



## The Rosemary Spell

*Virginia Zimmerman*

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Best friends Rosie and Adam find an old book with blank pages that fill with handwriting before their eyes. Something about this magical book has the power to make people vanish, even from memory. The power lies in a poem—a spell. When Adam's older sister, Shelby, disappears, they struggle to retain their memories of her as they race against time to bring her back from the void, risking their own lives in the process.

## **The Rosemary Spell Details**

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Author : Virginia Zimmerman

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## From Reader Review The Rosemary Spell for online ebook

### Jamie says

3.5 stars Okay, before beginning this review one must understand something important. I am not a poetry fan. And even Shakespeare's (as often referenced in this book) can be a real tightrope read for me. So with how much was in here and circled around these ideas, it challenged my enjoyment on a personal level. That said, it is well written. I enjoyed it better the second time around (and my re-reading should tell you something too!).

I really liked the kids and their attempts to remember and bring Shelby back. This was interesting as that is the name of a cousin of mine who pulled a disappearing act in real life for awhile so it was an interesting correlation for me. It was sad watching them forget, struggling to help the other remember! Has a mild emotional pull. Overall, well done. I will happily read more by Virginia Zimmerman in the future.

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### Megan Lane says

Things I appreciated:

1. Story telling. I can't recall a story written in 1st person present this good. I was thoroughly impressed. Sure, there were moments it felt forced, but I can have grace. And it didn't stop me from staying up until 3 am to finish it.
2. A boy-girl relationship that didn't hint at romance. Guys. That doesn't happen in books or movies. I kept expecting some hint to get thrown around, but it didn't. I am pleased. (That said, they did spend an unwise amount of time alone together. But that's beside the point.)
3. A book that talks about Alzheimers and makes it relatable to kids and young adults.
4. It was kind of an homage to all books, specifically fantasy, and the impact that they have had on so many people. And how books can bring people together. And also growing up and staying friends.

Things I didn't like/am not sure about:

1. Spells. Honestly, this reaches past this book into fantasy of all kinds. This book a little more because it's less of a "fiction world" and more strictly dangerous words and spells and repetitions. It was well done as a story, I'm just not sure if I'm comfortable with it in my own life, future kids' lives, etc.
2. Why didn't Adam and Shelby have good relationships with their parents? or did they? It was just sad. I'd like to have seen a better family life for them, maybe. It's not really important to the story, though. Just something I noticed.
3. Did they ever tell their parents? Major stuff happened that their parents didn't know about and if Rosemary had done the right thing to begin with, all the mess would have been avoided. So I guess that's an issue.
4. In the latter half, with all the remembering, it did drag a bit at times. It was fairly repetitive, but it echoed the story and its issues and characters interestingly, so now that I think of it more, I don't know if it's an issue or not. Hm.

I really enjoyed reading this book.

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## **Rose says**

I loved this book....It's good for all ages (I'm 64)  
It talked about memory and it was simply a good read!  
I'd recommend it to everyone.

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## **Olivia (The Candid Cover) says**

The Rosemary Spell really drew me in and refused to let go. This book has such an amazing and creative concept, and a mystery all rolled into one. Mystery is a genre that I have been loving recently and this book did not disappoint. Geared for a middle grade audience, The Rosemary Spell is quite enjoyable and makes for a quick read.

The Rosemary Spell has such an interesting concept! There is witchcraft, an old book filled with secrets, and so many more magical elements. In a nutshell, the main characters, Adam and Rosie, find a book that is seemingly blank, but soon fill with writing. The book is very powerful and has the ability to make their friend, Shelby, go missing. It was so much fun following Adam and Rosie as they try and bring Shelby back into our world.

The mysterious nature of The Rosemary Spell is what hooks the reader from the onset. It is sort of like a puzzle with plenty of mystery to whet your appetite. The reader can solve the pixel of the old book and Shelby's disappearance along with the characters. This book is a real enjoyable thrill as the characters struggle to remember who Shelby is, and keeps the reader flipping pages madly.

Although I really loved The Rosemary Spell, I would say that this story is definitely quite simplistic. The puzzle inside isn't overly complex, and there is definitely no major plot twist at the end. Also, I found the book to be pretty predictable, however it certainly did not lessen my enjoyment for it. Middle graders, though, will most likely enjoy the fun and fast paced adventure.

