

THE TROLL'S TAIL

Variations on this tale are told in many countries. Encourage everyone to chant along with you.

Prop suggestions:

- A blanket and some pinecones.
- A long sock with a knot tied in the end for the troll's tail.
- A pair of wellies held in your hands and banged together to make a 'stomping' noise.
- A pastry brush with silicone bristles for the feel of the long grass. (Gently brush this on the back of the listener's hands.)
- A Tupperware container (taped shut) with some gravel in it.
- A 'squeak' cut from an old squeaky toy and put into a little drawstring bag.
- If you have some voice recorder switches, you could use these to help everyone join in with the chant.

These props should only be used under adult supervision.

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Once upon a time an old woman
went into the woods to collect
pinecones for her fire.

*[Let everyone see and feel the
pinecones.]*

She found a troll's
tail in the woods.

*[Let everyone see and feel
the troll's tail.]*

She took it home. And she hung
it on her bed post.

In the middle of the night the
troll came stomping through the
woods. As he walked he chanted.

*[Bang the wellies together
as you chant.]*

*You know and I know
I'm coming to get my tailey-po
[Repeat three times or more.]*

The old woman put her hands
over her ears. *[Make this action.]*

The troll came through the long
grass. *[Use the pastry brush.]*

*You know and I know
I'm coming to get my tailey-po
[Repeat three times or more.]*

The old woman put her hands
over her eyes. *[Make this action.]*

The troll came up the path.
*[Shake the gravel shaker
as you chant.]*

*You know and I know
I'm coming to get my tailey-po
[Repeat three times or more.]*

The old woman put the blankets
over her head.
[Put the blanket over your head.]

The troll came up the
squeaky stairs. *[Squeak the
squeaker as you chant.]*

*You know and I know
I'm coming to get my tailey-po
[Repeat many times to build tension.]*

The old woman sat up in bed.

'Oh!' she shouted, 'Oh!
Why don't you just ...

... take it !'

[Say this loudly, with emphasis.]

The troll grabbed his tail.

Squeak, squeak he went, down
the stairs. *[Squeak the squeaker.]*

Crunch, crunch he went, over the
gravel. *[Shake the gravel shaker.]*

Swish, swish he went,
through the long grass.
[Use the pastry brush.]

Stomp, stomp he went,
back to the forest.
[Bang the wellies together.]

The old woman shook out her
blanket. *[Shake the blanket.]*

... and went back to sleep ...

... and she never saw
the troll again.

THE DOUGLAS FIR TREE AND THE WEE MICE

This legend is indigenous to the Pacific North-West of Canada. You can do the actions on your own body or on your child's, whichever is most appropriate. (If your child would find the details of the fir cone difficult to discern you can simply miss the ending out and tell this as a little action story.)

If possible, collect some Douglas Fir cones before telling this story. (These should only be used under adult supervision.)

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This is the story of how the tall
Douglas Fir saved the mice
in the forest.

Once, long ago, there was a
great forest fire.

[Make 'flames' with your hands.]

The mice in the forest ran round and
round in circles. They did not
know what to do.

*[Trace circles on the back of your
child's hand.]*

'Climb up here, little mice!'
said the tall Douglas Fir.

[Use a deep voice for the Douglas Fir.]

Quickly the mice ran up the
trunk of the tree.

*['Run' with your index and middle fingers
up your child's arm to their shoulder.]*

But they still did not feel safe.

'Climb higher little mice!'
said the tall Douglas Fir.

So they ran higher.

*['Run' with your index and middle fingers
up to the top of your child's head.]*

But they still did not feel safe.

'Climb into the fir cones!'
said the tall Douglas Fir.

So the mice closed their eyes ...

... and ran headfirst into the fir cones.

Now they were safe.

*[At this point either show your child a
fir cone, or 'dive' two fingers of one hand
into your other hand – so the two
fingers are held 'safe'.]*

The Douglas Fir had saved the mice!

And if you ever have a Douglas Fir
cone in your hand, take a good look:
you will still be able to see the back
legs and tails of the wee mice sticking
out from underneath the scales,
even after all these years.

ANT AND WOLF

This story is loosely based on a Swiss legend.
Little creatures can be powerful too!

