

# *Ella Enchanted*

by Gail Carson Levine

When Ella is born, a thoughtless fairy gives her the gift of obedience, which means that anything anyone tells her to do, she must do. Finally, through her own efforts and some help from Mandy, her fairy godmother, she is able to overcome the spell and marry her true love, Prince Char.

## **THEMES**

fantasy, problem-solving, family, friendship, responsibility, courage

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## **I. PRE-TEACHING**

### **A. Have the class define and discuss these terms:**

docile, evade, steadfast, etched, hart, avidly, voluminous, haughty, leering, gloating, diversion, unkempt, undulating, stupor, odious, malice, retaliated, vouchsafed, woebegone, ravenous, throng, rapturous, pantomimed, materialized, mettle, guile, gullible, solicitous, devoid, rapt, livid, glowered, vexed, subterfuge, scruples, riveted, menial, squalor, cogitation, paean, zeal, heinous, grimaced, stalwart, ploy, feign, scrutinized, shun, garrulous, chicanery

### **B. Before beginning the story, discuss the following questions with the class:**

1. Do you enjoy fairy tales? What do you like about them?
2. Have you ever wondered why Cinderella's father let her stepsisters treat her so badly? Or how she met the prince? Or who her fairy godmother was?
3. Is there anything about your personality you'd like to change? Are you shy? Or do you get angry too easily? Or do you do what people ask even if you don't want to? How can people make changes in their personalities?

## **II. PRESENTATION**

### **A. Understanding the Story:**

1. Begin with Chapters 1 - 10: In what ways is the gift Lucinda give Ella really a curse? If Mandy is a fairy, why can't she use her magic to save Ella's mother? Why does Ella's father send her to finishing school? Why does Mandy warn her not to tell her father about the curse? How does the ogre use Ella's curse against her? What does the gnome see in Ella's future? How does Hattie find out about Ella's curse? What does Ella discover about the fairy book Mandy gave her? How does Ella's new friend Areida help her? What does Mandy's letter say has happened at home?
2. Advance to Chapters 11 - 20: What does Ella learn when Hattie is under the bogwood spell? What does Hattie tell her she must do? What does Ella discover from Dame Olga's letter? How do the elves help her find the giants' wedding? What gift does Lucinda bestow on the giants? Why is this a curse? What

- does Lucinda order her to do? How does Mandy counter Lucinda's command? What gift does Lucinda bestow on Ella's father and Dame Olga at their wedding? Why does Ella think this is also a curse?
3. Complete the story with Chapters 21 - Epilogue: What do Ella and Prince Char find in the garden bench? What does Ella tell Prince Char in her letter? How does Ella hope to escape her miserable condition? How does Mandy outsmart Lucinda? Why can't Lucinda take away Ella's curse now? How does Ella hope to see Prince Char again? What "small" magic does Lucinda perform? How is Ella discovered? How does Prince Char get her to tell him she loves him? Why does she decide she can marry him after all? What is Lucinda's gift to Ella and Prince Char at their wedding? In what ways do they live happily every after?

### **B. For Discussion:**

1. Trace what happens to Ella because of the gift of obedience. In what ways might it have been a blessing? In what ways a curse? What are some of the ways she tries to break her curse? Why is she finally able to get rid of it? What might her marriage to Prince Char have been like if she'd still been under the spell?
2. Discuss the relationship between Ella and her father. In what ways does he show his love? Why does he treat her so badly?
3. Discuss the difference between "big" magic and "little" magic? Where does Mandy draw the line? Where does Lucinda draw it?

## **III. EXTENDING THE LESSON**

Give students the opportunity to work with partners, groups, the whole class, or alone.

### **INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS:**

#### **A. Language Arts:**

1. Have students compare *Ella Enchanted* with the original tale of "Cinderella."
2. Have students pretend for a day that they are cursed to obey any direct orders they are given (within reason). Have them keep a journal and write about the experience.

3. Have students pretend to be a fairy who could bestow any blessing on a newborn. What would they give? Why? What would be the consequences? Have them write a story, poem, or essay about this.
4. Have students select a folk or fairy tale and write it as a short story or a one-act play.
5. Have students listen to the languages of the various creatures. How do the languages fit the personalities of those who speak them?
6. Have students learn about the mythical folk mentioned in the story, such as the centaur, the unicorn, the gryphon, dragons, gnomes, ogres, fairies, elves and giants. Have them draw these creatures and make a bestiary.

### B. Art and Music:

1. Have students select background music that is appropriate to some of the scenes. They might use ballads and other songs from the Middle Ages, or minuets and other dance music to depict the balls.
2. Have students make a bulletin board about the story. Have them show the palace, the house where Ella grows up, the house where her stepsisters live, the places her father goes to buy and sell goods, and the different kinds of people and animals in her world.
3. Have students compare the Walt Disney version of “Cinderella” with *Ella Enchanted*.
4. Have students illustrate a scene from Ella’s book of fairy tales or from a favorite fairy tale of their own.
5. Have students design Ella’s ball gowns.
6. Have students draw cartoons of Ella’s stepmother Dame Olga and her stepsisters, Hattie and Olive.

### C. Social Studies:

1. Have students learn about medicine in medieval times. Why did so many people die? What could doctors do and what couldn’t they do?
2. When Ella visits the royal menagerie, she sees mythical beasts like the unicorn, centaurs, a dragon, a phoenix and a gryphon. Have students find out more about these creatures and the stories about them. Why did ancient peoples believe these wondrous creatures existed?

3. Have students learn about table manners during the Middle Ages. They might write an illustrated etiquette book for the period.
4. Share Rafe Martin’s picture book of the Algonquin Indian tale *The Rough Faced Girl* with the class and ask them to compare it with “Cinderella” Where did the tale of “Cinderella” originate? How might this account for the similarities between it and the Algonquin tale?

### D. Science and Math:

1. Have groups of students learn about the medicinal properties of various herbs and report to the class.
2. When Ella learns that Mandy is a fairy, she asks why she can’t control the weather. Have students find out about the weather. What causes it? What causes the seasons? What might happen if we could control the weather?
3. Have students find out why some birds, like parrots and magpies, can speak human language. How are they taught? In what ways is this similar to how children learn their native language?
4. Have students draw a map to scale of Ella’s journey to the wedding at the giants’ farm.
5. Have students discuss why giants do not exist. What problems might there be if people were that large? Have students look at *The Guinness Book of World Records* and find out the size of the largest human ever recorded.

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