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Family Plays

Hansel and Gretel

Drama adapted by
by I.E. Clark

From the fairy tale
by the Brothers Grimm

Hansel and Gretel

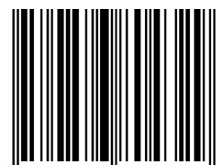
Drama with optional music. By I.E. Clark from the story by the Brothers Grimm. Cast: 4m., 6w., extras. This one-act condensation of the original three-act dramatization by I.E. Clark retains the fright, the fun and the fantasy of the fairy tale written in Germany in the very early 1800's by the Brothers Grimm. Also, it gives members of your audience an opportunity to participate—they'll love it. It may be done with or without music. This shortened version was made in response to requests for a version of *Hansel and Gretel* short enough for use in one-act play contests, workshops, classroom demonstrations, club meetings and other situations in which the full-length play could not be used. It is also suitable for showing to very young children who find it difficult to sit through a long play. Like the long version, this cutting provides the opportunity to include European folk dances and folk songs, giving your presentation the added value of acquainting your audiences with these important aspects of our American melting-pot heritage. The dances and songs may be minimized—or eliminated entirely, leaving a straight fairy-tale play. *Approximate running time: 35 to 40 minutes. Code: HC5.*

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Title

HANSEL AND GRETEL

IN ONE ACT

By I. E. CLARK

**Dramatized from the fairy tale
by the Brothers Grimm**

Family Plays

311 Washington St., Woodstock, IL 60098

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(HANSEL AND GRETEL)

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“Produced by special arrangement with
Family Plays of Woodstock, Illinois”

HANSEL AND GRETEL
in One Act

This shortened version of I. E. Clark's *Hansel and Gretel* was made especially for use in contests, workshops, and other venues where the 3-act original won't fit.

Cast

ROBIN ROBIN, a bird
STIEFMUTTER, the stepmother
HANSEL
GRETEL } friends
FRITZ }
FRITZENE
THE YOO-HOO CLOCK
PAPA
WITCH
GINGER, a gingerbread cookie
GINGERBREAD PEOPLE (as many as desired)
 And the **TREES** (the audience)



Synopsis of Scenes

Scene 1: The home of Hansel and Gretel
on the edge of the Black Forest;
and deep inside the forest

Scene 2: The Land of the Hungry Witch,
and her gingerbread house

Scene 3: Same as Scene 2, a few hours later



Once upon a time
(now, or yesterday)

ABOUT THE PLAY

“Hansel and Gretel” is one of the most enchanting tales from Fairyland: two little children, afraid and alone, hopelessly lost in a great forest...a papa who loves them very much, and a stepmother who doesn't love them at all...a gingerbread house with real live gingerbread cookies dancing about it...and a hungry witch with a special taste for roast boy.

This one-act condensation of the original three-act dramatization by I. E. Clark retains the fright, the fun, and the fantasy of the fairy tale written in Germany very early in the 1800's by the Brothers Grimm. This shortened version was made in response to requests for a *Hansel and Gretel* short enough for use in one-act play contests, workshops, classroom demonstrations, club meetings, and other situations in which the full-length play could not be used. It is also just right for showing to very young children who find it difficult to sit through a long play.

Like the long version, this cutting provides the opportunity to include European folk dances and folk songs, giving your presentation the added value of acquainting your audiences with these important aspects of our American melting-pot heritage. The dances and songs may be minimized—or eliminated entirely, leaving a straight fairy-tale play.

The Director's Script for the full version will be helpful in mounting this condensation on your stage. It provides full details regarding the German words, dances, songs, costumes, etc. A piano/vocal score, a video tape, and a sound effects/music tape are also available.

Suggestions for Staging: In keeping with the traditional German love of food, it is suggested that Hansel, Papa, and Stiefmutter be rather plump—especially Papa, who might even be roly-poly. Hansel and Gretel should be portrayed as children of six to 10 years of age. The actor and actress playing the roles may—as often happens in a fairy-tale play—be adults. The German dialect used by Hansel and Papa should not be so authentic that the audience can't understand what they are saying; in fact, no dialect at all needs to be used since the sentence structure and speech rhythm used in this script give sufficient hint of the dialect.

All German words may easily be omitted, too, by translating them into English (the translation is given on p. vi and in the Director's Script). However, it is our feeling that the German words add to the fun of performing—and watching—the play and should be used even if the pronunciation is not completely accurate. The Director's Script gives pronunciation helps.