Suggestions for props:

- Furry mittens and/or a howl sound effect for the wolf.
- A duster (lamb's wool if possible) for the fox's brush.
- An angry cat sound effect (or just snarl and hiss yourself!).
- An eagle sound effect (look online for this).
- A pastry brush to make the 'tickle' of the ant walking on a hand or arm. Alternatively, you can use your fingers for this.

Animal sound effects can usually be found online for free to download.

Children who enjoy visual rather than tactile elements might enjoy animal puppets being used for the story instead.

It is fun to use different voices for the wolf and the ant; one low and the other high.

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Long ago our forests were
full of wolves.

One day Fox came home.
*[Let everyone feel the duster
'fox brush']*

She found Wolf sitting in her den.

Wolf said:

'Lovely to see you Fox!
Tea or coffee?
Have a cup!
Then I'm going to ...
eat you up!'

*[As you say this you can pretend
to 'catch' one of your audience –
wearing the furry mittens if you have
them. Make sure that you choose
someone who enjoys this kind of play.]*

'Help!' said Fox and she ran
to get Wildcat.
*[Snarl and hiss like a wildcat
or use sound effect.]*

When Wolf saw Wildcat he said:

'Lovely to see you Wildcat!
Tea or coffee?
Have a cup!
Then I'm going to ...
eat you up!'

['Catch' someone as above.]

'Help!' said Wildcat and ran away.

So Fox went to get Eagle.
[Use the eagle sound effect.]

When Wolf saw Eagle he said:

'Lovely to see you Eagle!
Tea or coffee?
Have a cup!
Then I'm going to ...
eat you up!'

['Catch' someone as above.]

'Help!' said Eagle and flew away.

Just then Ant came along.
*[If appropriate, brush the back
of everyone's hands with the
pastry brush.]*

'I'll help you,' said Ant.

'You!' said Fox. 'What can **you** do?'

Ant walked right up to Wolf.

Wolf did not even see Ant.

Ant walked right up Wolf's leg.

And right up Wolf's neck.

Then Ant ran round and round
and round in Wolf's fur.

*[If appropriate use the pastry brush,
or your fingers to make the tickly path
of the ant on the hands and arms of
your audience. Alternatively, you
can mime the actions of the ant on
your own body and then squirm and
scratch yourself vigorously.]*

'Help!' said Wolf.

'Help! Help! Help!' he said,
and ran away.

And Fox said thank you
very much to Ant.

And went into her den.

And fell asleep. *[Mime sleeping.]*

HENNY PENNY

This re-telling of Henny-Penny is loosely based on an old Scottish version. Feel free to make your own adaptations if you would like to incorporate different types of animals/props, or add in more characters if you would like a longer story.

Prop suggestions:

- An acorn (or you could just mime the acorn falling).
- A hen sound effect (or you can make this noise yourself).
- A 'squeak' cut out of a squeaky toy and put in a small drawstring bag.
- A scrubbing brush (for the hedgehog's prickles).
- A duster (lamb's wool if possible) for the fox's brush.
- Cups and teaspoons.

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Once a hen was walking through the woods when an acorn fell on her head. *[Mime the falling acorn.*

Let everyone see the acorn and hear the hen.]

'The sky is falling! The sky is falling!' said the hen.
'I will tell the King.'

She ran through the trees.
[Make running noises/actions, slapping knees or stomping.]

And she met Squeaky Mouse.
[Squeak.]

'Where are you going, Henny-Penny?'

'The sky is falling!
I'm going to tell the King.'

'I'll go with you,'
said Squeaky Mouse.

And so off went Henny-Penny and Squeaky Mouse.

They ran through the trees.
[Make running actions/noises.]

And they met Prickly Hedgehog.
[Let everyone feel the bristles of the scrubbing brush.]

'Where are you going, Henny-Penny and Squeaky Mouse?'

'The sky is falling!
We're going to tell the King.'

'I'll go with you,'
said Prickly Hedgehog.

And so off went Henny-Penny, Squeaky Mouse and Prickly Hedgehog.

They ran through the trees.
[Make running noises/actions.]

And they met ... Mr Tod Fox.
[Let everyone feel the duster.]

Henny-Penny, Squeaky Mouse and Prickly Hedgehog hid under a holly bush.

