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The license may not give you all of the permissions necessary for your intended use. For example, other rights such as publicity, privacy, or moral rights may limit how you use the material. Last updated on December 17th, 2022 at 08:35 pmThere are a great many tales that have been disseminated down into popular culture, which were produced by the Brothers Grimm or the Grimm Brothers, as they are variously known, Jacob Ludwig Grimm and Wilhelm Carl Grimm were German academics from the state of Hesse or Hessen in the late eighteenth and early-to-mid-nineteenth century, who are famous for collecting ancient folklore tales and stories from around Germany and adjoining areas. Many of these stories had been transmitted throughout Germany and other areas for hundreds, and sometimes even thousands of years, but until the Grimms recorded them and published them, these stories had remained unavaiable in print. That changed once they began printing these stories, ones likeHansel and Gretelknown to all modern school children from the 1810s onwards. Some of these stories are famous, few more so than that the story of Rapunzel. But what might have been the story and the anthropology element which lay behind the true story of Rapunzel? Rapunzel is illustrated by Arthur Rackham First let us look at the story of Rapunzel itself. The story of Rapunzel was first published in 1812 by the Brothers Grimm in one of their first compendiums of tales entitledChildrens and Household Tales. This was collected from some less well-known collections composed by eighteenth-century German folklorists such as Friedrich Schulz and tales which the Grimms had collected orally from individuals whom they met while travelling around Germany. The plot of Rapunzel is complex. It begins with a couple living next to a large compound consisting of a vast garden and a tower belonging to a reclusive woman. They have little to do with the woman, whom we later learn is a sorceress and who owns the tower and the garden. But soon, the couple finds themselves drawn towards the compound as she becomes pregnant and begins to crave a type of salad green which they spot growing in the garden next door. This plant is generally believed to have been theCampanula rapunculosa, a salad green known as the bellflower. Bizarrely, the pregnant woman is adamant that she must eat some of theCampanula rapunculuseven as she begins to lose weight, threatening the life of the unborn. In despair, her husband agrees to break into the sorceress garden to obtain some of the bellflowers. And his first foray is successful. He scales the wall of the compound and finds some of the plants before returning home and giving them to his pregnant wife, but now she becomes obsessed with eating them. In the days that follow, he repeatedly breaks into the compound to obtain more and more of the flower until one day, while he is escaping from the compound, the sorceress catches him. This act is the genesis of the myth of Rapunzel. The sorceress now insists that the couple hand over their child when it is born as punishment for having broken into her garden. They begrudgingly agree to this and the child is indeed handed over in due course while the woman, who is now blind, watches her baby girl is born. The sorceress names her Rapunzel after the plant which she has become so obsessed with eating, and as she grows up, the sorceress locks her up in the tower which the compound. There she grows into a teenager with long golden hair. Then, one day a prince comes through the area and hears Rapunzel singing from the tower. He is entranced by her voice and drawn to see what the source of it is. Eventually, he manages to find his way into the tower, and he and Rapunzel fall in love. But they must navigate the ill demeanor of the sorceress, and although the prince attempts to explain the situation to her when he does, the sorceress cuts off Rapunzels hair. She casts her up over the tower and the compound altogether. She is left to wander the wilderness, seemingly helpless, given that she has not known anything other than the tower and the garden for her entire life. When the prince returns and learns what has happened, he throws himself from the tower and is blinded. He spends years thereafter wandering the wilderness, but eventually, the story has a happy ending. One day, as he is wandering blindly through the forest, they meet each other, having heard each other singing. When they meet, the princes sight is miraculously restored, and he learns that Rapunzel has given birth to twins, a boy, and a girl, in the interim. The family heads back to the princes kingdom, where they live happily ever after. Unlike many of the Grimm Brothers other stories, this one starts bleakly and ends happily. So what exactly is the backstory to this? What might this allegory reveal? Modern interpretations of the story of Rapunzel view it as being in line with a long line of maiden in the tower stories, which originated in Medieval Europe and became more popular again during the early modern period. For instance, the story is essentially a German rendering of a French fairy tale calledPersinette, written by