

Zel Annotation

Title: *Zel*

Author: Donna Jo Napoli

Illustrator: Stefanie Rosenfeld

Publisher and Date of Publication: Puffin Books (the Penguin Group) 1996

Genre: Traditional Literature

Number of Pages: 227

Grade Level(s): Eighth grade and up

Summary: In the beginning of *Zel*, a thirteen-year-old young lady named Zel and her mother leave their alm home in order to travel to the town. When Zel's mother leaves Zel's side, Zel meets a handsome count by the name of Konrad. Konrad and Zel fall in love at first sight. Zel's very magical mother, in an attempt to save Zel from making any bad decisions (like marrying Konrad), decides to lock Zel in a tower. While in the tower, Zel starts to go crazy, even reverting to self inflicted violence to keep herself entertained. The count searches for two years for Zel, then gives up and is about to marry, when he stumbles on Zel's tower. He and Zel get married in the tower, and when he goes to get supplies to rescue Zel, her mother (who actually turns out to be a witch who took Rapunzel at birth) comes and sees that Zel is pregnant with Konrad's children. The trees then take Zel to a far away land where she is able to be free from the tower that kept her for two years. She raises her children there. While the witch dies from falling, the count merely becomes blind, and he continues to search for three more years until he finds Zel and his twin girls living in the far away land. They all then live happily ever after.

Evaluation: The chapters switch between the perspectives of Zel, the mother, and Konrad. Sometimes chapter to chapter, the book also switches between first and third person. The mother also has a narrative. In some places of the book, the action and fast pace makes parts confusing. There are multiple examples of symbolism and short important sentences, which can be easily missed, that add to the plot and are very clever, but tricky. Otherwise, the book is very clear and easy to read. The book is well written with short and to the point sentences, as well as very descriptive sentences. The imagery created in this book is absolutely great. The author uses analogies, repetition, and similes to prove and reinforce her points.

Vocabulary: The vocabulary is very simple, and there are really no big or complex, out of the ordinary, words. The words used are appropriate for the time period, and setting. Many of the words create very descriptive sentences that are inspired by the magic themes in the book. There are not too many long or multi syllable words.

Illustrations: The major illustration is the cover illustration. On the cover, Zel is looking happily at the Rapunzel lettuce. She is wearing the green dress, which is a similar color as the Rapunzel. At this point, her hair is pretty and probably not long yet because she is happy. Another thing I noticed about the front cover is that it is very dark! There are also illustrations on the sub cover. On the back cover, there is a very pale plant in the back ground of the text that matches the side illustration of the plants surrounding Zel's name. The style of this book is so elegant because of the smaller illustrations like the three dots between the chapter number and the person's name whose perspective it will be. Also, some small details that give the book character are the boxes that start each chapter's first letter.

Format: The format of the book is basically that there are parts (they each have a new whole page dedicated to separating them) and sub chapters under each part. There are no major illustrations within the book that are significant to the story line. There are no borders. The font changes in the chapter

title as well as the person whose perspective the chapter is in. There is an author's note on the end page and on the beginning page. There is also a preview of the book, a table of contents, acknowledgements, and a dedication.

Other titles by Donna Jo Napoli

- *Spinners*
- *The Magic Circle*
- *Beast*
- *Breath*
- *Bound*

Other Rapunzel stories

- *Rapunzel* by Catherine Mccafferty
- *Rapunzel, Rapunzel, Let Down Your Hair and Other Stories* by Jancis M Andrews
- *Once Upon a Time... Rapunzel's Story* by Byn Always
- *Rapunzel: A Traditional Story from Europe* by Jennifer Beck

Personal Opinion: I thought this book was really really good in the beginning at twisting the traditional Rapunzel story. I really enjoyed the book all together, though it was gruesome in some places. I think the gruesome places explored the realities of the traditional story, which made it more sad, and more intriguing. The ending was more the typical happily ever after ending which was expected.