*Fee fi fo finner
In this bush is my dinner!*
said Mr Tod Fox.

[Repeat several times, getting louder.]

Henny Penny said, 'Before you eat us Mr Fox – can we see you dance? I know that you are very good at dancing.'

Mr Fox began to dance.

[Spin the duster around and 'dust' people's hands with it.]

*Fee fi fo fin
Watch me turn
And watch me spin!*

[Repeat several times as you 'dust'.]

'More!' said Henny Penny, 'More!'

So the fox danced and turned. He went spinning faster and faster.

[Repeat rhyme.]

While he was spinning, Henny-Penny, Squeaky Mouse and Prickly Hedgehog crept out of the bush.

They crept through the trees.

They ran all the way to the castle.
[Make light 'tiptoe' footsteps, gradually get faster and louder ...]

They told the King about the sky. And he thanked them and told them not to worry. Then he gave them all a cup of tea ... *[Stir the teaspoons in the cups.]*

And they all lived happily ever after in the woods.

I KNOW A TREE

This is a good rhyme for introducing the important role that trees play in providing homes for our wildlife. If you want to explore this in more depth you could introduce particular species into the rhyme (thrush, blackbird, ladybird, snail hunter beetle, pipistrelle bat and so on).

You can recite this rhyme with actions or you could add in some props for sensory interest.

Prop suggestions:

- A 'squeak' cut from an old squeaky toy makes a good mouse sound. Put it into a little drawstring bag and tie the bag shut.
- A toy bird or a bird whistle.
- A pastry brush is good to make the tickly feel of a beetle walking on your hand or arm.
- A toy bat – or make a very simple puppet by cutting out a bat shape from black card and taping it to a stick.

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I know a tree, an old, old tree,
An old, old tree in the woods.
There's a wee little mouse in
that old, old tree,
In that old, old tree in the woods!

I know a tree, an old, old tree,
An old, old tree in the woods.
There's a wee little bird in
that old, old tree,
In that old, old tree in the woods!

I know a tree, an old, old tree,
An old, old tree in the woods.
There's a wee little beetle in
that old, old tree,
In that old, old tree in the woods!

I know a tree, an old, old tree,
An old, old tree in the woods.
There's a wee little bat in
that old, old tree,
In that old, old tree in the woods!

THE LITTLE GIRL AND THE STARS

This gentle story is loosely based on the German folktale The Star Talers.

It is particularly suitable for children with complex additional needs, including those with PMLD (profound and multiple learning disabilities).

Prop suggestions:

- Blowing gently through a whistle can make a good noise for the wind. Alternatively, you could use a fan.
- If you are telling this story inside then the leaves, snow and stars can all be cut out of tissue paper. Cut very small shapes like confetti (or you could buy actual confetti, orange and red for leaves, white for snow and gold for the stars). Gently let this fall on everyone. Take your time with this. There should just be a tiny bit of confetti falling for the leaves, a little bit more for the snow and then lots for the stars.
- If you're telling the story outside you could use touch instead of the confetti – use your fingertips to make the feeling of snow, leaves and stars falling on the backs of everyone's hands.
- You could use a little drawstring bag full of coins at the end of the story (knot this tight shut). But if you want the story to be very calming it is probably best to just use the confetti. It could also be nice to play some soothing music.
- At Christmas time you could add that the girl took the coins to the market. Then have a bag of sensory Christmas objects that she bought there to finish off the tale (tangerines, tinsel, decorations etc.).

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The wind was whistling.
[Blow the whistle very gently or whistle yourself.]

It was a cold winter's day.
[Rub your hands together, and rub your arms.]

A poor girl was walking
in the woods.
[Make walking actions and/or stamp your feet.]

She was very tired.
She was very hungry.
[Rub your eyes and your stomach.]

She lay down under the trees.
[Mime lying down.]

The last autumn leaves fell from
the tree above her.
[Let a little orange and red confetti fall.]

The girl looked up as they fell.

A few snowflakes fell from
the sky above her.
[Let a little white confetti fall.]

The girl looked up as they fell.
Then ... the stars began to fall.
[Let some gold confetti fall.]

