



# Rapunzel

*Paul O. Zelinsky (retold by)*

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## Rapunzel Paul O. Zelinsky (retold by)

Surely among the most original and gifted of children's book illustrators, Paul O. Zelinsky has once again with unmatched emotional authority, control of space, and narrative capability brought forth a unique vision for an age-old tale. Few artists at work today can touch the level at which his paintings tell a story and exert their hold. Zelinsky's retelling of **Rapunzel** reaches back beyond the Grimms to a late-seventeenth-century French tale by Mlle. la Force, who based hers on the Neapolitan tale **Petrosinella** in a collection popular at the time. The artist understands the story's fundamentals to be about possessiveness, confinement, and separation, rather than about punishment and deprivation. Thus the tower the sorceress gives Rapunzel here is not a desolate, barren structure of denial but one of esoteric beauty on the outside and physical luxury within. And the world the artist creates through the elements in his paintings the palette, control of light, landscape, characters, architecture, interiors, costumes speaks to us not of an ugly witch who cruelly imprisons a beautiful young girl, but of a mother figure who powerfully resists her child's inevitable growth, and of a young woman and man who must struggle in the wilderness for the self-reliance that is the true beginning of their adulthood.

As ever, and yet always somehow in newly arresting fashion, Paul O. Zelinsky's work thrillingly shows us the events of the story while guiding us beyond them to the truths that have made it endure.

## Rapunzel Details

Date : Published 1997 by Dutton Children's Books  
ISBN : 9780525456070  
Author : Paul O. Zelinsky (retold by)  
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## From Reader Review Rapunzel for online ebook

### Set says

This book illustrated by Paul O. Zelinsky is unlike any children's fairy tale illustrated book I've seen, it is truly a work of art. I am a fan of fairy tale illustrated books and I am extremely picky and choosy but I simply had to have this for my library. I only keep classics and fairy tale books in my collection and this book is a definite must have for any fairy tale collection.

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### Greg says

Maybe because my teacher said something in class, but I was expecting something different from this book. I thought maybe it would be 'de-constructing' the fairy tale in someway, but instead it was just sort of putting it together in a mishmash of various versions, some Grimm, some earlier traditions. The illustrations were interesting, and the abundance of cats in the pictures were nice.

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### Mae says

Mark as A, B, and C

A = In this re-telling of a classic tail, Paul Zelinsky blends the more modern Grimm tale with an older Neapolitan story "Petronsinella". A new husband and soon to be father tries to satisfy his wife's craving for the rapunzel growing in the sorceress's garden next door. Caught stealing, he agree to give his new baby to the sorceress in return. The sorceress raises the child and then places her in the woods in a high tower with no entrance except a high window. The only access is the child, Rapunzel's exceptionally long and strong hair. A passing prince is enchanted by her singing and begins visiting her in the evenings, when their marriage is revealed by her pregnancy, the sorceress evicts her to give birth in the wilderness and blinds the prince. The prince and Rapunzel are eventually reunited and live happily ever after.

B = The drawings in this book are absolutely gorgeous. The renaissance italian illustrations are full of wonderful italanesque details.

c = For example, I was struck by how the women of the story were represented. More like Botticelli and Titian than the skinny and plain Disney re-incarnations, Zelinsky's drawings are full of rich detail and nearly Rubenesque figures. When the prince first climbs the tower to meet Rapunzel, The detailed embroidery on her generous neckline and hem echos nearly exactly the embroidery on the prince's shoes.

d = I might use this book in class to show characteristics of Italian art. The placement of figures, light source, perspective and horizon line all have strong roots in renaissance painting. It would be fun, as a class, to find paintings in this book that demonstrate each one of these concepts.

