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The Little Red Hen

Sara Cone Bryant · *1907* · *English original*

A grain of wheat travels through three jobs before the hen decides who will share the bread.

THE CENTRAL QUESTION

What should willing work have to do with sharing its reward?

“"Who will plant this wheat?"”
Opening: finding the wheat

The hen's neighbors seek the loaf after declining every task; her chickens receive the food her efforts have produced.

KEY CHARACTERS

The little Red Hen
Resourceful bird who completes every stage of bread making.

The Goose
Refuses each task but volunteers to eat the loaf.

The Duck
Echoes the Goose's refusals and later appetite.

The chickens
Join their mother for the finished bread.

Grades K–2
Read the full text free at classicslaunch.org.

01

A grain and a decision

OPENING: FINDING THE WHEAT

The hen finds wheat while caring for her chickens and asks for help beginning its growth.

- The hen finds a grain of wheat in the farmyard and asks who will plant it.
- Goose and Duck answer in the same refusing line.
- The planting is her work from the first exchange.

> *“"Who will plant this wheat?"”*
> Opening: finding the wheat

02

The harvest goes to the mill

MIDDLE: RIPE WHEAT

When the grain has ripened, the hen must arrange the next stage herself because both neighbors decline again.

- When the wheat is ripe, she asks who will take it to the mill.
- The same two neighbors refuse again.
- She carries the wheat herself; the pattern of work is now unmistakable.

> *“"Who will take this wheat to the / mill?"”*
> Middle: ripe wheat

03

Flour becomes bread

MIDDLE: FLOUR BROUGHT HOME

The hen brings home flour and takes responsibility for baking after receiving the familiar refusals.

- She asks who will make bread with the flour.
- Refusal meets her a third time, and she bakes it herself.
- The story keeps the same shape so a young listener can feel the weight of 'Not I.'

> *“"Who will make some bread / with this flour?"”*
> Middle: flour brought home

04

The invitation changes

ENDING: SHARING THE BREAD

Goose and Duck want the finished loaf, but the hen chooses to feed herself and her chickens.

- When the bread is baked, Goose and Duck offer to eat it.
- The hen keeps the loaf for herself and her chickens.
- The last line is a farmyard call, not a speech about fairness.

> *“And she called her chickens to help her.”*
> Ending: sharing the bread

Work and reward

Family provision

Repeated refusal

What to watch for as you read

GRADES K–2

1. Follow the changing task inside the repeated exchange.
2. Keep Goose and Duck distinct from animals in other versions.
3. Notice that the chickens join their mother at the very end.

Quotations are verbatim from the English original, Project Gutenberg #473: Sara Cone Bryant, Stories to Tell to Children (1907), "The Little Red Hen.", the public-domain text hosted at classicslaunch.org/works/the-little-red-hen/. Citations give book and chapter (or canto and line) so every line can be checked.