

# The shrinking Children's Book

## Introduction

Reading a book is an experience.

Not only does the reader interact with the words neatly displayed across every page, but they also encounter the feeling of the book in their hands and the turning of each page. Miniature books have existed almost as long as their full-size companions. Publishers take full-size works and shrink them to doll-like proportions. In so doing, the content of the book is altered. The work becomes a re-imagined text and new experience. Making such small-scale versions of children's literature is a popular practice among publishers. Miniature children's books are not created solely for the child reader, but small books have become collectibles and objects of fascination for adults. Exploring three different sizes of The Golden Age fairytale *The Little Red Cap* portrays the impulse for artists to create miniature books, their purpose, reading experience, and importance. The three editions include: the full-sized version from the anthology Grimm's Fairy Stories (1), as well as two miniature versions, a post Golden Age Hardee's rendition of *Little Red Riding Hood* (2), and a hand-made Russian collection of five of Grimm's fairytales published by Dubna Pheonix, including *The Little Red Cap* (3).

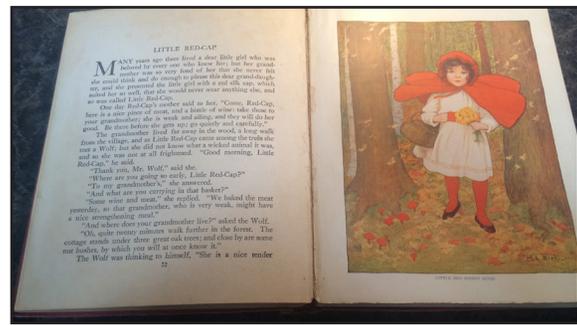


## Impulse

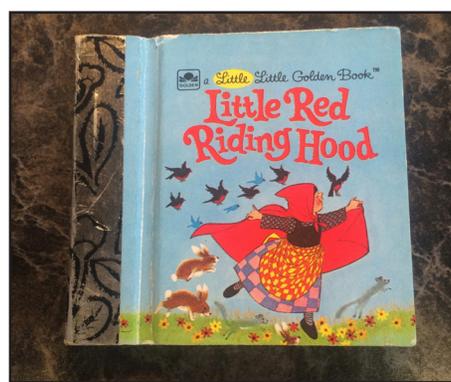
The desire for a publisher to create a miniature children's book means that a demand exists. A publishing company would only invest in shrinking the text and pictures and print tiny editions if they knew people would purchase them. The Hardee's edition of *Little Red Riding Hood* is indicative of a publisher trying to fulfill the demand of small books for children. The children's story is printed in small size for a child. Similarly, the Russian publisher Dubna Pheonix created 50 copies of the Grimm's story collection because adults were interested. However, just by looking at the precision used to create the collection, you can tell the impulse to publish such a work goes far beyond creating just another *The Little Red Cap* rendition. Dubna Pheonix creates a sculpture-like experience due to the luxurious miniature binding transforming the text into a work of art and expression.

## Purpose

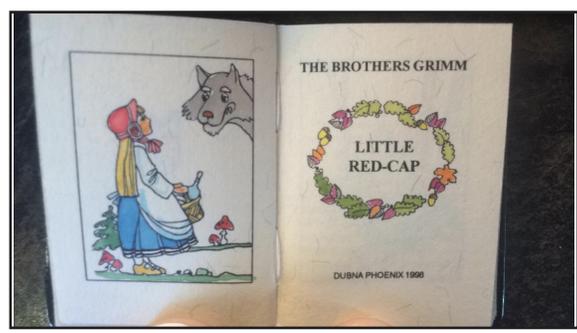
The size of miniature children's books depicts the work's intended purpose. Books as a source of entertainment for children may be perceived as an inconvenience. They can be bulky and weigh too much for a child to carry. Smaller versions eliminate any inconvenience and allows for easy transport. Miniature children books come in extremely impractical sizes.



(1) The full-sized version from the anthology *Grimm's Fairy Stories*.