Charlotte-Rose de Caumont de la Force and published in 1698. This features all of the same elements of the tale of Rapunzel, including the prince, the tower, and a maiden with long hair. Moreover, the tale has wider origins stretching back to the late classical period, as much as 1500 years before the Brothers Grimm were writing and compiling their information, notably the tale of Saint Barbara, a third-century Christian martyr who is believed to have been imprisoned in a tower in Eastern Europe during the third century. More widely, the tale is indicative of the idea of a maiden in the tower, so much so that it is a motif of a world-class illustrator, Zelninsky has also produced a master story of the tower, every day Rapunzel throws down her long golden hair for the enchantress to climb. Until one day a stranger climbs up the tower and she becomes pregnant, and we rejoice when the prince and his now modest-haired love are reunited. The notes at the back of Rapunzel reveal his careful scholarship regarding the long history of the story (tracing its origins and transformations from Italy to France and finally to Germany and the Grimm brothers)-work that no doubt contributed to his clean, compelling version of the age-old tale. Children will be captivated by the magical story and evocative pictures and adults will delight in the fresh feel of a well-loved legend. (Click to see a sample spread. Illustration 1997 by Paul O. Zelninsky, published by Dutton Childrens Books, a division of Penguin Putnam Books for Young Readers.) (Ages 4 and older) This story from the Brothers Grimm receives a classic treatment; a lyrical text and haunting illustrations full of mood express the quintessential longing of the tale. In Waldherr's rendering, Rapunzel's tresses--like the heroine herself--have the beauty and deceptive strength of finely spun gold, while the tower and the surrounding forest seem to bear their own dark mysteries. Each piece of art is framed with a contrasting border--in some cases amplifying the scene, in others highlighting a simple but telling detail. The sum is a textually and visually resonant work, rich in enchantment and romance. Ages 4-8. Copyright 1989 Reed Business Information, Inc. K-Gr 4In this classic story by the Grimm brothers, a husband and wife long for a child, but then make a second-rate deal with an enchantress that results in their daughter being shut away from the outside world and ultimately abandoned by her captor. Though the family is never reunited, much heartache does end in a happily ever after when Rapunzel heals her prince and travels with him to his homeland. This simple translation in a large, clear font is well paired with gentle, ethereal watercolor illustrations in muted tones. Figures are depicted in clusters and distinct poses rather than natural stances, each tableau imparting the sense that readers are witnessing a play rather than a live-action sequence of events. The softly washed palette, frequent inclusion of soaring birds, and the posturing of each figure alleviate some of the sense of danger that might have accompanied more literal parts of the story. The coloring, facial expressions, and physical positions are also subdued. The enchantress appears menacing, but not as threatening as she might seem. Rapunzel's pregnant mother has a wistful and melancholy countenance; and even at their happiest, Rapunzel and her prince are so calm and demure that one can imagine them hoping for a better life together. VERDICT A conventionally told and illustrated version of Rapunzel that is a welcome addition to large fairy tale collections needing a crisp copy of this beloved classic.Lauren Younger, New York Public Library Exhibit curate paintings in late Italian Renaissance style illumine this hybrid version of a classic tale. As Zelnisky (The Wheels on the Bus, 1990, etc.) explains in a long source note, the story's Italian oral progenitor went through a series of literary revisions and translations before the Brothers Grimm published their own take; he draws on many of these to create a formal, spare text that is more about the undercurrents between characters than crime and punishment. Feeling "her dress growing tight around her waists" a woman conceives the desire for an herb from the neighboring garden--rendered in fine detail with long clipped hedges, elaborate statuary and even a wandering pangolin--that causes her to lose her child to a witch. Ensnared for years in a tower, young Rapunzel meets the prince, "marries" him immediately, is cast into the wilderness when her own dress begins to tighten, gives birth to twins, and cures her husband's blindness with her tears at their long-awaited reunion. Suffused with golden light, Zelnisky's landscapes and indoor scenes are grandly evocative, composed and executed with superb technical and emotional command. (Picture book/folklore. 