The Rosemary Spell is such a magical novel that is filled with puzzles. It is quite fun to solve the mysteries along with the character! I am certain that middle graders will fall in love with story and its wonderful cast of characters. I recommend this book to someone who is looking for a quick mystery to read.

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## **Beth says**

This is, to be honest, one of the best middle grade books I've ever read. In fact, I'd call this more a YA than an MG. A YA with layers of theme and story, and a realistic handling of growing up. Add to this multiple references to Shakespeare \*and\* YA/MG novels I love, and you've got an amazing story.

I actually read this in two days. And it was super tough to stop every two chapters and consider discussion questions for a Facebook group. But that was only because the pace was excellent and the tension was nonstop. The levels of meaning in this story were numerous: belief creates reality, community consensus drives identity, words are magic, friendships define us, poetry transcends, parenting is more about being there than being blood, memory shapes life, etc.

And above and beyond those concepts, I loved the consistent handling of friendship in the book. I love the author's less-is-more approach (similar to poetry, right?) although she avoided flowery metaphor and generalized vagueness. It was more like: here's a cake with multiple layers, and you bring your own subtext, but it's going to be delicious even if only on one layer. OK, maybe that simile didn't work as well as I hoped. Regardless, I loved this book and I highly recommend it to everyone who is OK with a novel where the protagonists are teenagers.

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### **Marathon County Public Library says**

Books and words have always been important to Rosemary and her best friend Adam, so when they discover an extremely old book in a locked cabinet in her father's old study, they are excited beyond words. Is it perhaps a secret, magical, ancient book? Did it once belong to Shakespeare or perhaps to Constance Brooke, an elderly poet suffering from Alzheimer's disease who used to live in their house? When they begin to write in the book at school and strange Shakespearean verse magically appears and their friend Shelby suddenly disappears, solving the mystery becomes crucial. But is it too late and too dangerous to rescue Shelby? Can they retain their memories of her so she doesn't permanently vanish? This fun, exciting tween mystery will appeal to readers and book lovers of all ages.

Sharyn H. / Marathon County Public Library  
Find this book in our library catalog.

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### **Maja (The Nocturnal Library) says**

Lately I've been slowly exploring middle grade fiction, something I haven't done since I was actually a middle grade reader, trying to find more and more titles for my daughter, who's turning out to be quite the voracious reader. I must confess that I'm sometimes finding it difficult to see MG reads as she would see them and not judge them through adult eyes. But every once in a while there comes a book appropriate for all ages, beautiful and educational, a read that promotes all the right values and teaches all the right lessons.

The Rosemary Spell was quite a surprise for me. The second I read the words 'literary puzzle' in the synopsis, I knew I must read it, and read it I did, in a single breath no less. It is a wonderful story, warm and intriguing, with young but flawed characters with genuine fears and problems. It's a tiny bit magical in a very literal sense, but the true magic is in Rosemary's character, her sorrow for her father, her quiet anger at her mother, her feeling of abandonment caused by a friend who just started high school and the young, brilliant mind behind it all.

We are led through this adventure by a creative, smart girl, daughter of two academics, a brilliant mind, but young and vulnerable too. Rosemary discovers a secret diary under the floorboards in her room, empty pages that seem to slowly reveal words and paragraphs, only to hide them again minutes later. Rosemary and Adam are determined to discover the truth about the diary, but to do that, they have to be resourceful, creative, and very good at interpreting poetry.

In a way, this is a coming of age story, but the most prominent feeling is that of being left behind. Abandoned by her father and outgrown by one of her best friends and role models, Rosemary struggles with very real feelings while trying her best to solve the magical mystery. The setting, the characters and the very idea behind this book are lovely.

My favorite thing about this story is that it develops a love for poetry. Rosemary and Adam search for hidden meanings, interpret Shakespeare and other poets, read and explore biographies and collections. It's an exciting story, but its educational value is enormous. I really think young readers are going to adore this one.

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### **Lindsay says**

A short young adult novel that explores friendships, family and memory.

Rosemary and Adam are 13 and best friends who have long bonded over a shared love of books. Until recently Adam's 16 year old sister Shelby has been very much part of that friendship and another book lover, but she's growing up and beginning to leave Rosemary and Adam behind. It feels like the 16 year old who now wants to be called Michelle has forgotten them along with her other name.

Then the kids discover an old book with words in it that come and go, and a rhyming verse as part of it. And when they read the verse, Michelle *actually* becomes forgotten both for them and for reality. Fortunately they have a line from Shakespeare about Rosemary being for memory that allows them to remember her for a short time so that they can try and get her back.