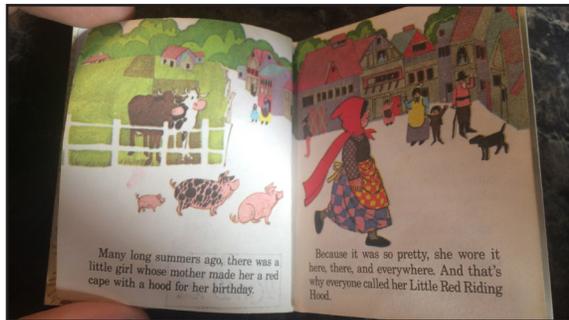
(2) Hardee's rendition of *Little Red Riding Hood*.



(3) The hand-made Russian collection published by Dubna Pheonix - *The Little Red Cap*.

## Purpose

Since the Hardee's edition of *Little Red Riding Hood* was created specifically for the purpose of entertaining children, the book is of an average quality with big colorful pictures and is a suitable size. The font is still small, but the book maintains its integrity. Since the pictures take up most of the page, even if a child struggles reading the text, they still have the ability to be entertained by the illustrations (4). More evidence exists that the Hardee's edition is catered towards children because the inside cover of the book says: "This Hardee's Little Little Golden Book Belongs to." The place for a name is often provided in children's books as a way for children to practice writing. The purpose of the Hardee's book aligns with the purpose of the full-sized text: to entertain children.



(4) The child-friendly drawings in the Hardee's edition of *Little Red Riding Hood*.

The collectable printing of *The Little Red Cap* published by Dubna Pheonix was made specifically as a piece of art or sign of status/exclusivity. Even though the work was originally written for children, its purpose was disassociated from the full-size text because it was reincarnated to serve a different purpose (5).

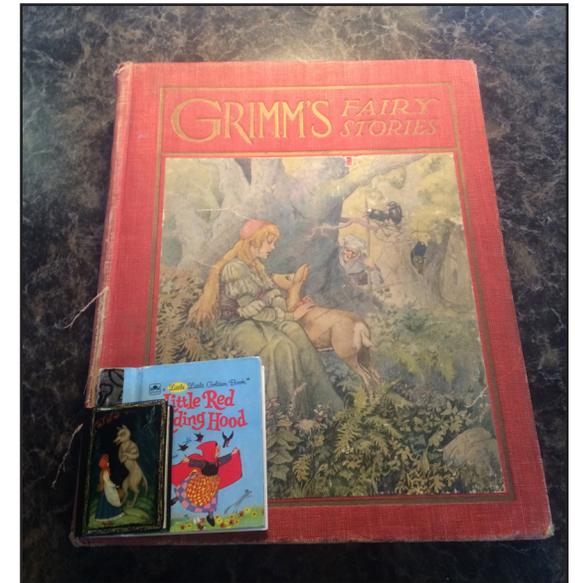


(5) The Russian Dubna Pheonix collectible collection of Grimm's Fairy Tales. The edition is targeted towards adults.

The packaging is proof that the edition is meant to appeal to adults. The collection consists of a beautifully designed ornate box decorated with gold embellishments and pictures of Grimm's Fairytale characters. Sitting inside the box atop a red velvet interior lays five tiny hand-made books. To think that such an exclusive and expensive collection was created with a child in mind would be naive. Certainly, a child would enjoy playing with the books. However, the collection's real purpose is to appeal to the inner-child of adults. Dubna Pheonix is a smart publishing company because they created widespread fascination with the beautiful little books. The creation of miniature children's literature serves a purpose – whether for the entertainment of a child or the fascination of adults.

## Importance

Pinpointing the importance of miniature children's books is a hard task since importance is subjective. However, in my study of *The Little Red Cap* and handling the three different formats I found that the importance lies in the progression of the book binding artistry and the return to a time when attention to detail matters. Books have shifted from the craft of hand binding with each copy a variant of another, to mass production on huge electronic presses printing identical books. Some of the magic in books was taken away because of the shift. The Dubna Pheonix collectable edition of *The Little Red Cap* marks the return of the magic.



A size comparison of the three different editions used in the analysis.