8-10) -- Copyright 1997, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved. On Duskov's edition of The Princess and the Pea; Dusikov's pictures are full of soft edges and soft colours, with pretty architectural details and an assortment of castle denizens, including a pair of cats and a toddler in a jester's motley. A rendering to bring a smile or possibly a giggle. Kirkus Reviews/Maja Dusikova's Rapunzel retells a classic fairy tale and adds lovely, soft-edged drawings... Good reading skills or parental assistance will lend to the beautiful story of a braided beauty with a beautiful voice and a brave prince who breaks her isolation. Midwest Book Review/Rapunzel, let down your hair! Trapped at the top of a tall tower, every day Rapunzel throws down her long golden hair for the enchantress to climb. Until one day a stranger climbs up the King's son/Rapunzel and the prince plan to escape. Can they live happily ever after? This classic retelling of the much-loved fairy tale is brought to life with beautiful, soft illustrations by popular artist Maja Duskov. Rapunzel, let down your hair! Trapped at the top of a tall tower, every day Rapunzel throws down her long, long golden hair for the enchantress to climb. Until one day a stranger climbs up - the King's son/Rapunzel and the prince plan to escape. Can they live happily ever after? This classic retelling of the much-loved fairy tale is brought to life with beautiful, soft illustrations by popular artist Maja Duskov. Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, often known as the Brothers Grimm, were German professors whose collections of folk tales and fairy tales have been loved for generations.Maja Duskov was born in Slovakia in 1946. She has illustrated over forty books for children. She lives with her family in Florence, Italy. She is the illustrator of The Princess and the Pea (Floris Books). Award winning author/adaptor/illustrator Paul O. Zelninsky's Caldecott Medal Winning book! Perfect for readers of all fairy tales."A breathtaking interpretation gives the fairy tale new art-historical roots, with illustrations that daringly and effectively-mimic the masters of Italian Renaissance painting."-Publishers WeeklyTrapped in a tower with no door, Rapunzel is allowed to see no one but the sorceress who has imprisoned her-until the day a young prince hears her singing to the forest birds. . . . The timeless tale of Rapunzel is vividly and magnificently brought to life through Paul O. Zelninsky's powerful sense of narrative and his stunning oil paintings."Simply put, this is a gorgeous book; it demonstrates respect for the traditions of painting and the fairy tale while at the same time adhering to a singular, wholly original, artistic vision. (The Horn Book, starred review) Painting contributed to the Italian School of Saint Barbara, kept in the Sheffield Museum.Nearly everyone knows the fairytale of Rapunzel. A beautiful girl is kidnapped and trapped in a tall tower by a witch, and she never gets a haircut a day in her life. By the time she is a teenager, her hair is so long, it can be used as a rope for the witch to climb up and down the tower. Eventually, a clever prince sees this and makes his way up the tower to meet Rapunzel. They fall in love, and he helps her escape. They live happily ever after. This version is the story written into most modern-day childrens books, and Disneys animated film Tangled basically follows this storyline as well.The first written version of the Rapunzel story was written in the year 1600 by a writer named Giambattista Basile, from Italy. In this version, Rapunzel is sold to an ogre when she was a baby, all because her mother stole some parsley from a garden. She was forced to give away her first-born child, and she was locked in a tower her entire life. The Grimm Brothers Fairy Tale version of Rapunzel in 1857 gets darker. 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Just like today, ones reputation had a lot to do with their success in business, so her father wanted to stick to the status quo and continue practicing the traditional pagan religion of Rome. He also knew that his daughter was very beautiful. Men were already lining up to meet her, and many of them were even princes. Dioscurus made a rule that men were not allowed to meet her unless they went through an interview process with him, first. This made Barbara angry, and she had an argument with him, saying that she had free will, and wanted to choose the man she was going to marry. When he tried to give her options of men he thought were good suitors, she would turn them all down and refused to cooperate. Since his daughter was being rebellious, and he had to leave her alone while he traveled for work, Dioscurus decided to throw money at the problem. He believed that the solution was to hide Barbara away in a high tower, where she was never allowed to leave. That way, she would not even have the option of disobeying him and potentially falling in love with a man while he was away.Since Barbaras father was busy traveling and working as a merchant, he hired people from the town to construct the tower and deliver food and supplies to her. She lowered a basket down the side of the tower, and they would place the goods that she needed inside. One day, someone left her a book that explained what Christianity was. At the time, Christianity was the religious cult that the Romans were trying to prevent from taking over. Considering how little love and affection her father showed her, and the fact that she was so alone