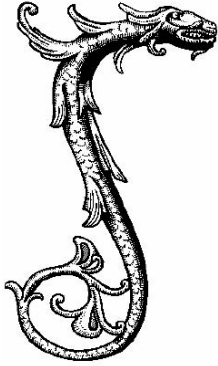
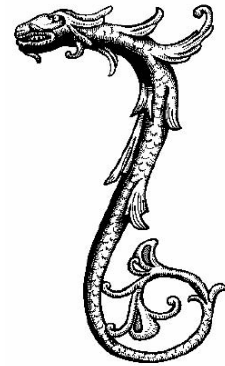


# **RAPUNZEL: Study and Activity Guide**



RAPUNZEL



STUDY AND ACTIVITY GUIDE



## The Plot in Brief



Harold and Whinny are a happily married couple with a baby on the way. But Whinny has been having some strange cravings lately. Not for pickles and ice cream, but green, leafy vegetables! Lettuce, spinach, parsley and rampion (or rapunzel as it is also called). Not Harold loves his wife and wants to please her, but the only vegetables he can find belong to the witch who lives next door. So he sneaks over the fence to get some for her. The witch catches him, but instead of being angry, she allows him to take some rampion (or rapunzel) to give to Whinny. But it is not enough to satisfy his wife's powerful cravings, and she locks him out of the house, vowing to not let him back in until he brings back enough greens to please her. So off he goes again. But this time the witch refuses to give him any more, so he boldly steals some. The witch prepares to destroy him, but shows him mercy only when he promises to give her his unborn child.

Nine short months later their beautiful baby girl is born. The witch returns and kidnaps the infant, naming her Rapunzel (after the greens the baby's mother craved during her pregnancy) and locking her in a tower far away from the outside world. Rapunzel's hair grows as long and lovely as she does and the witch uses it to climb the high, impenetrable tower every day on her visits to the girl. But little does she know that the King's son has been spying on her, having fallen in love with Rapunzel from the first moment he saw her face in the tower's window. The Prince begs Rapunzel to let him climb her hair, but she is afraid, and refuses. The witch catches him and strikes a bargain with him – carry her on his back all day and work in her garden and he may visit Rapunzel. He conspires with Rapunzel to one day dump the witch in the forest and free his love from the tower. But the witch finds out about their plot, tricks the Prince, and takes Rapunzel's place. They argue, he falls from the tower and is blinded by the pricks of the thorns growing at the foot of the tower.

Some years later, the Prince is stumbling through the desert when he hears the melodious singing of his one true love. In her anger, the witch had banished Rapunzel for her disloyalty and she is found wandering alone. When she and the Prince find each other again, her grateful tears heal his ruined eyes and his sight is restored, and Rapunzel and the Prince live happily ever after.

## About Fairy Tales



### What is a fairy tale?

fairy tale is a type of folktale that usually involves magical characters (also sometimes called characters of “Faerie”, which was known as the magical realm) such as witches, giants, ogres, elves, dragons, and so on. The main characters are sometimes royalty and sometimes ordinary people. Anything can happen in a fairy tale: frogs turn into princes, cats and other animals talk, pumpkins turn into carriages, and people fall asleep for a hundred years! There are usually characters that are clearly good fighting characters that are clearly evil, and most times there is a happy ending of some sort. Sometimes, especially in very old versions of Fairy Tales, tragic events occur and create huge obstacles for the main characters to overcome. Sometimes these characters are helped by magic and sometimes they succeed purely out of good luck.



## A Brief History of Fairy Tales and the Brothers Grimm

Researchers think that Fairy Tales originally existed as folktales and were passed on by word of mouth. The tales were meant to entertain not only young children, but also (and sometimes mostly) adults. Further, they were intended to teach about what the society of the time thought was right and wrong and what was good and evil. Often the original versions of the tales could be quite harsh and gruesome, with very unhappy endings, but later versions “softened” the stories so that the sad things weren’t quite so sad, the happy things happier, and the lessons learned in them more obvious.

The tradition of passing Fairy Tales on by word of mouth continued right up until the early 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> centuries in most of Europe, when Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm started collecting these folktales and writing them down. Their first book, originally called *Children’s and Household Tales* was eventually expanded, titled *Grimm’s Fairy Tales* and in its final version included over 200 tales. It was first published in 1812 and since then it has become the most popular German language book of all time! The Brothers Grimm became very well known as experts in folklore and fairy tales, and were also librarians, archivists and experts in mediaeval studies.

Read more about the Brothers Grimm and the history of Fairy Tales at these web sites: [www.kennedy-center.org/programs/family/intothewoodsjr/fairytales/home.html](http://www.kennedy-center.org/programs/family/intothewoodsjr/fairytales/home.html) (a more comprehensive history of fairy tales and the Brothers Grimm written in accessible language that was developed as part of the educational materials for the play *Into the Woods Jr.*)

[www.grimmfairytales.com/en/bio](http://www.grimmfairytales.com/en/bio) (a fun, basic introduction to the work of the Brothers Grimm)



## About RAPUNZEL



In many ways, RAPUNZEL is a tale to teach people that they should not be greedy, that they should not steal, and that parents cannot hide their children away from the world forever in an effort to try to protect them from suffering or being hurt. The tale is also a story of true love and devotion and of a girl's determination to escape the cruelty of an selfish and ruthless guardian. Early versions of the tale were quite a bit more gruesome and graphic than the Grimm version we know today.