**The stars were falling from
the sky above her!**
[Say this with quiet amazement!]

They landed all around the girl.
[Let lots more gold confetti fall.]

She jumped up.
She bent to pick up the stars.
[Mime the action.]

But they were coins!
She picked up the coins.
She ran home. And she never
ever forgot the day the stars
fell from the sky.
[Finish with lots more confetti.]

THE LITTLE WOODEN HOUSE IN THE WOODS

This story is very loosely based on
The Town Mouse and the Country Mouse.

Suggestions for props and actions:

- Actions work best for the little wooden house: roof, door, table and bowl. Simply make the shape of the object with your hands. It can be nice to use a real wooden spoon.
- Use any kind of berry such as brambles or raspberries or some aromatic fresh herbs.
- A Tupperware container (taped shut) with some lentils or rice in it works well for the noise of the trees at night.
- You could use actual autumn leaves or leaves cut from tissue paper.
- When Fergus is living in the city you might want to add in some traffic sound effects.

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Old Fergus lived in the woods.
He lived in a little wooden house
with a little wooden roof and a
little wooden door.

[Make actions.]

He had a little wooden table
and a little wooden bowl and a
little wooden spoon.

[Make actions.]

Every day he walked through the
woods and found things to eat.

*[Let everyone see and
feel the berries or herbs.]*

Every night he listened to the
trees rustling and he fell asleep.

[Use the shaker.]

Every morning he opened his
little wooden door. He watched
the leaves dance in the
wind and felt happy.

[Let some leaves fall to the ground.]

Then one day his brother came
from the town to visit.

‘Fergus,’ he said, ‘come and live in
the town. You can live with me in
my big house. You can eat good
food. You can rest.’

So Fergus went with his brother.

At first he liked it. He rested.
He ate good food.

[Mime yawning, sleeping and eating.]

But at night he could not hear the
trees rustling. He could not sleep.

*[Shake your head.
Use traffic sound effects.]*

And in the morning he
could not see any leaves dancing.
He did not feel happy.

*[Shake your head again.
More traffic noises.]*

So one morning he walked
back to the woods.

*[Make walking actions
and/or stamp your feet.]*

He walked back to his little
wooden house with the little
wooden roof and the little
wooden door.

[Repeat actions as before.]

There was his little wooden table
and his little wooden bowl and
his little wooden spoon just as
he had left them.

[Repeat actions as before.]

That night he listened to the trees
rustling and he fell asleep.

[Use the shaker.]

And the next morning he opened
his little wooden door.

He watched the leaves dance in
the wind and he felt happy.

*[Finish by letting lots of leaves
fall to the ground.]*

THE PIGEON AND THE WREN

Legends about the way birds build
their nests are told in many countries.

This one comes from Ireland.

For this story you will need sticks, grass, leaves
and sheep's fleece. Wrens often include a
variety of things in their nests so feel free to add
in or swap props according to what you have to
hand. (Other ideas would include yarn, natural
twine and raffia.) It is nice to finish by letting
everyone feel the warmth from a handwarmer.

These can be found online and in outdoor
equipment shops. Put the handwarmer in a
little drawstring bag and tie the bag shut.

If you can give the pigeon and the wren
contrasting voices it will make the story more
fun. The wren is a very small bird so her voice
should be quite high. And the pigeon should
be as annoying as possible! Encourage
everyone to join in as she says 'I know!'.

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The pigeon was feeling cold. Brrr!

*[Rub your arms and rub your
hands together.]*

The pigeon asked the wren:
'How do you make such a warm nest?'

'I take some little sticks like these ...'
said the wren.

*[Let everyone see and
feel the sticks.]*

'I know! I know!'
said the pigeon.

'I take some grass like this ...'
said the wren.

*[Let everyone see and
feel the grass.]*

'I know! I know!'
said the pigeon.

'I take some leaves like these ...'
said the wren.

*[Let everyone see and
feel the leaves.]*

'I know! I know!'
said the pigeon.

'And then I look for some sheep's
wool like this ...' said the wren.

*[Let everyone see and
feel the sheep's wool.]*

'I know! I know!'
said the pigeon.

Now the wren was getting cross.
She stamped her little foot three
times. *[Stamp your foot or clap
your hands three times.]*

'Stop!' she said. 'Stop, Pigeon!
You know everything already.
Go and do it yourself!'

