

LEVELED BOOK • R

# HANSEL and GRETEL

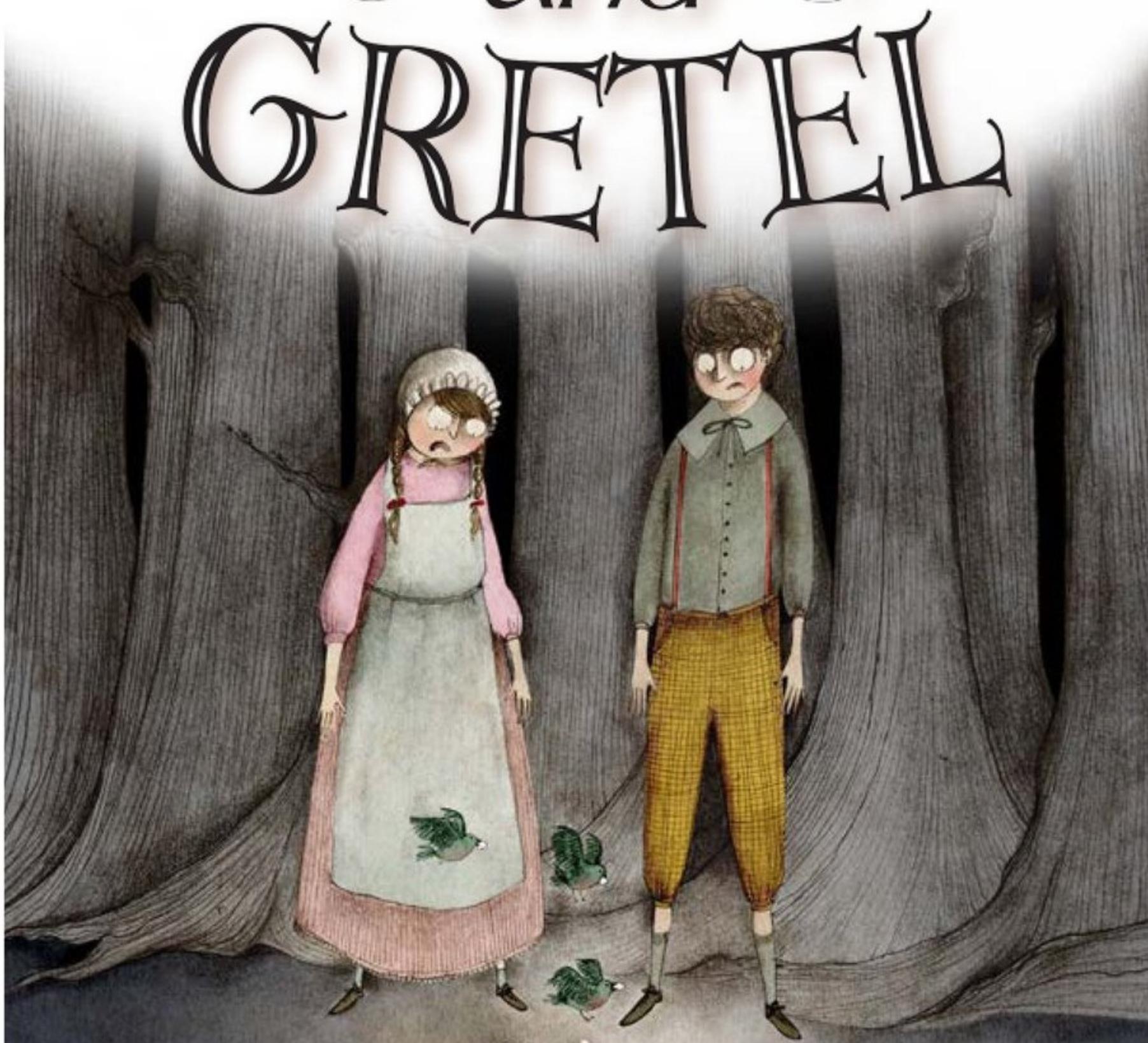


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A German Fairy Tale  
Retold by Katherine Follett  
Illustrated by Letizia Rubegni

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# HANSEL and GRETEL



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## Focus Question

What do you learn about Hansel's and Gretel's characters from what they say and do in the story?

## Words to Know

echoed  
frustrated  
gemstones  
glimpse  
remarkable

snarled  
stepmother  
treasure  
wicked

Hansel and Gretel  
Level R Leveled Book  
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### Correlation

LEVEL R	
Fountas & Pinnell	N
Reading Recovery	30
DRA	30



After three years of failed crops, Hansel and Gretel's family had no food left but some moldy potatoes. Their father grew weak, and their **stepmother** grew thin and sharp. Gretel was so young that she did not even remember the good times.

One morning, Father called the children. "Come with me for a walk in the woods," he said. Gretel happily followed, but Hansel caught a **glimpse** of his stepmother's face watching from the window. He got a very bad feeling.

"Where are we going?" Hansel asked as Father led them deeper into the forest.

"Shush," said Father, secretly squeezing a small crust of bread into Hansel's hand. "This is our last bit of bread," he whispered.

Hansel wanted to gobble it down, but he could feel that something was wrong. Though his mouth watered, he decided to tear the bread into crumbs and drop them as he walked. He marked a path as the three headed deeper into the forest.



Finally, Father stopped, his voice shaking. “We don’t have enough to feed you anymore,” he said. “There’s a village not far away where you can go.” With that, he vanished between the trees.



Gretel cried out and chased him but soon fell behind. “Look, I made a path,” Hansel said, pointing to the breadcrumbs. His sister sniffled bravely as they turned toward home.