## Experience

The content of each individual text differs drastically and creates a new re-imagined story. The actual words in all three of the texts vary slightly, however the reading experience and content varies. The most notable change is the transition from an anthology to a full book. The full-size text in *Grimm's Fairy Stories* anthology is three pages and makes the story feel like only one small part of a collection of stories. By shrinking the text, *The Little Red Cap* is able to stand on its own. Since the miniature books require the pages to be turned more frequently, the words are more split up. Therefore, the timing of plot delivery is stalled. The smaller the book, the more spread out the story is. Thus, creating a different rhythm and suspense than originally intended. The following lines are the climax of the story and the delivery in each edition differs:

“Oh, grandmother, what great ears you have!” she said.  
“All the better to hear you with,” was the reply.  
“And what great eyes you have!”  
“All the better to see you with.”  
“And what great hands you have!”  
“All the better to touch you with.”  
“But Grandmother, what very great teeth you have!”  
“All the better to eat you with;” and hardly were the words spoken when the wolf made a jump out of bed, and swallowed poor Little Red-Cap also. ”  
(Grimm's Fairy Stories, 74).

The anthology lists the entire climax of the story on less than half of a page, lined up neatly and easy to follow, allowing for more suspense and faster pacing. The Hardee's edition splits up the scene into three pages.

## Conclusion

Small packaging of children's literature creates a new adventure for all ages. The full-size original golden age anthology of *Grimm's Fairy Stories* portrays *The Little Red Cap* as a part of a whole. The Hardee's edition of *Little Red Riding Hood* effectively takes the original Golden Age text and transforms the work into its own reading experience intended for a child audience. The Dubna Pheonix version completely strays from its counterparts as it explores adult fascination and displays great artistry. All three texts supply important evidence for the impulse for artists to create miniature books, their purpose, reading experience, and importance.

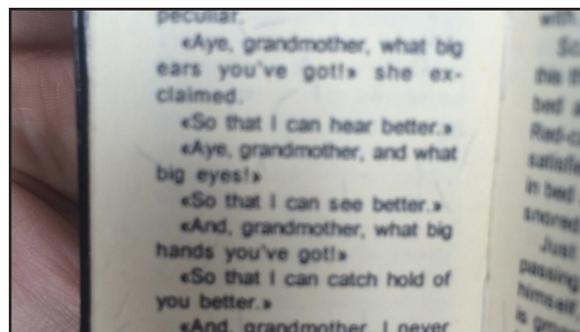
## Works Cited

Jacob and Wilhem Grimm. *Grimm's Fairy Stories*. New York: Cupples and Leon Company, 1922. Print

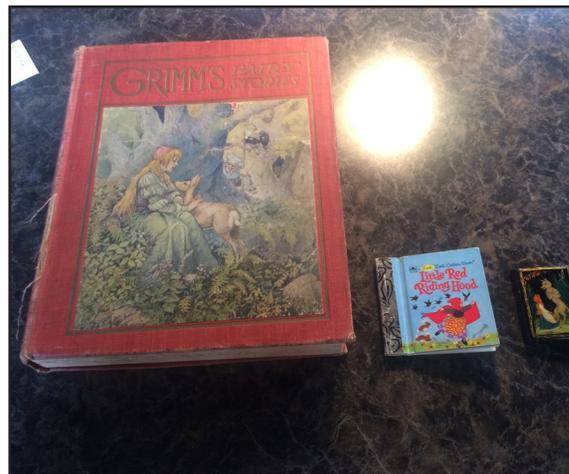
The Brothers Grimm set by A. Lavrenko, V. Markov, Y. Muravskaya, A. Pasko, and J. Pasko. 1996, Dubna Phoenix: Russia. [15h3824- 15h3828]

Watts, Mabel, and Leslie Gray. *Little Red Riding Hood*. Racine, Wis: Western Pub, 1972. Print.

The Dubna Pheonix version splits the climax into two pages, but it is not neatly lined up. Perhaps for artistic sake, the publisher decided to not use quotation marks, but a double arrow sign (<<). The double arrows become confusing and the dialogue is hard to follow, especially in such a tiny size (6). The smaller texts create a different experience during the climax of the story.



(6)The Dubna Pheonix version uses arrows instead of quotation marks.



Each edition gives a unique reading experience and changes the text as a whole.