As in most fairy tales, symbols are used in RAPUNZEL to illustrate certain qualities or traits that people of the day thought important. Rapunzel's golden hair is a symbol of beauty, innocence, and purity. The very name Rapunzel now reminds people of long hair. The woods where Rapunzel's tower is located are an ancient symbol of a barrier against the rest of the world, as well as an obstacle to a child growing up, which the Witch in the story clearly wants to prevent her from doing. Some researchers believe that the tale of Rapunzel was also a re-telling of the story of the Roman Catholic Saint Barbara, whose father locked her in a tower because she refused to marry the man her father chose for her.

Another version of the Rapunzel story, believed to come from Italy, is called *Petrosinella*. Instead of craving rampion, or rapunzel, when she is pregnant, Petrosinella's mother craves parsley. Other versions of the tale in other countries include *The Canary Prince* (Italy), *The Fatal Marriage* (Greece), *The Godchild of the Fairy in the Tower* (France) and *Louliyya, Daughter of Morgan* (Egypt). Rapunzel also appears in many different modern versions of the story, as well as in poetry for adults and children, and more recently in Steven Sondheim's famous musical *Into the Woods*.

You can read more about Rapunzel on these web sites:

[www.nationalgeographic.com/grimm](http://www.nationalgeographic.com/grimm) (this site also has versions of many other of Grimms' Fairy Tales, some with audio)



## Women and Fairy Tales

Did you know that women were often the primary storytellers in a village? Many of the fairy tales we know today were passed down to us by women. Earlier versions of these tales had female characters who were very active in their own fates, made their own decisions and stood up to those who threatened them. As fairy tales were written down and published in the Victorian era, the original tales were changed to reflect the way people in those days thought “proper” children and especially girls should behave. This led to many more people reading fairy tales. Today, more and more women writers are doing research into the older versions of many fairy tales that had stronger, less passive female heroines, or they are again modifying the Victorian versions of the tales to reflect this.

### Activities

#1 Curriculum Connection: Language Arts Purpose: To discuss and become familiar with common character and setting elements of fairy tales

Brainstorm a list of characters that occur often in fairy tales (witch, princess, peasant, king, queen, and so on). You can keep a chart and list the elements by story. You can also check off characters you find in more than one story. Do the same for settings.

Next, explore pictures in magazines, on the internet, and in books of a variety of settings that are common in fairy tales (castles, cottages, mountains, rivers, forests, and so on). Explore pictures from these sources that are not common in fairy tales (city streets, high rise buildings, factories). Younger children could make a wand waving motion to indicate a fairy tale setting and a car driving motion for a setting that isn't like a fairy tale. Older children can create collages that are fairy tale or non-fairy tale examples. Children can also create a modern day version of a fairy tale. What would it look like? How is it different from a traditional fairy tale?

#2 Curriculum Connection: Language Arts, Drama Purpose: to discuss and become familiar with common plots and plot elements of fairy tales

Make a set of cards that can be stuck or pasted up (for example, put a magnetic strip or tape on the back of the cards) that describe some common fairy tale plot elements. Here are some examples:

Hero (or heroine) has bad luck Hero (or heroine) must perform impossible tasks Hero (or heroine) must fight a villain Hero (or heroine) meets a magical helper (e.g. elf, wizard, good witch) Hero (or heroine) is treated badly Hero (or heroine) is in danger A magic spell is cast Villain is punished Hero (or heroine) is rewarded with wealth Hero (or heroine) is rewarded with happy marriage Hero (or heroine) is reunited with a loved one (brother, sister, mother, father)

Things happen in threes (three battles, three tasks)

Now do the same with some plot elements not common in fairy tales. For example:

Hero (or heroine) always has good luck  
Hero (or heroine) is always treated nicely  
Hero (or heroine) solves problems without any help  
No magic in the story  
No one is punished in the story  
Hero (or heroine) is never in danger  
Hero (or heroine) does everyday ordinary things

You and the children can stick the cards on a board under the headings “Fairy Tale” and “Not Fairy Tale”.

Now students can make up stories using a) only the fairy tale plot elements, b) only the “Not Fairy Tale” plot elements and c) trying to mix the two types together. They could also write a script of their story and perform it as a play.

These activities can also be done in small groups, with children working on only characters, only settings, or only plot elements. Small groups can also work on making up their own stories and presenting them to the rest of the larger group, their parents, and each other. They can share by telling the stories or by performing a simple script they have written.



### Fun facts:

According to researchers, Rapunzel’s tower window was estimated to be approximately 60 feet or 18.29 meters high. For Rapunzel’s hair to reach the ground, it would have to be almost *12 times* the average height of a girl her age (estimated by researchers at 12 years old)!

Think Rapunzel has the world’s longest hair? Well, according to the Guinness Book of World Records (2003) the real life record for the longest hair was set by Hoo Sateow on November 21, 1997, when her hair was measured at 16 feet 11 inches, or 5.15 m long!

**Did you know** that rapunzel, or rampion, as it is called in some versions of the tale, is a real plant? This leafy vegetable was grown as food in England, France, Germany and Italy during the 1800’s and was often boiled and used as a substitute for spinach. Today it can be seen growing wild at roadsides in southern England. In North America, relatives of this type of rampion are grown as decorative plants in rock gardens. Common varieties are: weakstem rampion (*phyteuma scheuchzeri*) which has deep blue flowers and rampion (*phyteuma vagneri*), which has black-violet flowers.