## How effective is the symbolism that is used in

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## The Little Match Girl?

Have you ever read a story and thought you might be missing the point? Many stories, fables, tales of old, call them what you will, have symbolism engrained in their core. The success of this layered meaning within the classic tale of The Little Match Girl will be discussed below.

It must not be forgotten that, first and foremost, The Little Match Girl is a children’s story: A cautionary tale. Over the centuries it has been told and retold to children in order they be taught the terrible things that can happen to them if they are poor, hungry and don’t work hard enough.

On the other hand, while the story of The Little Match girl is one for children, there are in fact many meanings weaved into the images and characters that offer numerous, and deeper explanations than those so far discussed. For example, the Christmas tree, ablaze with beatific candles, has anticipated the arrival of Christmas Eve, yet come the New Year it will be discarded. Just like the little girl, the tree, standing alone, symbolizes a loss of family and being literally uprooted.

The matches burn out ‘black and grey’. The reference to this colour echoes the coming of death and the grieving that will begin. This colour is used to draw out these feelings, emotions and images to the reader.

When all the evidence has been considered I believe that, though complex in nature, the use of symbolism in the Little Match Girl, is successful in creating deeper meaning for a wider audience.