

Rapunzel and Vocabulary

Section Objective:

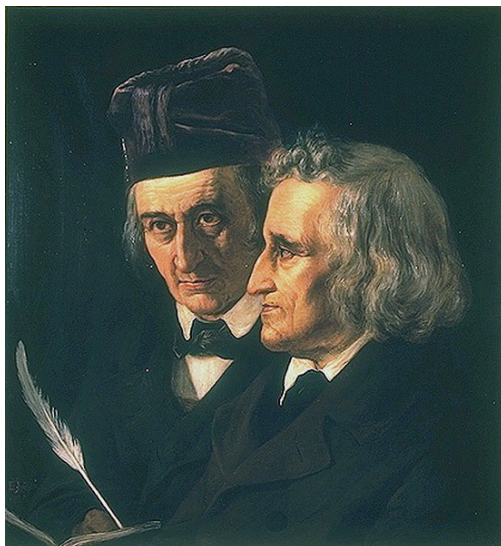
- Monitor reading comprehension
- Evaluate an author's argument
- Identify cause and effect.
- Understand the way a work of literature is related to its historical period
- Analyze characteristics of folktales
- Analyze similes
- Understand synonyms and epithets
- Understand idioms

“Rapunzel” Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm

Introduction to the Story

The Brothers Grimm, Jacob and Wilhelm, collected stories and folktales, which they published in the year 1812. They called their work *Children's and Household Tales*. This book had a significant effect both in Europe and America, since children all over became familiar with stories such as “Little Red Riding Hood,” “Cinderella,” and “Snow White.” Probably the majority of stories you learned or read as a child have their source from these collections. Some of the Grimm stories were set to music, and many have become familiar through animated cartoons.

The plant rapunzel to which the story refers could be any of several plant species whose leaves or roots may be used as salad greens.



The Grimm Brothers

Reading Skills

As you monitor your reading, focus on the roles of the husband and the wife at the opening of the story. The wife, gazing at the garden, wants the rapunzel so much that she becomes ill. Explain how she becomes the **cause** of her own illness; **identify** the driving quality in the woman that produces this **effect**. The husband in the story wants to help his wife. Describe the **effects** of his actions. Determine whether he was right in stealing the rapunzel from the garden. Describe other options that he could have taken to help his wife.

When the husband is caught stealing the rapunzel, he asks for mercy from the sorceress. Consider how often in various tales a sorceress or a witch appears as one who is willing to help in a positive way. **Describe** what the husband should expect in this situation.

The story describes the sorceress locking the girl in a tower when the girl reached the age of 12. For many societies, the age of 12 marks either the beginning of adulthood or the start of a transition to adulthood. In the Jewish tradition, a girl of 12 has her bat mitzvah, and at 13 a boy has his bar mitzvah, indicating adult responsibilities for religious observances.

Literary Skills

Among the **characteristics of folktales** that we've examined, **magic** plays an important role. Evaluate the actions of the sorceress to identify any use of magic on her part; determine whether her curse "she will scratch your eyes out" fits into the realm of magic. Continuing with the theme of eyes, evaluate the use of magic in Rapunzel's *tears*. Identify other stories read this year which uses tears in a magical way.

When the husband asks for mercy, the sorceress becomes less angry and she makes a deal. A frequent theme in folktales is **bargaining with evil**. In this case, the husband, "in is fear agreed to everything." Analyze the impact of fear on the actions of the character, then consider how the husband must live out the consequences. Although the story focuses on what happened to Rapunzel after her birth, examine the effects of the bargain on the two parents.

Folktales and legends often use **towers as symbols** of protection, creating difficulties for someone who wants to approach the tower. Towers also serve as prisons or dungeons. Determine the various ways the tower functions in this story. When the young prince sees the deception when he climbs the tower, with *grief* and *overcome by despair*, he hurls himself from the tower. Examine the **impact of grief** and despair on heroes of folktales and legends. List examples of other heroes overcome with despair.

Blindness plays a significant role at the end of the story. Compare and contrast the **blindness of characters** of the prince with other blind characters, such as the Cyclops, Teiresias, and Oedipus. List the similarities and differences among these blind characters; identify *blindness* as both external and inner blindness. Draw your own conclusion concerning the blindness in the **folktale** and blindness in **epics** and **tragedies**.

Vocabulary

The story describes the young Rapunzzel as “the most beautiful child under the sun.” Consider alternate words or phrases that would act like **synonyms** to the phrase used here. List these possible synonyms; then, using evidence from the story, determine whether this phrase best fits within the context of the story.

When the sorceress greets the young prince, she tells him, “That beautiful bird is no longer sitting in her nest.” **Analyze the simile** used here; determine how accurately the simile fits the story, and whether the simile adds to the story’s impact. Later, extending the analogy, the woman says “The cat got her, and will scratch your eyes out as well.” Analyze how this phrase continues the previous image and **foreshadows** coming events.

Various folktales use different terms to describe a similar character; in this story, we have a *sorceress*. Compare various **synonyms** used for such a character, such as *witch*, *hag*, or *old woman*.

A footnote describes possible meanings of the word rapunzel. **Use context clues** describing the woman eating, then give a common meaning for the word that might apply today. When the food takes control over the woman, she is described with the phrase “her desire had grown threefold.” Explain the meaning of the number used here.

Two rather common idioms appear in the story, either directly or indirectly related to the husband. The husband pleads with the sorceress, “Let mercy overrule justice”; and when the sorceress makes him an offer, he “bargains with the devil.” **Analyze these idioms** both as common expressions and how they fit within the story.

Specific vocabulary words: devoured, abated, splendid, unmerciful, despair