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### Kathryn says

I really appreciated everything about Zelinsky's "Rapunzel" from his detailed author's note to his thoughtful adaptation to the faithful representation of Renaissance art. (Alas, the Renaissance style has never been one of my favorites so I didn't personally love the illustrations, though I find a great deal of merit in them. His

work really makes an impression, I feel. I still get a little shiver when I think of his Rumplestiltskin, whom I met in childhood.) I liked his less-"Grimm" version of the tale but that he still retained some of the more somber elements. (I couldn't help but think of Rapunzel's own mother and father when the "happy ending" came about. So sad!) Rapunzel really is a fascinating story. I feel that the "wicked" witch could be so much more richly developed. (I know there are times when a part of me wishes I could keep my own children safe in a happy, magical tower, away from the dark forces in the world!) But, in all the versions of "Rapunzel" that I've encountered (even the Disney version, which does have a more developed witch character) the witch is ultimately purely selfish, or so it seems to me, not as nuanced as most parents, with their own tug-of-war over that delicate balance of freedom and safety for their children.

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### **Barbara says**

The story of Rapunzel was always one of my favorite fairy tales growing up. I was intrigued by the idea of a girl kept hidden in a tower, letting her hair down to let the world in, but never being able to leave that tower. With sumptuous oil paintings that allow the beauty of the tower and Rapunzel with her amazingly-long tresses to be highlighted, the author/illustrator takes readers to a different place and time than their current surroundings. Echoing as he does the style of Italian Renaissance painters, his illustrations are luminescent, and he shows so much devotion in the simple gesture of the prince holding Rapunzel's hand in his own once he enters the tower. The separate anguish of the sorcerer and Rapunzel are depicted perfectly in the scene in which the sorcerer hacks off Rapunzel's hair. Although this is a picture book, it touches upon adult themes. After the prince visits her every night, Rapunzel's dress seems too tight, a sign that she is pregnant and proof to the sorceress that she has not been alone all those nights. One aspect of the illustrations that may interest readers is the cat that keeps appearing throughout the pages. This is a gorgeous picture book.

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### **Carrie says**

Beautiful illustrations. Part of the story was a new-to-me retelling. I've never read a version where there was a marriage and children. I would have to consider this a favorite out of all the versions I've read.

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### **Jenny says**

Based on the Grimm brothers version of Rapunzel (which was based on several older versions of similar stories). Gorgeous illustrations.

Reread January 2016. I really loved this version of Rapunzel. I appreciated Zelinsky's author's note about the origins of the Rapunzel story. I really, really love the illustrations. They are breathtaking. The Caldecott Medal was well deserved.

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### **John Yelverton says**

A very fun story, but it definitely depends on what version you read.

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### **Haley Hambrick says**

Rapunzel is a childhood story every child should read at some point I believe. This is great for all young children elementary school-aged. It has earned a Caldecott Medal award. The soft artwork through the whole book is a great visual aid for the reader, especially because if you haven't heard of Rapunzel imagining someone climb up someones hair could be difficult. The paintings of Rapunzel hair hanging down the tower is an important attribute to the story. The cover page shows Rapunzel in her tower, with the title vertical, just like how her hair would be hanging out the town, which was creative and appropriate. I would read this aloud and show the pictures to the child/ren on each page.

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### **Laura says**

This is a hard book for me to rate. On one hand, it had intricate illustrations that many will love, and the story was certainly exciting. However, as a mom, this book just felt very uncomfortable to me. I felt like the pregnancies and babies in the story were ...well...awkward.

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### **SamZ says**

1998 Caldecott Medal - Favorite Illustration: When the prince and Rapunzel are headed back toward his kingdom, each carrying a child.

I adore these illustrations! The rendering of this fairy tale using the Italian Renaissance style is absolutely beautiful. I thought the text was simply a standard version of the story but you almost don't need any words as the pictures have so much detail you could "read" the story from them alone. Also, I have always loved the ending of this version, with Rapunzel having twins in the wilderness and her tears healing the prince upon their reunion. I especially loved the way Disney kept this small detail at the end of Tangled, when Rapunzel's tears heal her love.

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### **Maggie Ignasiak says**

This retelling is masterful, mixing its many origins. I also love the artwork, and it %100 earned its Caldecott win. I love this so much.

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### **Shannon (Giraffe Days) says**

Once upon a time there was a happily married couple whose only sorrow was that they did not have a child.

