



## Duffy and the Devil

*Harve Zemach, Margot Zemach*

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*Duffy and the Devil* was a popular play in Cornwall in the nineteenth century, performed at the Christmas season by groups of young people who went from house to house. The Zemachs have interpreted the folk tale which the play dramatized, recognizable as a version of the widespread Rumpelstiltskin story. Its main themes are familiar, but the character and details of this picture book are entirely Cornish, as robust and distinctive as the higgledy-piggledy, cliff-hanging villages that dot England's southwestern coast from Penzance to Land's End.

The language spoken by the Christmas players was a rich mixture of local English dialect and Old Cornish (similar to Welsh and Gaelic), and something of this flavor is preserved in Harve Zemach's retelling. Margot Zemach's pen-and-wash illustrations combine a refined sense of comedy with telling observation of character, felicitous drawing with decorative richness, to a degree that surpasses her own past accomplishments.

*Duffy and the Devil* is a 1973 New York Times Book Review Notable Children's Book of the Year and Outstanding Book of the Year, a 1974 National Book Award Finalist for Children's Books, and the winner of the 1974 Caldecott Medal.

## Duffy and the Devil Details

Date : Published December 1st 1986 by Farrar Straus Giroux (first published January 1st 1973)

ISBN : 9780374418977

Author : Harve Zemach , Margot Zemach

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Genre : Childrens, Picture Books, Folklore

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## From Reader Review Duffy and the Devil for online ebook

### Nicole Grote says

This children's book follows Duffy, a woman who quite frankly is lazy. One day she makes a deal with the devil that he will do her work for 3 years and after that time is up, she must go home with him forever unless she can tell the devil his name. In a panic Duffy must find the devil's name so she can stay with her husband. As she always seems to do, she gets others to find the information for her in attempt to save herself from the devil. I personally didn't like this book. While I know that all books don't have to have a meaning or message behind them, I felt that this one somewhat did and it wasn't a good message. I personally felt that the book basically told the reader that if you are lazy and make other people do your work, you can get away with doing nothing and still reap the benefits. Duffy never did anything but rather had people do things for her. When it got to the part in the book where she needed to fix her mistake, she didn't even do that. She sat at home while her husband did the work for her. In the end, she is basically rewarded for being lazy. Personally I would rather have my students and own children read a book about someone who works hard and reaps some kind of benefit in the end. Then there was the artwork. I personally wasn't a fan of the art work either. While the colors were nice I felt that the illustrations were hard to concentrate on and were almost too over the top in the sense there was so much put into a small amount of space. While you are more than welcome to read this book to your class or kids, I just personally wouldn't.

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### Andrew says

I remember reading the 1974 Caldecott Winner in Elementary School. I know I really liked it then. I couldn't remember much about it, but again, the cover art brought me back.  
I wasn't as big of a fan of this one as some of the other Caldecott Winners.

The book is a Cornish fairytale version which became a play of the same title that traveling players would take house to house during the Christmas season. There is no reference to the holiday or that context in the book at all..

The essential story is Rumplestiltskin, just set in a different time and place. Duffy is a lazy maid who makes a Faustus like deal with a little pointy eared-long-tailed imp or 'Devil' to help her. When the time comes to pay up, an unusual twist on the storyline we THINK we know brings about unexpected and slightly mature (even for juvenile standards) discovery of the Devil's riddle.

The illustrations are very pretty with its characters dressed in late 1700's/early 1800's fashion, and its very well done and researched; the illustrations are also very witty and humorous at times;

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### Emily says

This book is almost a spin off from the original tale of "Rumpelstiltskin". Within this book, the main character Duffy agreed to make clothes for Squire Lovel to wear, although she knew that she had no idea how to sew or knit. This is when the Devil character is introduced, informing Duffy that he would willingly sew and knit all of the clothes for Squire Lovel. This agreement was only in place if Duffy was able to guess

the name of the Devil within three years. Years had passed and she was still taking credit for the clothing and the Devil was not happy about it, eventually the Devil vanished as did all of the clothing he had created. The illustrations looked to be created by water colors, and they seemed to be a little messy. The messiness strives from the blending of the water colors. The messiness of the illustrations fit in well with the theme of the book and the overall story of Duffy. The colors used also convey the feelings that Duffy had throughout the text, in addition to the clear facial expressions of each character. I don't think this is a text that I would necessarily want within my classroom, I think it was an interesting read with beautiful pictures but it is not necessarily my favorite read.

