The Story of Peter and the Wolf

Early one morning a young boy named Peter opened the gate and went out into the big green meadow.

On a branch of a big tree sat Peter's friend, a little bird. "All is safe, all is quiet" chirped the bird merrily.

Just then a duck came waddling over. She was glad Peter had not closed the gate and decided to take a nice swim in the deep pond in the meadow. Seeing the duck, the little bird flew down upon the grass, settled next to her, and shrugged his shoulders:

"What kind of bird are you if you can't fly?" he said. "What kind of bird are you," replied the duck, "if you can't swim?" and she dove into the pond.

They argued and argued, the duck swimming in the pond, the little bird hopping along the shore. When suddenly, something caught Peter's attention. He saw a cat prowling through the tall green grass. The cat thought, "The little bird is busy arguing, I'll just grab him...." Quietly, she crept towards him on her velvet paws. "Look out!" shouted Peter. The little bird immediately flew up into the tree while the duck quacked angrily at the cat from the middle of the pond. The cat walked around the tree and thought to herself, "Is it worth climbing up so high? By the time I get there the little bird will have flown away."

Just then Peter's grandfather came out. He was angry because Peter had gone out into the meadow. "It is a very dangerous place," he said. But Peter paid no attention to his grandfather's words. Boys like him are not afraid. Grandfather took Peter by the hand, led him home, and locked the gate behind them.

No sooner had Peter gone, then out of the forest came a great, grey wolf. In a flash the cat climbed up the tree. The duck quacked, but in her excitement, she jumped right out of the pond. No matter how fast the duck tried to run, she couldn't run faster than the wolf. He was getting closer and closer, catching up with her, until...
the wolf caught her and with one big gulp, swallowed.

So now, this is how things stood: The cat sat on one branch of the tree. The little bird on another, but not too close to the cat. And the wolf paced round and round the tree looking up at them with mischievous eyes.

In the meantime, Peter stood behind the closed gate watching all that was going on. He knew he needed to help his friends, so he ran home, got a strong rope, and climbed up the high stone wall that surrounded his house. One of the branches of the tree, around which the wolf was still pacing, stretched out over the wall. Grabbing hold of the branch, Peter lightly climbed over onto the tree.

Peter said to the little bird: "Fly down and circle around the wolf's head; but be careful that he doesn't catch you." But the bird got so close, he almost touched the wolf's head with his wings. Startled, the wolf snapped at him from this side and that. Oh, how the little bird did tease the poor wolf! And oh, how the wolf wanted to catch the little bird! But the little bird was much too quick and clever. And the wolf simply couldn't do anything about it.

Meanwhile, Peter made the rope into a lasso, and carefully letting it down, he caught the wolf by the tail and pulled with all his might. Feeling himself caught, the wolf began to jump wildly, struggling to get loose. Peter tied the other end of the rope to the tree, but the wolf's jumping only made the rope around his tail tighter and tighter. Just then hunters came out of the woods following the wolf's trail.

Peter called down from the tree, "Wait! Stop! The little bird and I have already caught the wolf. Will you help us take him to his new home at the Zoo?"

And now, imagine the triumphant procession: Peter at the head, followed by the hunters leading the wolf. And at the end of the procession, Grandfather and the cat. Grandfather unhappily shaking his head and mumbling, "If Peter hadn't caught the wolf, what then?" And above them all flew the little bird.

Just as the procession was leaving the meadow, something caught their attention. Listen very carefully. Can you hear it? Could it be? No...Yes. Yes, it is! It's Peter's friend the Duck, quacking from inside the wolf. Because the wolf, in his hurry, had swallowed her alive.

The End

Ways to engage with the story

Read the story aloud, pausing during the story to ask students about the emotions of the characters.

Questions could include:

- Why do you think that Peter, his grandfather, and the other animals were scared of the wolf?
- How do you think Peter felt when he was trying to catch the wolf?
- How do you think the wolf felt when the bird was teasing him?
- How do you think the wolf felt when Peter caught him in his lasso? (What is a lasso?)
- When the wolf eats the duck, how do you think Peter and his friends felt?
- Should Peter have disobeyed his grandfather?
- If Peter hadn't caught the wolf, what then?

After reading the story to the students, divide them into small groups and ask them to retell, perform, or storyboard different sections of the story. They could do this by:

- Acting
- Creating movements without words (miming or expressive movement with or without music)
- Using stuffed animals or puppets
- Creating illustrations or comic book frames

Students could then present their creations to the class with the music. Listen through the entire piece, pausing at each scene to allow each group to present their work.