Then one day, they learn the woman is pregnant and the sorrow is replaced with joy. The wife liked to sit by the window overlooking a beautiful walled garden owned by a sorceress. One day she saw an abundant bed of the herb rapunzel, and a great need to eat some overcome her. Telling her husband she will die if she doesn't have some, he dutifully climbs down into the garden and steals some. But it's not enough, and the next day he goes back - and is caught by the sorceress.

On explaining his problem to her, she tells him he can take the rapunzel, but in exchange she will take their baby when it is born. She names the child Rapunzel, and raises her in isolation in the wilderness. When Rapunzel turns twelve, the sorceress takes her through the forest and puts her in a tall, narrow tower with no door and only one window, high up. It's a magic tower, and spacious inside, but Rapunzel is sealed off from the world. To get inside, the sorceress calls out "Rapunzel Rapunzel, let down your hair", and she climbs it.

One day a prince discovers the tower and is curious; he has heard rumours of a fabled beauty trapped inside. He hides in the forest and witnesses the sorceress's method for gaining access. When the sorceress is gone, he calls out to Rapunzel to lower her hair and climbs inside, giving her the shock of her life. But he's nice and friendly and soon they become lovers and Rapunzel falls pregnant. The sorceress, on discovering that Rapunzel has betrayed her, cuts off her hair and sends her out into the wilderness to perish. Instead, Rapunzel survives and has not one baby but twins, a boy and a girl.

Meanwhile, when the prince returns to the tower and calls out to Rapunzel to lower her hair, the sorceress hooks the shorn hair to the window and confronts him at the top of the tower. She tells him Rapunzel is lost to him forever, and in shock and despair he falls. He doesn't die, but he is blinded and weak, and stumbles for months through the wilderness until, lo! he hears Rapunzel's voice and finds her. Her tears of joy fall onto his face and his blindness is cured. Together with their two children they return to the town and the king's palace, where they live happily ever after.

"Rapunzel" wasn't a story I really read as a kid - I didn't have my own copy, or a beloved version. I knew the story in a vague way, but I don't know if that's because Rapunzel tropes and distinctive symbols crop up so much in our society and culture (like a lot of other fairy tales and Shakespeare plays). In short, I can't actually say with any certainty whether I read the story as a child or not. As an adult with a young child of my own, I suddenly became interested in collecting really good editions of fairy tales and other classic stories - hence my lovely Robert Ingpen-illustrated editions of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and others.

Finding a good edition of fairy tales is a harder task, though. Ideally, I wanted to browse through book shops and check out the version quality (text) and the illustrations, before committing to buying any. Sadly, the bookshops only had rather trite and silly, or Disneyfied, editions, collections of heavily abridged stories in "bedtime" volumes. So I took a gamble on Paul O Zelinsky's beautifully illustrated retelling, buying it without being able to check it out first.

And it is a beautiful rendering of the story of Rapunzel. I wanted a version that hadn't been made cutesy or had the darkness removed from it - fairy tales should be dark stories, they were originally moralistic, cautionary warning tales, after all. Zelinsky's illustrations are vivid and richly detailed, colourful and patterned yet still broody and full of atmosphere. (I do find the prince's mullet to be a bit off-putting, though!) The story reads well, though in typical fairy tale fashion, plot holes abound. You just have to take those in stride; realism was never the point of a fairy tale, though Zelinsky (whose is "the son of a mathematics professor and a medical illustrator" according to his Goodreads page) provides a lot of *precision* in his illustrations, which also have the feel of classic Italian paintings. The illustrations are both real and romantic; as an adult I feel that they don't really capture the human emotions or fill in any gaps in

the story, but I also feel that as a child I would have been drawn to this style of illustration (I liked the precise and finely detailed, like intricate mazes and *Where's Wally?* pictures).

Not having anything to compare it to, though, I can't offer an opinion on this retelling over others. I've given you an abridged run-down of Zelinsky's retelling above, and I'd love to hear how it compares to other versions that you've read. This is just the kind of edition I was looking for, and it has a three-page "note" at the back about the history of the story and its history, and the alterations it's undergone over the centuries, which is by far the more fascinating part of the story for me! My young son, however, is quite interested in the story itself, and I hope it will be one he (and any sibling he may have) can enjoy for years to come.