Zimmerman is an English professor and it really shows. The kids have an enthusiasm for books, literature, words and poetry that I remember at the same age having for creepy-crawlies and blowing things up. And the adults are wonderfully supportive and interested in these things as well, from Rosemary's mother who is an English professor, to their Dead Poet's Society-like English teacher. The story also has a wonderful overlap with the original owner of the book who is a famous poet now living in a nursing home with advanced Alzheimer's. Again memory and forgetting is a huge part of this story.

The book is also extremely tight and well paced. For a relatively leisurely set of topics, Shakespeare and spells from poetry verses, once Michelle disappears the sense of urgency becomes palpable and the actual climax is quite action-packed.

Ultimately, this kept me up after when I should have gone to bed and made me tear up near the end. What more can you expect from an excellent book?

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### **Amanda says**

I received an ARC of this book as a GR giveaway.

"I can't imagine having once loved certain books and not loving them anymore. In a way, you are what you read, so abandoning books is the same thing as abandoning a part of yourself. And the truth is that his leaving the books behind baffled me more than his leaving Mom and me behind."

Rosie, Adam, and Shelby are the best of friends. They have spent their childhood together going on adventures, and books are an integral part of their friendship. When Rosie moves into her father's old study, she finds an ancient book. Curiosity leads to dire consequences for Shelby, which forces Rosie and Adam to search for a way to reverse the spell.

The predominant theme is loss. Thirteen year old Rosie has suffered loss, both physical and emotional. Her father abandoned the family a decade earlier, and she struggles with his physical and emotional absence. Rosie is also dealing with the fact that Shelby, her friend who is three years her senior, is spending more time with new friends and becoming more mature. The emotional pain for Rosie is apparent, but nothing compares to Shelby physically disappearing into the void.

Memory is another prevailing theme. Rosie and Adam constantly struggle to keep Shelby alive in their memory in order to not lose her forever. There is even a character that has Alzheimer's disease.

The Rosemary Spell pays homage to some wonderful children's fantasy novels and makes many references to the work of Shakespeare. This book pulled me in very quickly, and the suspense was delightful. Into the second half I felt that the book dragged a little and became a bit repetitive, but this wasn't enough to dampen my enthusiasm. The ending was climactic with palpable real life danger. I would highly recommend it.

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## **Once Upon a Twilight says**

When I got my hands on the advanced copy of The Rosemary Spell, I had no idea how difficult of a time I was going to have reviewing it. Before you assume the worst, what I mean by this is, it's such a great book, I was actually stumped for a few days in trying to figure out how to best recap this book as well as how to convey the excitement I felt over this book.

This book falls within the YA category, and it is a great book that every young adult who has a passion for reading should read at least once! It's part mystery, part puzzle and definitely thrilling. I could not put this book down once I got started. Being a book lover myself, I was captivated by this story of Rosie and her best friend Adam (and his sister Shelby) who loved books as much as I do. They have all sorts of books they've read and re-read together, books they keep closest to their nightstand in case they need a specific one for 'emergency reading' (raise your hand if you currently have at least three books within arms reach! I know I do!), as well as books organized in different but specific orders.

There is one quote that stuck with me from the moment I read it, and that I kept in mind the entire time I read this book, "In a way, you are what you read, so abandoning books is the same thing as abandoning a part of yourself." Even typing this gives me chills because it resonates so deep within me; this quote is so true. Think about it (and this doesn't include the books we are told to read for class, I'm talking about the books we select and read on our own time) – how many times have you re-read that battered copy in your library, and why do you keep going back to that book? Also, the books we choose say so much about us, whether we realize it or not. Seriously, think about this for a minute and make your own conclusions about yourself.

Back to the story, Rosie's father just disappeared from her life, and they moved into a house that is two centuries old that belonged to one of their favorite poets. Rosie and Adam end up finding this old, leather bound book that is unbelievably made from parchment! If we recall from our history books, books or anything written on parchment for that matter, dates pretty far back so it's technically valuable. As they try to figure out what is in the book that looks like a diary, they use it to write down some of their own things and it seems like some of the stuff within the book has disappeared, which makes them wonder what is really going on.

One day, when the three of them decide to row to an island for a day of fun, Rosie brings the book with her and is showing Shelby as well as trying to let her know they think the book is magic. Next thing they know, Shelby disappears and they can't remember why she disappears then that turns into not knowing who disappeared which turns into them feeling like they should remember someone or something but for the life of them, they can't remember!

