Teaching Guide to

RAPUNZEL'S REVENGE

BY SHANNON AND DEAN HALE

ILLUSTRATED BY NATHAN HALE

As a rich and engaging story coauthored by Newbery Honor–winning writer Shannon Hale, *Rapunzel's Revenge* is a great selection for independent or group reading, or for book circles, and offers many opportunities to enhance skills in reading and literature. As a graphic narrative, it provides additional benefits as its visual storytelling and iconography supports, extends, and complements the narrative information conveyed by the print text.

ACTIVATING BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

Prior to reading the graphic novel or discussing the book, call on volunteers to provide a synopsis of the fairy tale "Rapunzel," reviewing its key story elements as necessary. You can use the Brothers Grimm version or another traditional telling of the tale as a point of departure. Point out that most of the fairy tale's distinctive features are present in *Rapunzel's Revenge*, in the title character's early childhood and backstory. Also review the plot of "Jack and the Beanstalk," particularly in light of the book's goose character, Goldy, and its theme of unbridled growth. **1** / **2**

SPEAKING AND LISTENING

Rapunzel's Revenge is particularly rich in "silent" sequences—passages in which there is little or no dialogue or narration. Examples can be found on pages 21–23 and pages 92–93. Challenge students to provide improvised first-person or third-person narration for such passages that fits the characters and situation. Other students can practice listening skills by paying attention to these live "voice-overs"—and then being asked to jump in and continue or respond to what a previous student said, ad-libbing in a way that both makes sense and heightens dramatic power. **4**

ANALYZING CONFLICT

Reproduce and distribute the activity sheet on page 3 of this guide. You can use it as a formal assessment or to support recall prior to discussion, even allowing students to work on it as an open-book exercise. Or you can also use it simply as the entry point to exploring the issue of dramatic structure. **6.3**

STANDARDS ALIGNMENT

The instructional content of this teaching guide is aligned with . . .

The Joint Standards of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and the International Reading Association (IRA)

Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) Benchmarks for Grades 6–8, Standards 5 and 6

CONCEIVED AND WRITTEN BY PETER GUTIÉRREZ

The following questions are ordered in terms of increasing complexity, so that you can plan a discussion based upon the strengths of your middle school or upper elementary students and the time available to you.

RECALLING/SUMMARIZE The detailed map of Gothel's Reach (page 73) can be used at various points in the guiding reading process. Prior to reading, you can have students speculate about the kind of adventures that the protagonists might encounter in places with names such as "The Devil's Armpit" or in specific locations such as the waterfront community of Fin's End. Alternately, focus on the map at point-of-use by having students make predictions based upon Jack's plan. Or, perhaps most fruitfully, have students use the map as a visual prompt to recall plot details as they provide a summary of the story after reading it. **3** / **6**

RECALLING/ITEMIZE One engaging way to support recall of story details is to ask students to describe all the "hair-based" skills that Rapunzel displays. These include disarming threats (page 78) and spinning torchlike objects (page 96). **6**

RECALLING/IDENTIFY FORESHADOWING Help students connect different passages by pointing out instances of foreshadowing and having them explain them. For example, a reference to a wild boar is made on page 25 and then one appears on page 36. Likewise, page 11 shows Rapunzel using a rope to swing from long before she uses her hair for the same purpose (page 70). **6.5**

RECALLING/COMPARE AND CONTRAST What general elements of a traditional fairy tale does *Rapunzel's Revenge* include? What is the typical setting, both in time and place, for such stories and how does this text radically alter them? Questions like these will help students appreciate the book's inventive revisionism. **6.2**

> Once upon a time, there was a beautiful little girl.

INTERPRETING/MAKE INFERENCES As students read, model how to make inferences to understand events and emotions, particularly in the flashback sequences early in the story (pages 16 and 17, page 27). Dialogue between Rapunzel and Jack often requires inferential thinking as well. For example, what does Jack think she means by "prison" on page 48? And what should we infer from his "Are you thinking what I'm thinking?" on the bottom of page 53? **1**

INTERPRETING/IDENTIFY TURNING POINTS Support students to interpret an important aspect of the text's character development by having them identify key moments when Rapunzel and Jack's relationship evolves (e.g., pages 63, 78, 89, and 113). **6.3** / **6.4**

INTERPRETING/EXPLORE THEME What is Shannon and Dean Hale's conception of a hero? Draw attention to the scenes with the "rifle-toting ninny" (pages 41–42) and Rapunzel herself "trying to be a hero" (page 46) as places to find evidence related to this theme. Explore the idea that real heroes don't try to act like heroes, but simply do what's right. Finally, explore Jack's shifting motives to show why he's a more authentic hero than the "prince archetype" whom he replaces. **6.4**

