Usborne English



Rapunzel • Teacher's notes



Author: based on a story by the Brothers Grimm

Reader level: Upper Intermediate

Word count: 1683

Lexile level: 460L

Text type: Traditional fairy tale

About the story

Mrs. Rose is expecting a child. Unfortunately, her strange cravings land her and Mr. Rose in trouble with the witch next door, who catches Mr. Rose stealing juicy, green rapunzel leaves from her garden. In his desperation not to be eaten alive, he promises to give the witch his wife's baby. Of course he regrets his promise at once, and naively hopes that the witch will forget it, but on the day of his daughter's birth the witch arrives and snatches the child away.

The witch names the little girl Rapunzel and treats her like a slave. Rapunzel grows older and more beautiful, with long golden hair to the ground. Concerned that a young man might run off with her, the witch locks her in a tall tower with no doors or stairs. Clambering up Rapunzel's hair is the only way to get in. The witch delivers food daily, but otherwise Rapunzel is alone and bored... until the handsome Prince Hans rides by. He then visits every night, delivering balls of silk so Rapunzel can weave a ladder and escape to his kingdom.

One day, Rapunzel lets slip to the witch that a prince has been visiting. The witch cuts off Rapunzel's hair, casts her into the desert, lies in wait for the prince and sends him tumbling from the tower into a thorn bush. Blinded by the spines, Prince Hans wanders for months in search of Rapunzel. The pair are finally united; Rapunzel's tears of joy heal the prince's eyes, and they are happily married.

About the authors

Many of our best-known fairy tales were collected and retold by the brothers Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm (1785-1863 and 1786-1859), from Hanau in north-west Germany. They began collecting folk tales originally as part of their study of the German language. The stories were published as "Children's and Household Tales", between 1812-1814. Today they are retold around the world in over 160 languages, as well as being the inspiration for countless movies, musicals, opera, ballet and other artworks.

Key words Your students might not be familiar with some of these words in the story.									
р3	dared	p14	deal		shrug		frowned		grip
p4	gaze	p15	terrified		heaved	p35	courtyards	p43	smack
p5	pregnant		desperately		locks [of		fountains		thorn
p6	Brussels	p16	wept		hair]		turrets		despite
	sprouts		snatched		tumbled	p36	trick		blind
р9	thief		vanished	p26	spooky	p37	tugged		cackled
	sobbing	p17	slugs	p27	astonished	p39	heap	p44	wandered
p11	shuddered		spell		spurring	p40	sly		hired
	foul		slave		galloped		shimmering	p45	stumbled
p12	pimple	p18	flowed	p30	haughtily	p41	crone		gasped
p13	glint	p21	cackled		chuckling		sinister	p46	pumpkin
	stammered	p23	starve	p34	weave	p42	slimy		sprout

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Key phrases						
р3	to look onto	p17	to be treated like	p33	to come up with	
р9	to give in	p21	to get used to		or your hair gets it	
p12	to make [someone]	p22	to cast a spell	p34	that'll take ages	
	pay for [something -	p22	no way out	p35	to long to [do something]	
	figuratively not literally]	p25	years went by	p41	to stand in [someone's]	
p14	to make a deal	p27	to the rescue		place	

Before reading

Ask students to guess the name of the fairy tale. Draw stick figures on the board: a stick figure in a skirt and a witch's hat, a tall tower, a stick figure with a crown, a stick figure with a skirt and very long hair. By the final figure, they should have guessed "Rapunzel"; give them the name in English if they don't know.

Read out loud or write on the board the words: "Rapunzel, Rapunzel, let down your hair". Ask the class if they know why Rapunzel is being told to let down her hair? Make a list of all the details the students know about the story (e.g. the witch taking Rapunzel as a baby, imprisoning her in a tower). Then show the cover of the book; as you read, you can see how much of the story is as they remembered.

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.

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

р3	Can you see something suspicious in the		What could Rapunzel do to pass the time?
	garden?	p33	Do you think the prince's idea is a good
pp5-7	Is it usual for pregnant women to crave		one? If you were Rapunzel, would you let
	strange foods? Can you think up some more		him cut off your hair?
	examples? (Chalk and coal are true-life ones.)	p34	What about Rapunzel's idea? Which plan
p8	How would you describe Mrs. Rose's		would you choose?
	response? [emotional, exaggerated, etc.]	p37	What sort of food is the witch bringing?
p11	What might the foul smell be?	p38	Why do you think Rapunzel mentions Hans?
p12	Have you heard of the plant rapunzel before?	p43	How can Hans find Rapunzel? (It might help
p16	How do you think Mrs. Rose feels about		that he's a prince)
	having her baby taken away?	p46	How do you think Rapuzel's parents feel,
p18	What's Rapunzel doing? Does she seem a		seeing their daughter after all these years?
	happy child?	p47	Who do you think chose the children's
p23	What would it be like living in the tower?		names?

After reading

Do you think Rapunzel will be a good mother? How do you think her childhood with the witch, her years in the tower and her months in the desert might have affected her? Do you think they've made her stronger? Closer to her family? More grateful for everyday things? How might she feel about enclosed spaces? Do they know the word for this (claustrophobia)?

The story doesn't tell us what happened to the witch. What do students think?

Do you think Rapunzel will tell her own children about the witch and the tower? Will they believe her?