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“Little Red Riding Hood” is a famous children’s story. It’s a story about a young girl who travels through the woods to see her grandmother. Along the way she is accosted by a wolf who asks her seemingly innocent questions about her trip. After Little Red Riding Hood continues her journey, the wolf uses a short cut to get to grandmother’s house. He ties grandmother up and dresses in her clothes. He then pretends to be Little Red Riding Hood’s grandmother by placing on her clothes.

*Using scholarship to support your ideas, offer a literary interpretation of “Little Red Riding Hood” from a psychoanalytic perspective.*
You chose this paragraph.

Now select another paragraph to go with it.

The story of Red Riding Hood illustrates for children the danger of strangers in world—particularly the threat posed by mature males to young females. Little Red Riding Hood’s innocence and vulnerability are expressed symbolically in her name—“Little” emphasizes both youth and physical vulnerability while “Red” suggests blood and the possibility of violence (it is also associated with sexuality—which is a significant element of the story’s subtext). Finally “Riding Hood” describes her apparel which both covers her head protectively but which can also block her vision—it suggests innocence and the way it protects children psychologically but also makes them unable to distinguish potential threats.

Bettelheim and other critics have said that “Little Red Riding Hood” is really about a girl who encounters a potential sexual predator in the form of a male wolf. If this is true, I don’t understand what the grandmother is supposed to represent. I think this interpretation is questionable. Moreover, I think it is unfortunate that critics need to spoil these wonderful tales for children by trying to inject sex into everything. I think a better psychological interpretation of the story would be to see it as a coming-of-age story about a young girl learning to be brave and resourceful.

I suppose the fact that the Wolf is dressing up in women’s clothing may be because of something psychological. Maybe he is acting out some cross-gender fantasy. Anyway, I’ve always thought the conversation between Little Red Riding Hood and the Wolf (“Grandma, what big eyes you have!” “All the better to see you with, my dear”) was a bit creepy. That may have some psychological significance.

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