

The little match girl - Short story

The little match girl is a very famous fairy tale published in 1845 by Danish poet and author [Hans Christian Andersen](#). Originally published in Danish, it is called as Den Lille Pige med Svovlstikkerne. The story goes on about a shivering barefoot girl on new year's eve trying to sell matches and about her hopes and dreams.

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About the author – Hans Christian Anderson

[Hans Christian Andersen](#) is one of the legendary writers who has written most of the stories which have been adopted by Disney and this over a 100 years before Disney even existed. Surprised? Hans Christian Anderson, born in April 2 1805, was a Danish author and a prolific writer of plays, novels, poems, and fairy tales. Andersen's fairy tales consists of a collection of 156 stories across nine volumes has been translated into more than 125 languages. His most famous fairy tales include "[The Emperor's New Clothes](#)", "[The Little Mermaid](#)", "[The Nightingale](#)", "[The Steadfast Tin Soldier](#)", "[The Red Shoes](#)", "[The Princess and the Pea](#)", "[The Snow Queen](#)", "[The Ugly Duckling](#)", "[The Little Match Girl](#)", and "[Thumbelina](#)".

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The little match girl

It was so terribly cold. Snow was falling, and it was almost dark. Evening came on, the last evening of the year. In the cold and gloom a poor little girl, bareheaded and barefoot, was walking through the streets.

Of course when she had left her house she'd had slippers on, but what good had they been? They were very big slippers, way too big for her, for they belonged to her mother. The little girl had lost them running across the road, where two carriages had rattled by terribly fast. One slipper she'd not been able to find again, and a boy had run off with the other, saying he could use it very well as a cradle some day when he had children of his own.

And so the little girl walked on her naked feet, which were quite red and blue with the cold. In an old apron she carried several packages of matches, and she held a box of them in her hand. No one had bought any from her all day long, and no one had given her a cent.

Shivering with cold and hunger, she crept along, a picture of misery, poor little girl! The snowflakes fell on her long fair hair, which hung in pretty curls over her neck. In all the windows lights were shining, and there was a wonderful smell of roast goose, for it was New Year's eve. Yes, she thought of that!

A lit match

In a corner formed by two houses, one of which projected farther out into the street than the other, she sat down and drew up her little feet under her. She was getting colder and colder, but did not dare to go home, for she had sold no matches, nor earned a single cent. Her father would surely beat her.

Besides, it was cold at home, for they had nothing over them but a roof through which the wind whistled even though the biggest cracks had been stuffed with straw and rags.

Her hands were almost dead with cold. Oh, how much one little match might warm her! If she could only take one from the box and rub it against the wall and warm her hands. She drew one out.

R-r-ratch! How it sputtered and burned! It made a warm, bright flame, like a little candle, as she held her hands over it; but it gave a strange light! It really seemed to the little girl as if she were sitting before a great iron stove with shining brass knobs and a brass cover.

How wonderfully the fire burned! How comfortable it was! The youngster stretched out her feet to warm them too; then the little flame went out, the stove vanished, and she had only the remains of the burnt match in her hand.

Dreams

She struck another match against the wall. It burned brightly, and when the light fell upon the wall it became transparent like a thin veil, and she could see through it into a room.

On the table a snow-white cloth was spread, and on it stood a shining dinner service. The roast goose steamed gloriously, stuffed with apples and prunes. And what was still better, the goose jumped down from the dish and waddled along the floor with a knife and fork in its breast, right over to the little girl.

Then the match went out, and she could see only the thick, cold wall. She lighted another match. Then she was sitting under the most beautiful Christmas tree.

It was much larger and much more beautiful than the one she had seen last Christmas through the glass door at the rich merchant's home. Thousands of candles burned on the green branches, and colored pictures like those in the printshops looked down at her.

The little girl reached both her hands toward them. Then the match went out. But the Christmas lights mounted higher. She saw them now as bright stars in the sky. One of them fell down, forming a long line of fire.