"You didn't make a very good path," Gretel pouted. Hansel thought he'd dropped enough crumbs, but he kept losing the way. Then he saw a sparrow swoop down, grab a crumb, and fly off. They could not find the path.



"Birds ate your crumbs—we're lost!" Gretel cried. Hansel tried to stay calm, but the forest was growing gloomy.

"Let's try to find that village," he said.

They walked for a long time. Hansel was almost sure Father had lied to them, when suddenly he spotted a clearing ahead.



In a meadow was the most **remarkable** thing—a cottage made entirely of sweets! The children stumbled toward it, their stomachs grumbling with hunger. Gretel took a chocolate shingle. The sweetness of a frosting icicle almost made Hansel dizzy. They didn't hear the door swing open.

“Do I hear little mouths nibbling on my house?” a sweet voice said. It was a tiny old woman with cloudy eyes calling to them.

“Please, come in!” she offered. Hansel and Gretel happily followed her inside.

The old woman blindly felt her way around the house as she brought heaping plates of gingerbread, cake, and pie. When the children were finally full, she pulled a box off her shelf.



"I don't have many toys, but I do have these old things," she said. She tossed Hansel an emerald the size of his fist! He and his sister played with the **gemstones**. The warm fire made them sleepy, and soon they fell onto the woman's soft feather bed.

Breakfast was waffles, strawberries, and piles of whipped cream.

When they were finished, the woman said, "My eyesight isn't so good anymore. Would you mind doing a few chores for me?"

The children agreed at once. The woman handed Gretel a broom. Then she pointed to a broken latch on a high window. "Maybe you can reach it from that birdcage?" she suggested. A huge empty birdcage hung from the ceiling near the window.

Hansel climbed onto a table and pulled himself inside. He heard a *click!* as the cage door swung shut behind him.



Gretel did not see the cage door shut, but she heard the click. She also saw a **wicked** smile flash across the old woman's face.  
“What happened?” she asked.

“Get back to work!” the woman **snarled**.

“Isn’t it comfortable up there?” the woman cooed at Hansel. “Have some more cake. You’re thin now, but you’ll fatten up soon.”

Gretel shuddered, but she was too scared to object. “Can I do anything else?” she asked with false cheer.

“Oh, there’s plenty,” the woman hissed, bringing out a filthy mop, bucket, and rag.



Gretel washed, scrubbed, and swept for days, always keeping an eye on the old woman. Every day, the woman shoved more treats into Hansel's cage. Every day, she pinched his arm. Over time, Hansel began to grow soft. The woman smiled in a way that made Gretel feel ill.

Gretel felt helpless, but one evening she got an idea. While sweeping, she found a chicken bone. She tossed the bone into Hansel's cage. "When she tries to grab your arm, give her this instead," she whispered.

From then on, when the woman reached for Hansel's arm, she pinched the bone. "Why aren't you getting fat?" she demanded.



The old woman finally grew **frustrated**.  
“I’m not waiting any longer. Girl, fill that big pot with water and build a fire!” she ordered.

Gretel began to tremble, but she did as she was told. When the water got hot, the woman went to Hansel’s cage. She had to stand on a chair to open the door.

This was Gretel’s chance!



With all her strength, she swung her broom at the cage, knocking it from its hook. As the cage and Hansel came crashing down, the woman stumbled backward and fell.

Hansel squirmed free. The woman slowly pulled herself up, but Hansel and Gretel rushed at her together. They shoved her into the cage and slammed the door.



“You wicked children—let me out!”  
she screamed.

Hansel snatched the **treasure** chest.  
Together, the children fled into the forest.

They ran until they were exhausted. They were right where they'd started: lost in the woods. Gretel somehow felt stronger and less afraid than before. They decided to walk on, hoping to find a village.

Suddenly, Gretel heard a distant voice calling their names. Still afraid, the children hid in the underbrush. As the voice came closer, it began to sound more familiar. Just before the source came into view, Gretel realized who it was.



“Father!” she cried, leaping into his arms.  
His eyes were red from crying.

“My children!” he shouted. “I’m so sorry  
for what I did. I sent your stepmother away,  
and I’ve been looking for you ever since!”  
Then his happy smile fell. “I still have no  
food for you,” he sighed.



“We can buy all the food we want!” Hansel  
announced, pulling the treasure chest from his  
coat.

Their laughter **echoed** through the forest.  
Together, they headed toward home.

## Glossary

<b>echoed</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	repeated a sound (p. 15)
<b>frustrated</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	feeling or expressing annoyance or distress about being unable to complete a task (p. 12)
<b>gemstones</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	minerals or organic materials that can be cut and polished for use in jewelry (p. 8)
<b>glimpse</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a quick look at something (p. 3)
<b>remarkable</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	worthy of attention; amazing or unusual (p. 7)
<b>snarled</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	growled aggressively or said something in an angry way (p. 10)
<b>stepmother</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a woman who has married a child's father after the death or divorce of that child's mother (p. 3)
<b>treasure</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	something that is very special or valuable (p. 13)
<b>wicked</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	very mean or bad (p. 10)

# Hansel and Gretel

A Reading A-Z Level R Leveled Book

Word Count: 1,062

## Connections

### Writing

How might the story have been different if the birds had not eaten Hansel's trail of breadcrumbs? Write a paragraph describing how the story would change.

### Social Studies

People believe that fairy tales written by the Grimm brothers, including *Hansel and Gretel*, are related to the Black Forest in Germany. Research the Black Forest and create a poster about it that includes pictures.

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