INTERPRET/DRAW CONCLUSIONS As a starting point to analyze her character, explain that "Mother Gothel" means "Godmother" in German. Why does she want a daughter so badly? Is it to have an heir, someone to love and be close to, or is it a way of correcting or repeating her own childhood—or is it a combination of these reasons? **3** / **5.6** / **6.4**

REFLECTING/ANALYZE REPRESENTATION How do gender roles in *Rapunzel's Revenge* contrast with those in traditional fairy tales, adventure stories, or comic books? Coach students to analyze not only the actions and relationships of the male and female characters but also more subtle text clues (e.g., the book *Girls Who Get Saved and the Princes Who Save Them*, page 30). Why might it be significant that Jack first appears in women's clothing (pages 44–45) and that Rapunzel's garb becomes increasingly less feminine (page 80)? Also, how does the depiction of Native Americans, including that of Jack, compare to other representations in popular media? **9** / **5.6**

REFLECTING/MAKE CONNECTIONS Why is Rapunzel averse to performing a "sultry little dance" (page 57) or why does she initially balk at being called "Punzie" (page 55)? Questions like these can launch a conversation that helps students identify with the book's coming-of-age themes and make connections beyond the text. What sort of behavior do we avoid because it affects our conception of self—or others' impression of us? Guide students to reflect on similar moments either in other works of fiction or in their own lives, discussing nicknames they've outgrown or activities they no longer engage in—as well as new ones that they're excited to embrace, a notion consistent with the sense of unlimited possibility conveyed by the book's ending. **3** / **5.6** / **6.4** / **6.10**

NAME _____   DATE _____

Like most adventure stories, *Rapunzel's Revenge* has an episodic structure—no sooner do our heroes get out of one mess than they're knee-deep in another. To keep track of these different incidents, and to analyze how their conflicts make you want to keep reading, complete the chart below.

Order the images by assigning a number from 1 to 4. Then for each scene that they represent write what Rapunzel and Jack were trying to accomplish, the challenges they faced, and the final outcome—what did they learn, gain, or achieve?
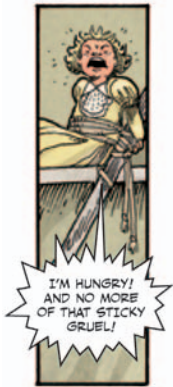

ORDER: _____

OBJECTIVE: _____
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CHALLENGE: _____
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OUTCOME: _____
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DIFFERENTIATING INSTRUCTION

BELOW-LEVEL LEARNERS Support students by explaining the text's effective use of irony. Examples include both ironically delivered dialogue ("creative borrowing") and ironic first-person narration ("luxurious accommodations"). Help students appreciate that the words and the visuals don't always correspond literally but ironically. Prime examples include Rapunzel's escape on pages 34 and 35 and panels 2 to 5 on page 45. You also might want to check comprehension of the text's vivid figurative language in phrases such as "winter-creek dry" (page 9).

ADVANCED LEARNERS Encourage students to compare and contrast the protagonist with related characters in other texts and even across media. For example, in what ways is Rapunzel similar to a superhero or to characters students know from manga or anime? Also, prompt extrapolation by asking what the real-world consequences of having "twenty feet of hair" might be. What daily challenges would Rapunzel face that are not mentioned in the text?

ENGLISH-LANGUAGE LEARNERS Both the fairy tale and Wild West elements of the story may not be as readily accessible to students from different cultural backgrounds, so provide explicit instruction on these topics. You will also want to preview instances of nonstandard English, dialect, idiom, and wordplay, providing definitions as needed. Examples include "pretty/ugly hot," "feller," "cut a swell," "yep," "fish to fry," and the concluding pun based upon the idea of stealing a kiss.

EXTENDING LEARNING

CREATIVE WRITING/CRITICAL ANALYSIS Using *Rapunzel's Revenge* as a touchstone, have students explore the roles of women and girls in fairy tales or other traditional texts. Challenge them to write a one-page plot synopsis of a story that successfully updates one of these characters.
2 / **5** / **9** / **5.6**

MULTIMODAL PROJECT Provide art supplies so that students can make "Wanted" posters, using the ones in the book as models for how to coordinate graphics and text. These posters can be for characters such as Jack or Witchy Jasper, or for characters from other other titles that students have read. Consider displaying the finished posters in a "rogues' gallery." **6**

CROSS-CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS Collaborate with a history teacher to help students answer the question, "What was life really like in the Old West?" That is, what visual details did artist Nathan Hale do a great job in capturing? What other elements are more fanciful and don't reflect the technological, economic, or political realities of the period (apart from obvious fantasy elements such as huge serpents)? Focus this cross-curricular inquiry with a task: If you had a to pick a year for when the story takes place in "our" reality, when would that be? What's your evidence based upon clues in the print and graphics? **7** / **8**

Peter Gutiérrez is a spokesperson on graphic novels for the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and has developed curricular materials for clients such as Pearson Education, Scholastic, Sylvan Learning, and TOON Books.