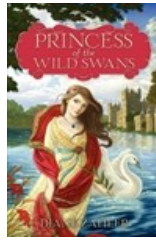


# Reader's Guide

## *Princess of the Wild Swans*

By Diane Zahler



The activities and questions in this guide are correlated to Common Core State Anchor Standards. For more specific, grade-level standards within each Anchor Standard, see the specific Literature, Writing, and Speaking and Listening Standards for your grade at <http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy>.

### Extension Activities

#### 1. Story Versions.

There are two original fairy tales in which a princess's brothers are turned into swans. One is "The Six Swans" by the Grimm Brothers, and the other is "The Wild Swans," is by Hans Christian Andersen. Read these stories and consider how they differ from *Princess of the Wild Swans*. How do the characters and setting differ? How are they the same? Which plot events are similar and which are different? Write a short essay comparing and contrasting the two story versions.

CCRA.R.1, CCRA.R.2, CCRA.R.9, CCRA.W.9

#### 2. The Irish Creatures of Faerie.

Diane Zahler used Irish legends as the basis for some of the horrific creatures in *Princess of the Wild Swans*. The merrow is one such creature. Another is the onchu. Choose one of these monstrous beings and, using the Internet, find out how they are treated in Irish tales. Write a summary of one such tale, describing the legendary being and its actions. Include your own illustrations to show what happens in the tale you've chosen.

CCRA.R.7; CCRA.W.6, CCRA.W.8

#### 3. Healing Plants.

Riana and her mother grow a number of healing plants in their garden, and the apothecary, Master Declan, uses a number of these plants and herbs in the cures he sells in his shop. Using the Internet to find out about healing plants, create a small booklet that shows plants that heal and describes their properties. Include illustrations of the plants in your booklet..

CCRA.R.7, CCRA.W.2, CCRA.W.4, CCRA.W.7, CCRA.W.8

#### 4. Poetry and the Princess.

The author includes parts of three well-known poems in *Princess of the Wild Swans*: “The Swan” by Sara Teasdale in Chapter 6, “The Wild Swans at Coole” by William Butler Yeats in Chapter 7, and “The Song of Wandering Aengus” by Yeats in Chapter 12. Choose one of these poems to read aloud with a partner. You and your partner can alternate verses or lines or read the entire poem together. Practice your reading, and perform it dramatically for the class.

CCRA.R.4, CCRA.R.10; CCRA.SL.1, CCRA.SL.6

### Discussion Questions

CCRA.R.1, CCRA.R.2, CCRA.R.3, CCRA.R.6, CCRA.R.10; CCRA.SL.1, CCRA.SL.4

1. What is Princess Meriel’s first impression of Lady Orianna? Why does she feel the way she does about the new queen?
2. What does Lady Orianna do to Meriel’s brothers? Why does she do it? How does Meriel discover the nature of the curse?
3. What does Meriel have to do to try to break the curse on her brothers? Which part of her task will be harder for her, and why?
4. Why did the author choose to write the story from Meriel’s point of view? What aspect of the story would be more difficult to understand if it were not written in the first-person point of view?
5. When Meriel first meets Liam, they don’t get along very well. Why are they unfriendly? What happens to change their relationship?
6. Cullen is Meriel’s favorite brother. What is special about him? What character traits does he reveal as the story progresses?
7. Meriel is helped by many people – Riona, Liam, Brigh, Mistress Tuileach, Master Declan. Which of these characters gives her the most valuable aid? Why do you think so?
8. Meriel and Riona have a serious argument in Chapter 11. What do they fight about? Which one of them do you think is right, and why?
9. Meriel almost completes the task that she must do to free her brothers from their enchantment. What does she leave undone? How might that affect her brother’s future life?
10. Meriel changes from the beginning of the novel to the end. What words would you use to describe Meriel at the beginning of the story? Make a list of words that describe her. Then think about how she changes. Make another list of words that describe her by the end of the book.