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Rapunzel's Revenge



Synopsis

Rapunzel escapes her tower-prison all on her own, only to discover a world beyond what she'd ever known before. Determined to rescue her real mother and to seek revenge on her kidnapper would-be mother, Rapunzel and her very long braids team up with Jack (of Beanstalk fame) and together they perform daring deeds and rescues all over the western landscape, eventually winning the justice they so well deserve.

Book Information

Lexile Measure: 500 (What's this?)

Series: Rapunzel's Revenge

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Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 starsÂ Â See all reviewsÂ (106 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #44,566 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #49 inÂ Books > Children's Books >

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Graphic Novels #2230 inÂ Books > Children's Books > Action & Adventure

Age Range: 10 - 14 years

Grade Level: 5 - 8

Customer Reviews

This is a graphic novel in the truest sense of the word, a done-in-one novel length comic book. It's intended for, and marketed to, the middle reader set (ages 9 to 12), but it's just as suitable for young adults and adults alike. Rapunzel's Revenge takes place in a fairy-tale-version of the American west, in which standard fairy tale tropes are recast in western idioms. The main character is Rapunzel, a young girl raised in a well-guarded villa by a woman she thinks is her mother. When Rapunzel learns that the woman is in fact an evil sorceress who rules the land with an iron fist, she tries to escape, only to end up imprisoned in a high tower, her hair cursed to grow endlessly. But rather than waiting for any handsome prince to come along and rescue her, Rapunzel simply braids her hair into two long rope-like braids, frees herself, and then using her braids as lariats and whips sets

out to end the sorceress's rule once and for all. She meets up with a young ne'er-do-well named Jack, who is down on his luck until his pet goose finally lays an egg, and together they travel across the deserts and forests, having adventures. Highly recommended.

Every so often a book comes along that crosses boundaries, and this graphic novel should appeal to the young, the old, girls, boys, and, unless a true snob, it should even appeal to those who don't usually like comix. Unlike some, I've been reading science fiction, horror, adventure, and mystery stories for over forty years, so the mixing of the western, fantasy, and fairy-tale genres didn't bother me, it just enhanced the story. This review may contain spoilers, but everything important happens within the first twenty pages anyway, so this review shouldn't spoil much. This modern retelling of an old fairy tale is reset in an alternate universe of our old American west. The story starts off with the Hales painting an idyllic picture, literally and figuratively, of the young redheaded Rapunzel and her life in Mother Gothel's huge hacienda where everybody is nice to her. However, she is also having troublesome dreams of being part of a family that she barely remembers. Unfortunately, Rapunzel is just an average girl and she rebels against being cloistered in Gothel's hacienda. In an act of rebellion on her twelfth birthday, Rapunzel escapes from Mother Gothel's place and discovers what Mother Gothel's kingdom is really like and who her real mother is. This angers Gothel and Rapunzel is then taken by the thuggish Brute to Gothel's swamps and is placed in a tree hollow where she stays until she is sixteen. At that time Rapunzel is given a choice by Gothel to either be an obedient girl or stay in the tree. Rapunzel denies Gothel, and is punished by being abandoned forever, and left in the tree. During her stay in the tree, Rapunzel's hair has grown ridiculously long and she has learned how to use her (braided) hair like either a rope or a whip along with keeping herself in really good physical shape. After being abandoned, Rapunzel uses her hair to escape her prison, and then starts on her way back to Mother Gothel's hacienda to rescue her mother. Along the way, she teams-up with (rescues) a young drifter named Jack and his pet goose and in a rocky partnership decide to continue Rapunzel's quest, in which they meet, and beat, villains, kidnappers, backstabbers, and wild beasts, all the while being hunted by Brute. The novel is episodic, with the episodes dealing with Rapunzel and Jack saving a starving village from wild dogs, and the one with them saving a community of river small-people from a huge river monster being particularly good. Love that giant snake. Through trials and tribulations Rapunzel and Jack end up at Mother Gothel's hacienda during a celebration and the big showdown begins. All things being fair though, this is a young girl's book, and Jack is always subservient to Rapunzel, usually because she's a real tuff girl, a kind of young female Indiana Jones. However, in the end, both Rapunzel and Jack are written

well, as is Mother Gothel as a villain. Despite being episodic, the story flows well, and while not too violent, it doesn't scrimp with the action, and there are things buried in the story that will appeal to older readers. Nathan Hale's artwork is at times plain, and at times detailed, and always distinctive, Hale's artwork, like the story also flows nicely, and never gets in the way of the story, and there are some splash pages that are just beautifully rendered. This adventure quest is filled with action, likable characters, magic, fantasy, self-sacrifice, humor, heroism, and loyal friendship. While this fast-paced adventure graphic novel may be aimed at young girls, most boys should enjoy it also, and it never talks down to, or patronizes its audience. I've already read it several times, and this may be one of the best family oriented books of the year. But then, I'm not a father, just a lover of good stories, and this review is from that viewpoint, and I hope this review helps.