This *Hansel and Gretel* gives members of your audience an opportunity to participate. They'll love it. Playing time: About 35 minutes.

THE DIRECTOR'S SCRIPT

The Director's Script for the three-act *Hansel and Gretel* will be helpful to those mounting this one-act version. Stage Directions in this playscript have been kept to a minimum for a specific reason: Many directors want their actors and actresses to create their own characterizations without help from the play publisher. An imaginative cast member often introduces exciting bits of business and line readings if s/he is made to do his/her own thinking.

Some directors, on the other hand, are so deluged with details of publicity, ticket sales, and house management that they can never find time to devote full attention to staging, blocking, and characterization. For these harried directors, we provide a Director's Script loaded with full stage directions which show every action of every actor in detail.

The Director's Script contains drawings and information on costumes, scenery, props, lighting, make-up, and other technical aspects of the play.

To save the director even more time, the Director's Script discusses the characterization of each role. And the Director's Script for *Hansel and Gretel* gives detailed information on the folk songs and dances, German dialect, and other aspects of an ethnic presentation.

The Director's Script may be ordered from

Family Plays

311 Washington St., Woodstock, IL 60098

German Words and Phrases
*approximately pronounced and translated; see
 the Director's Script for more details.*

Ach du Hanswurst! [OCK doo HAHNTS-voorst] "Oh, you clown!"

Ach du liebe! [OCK doo LEEB-uh] "Oh, dear!" "Golly!"

Achtung! [OCK-toong] "Watch out!"

Das ist richtig [DAHS isst RICK-tig] "That's right"

Ei Katz [EYE COTS] "Oh, cats!" "Holy cow!"

Frau [rhymes with "now"] "Mrs."

Guten Abend [GOOT-n AH-bend] "Good evening"

Hansel [HAHNT-sul]

Ja [YAH] "Yes"

Klein [KLINE] "Little"

Liebling [LEE-B-ling] "Loved one"

Liebschen [LEE-B-shun] "Beloved"

Mach schnell! [mock SHNELL] "Hurry!"

Mein [MINE] "My"

Mit [MIT] "With"

Morgen [MORE-gun] "Morning"

Ser gut [zair GOOT/ "That's good"

Stiefmutter [SHTEEF-mut-uh ("mut" rhymes with "put")] "Step-mother"

Teufel [TOY-ful] "Devil"

Und [UNT "u" as in "put"] "And"

Was ist das? [VAHS iss DAHS] "What's that?"

Wie gehst? [vee GATES] "How are you?"

WIEN /VEEN/ "Vienna."

Wiener schnitzel [VEE-nuh shnit-sl] breaded veal cutlet

Suggestions for German dialect:

"ch" = "sh" ("children" > "shildren")

"s" = "sh" ("stop" > "shstop")

"w" = "v" ("witch" > "vitch")

final "d" = "t" ("kid" > "kit")

"j" = "y" ("just" > "yust")

HANSEL AND GRETEL

[When the house lights dim, a BIRD flutters down an aisle and hops upon the stage]

BIRD. Hello, everybody. My name is Robin. That's my first name. It's my last name, too. That's right—my whole name is Robin Robin. And I need your help in presenting this play. Let's see now— *[to a man—preferably one about eight years old]* excuse me, sir, but would you mind holding your arms over your head like this? O.K., thank you. Now... who else? I know! Why don't *all* of you hold your arms up! Very good, very good! Can you guess what I'm doing? I'm trying you out for parts in this play. It takes place in a great forest—that's where I live. And the forest is full of—can you guess what?—that's right—the forest is full of *trees*. Now can you guess what part I want you to play? Right again—you're going to be *the Trees!* Let's rehearse a bit before the play begins. First of all, when the wind blows, Trees shake their leaves, don't they? Okay, everybody raise both hands and wave them gently like this. Gently, gently. Now you must act the part right and do what I say; otherwise we can't have a play. Now when the wind blows harder, the Trees sway a little—first this way—that's right—and then this way. And sometimes, on a very dark night, when all the stars have pulled the covers over their eyes and gone sound asleep, the Trees make noise—it's a kind of scary noise—like a low whistle or a quiet moan—like this. All right, let's hear all the Trees moan—not too loud, though. There, that's perfect!