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### **Marquise says**

Zelinsky is a better artist than a writer, in my opinion, so this wasn't as impressive as his other work I've read. But it's still a very good version of "Rapunzel" that's going to be a keeper for me.

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### **Cheryl says**

I do very much like this version. I like that the 'witch' is here known as a 'sorceress.' I like that here the girl is hidden, but not locked up in the tower, until she is twelve. I have always preferred the versions that included the twin babies. I mean, it's only natural that the sorceress needs to learn the lesson of the folly of over-protection. Lots of parents need to learn that lesson!

Author's note explains origins of tale, and choice of setting for the art.

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### **Lorraine says**

This Caldecott winner is the familiar story of Rapunzel but the watercolor paintings that accompany it are absolutely beautiful. The story itself is a simple retelling of the fairy tale but it is made all the richer with Zelinsky's incredible paintings. Recommended for middle elementary students.

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### **Manybooks says**

The folktale (fairy tale) of *Rapunzel* is more often than not (and even amongst a goodly number academics, it seems) considered to primarily be of German origin (collected by the Brothers Grimm and included in their

famous *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*). However, as Paul O. Zelinsky brilliantly demonstrates in and with his informative afterword on the genesis and development of the former, this assumption is only partially correct (including *Rapunzel*'s designation as a true and absolute folktale, as it seems to be primarily based on extant literary sources and not so much oral traditions). True, most modern retellings of the *Rapunzel* theme are primarily and heavily based on the Brothers Grimm, but Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm's own version is actually gleaned from a loose German translation of an older French offering, which in turn, is heavily influenced by Gianbattista Basile's *Petrosinella* (a Neapolitan Baroque fairy tale of the 17th century, where the expectant mother craves her sorceress neighbour's parsley, instead of Rapunzel, or rampion, as the herb is called in English). In the late 18th century, a French translation of Basile's *Petrosinella* (titled *Persinette*) was then translated into German by one Joachim Christoph Friedrich Schulz (who actually not simply translated the tale, but freely adapted it, adding for example the referrals to the girl's tight clothing to indicate her pregnancy and changing the herb from parsley to rampion, to Rapunzel).

The Brothers Grimm were aware of Schulz's translation, and their own *Rapunzel* is heavily based on his tale (basically, just as Schulz freely adapted the 18th century French translation/adaptation of Basile's *Petrosinella* tale to suit his needs, the Grimms in turn, adapted Schulz' narrative to suit theirs). Now one might wonder why the Grimms chose to include a tale that was so obviously literary in their collection of what they primarily considered orally developed and through the centuries repeatedly recounted and re-counted folktales, but the brothers actually and wrongfully assumed that Schulz' tale was in fact taken from, was gleaned from and based on an earlier oral version (they did notice the similarity to Basile's *Petrosinella* but did not take the next logical step, namely that Schulz's translation was in fact based on the same, and was not simply a rendering of an earlier orally recounted, orally passed on folktale).

Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm much shortened Schulz' translation (or rather, his adaptation), making it sound, or at least attempting to make it sound less literary, but in the 1812 edition of their tales, their *Rapunzel* still keeps the pregnancy of the heroine, of the main protagonist. It was only in later editions of the *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* that the now more familiar scenario is shown (instead of Rapunzel asking the sorceress to help her with tightening up her dress, as it has become too small due to of course her being with child, in later editions, Rapunzel simply states that the sorceress is so much heavier to pull up than than the prince). Supposedly, the Grimms' chose to remove (under considerable annoyance and protest) the pregnancy aspect, as there were increasing complaints by parents, as the tales, although originally not intended for children, were being more and more considered as children's fare and read as such (for both education and entertainment).