"Now someone is dying," thought the little girl, for her old grandmother, the only person who had loved her, and who was now dead, had told her that when a star fell down a soul went up to God.

New year

She rubbed another match against the wall. It became bright again, and in the glow the old grandmother stood clear and shining, kind and lovely.

"Grandmother!" cried the child. "Oh, take me with you! I know you will disappear when the match is burned out. You will vanish like the warm stove, the wonderful roast goose and the beautiful big Christmas tree!"

And she quickly struck the whole bundle of matches, for she wished to keep her grandmother with her. And the matches burned with such a glow that it became brighter than daylight. Grandmother had never been so grand and beautiful.

She took the little girl in her arms, and both of them flew in brightness and joy above the earth, very, very high, and up there was neither cold, nor hunger, nor fear—they were with God.

But in the corner, leaning against the wall, sat the little girl with red cheeks and smiling mouth, frozen to death on the last evening of the old year. The New Year's sun rose upon a little pathetic figure. The child sat there, stiff and cold, holding the matches, of which one bundle was almost burned.

"She wanted to warm herself," the people said. No one imagined what beautiful things she had seen, and how happily she had gone with her old grandmother into the bright New Year.

Summary and Analysis – The little match girl

The little match girl is a very dark and gloomy tale. It focuses on the plight of the poor children who suffer undeserved hardships just because of their birth into a poor family. In the present day and age, many suffer the same fate with terrible living conditions, hunger and poverty rife.

Back in 1850s, the children of the poor was much more miserable and were victimized for not being born into privilege. The Little Match Girl is a story which tells the story of the voices of the voiceless and teaches all about being more compassionate towards the downtrodden.

The Little Match Girl is a portrayal of the final hardships faced by an innocent little girl against the harsh cruel world.

Questions and Answers - The little match girl –Set 1

1. What is the story about The Little Match Girl?
 1. The story is about a very poor girl who is out in the cold selling matches and then freezes to death on the eve of the New Year.
2. Who is the little match girl?
 1. The little match girl is a very poor girl who was born into poverty and is trying to sell matches in order to survive.
3. Why does the girl not want to go home?
 1. Though it was getting colder and colder, she did not dare to go home since she had not sold any matches or earned a single cent. Her father would surely beat her.
4. What does the girl see when she strikes the first match?
 1. She sees a table with a snow-white cloth, and on it stood a shining dinner service. A roast goose steamed gloriously, stuffed with apples and prunes. The goose jumped down from the dish and waddled along the floor with a knife and fork in its breast, right over to the little girl.
5. On striking the second match, what does the girl see?
 1. She was sitting under the most beautiful Christmas tree. It was much larger and much more beautiful than the one she had seen last Christmas through the glass door at the rich merchant's home. Thousands of candles burned on the green branches, and colored pictures like those in the printshops looked down at her.

Questions and Answers - The little match girl –Set 2

6. What does the girl see on striking the third match?

1. When rubbed another match against the wall, it became bright again, and in the glow the old grandmother stood clear and shining, kind and lovely.

7. Why does she strike the entire box of matches?
 1. She struck the whole bundle of matches since she wished to keep her grandmother with her. The matches burned with such a glow that it became brighter than daylight and her grandmother had never been so grand and beautiful.

8. Explain the symbolism in the little match girl?
 1. The Little Match Girl is a portrayal of the final hardships faced by an innocent little girl against the harsh cruel world.

9. Is The Little Match Girl Based on a true story?
 1. While it is a story based on the imagination of the author, it is based on parallels of the real life experiences back in the 1800s.

10. Is The Little Match Girl a sad story?
 1. Yes it is a very sad story about the cruelty of the world.

11. What is the moral lesson of The Little Match Girl?
 1. One must not judge someone just because they are poor and you are not.

12. What is the reason for the death of The Little Match Girl?
 1. She freezes to death as she does not have proper clothes or shoes to face the cold.