Now, whenever we need a forest in this play, I'll signal to you like this *[raises her hands above her head]*. And this is going to be our secret because humans can't understand me when I speak. Hansel and Gretel live in a little cottage right on the edge of this forest—with their father and their stepmother... *[The LIGHTS have been coming up on the stage as she speaks this final sentence, and when the lights are full, ROBIN ROBIN has disappeared]*

Scene 1

[The stage represents the parlor of the cottage in which Hansel and Gretel live. Since the family is not wealthy (but not destitute, either) the room is sparsely furnished, with a table or two and chairs—and a Grandfather Clock. As it turns out, the Grandfather CLOCK can

talk—almost like a human. The STEPMOTHER enters, roughly pushing HANSEL and GRETEL into the room. HANSEL with a broom and GRETEL with a mop clean the room rapidly but carefully. STEPMOTHER holds a feather duster, which she uses to pop the children. When she is sure they are working rapidly enough, she dons a bonnet and shawl, takes a market basket from the table, and exits. The CHILDREN work for a few moments frantically; then GRETEL tiptoes to the door, looks out stealthily, nods at Hansel with a grin. They run out, laughing. HANSEL returns almost immediately, winds the clock, and then runs out. The CLOCK comes to life, steps downstage and dances as he sings]

CLOCK. Tick, tock, rick, rock,
 Spick, spock, I'm a clock—
 But I can't bong and I can't br-r-r-ing;
 I can't dong or even ding;
 They didn't fit me with a cuckoo,
 So on the hour—what do I do?
 I go—yoo-hoo, yoo-hoo, yoo-hoo, yoo-hooo!

GRETEL. *[Runs in]* Hurry, Hansel! The Yoo-Hoo Clock just struck four. Our friends will be here any minute.

HANSEL. *[Following]* Maybe they don't come today. Maybe they are frightened that—that—

GRETEL. *[Covering her ears]* Don't, Hansel, and—don't even talk about the Stiefmutter!*

HANSEL. Don't worry—I take care of my sister. I will not let the Stiefmutter hurt you...

FRITZ. *[Sticking his head in door, cautiously looking around]* Is—is it all right?

HANSEL. Sure, Fritz—it is all right already. *[FRITZ motions to his sister, and FRITZENE peeks in cautiously]*

FRITZENE. Wie gehts.*

HANSEL and GRETEL. Hi, Fritzene!

FRITZENE. Are you sure the Stiefmutter won't come back early again? My leg still hurts—

HANSEL. We all watch out.

FRITZ. I brought you a present, Gretel. *[He takes a small box from his pocket and holds it out to her]*

*For pronunciation of German words, see p. vi and the Director's Script for the 3-act version. English words may be substituted, if preferred.

GRETTEL. Oh—what is it! *[She takes the box and opens it eagerly. She looks at the contents for a moment and then throws it down with a scream]*

HANSEL. What is it yet? Ach, it's about to get away already! *[He catches it and holds up a small snake]* A little snake-in-the-grass! *[In catching the snake, he accidentally steps on the box it was in]*

FRITZENE. You mean a grass snake. Fritz found it just before we left home. Boys are so mean. *[HANSEL and FRITZ enjoy the compliment]*

HANSEL. Gretel is scared of snakes—just like the Stiefmutter.

GRETTEL. *[About to cry]* It's been so long since I had a real present!

HANSEL. It's just a little joke, Gretel. I tell you what—we give you a real present—we dance, like you always want—ain't so, Fritz?

FRITZ. Well—*[Dancing isn't his favorite pastime]*

HANSEL. Okay—but we better hurry so the Stiefmutter won't catch us again. What we going to do with your little snake-in-the-grass, Fritz?

FRITZENE. It's a grass snake.

FRITZ. I want to keep him for a pet—but—*[he picks up the crushed box]*

FRITZENE. Oh, put him in your pocket—hurry!

HANSEL. I'll put him in this sewing basket. Then he won't run away. *[He drops the snake into a sewing basket on the table]*

[The CHILDREN start to dance a Herr Schmidt, (or some other German folkdance) but before it has progressed far, the YOO-HOO CLOCK strikes five, showing a great deal of agitation, for he sees the STIEFMUTTER (which is what we shall call the Stepmother from here on) coming, and he tries to warn the children]

CLOCK. Yoo-hoo, yoo-hoo! yoo-hoo-oo-oo-oo! yoo-hoo yoo-hoo!

[But the CHILDREN are having so much fun, they don't notice. STIEFMUTTER enters and surveys the scene with great displeasure]

STIEFMUTTER. Hansel! Gretel! Why aren't you working! Always these neighbor children to make you waste time!

FRITZ. Oh, oh—your Stiefmutter!