and isolated up in the tower, it is not surprising that she would be impressed by the Christian messages about God.When the men came to do renovations on the tower, the men felt pity for her and would let her climb down to speak to them. While they were working on the tower, Barbara asked them to make three windows, instead of two. These windows represented the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. They tried to say no because they knew it would make Dioscurus angry, but beautiful Barbara somehow convinced them to do it, anyway. While she was walking the grounds, she began to destroy her fathers pagan idols, because the Bible said that they were a sin. One day, she even convinced the workers to send her a priest, who came to her under the guise of being a doctor to treat an illness. He baptized her, and she officially became a Christian. Today, a teenager wanting to become a Christian would make her seem like a goody-two-shoes, but at the time, it was the most rebellious thing a teenager could possibly do. She was fully aware that she was breaking the law, and its possible that she did it just to spite her father. Painting of Barbara jumping from the window of the tower right before she flies away. Credit: Wikimedia Commons.Barbara Gets CaughtDioscurus eventually returned home from his journey, he expected that his plan to shelter his daughter from the outside world had gone off without a hitch. Instead, he saw that Barbara had climbed out of the tower and destroyed all of his stuff, and she had joined an illegal religion. He was absolutely furious. At the time, practicing Christianity was a crime that was punishable by torture and death. Considering that someone must have given her the Christian books, the workers knew the intention behind the three windows, and her Baptism may have become public knowledge around town. At this point, Dioscurus was harboring a fugitive in his tower.Even though Barbara was his daughter, Dioscurus handed her in to the authorities. We will never know if he truly was that heartless and cruel, or if he was given no choice but to obey the law and hand her in. He grabbed her by her long hair and dragged her to the Roman courts. When the judge asked her about her crimes, she shouted that she only answered to her Lord Jesus Christ. It was clear that she was guilty of being a Christian and evident that no matter what her father did to try to control her, she was not going to stop fighting for her free will. The people began to torture her. They cut her skin with knives, and threw salt in the wounds. They also burned her skin. When she was finally weak and near death, Dioscurus chopped his daughters head off with a sword.Painting of people torturing Barbara just before her father chops her head off. Credit: Wikimedia Commons.After her death, Barbara became a martyr in the Eastern Orthodox Church, and she was canonized as a saint. Even if someone died defending the religion, there is a rule that no one can become a saint unless they performed a miracle. In the magical Christian version of this story, Barbara flew when her father was chasing her around with a sword, which is interesting, because if she could fly this whole time, why didnt she escape sooner? When she was hiding, a shepherd in his field told Dioscurus where to find her, and apparently, he was turned to stone immediately for being a jerk. When they were torturing her, apparently Barbara covered in a comforting fog that prevented her from feeling any pain while she was tortured. Last but not least, there is a claim that lightning struck and killed Dioscurus immediately after he killed his daughter. Painting of the Persian story of star-crossed lovers Rdbeh and Zal. Credit: The British Museum.The Persian RapunzelAfter reading the story of Saint Barbara, you may notice that something is missing. What about the long hair? 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Just like today, ones reputation had a lot to do with their success in business, so her father wanted to stick to the status quo and continue practicing the traditional pagan religion of Rome. He also knew that his daughter was very beautiful. Men were already lining up to meet her, and many of them were even princes. Dioscurus made a rule that men were not allowed to meet her unless they went through an interview process with him, first. This made Barbara angry, and she had an argument with him, saying that she had free will, and wanted to choose the man she was going to marry. When he tried to give her options of men he thought were good suitors, she would turn them all down and refused to cooperate. Since his daughter was being rebellious, and he had to leave her alone while he traveled for work, Dioscurus decided to throw money at the problem. He believed that the solution was to hide Barbara away in a high tower, where she was never allowed to leave. That way, she would not even have the option of disobeying him and potentially falling in love with a man while he was away.Since Barbaras father was busy traveling and working as a merchant, he hired people from the town to construct the tower and deliver food and supplies to her. She lowered a basket down the side of the