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### **Rhonda says**

This is an interesting take on a Rumpelstiltskin story. It has many similar aspects. In this version his mane is Tarraway. As a reader, you almost feel sorry for Duffy, even though she continues to pretend to have made the stockings and other articles of clothing when really "the devil" makes them. This would be a great book to discuss honesty. This would be a great addition to a fairy tale unit. Although it has a beer reference and a practically nude Squire at the end.

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### **Luann says**

This must be the Cornish version of Rumplestiltskin. At first glance, I didn't really care for the illustrations, but they do have some fun details. I did love the words used in the story, though. Too fun! Some of my favorites: confloction, gashly, oogly, squinny-eyed, whillygogs and whizamagees.

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### **Victoria Bottoms says**

Summary: Duffy and the Devil is a play that was preformed in Cornwall. It is a Rumpelstiltskin type story line. The lady, Duffy, helps the Devil by making him new socks and clothes. The devil deceits Duffy though and does her wrong.

Evaluation: While this book could teach a good lesson, it would be hard for students to comprehend. The book uses vocabulary that is far too difficult for most children; the words are also used in ways that context clues could not be used to decipher the text. The book was also copyrighted in 1989, so the illustrations are not the best, and I do not think that they would catch children's eyes.

Teaching idea: I probably would not use this book in my classroom. I may have it in my classroom library, since it is a text from another culture, but I probably would not read it out loud because of the complexity of the book.

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### **Madison Glenn says**

This Cornish fable is the well recognized and often repeated story of rumpelstiltskin, whom offers to do

Duffy's spinning and knitting for her in exchange for a devilish deal. Duffy will be in great debt to the devil unless she can guess his name, she must outsmart him to keep her happy life and her secrets. The story begins with a lie told by Duffy and evolves into the mess that lie creates, showing that the theme is to be truthful and provide children with a lesson in why lying is bad even if things did work out for Duffy in the end. The plot of Duffy and the Devil is easy to follow as it is already so well known, Duffy tells a lie, lives happily for a while until the devil asked her to fulfill her part of the deal, and finally Duffy outwits the devil and lives happily ever after. The mood of the story is always upbeat, I feel that both the language and humor used as well as the illustrations is what kept the story from feeling too serious or heavy. The book's illustrations were all well sized and very detailed, done in quaint watercolor with lots of colors and the appearance of texture. I felt that the illustrations did a wonderful job of clearing up any misunderstandings or confusion created by the text and filled the book with humor and movement. I really enjoyed reading Duffy's story, I've always loved fables and fairy tales and being already familiar with the tale of Rumpelstiltskin I was very intrigued by this Cornish variation. I think children of any age will connect with this story as it is fun, fast paced, and humorous both in the text and illustrations.

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### **Maria Rowe says**

#### **• 1974 Caldecott Winner •**

This is a Cornish twist on Rumpelstiltskin. Pretty fun and I like the ending. The watercolor washes are really lovely! I love the *New York* quote on the back of the book: "Margot Zemach draws like an intoxicated angel." Hahaha If that doesn't make a parent pick up this book, I don't know what will.

*Materials used: unlisted*

*Typeface used: unlisted*

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### **Tricia Douglas says**

This was a new version for me of the Rumpelstiltskin story. More narrative and more complicated language so I think older children (8-9 year olds) would enjoy this version. Illustrations are wonderful and done by Margot Zemach.

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### **Lindsey says**

Duffy and the Devil is a Cornish version of Rumpelstiltskin. This book won the Caldecott Medal in 1974. I liked this book because it was easy to connect to the version of the tale I am familiar with, but it was different enough that it was still interesting. The Squire Lovel of Trove is an older man who takes a new maid, Duffy, to help his existing maid with spinning yarn and knitting clothes. She promises to be an excellent knitter, but in truth has no idea what she is doing. So the devil comes and offers his help, and she will not have to pay him a thing if she can guess his name within three years. However, if she does not guess, he says he will take her away. So life goes on with Duffy getting credit for the exquisite knittings, and eventually the Squire marries her. Eventually the Squire happens upon the devil while hunting, and after partying with him for the evening, learns that his name is Tarraway. He tells his wife, never knowing how

important this piece of information is. And now comes the part my son and I loved... When Duffy revels to the devil that she knows his name, he cannot take her away, but everything he has ever knit for her turns into dust, leaving her husband standing outside with only his hat and shoes on. Duffy swears she'll never knit again, and she never does.

I wasn't very excited to read this book initially because the illustrations aren't all that appealing. I believe they are watercolors. The colors are fairly muted. However, the book is very well written, and I enjoyed the familiar story with a different take. It was also kind of funny, which I enjoyed.

