CLASSICS LIBRARY · STORY MAP

The Three Billy-Goats Gruff

George Webbe Dasent · *1859 · George Webbe Dasent, Popular Tales from the Norse (1859)*

Three hungry goats approach the same bridge, each louder and larger than the last.

THE CENTRAL QUESTION

How do three travelers pass a guard who intends to eat them?

"under the / bridge lived a great ugly Troll"
Opening: the bridge

The two smaller goats postpone the encounter, and the strongest ends it by defeating the Troll.

KEY CHARACTERS

The youngest Gruff
Small goat who bargains for safe passage.

The second Gruff
Middle goat who repeats the younger one's strategy.

The big Gruff
Powerful goat who defeats the bridge's guard.

The Troll
Hungry creature whose greed makes him keep waiting.

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

01

A crossing to pasture

OPENING: THE BRIDGE

The goats need to cross a stream to reach good grazing, but a hungry Troll occupies the space underneath their bridge.

- Three goats named Gruff are going up to the hill-side to make themselves fat.
- A troll with saucer-eyes lives under the bridge they must cross.
- Dasent's English is the hosted wording, including the troll's roar.

> *"under the / bridge lived a great ugly Troll"*
> Opening: the bridge

02

The smallest passes

FIRST CROSSING

The little goat persuades the Troll to wait for a larger meal, and the first crossing succeeds.

- The tiniest goat crosses first, with a small voice.
- He asks the troll to wait for a bigger goat.
- The troll lets him pass, which sets the pattern for the middle brother.

> *""Well! be off with you""*
> First crossing

03

The middle goat delays the danger

SECOND CROSSING

A louder traveler repeats the bargain and directs the Troll's appetite toward the biggest goat.

- The second goat is heavier, and the bridge sounds louder.
- He too asks the troll to wait for one still bigger.
- The delay is the tale's cunning, not a change of destination.

> *""Very well! be off with you""*
> Second crossing

04

The strongest clears the way

THIRD CROSSING

The biggest goat answers with force, defeats the Troll, and joins the others on the hillside.

- The big billy-goat answers the troll in a hoarse voice of his own.
- He uses horns and strength, then goes on to the hill-side.
- The tale ends with the old close: Snip, snap, snout, this tale's told out.

> *""IT'S I! THE BIG BILLY-GOAT GRUFF""*
> Third crossing

Growing courage

Greed and judgment

Threefold repetition

What to watch for as you read

GRADES K–2

1. Hear the difference between the three sets of hoofbeats.
2. The final clash is described directly and ends the threat.
3. The last rhyme is the storyteller's closing formula.

Quotations are verbatim from the George Webbe Dasent, Popular Tales from the Norse (1859), Project Gutenberg #8933: George Webbe Dasent, Popular Tales from the Norse (from Asbjørnsen and Moe), "The Three Billy-Goats Gruff.", the public-domain text hosted at classicslaunch.org/works/the-three-billy-goats-gruff/. Citations give book and chapter (or canto and line) so every line can be checked.