I'm a fan of Shannon Hale's novels, and I too was surprised that this is in a "comic book" format. Wow! The story is well-told, but my kudos go to the illustrator Nathan Hale. I had to read this twice in succession -- first to enjoy the plot, but the second time to look closely at every picture. The pictures make the text even more ironic and witty, and there are little themes in the pictures alone (watch the goose, for example). I feel silly sometimes for reading "kid's books", but this was so classy I plan to share with friends.

A popular novelist may be prone to looking at the whole of their oeuvre. They consider their past works, look to the future, and decide to write a graphic novel. What makes them do this? Is it the potential to reach whole new audiences? Is it the accessibility of the format? The trendiness of it all? Or it is something else? Could it be that graphic novels are the wave of the future? Could be. Certainly they offer an author a whole new way of looking at the literary format. Why an enterprising young man or woman - and man, could perhaps even take a fairy tale and do wondrous things with it. You could even, and maybe I'm just talking crazy stuff here, take the fairy tale of Rapunzel, slap it into a pseudo-cowboy/wizardry setting. Add in Newbery-Honor winner Shannon Hale, her husband, and a guy with the same last name who doesn't happen to be related to either of them, and you have a rip-roaring tale of betrayal, escape, romance, and very long locks. Hypothetically, of course. First things first. You are all familiar with the story of Rapunzel I assume, yes? Witch takes neighbor's baby after the husband steals some of the rapunzel plant for his wife to eat. Witch keeps kid up a tower until the child's hair grows long and she is eventually rescued by a prince. It's all pretty basic stuff. Well that's sort of the true story, but not exactly. For most of Rapunzel's life she's actually kept in a lovely castle with the woman she thinks is her mother, learning rope tricks from the

guards and generally having a good time. One day the girl grows inordinately curious about the tall wall that surrounds her home and so she scales it. Consequently, what she sees from the top causes her to question everything about her life. As punishment for this act of rebelliousness Rapunzel is kept in the hollow of a tall tree where her hair grows at an inordinate rate. Each year her "mother" asks if she's ready to be forgiven and each year Rapunzel stays the same. When she finally breaks out of her treetop prison she joins forces with a boy named Jack and the two of them set out to break the power of her "mother" and save the hardscrabble land around them. Rapunzel is one of those fairy tale characters that remain both iconic and relatively unblemished. Disney never did a thing with Rapunzel, after all. When you think of her, you mind may refer to Paul O. Zelinsky's Caldecott winning picture book or other images of her in literature. From a personal viewpoint, my first reference tends to be the Rapunzel character in Stephen Sondheim's musical *Into the Woods*. But where Sondheim played up the mother/daughter aspects of the relationship, Hale n' Hale are not particularly interested in that take on the story. Here Mother Gothel, as she is known, is a pretty unrepentantly evil character. She bears little affection for the girl she has raised, which I think is a bit of a loss. It would have been nice to see a more complex villain. Someone who can care and love a little girl on the one hand as a mother, and then turn around and crush the spirit of a nation on the other. That said, the Hales have a good sense of character and personality here. Rapunzel's spirit is pretty evident, both visually and through her verve and words right from the get go. Heck, the first time you see her she's hanging off a branch in the garden and falling into a small pond. The Hales avoid the usual tomboy-told-to-act-like-a-pretty-princess storyline that's been so done and overdone before. Here Rapunzel is brave and curious right from the start, but with a way of communicating that is entirely her own. After all, when she first sees the devastation that surrounds her home of the past nine years her response is "Well I'll be swigger-jiggered and hung out to dry." The cowboy feel and characters in this book are a bit odd, but they work within the context of the tale. It's certainly a more American take on the Rapunzel story than you'll usually find in a library. All spurs and lassos and riding bucks. Short of Indian attacks (of which there are blessedly none) all the usual tropes are there. Nathan Hale was an interesting choice of illustrator for this particular outing. It took me a while to get attuned to his more cartoonish style, I admit. I had seen the work he'd done on his picture books *Yellowbelly* and *Plum Go to School*, which employed a mighty realistic take on your average everyday six-year-old monsters. For this book, Hale scales back the complexity (at least until he needs to use it) producing a simpler product. Once you get into it, it kinda works. I liked Hale's ability to render the multiple uses of extremely long hair during the Rapunzel-grows-up montages. I liked that he was as comfortable presenting a grey desolate wasteland as we was a

beautiful ball gown. If I'm not too much mistaken there seemed to be a visualÂ Pippi LongstockingÂ reference going on for much of the book (hey man, I always said she was the original female superhero). And I liked that he ends the book (spoiler alert, for those of you who care) with a very sexy kiss. Very sexy. Or maybe I just like boys in white shirtsleeves. It's a hard novel to place, in a way. There really aren't that many younger reader graphic novels outside of the manga sphere to compare this to. I can't help but think that it's going to have to be a hit, though. A Newbery Honor winning author taking familiar fairy tale tropes and then wrapping the whole kerschmozzle in a kick-butt girl package? It's going to have its fans. My only difficulty as a librarian is in figuring out what to recommend to my patrons when they finish the book and want more of the same. Suggestions on that topic are more than welcome. A fun new book worth taking a gander at.

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