tower, and they would place the goods that she needed inside. One day, someone left her a book that explained what Christianity was. At the time, Christianity was the religious cult that the Romans were trying to prevent from taking over. Considering how little love and affection her father showed her, and the fact that she was so alone and isolated up in the tower, it is not surprising that she would be impressed by the Christian messages about God.When the men came to do renovations on the tower, the men felt pity for her and would let her climb down to speak to them. While they were working on the tower, Barbara asked them to make three windows, instead of two. These windows represented the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. They tried to say no because they knew it would make Dioscurus angry, but beautiful Barbara somehow convinced them to do it, anyway. While she was walking the grounds, she began to destroy her fathers pagan idols, because the Bible said that they were a sin. One day, she even convinced the workers to send her a priest, who came to her under the guise of being a doctor to treat an illness. He baptized her, and she officially became a Christian. Today, a teenager wanting to become a Christian would make her seem like a goody-two-shoes, but at the time, it was the most rebellious thing a teenager could possibly do. She was fully aware that she was breaking the law, and its possible that she did it just to spite her father. Painting of Barbara jumping from the window of the tower right before she flies away. Credit: Wikimedia Commons.Barbara Gets CaughtDioscurus eventually returned home from his journey, he expected that his plan to shelter his daughter from the outside world had gone off without a hitch. Instead, he saw that Barbara had climbed out of the tower and destroyed all of his stuff, and she had joined an illegal religion. He was absolutely furious. At the time, practicing Christianity was a crime that was punishable by torture and death. Considering that someone must have given her the Christian books, the workers knew the intention behind the three windows, and her Baptism may have become public knowledge around town. At this point, Dioscurus was harboring a fugitive in his tower.Even though Barbara was his daughter, Dioscurus handed her in to the authorities. We will never know if he truly was that heartless and cruel, or if he was given no choice but to obey the law and hand her in. He grabbed her by her long hair and dragged her to the Roman courts. When the judge asked her about her crimes, she shouted that she only answered to her Lord Jesus Christ. It was clear that she was guilty of being a Christian and evident that no matter what her father did to try to control her, she was not going to stop fighting for her free will. The people began to torture her. They cut her skin with knives, and threw salt in the wounds. They also burned her skin. When she was finally weak and near death, Dioscurus chopped his daughters head off with a sword.Painting of people torturing Barbara just before her father chops her head off. Credit: Wikimedia Commons.After her death, Barbara became a martyr in the Eastern Orthodox Church, and she was canonized as a saint. Even if someone died defending the religion, there is a rule that no one can become a saint unless they performed a miracle. In the magical Christian version of this story, Barbara flew when her father was chasing her around with a sword, which is interesting, because if she could fly this whole time, why didnt she escape sooner? When she was hiding, a shepherd in his field told Dioscurus where to find her, and apparently, he was turned to stone immediately for being a jerk. When they were torturing her, apparently Barbara covered in a comforting fog that prevented her from feeling any pain while she was tortured. Last but not least, there is a claim that lightning struck and killed Dioscurus immediately after he killed his daughter. Painting of the Persian story of star-crossed lovers Rdbeh and Zal. Credit: The British Museum.The Persian RapunzelAfter reading the story of Saint Barbara, you may notice that something is missing. What about the long hair? Every painting of Barbara depicts her with long hair, but it is not long enough to drop from the tower and use as a rope, which is pretty much the most iconic part of the Rapunzel story. In the Persian epic The Shahnameh, or The Book of Kings from the year 1000 CE, the book tells the origin stories of all of the men who would someday become royalty. In ancient Persia, two lovers used a tower as a secret hiding place. They were forbidden from being together, because they came from enemy countries, like Romeo and Juliet. The young woman, Rdbeh, was very beautiful. She had very long and shiny black hair. She would run-up to the tower and drop her hair out of the window while she waited for her lover, a famous king and warrior named Zl. According to legend, he shone like silver, so some artists depict him with a head of premature silver hair.Illustration of pregnant Rdbeh and Zal, who used his magic feather to help her with pain she was experiencing. 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