The pigeon just could not listen.
And that is why she sits in a nest of
sticks to this very day.

She is so cold! Brrr!
*[Rub your arms and rub your hands
together.]*

But the wren is dry and warm
in her cosy nest.
*[Cup your hands full of the grass, leaves
and wool to show a 'nest'. Then let
everyone feel the handwarmer.]*

TREE ON THE HILL

This is traditionally recited with actions. Draw the hill in the air with your finger. Stand like a tree and then stick your arm out to make a 'branch'. Cup your hands together to make a nest. Use your hands to make flapping wings for the bird. Then mime holding a feather in one hand and drawing the thumb and finger of your other hand up the length of it.

Draw a circle in the air for the sun at the end.

If you would like to tell a more sensory version of this rhyme you could add in some of the following props:

- A twig for the branch.
- A felt bowl for the nest.
- A toy bird or a bird sound whistle.
- A feather cut from paper.
- A handwarmer for the sun. These can be found online and in outdoor equipment shops. Put the handwarmer in a little drawstring bag and tie the bag shut.

You can pause the rhyme while everyone has a chance to look at or feel the props.

As you say the rhyme repeat the words 'and the hill stood still' with great emphasis each time, encouraging everyone to join in. And once you have recited the rhyme once do the whole thing over again – it is even more fun the second time!

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Over on the hill there stands a tree.
Tree on the hill, and the hill stood still.

And on the tree there was a branch.
Branch on the tree, tree on the hill, and the hill stood still.

And on the branch there was a nest.
Nest on the branch, branch on the tree, tree on the hill,
And the hill stood still.

And in the nest there was a bird.
Bird in the nest, nest on the branch, branch on the tree, tree on the hill,
And the hill stood still.

And on the bird there was a feather.
Feather on the bird, bird in the nest,
Nest on the branch, branch on the tree, tree on the hill,
And the hill stood still.

And in the sky there shone the sun.
Sun on the feather, feather on the bird, bird in the nest,
Nest on the branch, branch on the tree, tree on the hill,
And the hill stood still.



THE WILLOW PEG

Willow grows very easily and legends about willow trees growing from a dropped object are quite common.

For this story you will need some old-fashioned wooden 'dolly' pegs, if possible in a drawstring bag. A bag full of pegs makes a good noise when shaken and is also interesting from a tactile point of view. If you have lots of pegs at the end that is a nice contrast to the one dropped peg at the beginning.

A slide whistle is perfect for the roots going down and the shoots going up (or you can just do the actions). Shaking some pillowcases at the beginning makes an intriguing start to the story. And a rainstick or a shaker can be useful to make the 'rain'.

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Mrs MacTavish was shaking
out her washing.
Shake, shake, shake. *[Mime the actions,
or use some real pillowcases.]*
Mrs MacTavish was pegging up
her washing.
Peg, peg, peg. *[Mime the actions.]*
Mrs MacTavish went inside.
Uh-oh! It began to rain. *[Make a
'rainstorm' using clapping hands, or
shakers and rainsticks.]*
Mrs MacTavish ran back out
to the garden.
[Mime actions and/or stomp feet.]
She grabbed the washing.
And ran inside again.
[More running actions/stomping.]
But she dropped a peg! *[Drop a peg.]*
Now that little peg was made of
willow. And willow grows very easily.
It lay on the ground.

Then it put down a root. *[Use a slide
whistle going down for the roots and up for
the shoots and/or use actions.]*
And put up a shoot.
It put down a root. And put up a
shoot. *[Repeat whistle and/or actions.]*
It put down a root. And put up a
shoot. *[Repeat whistle and/or actions.]*
And grew, and grew, and grew ...
Into a beautiful tall willow tree.
Mrs MacTavish cut off a branch here
and a branch there. *[Mime actions.]*
She got out her knife and sat by the
fire and whittled. *[Mime actions.]*
She made pegs!
And that is how one peg ... turned into
hundreds of pegs! *[Have one peg in one
hand and a bag of pegs in the other hand.]*
And Mrs MacTavish gave the pegs to
all her friends and neighbours.
And she lived happily ever after by the
willow tree in the woods.