[STIEFMUTTER chases the children, trying to hit them with her walking stick. After a frantic scramble in which she manages to land one or two blows, FRITZ and FRITZENE run through the door and

disappear. HANSEL and GRETEL hide behind the clock. STIEFMUTTER drops her stick and grabs Hansel and Gretel and shakes them]

STIEFMUTTER. You miserable children! I can't take my eyes off of you for a second. All you think about is pleasure.

HANSEL. But Stiefmutter—only for a minute just—

STIEFMUTTER. Shut up! You don't care if we starve. Your Papa makes clocks nobody buys, and his children waste the whole day dancing!

GRETEL. We just wanted to rest a while, Stiefmutter...

STIEFMUTTER. Rest—that's all you think about. Why can't you be like me—I always find something useful to do with my time—cooking, cleaning the house—*[she picks up a garment on the table and exhibits a tear in it]* look at this pile of clothes I've got to patch! *[HANSEL and GRETEL remember the snake and look at each other in horror. HANSEL tries to sneak to the table and grab the sewing basket while STIEFMUTTER examines the torn garment. When GRETEL sees that she is about to put the garment down, she tries to distract her attention]*

GRETEL. Uh—could I help you with that, Stiefmutter?

STIEFMUTTER. No! Now get out to your woodpile—I've got to do this sewing. *[She turns to her sewing basket just as HANSEL reaches for it. She slaps his hand and grabs it away from him]* Leave that alone, you mischievous brat—I said get out to your woodpile! *[She rummages around in the basket and draws out the snake. She holds it for a moment in frozen terror and then throws it and the basket from her with a scream. HANSEL can't quite suppress a laugh, which does not go unnoticed]* All right, boy—come here! As if I didn't have enough worries trying to keep us from starving.

HANSEL. I'm sorry already, Stiefmutter. I didn't mean to—it's a little snake-in-the-grass only. *[STIEFMUTTER gives him a sound spanking]*

PAPA'S VOICE. *[Offstage]* High-low, high-low high-low high-low! Where is everybody at already? Papa's home! Where are mein little kitty-katzes?

STIEFMUTTER. *[Shaking Hansel]* Don't you tell your papa I gave you a whipping—or I'll whip you harder, do you hear?

HANSEL. Ja, Stiefmutter.

PAPA. *[Entering]* What a fine day, ain't it! A day when a man wants to be mit his family just, and listen to the laughter of his kids...

STIEFMUTTER. [*Curtsying sweetly*] Guten abend, Husband. How many clocks did you make today?

PAPA. Enough for a long time. [*He laughs at his pun*]

STIEFMUTTER. What's so funny?

PAPA. Clocks...*a long time*...clocks...time...?

STIEFMUTTER. [*She fails to see the humor*] Oh. But you did make some clocks—we need the money—

PAPA. We could have made more, but the clocks went on strike! [*He laughs again. She doesn't think it's funny. He picks up his pipe from the table*]

STIEFMUTTER. You smoke too much. Tobacco is expensive. [*PAPA blows on the pipe to clear the bowl, and soap bubbles rise from it. We can tell from the faces of HANSEL and GRETEL that they have played a joke on their Papa*]

PAPA. Somebody put soap in my pipe.

HANSEL. I did it, Papa. Please don't spank me already, Papa.

STIEFMUTTER. [*Losing her cool and the gloss of house-wifeliness that she tried so hard to convey*] These horrible children put a snake in my sewing basket!

HANSEL. I told her I was sorry, Papa. It was a little snake-in-the-grass only—and I meant to take it out before the Stiefmutter got home from the store.

PAPA. [*Putting his arms around the children*] Ach, now, these rain clouds in the eyes... Hey! I got an idea already—just like a clock striking—bong! bong! bong! bong! [*four different notes, like Big Ben*]

HANSEL. What, Papa?

PAPA. What you say to a picnic—in the forest?

HANSEL. [*Without enthusiasm*] That-that would be a good idea, Papa— [*he looks furtively at Gretel; there is fright in her eyes*] I guess...

PAPA. Wife, you take Gretel and go see if you two ladies can find something we can make mit a picnic in the forest.

[*STIEFMUTTER grabs GRETEL; they exit. GRETEL looks back at Hansel, trying to convey a message with her eyes*]

HANSEL. Do we have to go on the picnic, Papa?

PAPA. What's this! Everybody loves a picnic—sure we go—und be a happy one big family.

HANSEL. But last time we had a picnic—it was not so happy...