The Rosemary Spell was written exceptionally and it draws you into their world; a world where magic exists and a world where you feel like you are right alongside the characters trying to figure out what is going on. Then, when you take a second to look away from the book, you realize that no, YOU still have your memory and that it's just a book but...what if...what if what happened to Rosie and Adam can in fact happen to you in your life? How exciting would that be? Nothing is impossible!

This book brings your inner child back, where anything is possible and books are more than just words on paper – they are the vessels into another world, a ship with endless destinations. - Crystal

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### **Hannah Rae says**

This is one of those books that I wouldn't normally read, but the author was speaking at the local library and I wanted to attend the presentation. So I got a copy, read it really quickly, and was happy I did. The Rosemary Spell was a fun read with a bunch of interesting literary references. I also learned some things about herbs and Shakespeare.

Even more than the book, I enjoyed the author. Virginia Zimmerman spoke so well and answered every single question that was asked of her. She was both kind and patient, and she did a wonderful job of explaining her writing process. If you ever have the chance to listen to her speak, seize the opportunity.

Overall, The Rosemary Spell is a great little mystery that will leave you satisfied... but also thoughtfully questioning some of the magic that occurs within its pages.

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### **Suzanne says**

This is an interesting book, combining literary criticism with wishful fantasy. For every middle school student learning about Shakespearean sonnets or modern poetry and wishing tirelessly that just once, an ancient book of sorcery might get tangled up in the homework assignment, this book is perfect. The tension of the story, and any fear or horror that might exist, really occurs by way of repetition. And the author does this very skillfully. For this age group, it's the fear of what might happen that sends shivers up the spine rather than what does happen. As an adult reader, I found the repetition a tad too much, but I applaud its use in the story. I think this is a really well crafted tale for the book-ish reader who likes mystery and clues in old

books and disparate sources. A fun and charming story with a strong mystery element. I received my copy from the publisher through NetGalley.

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### **J says**

It's not often I find myself sticking through a book that I find dull from beginning to end, but that's what happened with *The Rosemary Spell*. I was waiting for something interesting to occur, for the action to pick up or the characters to do something exciting, but none of that happened. There's an inordinate amount of repetition in the book that can be partly explained by the fact the characters are dealing with a loss of memory on two levels: their own and the Alzheimer's suffered by the poet Rosemary and Adam are researching/talking to. The idea is intriguing but the execution felt rather like someone's National Novel Writing Month novel in that there was just so much repetition of the same phrases over and over and over again to make it book length. As someone who works with the target age group, it's a hard sell even though I'm all for trying to get middle grade readers interested in poetry and the classics.

Note: ARC received via Amazon Vine in exchange for review.

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### **Ricki Treleaven says**

Happy Literary Friday! So sorry for posting this late, but I'm slow moving this morning. This week I read *The Rosemary Spell* by Virginia Zimmerman. It's this quarter's book club selection for the Page à Vu book club blog.

I really enjoyed this little book. It's characterized as a middle grades book probably because the main characters are in middle school, but I think YA readers will enjoy it, too, given the supernatural qualities of the magical book. Thought to be a Shakespeare false codex, the mysterious book contains a list of flowers and herbs found in Shakespeare's writings. The rosemary spell is from Ophelia's mad speech: "There's rosemary, that's for remembrance. Pray [you], love, remember." This book would enhance the reading of Hamlet and/or Macbeth.

The codex itself is found in Rosie's room which at one time belonged to a famous poet, Constance Brook. Rosie and Adam are partners working on a classroom poetry project and decide to choose Constance as their topic. They believe she's their only hope in saving Shelby from the void, but when they visit her at the nursing home it's clear that Alzheimer's has taken its toll on her once sharp and creative brain. Constance does have a few lucid moments, and with her hints and their research, Rosie and Adam think they know how to rescue Shelby, but they are pushed for time because the spell becomes permanent at the start of the new moon.

The timing could not have been better for my reading this book because we are reading Hamlet now in school, and next week we'll read a few sonnets before moving on to Macbeth. I've already decided to assign *The Rosemary Spell* as independent reading next week.

Thanks to Beth, Angie, and Kenzie for a great choice for this quarter!

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**Lily (Night Owl Book Cafe) says**

3.5 Stars review to come

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