcutters who might observe him, and he changed his mind. Instead of falling upon Blanchette he came frisking up to her like a good dog.

"'Tis you! my nice Little Golden-Hood," said he.

So the little girl stops to talk with the wolf, who, for all that, she did not know in the least.

"You know me, then!" said she. "What is your name?"

"My name is friend wolf. And where are you going thus, my pretty one, with your little basket on your arm?"

"I am going to my grandmother, to take her a good piece of cake for her Sunday treat tomorrow."

"And where does she live, your grandmother?"

"She lives at the other side of the wood, in the first house in the village, near the windmill, you know."

"Ah! yes! I know now," said the wolf. "Well, that's just where I'm going; I shall get there before you, no doubt, with your little bits of legs, and I'll tell her you're coming to see her; then she'll wait for you."

Thereupon the wolf cuts across the wood, and in five minutes arrives at the grandmother's house. He knocks at the door: toc, toc.

No answer.

He knocks louder.

Nobody.

Then he stands up on end, puts his two forepaws on the latch and the door opens. Not a soul in the house. The old woman had risen early to sell herbs in the town, and she had gone off in such haste that she had left her bed unmade, with her great nightcap on the pillow.
"Good!" said the wolf to himself, "I know what I'll do."
He shuts the door, pulls on the grandmother's nightcap down to his eyes, then he lies down all his length in the bed and draws the curtains.
In the meantime the good Blanchette went quietly on her way, as little girls do, amusing herself here and there by picking Easter daisies, watching the little birds making their nests, and running after the butterflies which fluttered in the sunshine.
At last she arrives at the door.
Knock, knock.
"Who is there?" says the wolf, softening his rough voice as best he can.
"It's me, Granny, your Little Golden-Hood. I'm bringing you a big piece of cake for your Sunday treat tomorrow."
"Press your finger on the latch, then push and the door opens."
"Why, you've got a cold, Granny," said she, coming in.
"Ahem! a little, a little . . ." replies the wolf, pretending to cough. "Shut the door well, my little lamb. Put your basket on the table, and then take off your frock and come and lie down by me. You shall rest a little."
The good child undresses, but observe this! She kept her little hood upon her head. When she saw what a figure her Granny cut in bed, the poor little thing was much surprised.
"Oh!" cries she, "how like you are to friend wolf, Grandmother!"
"That's on account of my nightcap, child," replies the wolf.
"Oh! what hairy arms you've got, Grandmother!"
"All the better to hug you, my child."
"Oh! what a big tongue you've got, Grandmother!"
"All the better for answering, child."
"Oh! what a mouthful of great white teeth you have, Grandmother!"
"That's for crunching little children with!"
And the wolf opened his jaws wide to swallow Blanchette.
But she put down her head crying, "Mamma! Mamma!" and the wolf only caught her little hood.
Thereupon, oh dear! oh dear! he draws back, crying and shaking his jaw as if he had swallowed red-hot coals. It was the little fire-colored hood that had burnt his tongue right down his throat.
The little hood, you see, was one of those magic caps that they used to have in former times, in the stories, for making oneself invisible or invulnerable. So there was the wolf with his throat burnt, jumping off the bed and trying to find the door, howling and howling as if all the dogs in the country were at his heels.  
Just at this moment the grandmother arrives, returning from the town with her long sack empty on her shoulder.
"Ah, brigand!" she cries, "wait a bit!" Quickly she opens her sack wide across the door, and the maddened wolf springs in head downwards.
It is he now that is caught, swallowed like a letter in the post. For the brave old dame shuts her sack, so; and she runs and empties it in the well, where the vagabond, still howling, tumbles in and is drowned.
"Ah, scoundrel! you thought you would crunch my little grandchild! Well, tomorrow we will make her a muff of your skin, and you yourself shall be crunched, for we will give your carcass to the dogs."
Thereupon the grandmother hastened to dress poor Blanchette, who was still trembling with fear in the bed.
"Well," she said to her, "without my little hood where would you be now, darling?" And, to restore heart and legs to the child, she made her eat a good piece of her cake, and drink a good draught of wine, after which she took her by the hand and led her back to the house. And then, who was it who scolded her when she knew all that had happened? It was the mother.

But Blanchette promised over and over again that she would never more stop to listen to a wolf, so that at last the mother forgave her. And Blanchette, the Little Golden-Hood, kept her word. And in fine weather she may still be seen in the fields with her pretty little hood, the color of the sun. But to see her you must rise early.