Deception is a recurring motif in Anne Sexton’s “Red Riding Hood,” a confessional poem that describes a collection of vignettes about “deceivers” (1). The stories in the poem show that anyone—celebrities, homemakers, old women, and even the poetic speaker— can be as deceptive to themselves as the wolf was to Red Riding Hood.

Sexton’s “Red Riding Hood” is a poem that alludes to the popular tale of Little Red Riding Hood. While this poem employs several motifs, one important motif is wine and cake. The motif of wine and cake first appears when the speaker focuses on the Red Riding Hood story. It is the position of this essay that wine and cake is Sexton’s motif for ignorance.

Sexton’s “Red Riding Hood” is a confessional poem in free verse that alludes to the popular tale of Little Red Riding Hood, especially its incarnation by the Brothers Grimm. While this poem employs several motifs, one important motif is wine and cake. The motif of wine and cake, first appearing when the speaker focuses on the Red Riding Hood story, suggests the speaker’s critique of learned ignorance.