Personally, I much appreciate the fact that Paul O. Zelinsky has combined the Grimms' 1812 edition (German) with earlier Italian and French Rapunzel/Petrosinella traditions. And considering his glowing, painterly, Italian Renaissance style illustrations, which are not just simple book illustrations, but accomplished works of art that could easily hold their own alongside of many of the greatest Italian painters of that era, I almost wish that he had titled his retelling *Petrosinella* instead of *Rapunzel* (although I do realise that the latter is more commonly known and accepted). Zelinsky's narrative flows smoothly, reads easily, and really and truly presents the different German, Italian and French Rapunzel/Petrosinella traditions in a manner that is natural, organic and does not even seem so much a combination, but rather a story with one plot line, a story of love, betrayal, and that in the end, love does conquer all.

Finally, I guess I can to a certain extent understand that (and even why) some individuals have taken umbrage at the fact that Rapunzel's, that Petrosinella (or Persinette's ) pregnancy has been included in this book (and they actually are in good historical company, it seems). However, the allusion to the latter is not, as I hope to have shown, a salacious tidbit gratuitously added by the author/illustrator; it is historical and literary fact (both Joachim Christoph Friedrich Schulz's 18th century translation and the Grimms' 1812

rendering of the Petrosinella/Rapunzel thematics show the pregnancy of the heroine as a main point of information, and I heartily applaud Zelinsky for not shying away from including it in his wonderful and evocative retelling, in his own shining, glowing, perfect Rapunzel).

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### **Ronyell says**

“Rapunzel” is a Caldecott Medal award winning book from the talented Paul O. Zelinsky and it is a classic Brothers Grimm tale about how a young woman named Rapunzel meets her true love after being trapped in a tower for many years and how she tries to keep this secret from a wicked sorceress. “Rapunzel” is truly a captivating story about true love that many children will love for many years.

Paul O. Zelinsky’s story about a young girl imprisoned in her castle has been a cult classic in the fairy tale industry for many years and the writing is dramatic and romantic at the same time as the audience feels the tension when Rapunzel is taken away from her parents by the sorceress and the romance being blossomed when Rapunzel meets the Prince for the first time. Paul O. Zelinsky’s illustrations are extremely beautiful and realistic looking, especially of the image of Rapunzel herself having long, orange hair and maintaining a beautiful face all throughout the story.

“Rapunzel” is a brilliant book about the importance of true love and it will easily captivate children who are fans of fantastic fairy tales such as this one. I would recommend this book to children ages five and up since smaller children might be upset about the scene where Rapunzel is taken away from her parents as a baby.

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### **Kristine Hansen says**

If you're a fan of the Italian Renaissance, this is a version that will visually delight. The story of Rapunzel is re-told with a blending of versions that is interesting and not too scary (thanks for all the nightmares Brothers Grimm!). The detail is exquisite and each picture begs to be lingered over. I appreciated the notes at the end about the original story as well.

Overall, the best part? Finding out the tower is related to Dr. Who's TARDIS apparently. I would have liked to explore the many rooms in the book, but we never got quite enough page time for that which I found very sad. :P

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### **Ashley Adams says**

1. Picture Book: Traditional Literature
2. This is the retelling of Rapunzel, the story of a young girl who is forced to grow up in isolation and confinement because a sorceress is hiding her from the king, when she meets a prince who is enchanted by her voice and her long, lustrous hair. She then has to learn how to live on her own after many years of confinement, and is reunited with her prince.
3. Critique:
  - a. Zelinsky brings the age-old tale of Rapunzel to life with his beautiful illustrations.
  - b. His Italian renaissance style of illustrations is filled with light warm golden tones. Zelinsky uses control of

light, landscape, characters, architecture and costumes to paint a beautiful, poignant picture of Rapunzel. c. As opposed to the dark and extremely dim recount by the Grimm Brothers, this version uses illustrations to show that Rapunzel was not living in a dungeon like tower by an evil witch who tortured her, but was kept in solitude because the woman loved her so much, and provided her with luxury. The illustrations set the tone of the piece, and although she endures quite a bit of hardship, the overall tone lends to love that conquers all.

4. This is a great story to read to early elementary students, and then apply their art and dexterity skills by making their own Rapunzel puppet out of a paper bag, with long yarn for hair. The students can then practice braiding the hair to strengthen fine motor skills.

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