This book could be used enjoyed mostly K-5, but depending on what it was being used for, might be appropriate through middle school. The book does mention drinking beer, and the Squire does end up without clothes at one point, although he is covered with his hat. These are things to be aware of, but I would still use it in the classroom. Younger students would just enjoy listening to this traditional tale. I think it would be interesting to have older students read different versions of this tale, and compare and contrast story elements. They could then write their own traditional tale, utilizing some of the elements that are consistent in each tale.

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### **Beverly says**

A very humorous Cornish version of the Rumpelstiltskin tale. The skillful watercolors burst with vitality and humor.

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### **Lauryn G says**

This is a Cornish version of Rumpelstiltskin-the story about a man who hires a woman named Duffy to knit, spin and sew clothes for him because his current maid, Jone, cannot do it as well as she used to. Little did he know, Duffy had no idea how to do any of those things, so she allowed the Devil to make all of the clothes for her for three years, but if she couldn't guess his name by that time, she would have to go away with him. Out of desperation, Duffy agreed and gained the reputation of making the greatest clothes in town. Towards the end of those three years, she realized that she needed help figuring out his name. So with the help of Jone and a strong beer, she figured out the Devil's name and was free of his evil clutches. The illustrations in this story are painted with pastel watercolors and are effortlessly detailed as well. This story could be used when talking about different cultures and renditions on fairy tales. We can compare and contrast this to the original Rumpelstiltskin.

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### **Alli Marbois says**

Duffy is a woman hated by her current mistress, but the Squire Lovel of Trove is in need of a helper for his housekeeper Old Jone who cannot see very well. The Squire takes Duffy back to his house and she begins her work first at the sewing machine to make him new pair of stockings. She can't figure out how to spin thread and becomes so frustrated that she cries "The devil can make Squire Lovel's stockings for all I care!" And a little horned creature appears! He agrees to do all of Duffy's sewing and knitting for her for three years, but if at the end of the three years she cannot tell him his name, he will take her away. Duffy agrees and lives her happy new life with wonderful yarn creations. She ends up marrying Squire Lovel, but their

joyful marriage is in jeopardy when at the end of three years Duffy still does not know the little devil's name.

My initial impression of the book is that it is a clever creation that leads the audience all the way until the end when the devil's name is revealed. My only suggestion would be to change the name of the creature to be something more clever.

One literary element is the continued alliteration of the names of the characters. It adds a light hearted and humorous tone to the story. Another literary element is the rhyming of the devil's name to the song at the end. It's catchy and provides young readers with something to interact with and sing if they want to.

A design element is the wide variety of colors that creates a very busy story with lots of things for young minds to find interesting and funny. Another design element is how the pictures aren't clearly lined or filled in, which adds to the business of the story and the amount of things that can grab the attention of the reader.

I believe this book was interesting and funny, and I also am not entirely convinced as to why it received an award. It certainly is detailed and creative, but I would have expected more for an award-winning story. It was still a good read!

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### **Kristin says**

Source: Goodreads Rumpelstiltskin shelves

Duffy and the Devil is a Cornish version of Rumpelstiltskin. A young girl, Duffy, tells Squire Lovel that she "spins like a saint" and "knits like an angel." Squire Lovel's current housekeeper is no longer able to knit well, so he brings Duffy home with him in hopes that she will help his housekeeper with the knitting. Duffy does not really know how to knit and makes a deal with the devil to have him do all of her spinning for three years. If she is unable to tell him his name by the end of the three years, he will take her away.

I enjoyed this story, as it is a recognizable version of Rumpelstiltskin; however, there are many differences in this version which makes it unique. It aligns with the traditional English tales that are often about "simple folk" who are able to overcome hardships. This story is well written, with touches of humor. The characters are strong and the sequence of events is descriptive and easy to follow. The language is memorable—there is descriptive language, as well as interesting words and phrases like "confloption" and "oogly little squinny-eyed creature." This book won the Caldecott Award and contains detailed, pastel-colored pictures that help to tell the story using both single and double page spreads.

Since this version of Rumpelstiltskin varies from other versions, this would be excellent to use to compare and contrast to the original version. It would also lend itself to analyzing and comparing characters.

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### **Jennifer (JenIsNotaBookSnob) says**

This was interesting, but not quite my style.

This is a Rumpelstiltskin retelling featuring a lazy woman named Duffy who has lied and said she knows

how to do spinning and sewing and so on. A devil makes a deal with her to do all these chores for her, but, if she doesn't guess his name than he gets to take her away in three years.

If you enjoyed Rumpelstiltskin, then you may enjoy this as well. Unfortunately I just wasn't wild about the illustration style which is a matter of personal taste.

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