

The Woodsman

For many years, the woodsmen of the forest led very simple lives. They'd head out each morning and chop down trees for firewood, timber and whatever other uses the villagers could think of for their produce. Other than the occasional accident with an axe or the sighting of a rare red-billed warbler, their days were uneventful.

That all changed one day recently when a bustling young girl, full of vim and vigour, set out on an errand to deliver a basket of lovely food to her convalescing grandmother. She'd recently injured her ankle on a skiing trip and had been told by the doctor to rest up for a while. Of course, she'd fretted about her house going to rack and ruin and who was going to fetch Mrs Dawkin's medicine from the pharmacy, and so on. So, her granddaughter had promised to take care of all that for her.

There's not much point telling you that side of the story, you already know it. Perhaps less well-known is the story of Hank, the woodsman.

On that fateful day, Hank had set out, as usual, to meet the other lumberjacks in the great clearing on the far side of the forest. He'd eaten his breakfast like any other day and was in such a chipper mood that he whistled his way to work. It was around about lunchtime that his life took a turn for the unexpected.

All of the lumberjacks were sat down around the clearing, eating their sandwiches when a young girl, dressed all in red, came screaming through the trees.

"You must come quickly," she hollered when she'd recovered her breath. "There's a terrible wolf that's eaten my grandmother."

"I'm a lumberjack, and I'm okay right here," said the head woodsman. "I cut down trees..."

But before the lumberjack could finish, Hank stepped in and offered to help. Later on, he wasn't sure why he'd done it, but soon he was following the young girl back through the forest to her grandmother's house.

It didn't take him long to subdue the wolf and release the grandmother from his stomach (you

don't want to know how) but, by then, the press photographers had arrived and began to cause a scene.

The headlines ran for weeks about the heroic woodsman who saved the injured granny. There were offers to appear on talk shows on the television and to star in movies. Within a year, Hank had forgotten about his old life and was living in a mansion somewhere in the hills. Long gone were the days whistling in the woods.

Soon, people moved on to other things. There was a fox who'd caught a runaway gingerbread man and stopped his rampage. Now he was the star of the hour, and Hank had been forgotten.

He moved back with his family to the woods where it had all started. If you head there now, you can sometimes see him whistling away as he chops down trees. But, whatever you do, don't ask him about the wolf.

RETRIEVAL FOCUS

1. What was the lumberjack's name?
2. Which bird did the woodsmen occasionally spot?
3. What did the grandmother collect for Mrs Dawkin?
4. True or false: The grandmother injured herself rock-climbing.
5. What kind of offers did Hank get?

VIPERS QUESTIONS

V

Find a word that tells you the man defeated the wolf.

V

Find and copy a phrase that describes how much energy Little Red Riding Hood had.

S

What happened to Hank after the fox ate the gingerbread man?

S

Hank's fortunes change over the story. Summarise the different stages?

I

Is there any evidence that Hank is happy again at the end of the story? Explain.