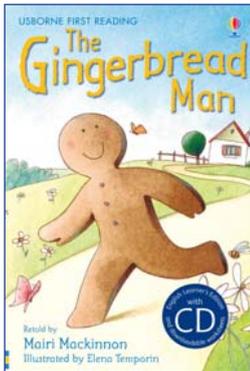


The Gingerbread Man • Teacher's notes



Author: Traditional, retold by Mairi Mackinnon

Reader level: Lower Intermediate

Word count: 533

Lexile level: 440L

Text type: Folk tale

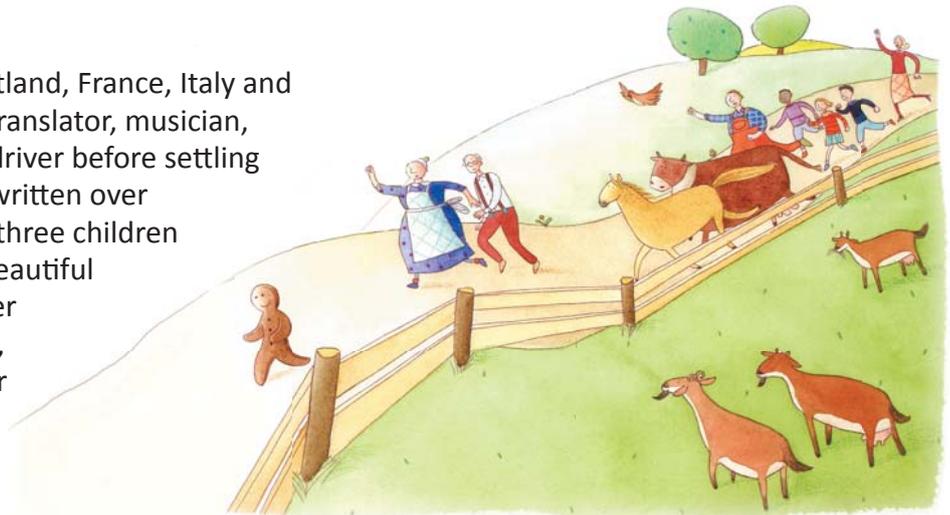
About the story

A little old woman and a little old man are sad because they don't have any children. The old woman decides to make a boy out of gingerbread, but as soon as he's cooked, he jumps out of the oven and runs away. First the woman and the old man, then a whole stream of other people and animals chase after the gingerbread man. He runs on and teases them with a chant ("Run, run, as fast as you can..."), until he reaches a river he can't cross. A cunning fox offers to help. As the water rises higher up the fox's body, the gingerbread man jumps from the fox's tail to his back to his head, until – in four bites – the fox eats him up.

The story itself is an old folk tale, first seen in print in an American magazine in 1875. It has similarities to other European folktales such as The Runaway Pancake, but the Gingerbread Man's defiant song is unique to the story and always very popular with children.

About the author

Mairi Mackinnon has lived in Scotland, France, Italy and Spain, and worked as a teacher, translator, musician, bookseller, nanny, cook and bus driver before settling down in London, where she has written over forty books for children. She has three children of her own, five or six violins, a beautiful old piano and a house full of other people's books. She likes cooking, especially baking, but none of her gingerbread people have ever yet tried to run away.



Key words

Your students might not be familiar with some of these words, which are important in the story.

gingerbread	p14	ran away
p8 decided	p18	past
p9 mixed	p36	cross
dough	p 41	climb
shape	p42	creeping
p10 buttons	p47	gulp
p11 oven		
bake		

Key phrases

p4	Once upon a time
p17	as fast as you can
p18	you look good
p20	down the road
p37	I'll take you across
p45	Snap! went the fox a quarter gone
p46	half gone
p47	three quarters gone that was the end of

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Before reading

You might like to bring in a real gingerbread man – or even a number that you can then share out at the end of the class. Otherwise, look for a picture. Do students know what they are made of? They might not know the English word, “gingerbread”. Have they seen other kinds of gingerbread shapes? How about gingerbread ladies, teddy bears, Christmas trees or flowers? What can be used to decorate them? (For example, candy, icing, chocolate...) Do they like gingerbread? When do they usually eat it?

Look at the book's cover with your students. They may already be familiar with the story. Ask what the gingerbread man is doing, where he's going. Do the students know any other stories with food characters? Ask what they would do if they saw a gingerbread man running by – would they try to catch him?

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Reading or listening

You can listen to the story on CD or read it aloud to the students, take turns to read or read together silently. Each double page spread in the book is one track on the CD, so that you can pause between tracks or repeat tracks if your students need it. The first reading is in a British English accent, and it is followed by an American English reading. The words are exactly the same. After the story, there is a short selection of key phrases that can be used for pronunciation practice.

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During reading: you might like to ask some of these questions.

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| p8 | Why does the little old woman want to make a gingerbread man? | p32 | Why is the teacher blowing her whistle? Does she want to stop the gingerbread man... or the children? |
| p14 | How do the old man and the old woman feel when the gingerbread man runs away? | p35 | Do you think anyone will catch the gingerbread man? |
| p21 | Why doesn't the gingerbread man want to stop? | p36 | What will happen if the gingerbread man gets wet? |
| p23 | Encourage the students to join in with the chant as they become more familiar with it. | p46 | What do you think all the people and animals on the bank are thinking? |
| p30 | What would happen if a gingerbread man ran past your playground? Do you think you could catch him? | p47 | Can you think of some words to describe the fox? How about the gingerbread man? |
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After reading

You could ask your students: do you like the story? Do you think the old woman will make another gingerbread man? How could she stop him from running away?

Some of the students may feel sorry for the gingerbread man. Perhaps they will want to explore the idea of whether he was 'real' or not and what that means. You could consider the story of Pinocchio: although he could walk and talk as a puppet, it was only at the end that he became a real boy.

The downloadable worksheet for this title has a recipe for gingerbread men. If you have cooking facilities, you may like to try this with your class.

You could also try using collage to make and decorate pictures of gingerbread men.

