



Ella Enchanted

By Gail Carson Levine
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About the Book:

The 1998 Newbery Honor Book, *Ella Enchanted*, is the funny and charming story of a girl who receives a most unfortunate “gift” of complete obedience. At her birth, Ella of Frell was given the gift of obedience by a fairy. Ella soon realizes that this gift is little better than a curse, though, for how can she truly be herself when at any moment she must obey any order given to her, whether it is to hop on one foot, or cut off her hand, or betray her kingdom. But spunky Ella does not tamely accept her fate: “Instead of making me docile, Lucinda’s curse made a rebel of me. Or perhaps I was that way naturally.” Battling hungry ogres, wicked stepsisters, and foolish fairies along the way, fifteen-year-old Ella embarks on a quest to break the curse—once and for all.

Questions For Discussion:

1. When she started writing this novel, Gail Carson Levine wanted to base her story on Cinderella but didn’t want Ella to be a “goody two-shoes.” So Levine created the obedience “gift,” which forces Ella to be good. Identify additional differences and similarities between *Ella Enchanted* and the classic fairy tale Cinderella.
2. Ella’s father tries to set up a marriage for her with a man who is much older. How are marriages arranged in Frell? Do people marry for love or other reasons? How are marriage customs in Frell like and unlike modern marriage customs in our society?
3. What kind of relationship does Ella have with her father? Do you feel he is wrong to try and marry her off to a wealthy man or to leave Ella alone with Dame Olga and her daughters? How is Ella’s relationship with her father different from the relationship she had with her mother? Do you think Ella takes more after her mother or her father? Explain why.
4. What is the difference between small and big magic? Give some examples of both. Why is Mandy so reluctant to cast big magic? Why does she rarely tell people that she is a fairy?
5. What does it mean that Ella is in a line of women who are “Friends of Fairies” (page 25)? Are there instances in the story when Ella demonstrates her “fairy blood” and performs some magic of her own?
6. While at finishing school Hattie orders that Ella discontinue her friendship with Areida, her only friend. After Hattie’s command is issued, Ella proclaims, “In all the times I’d imagined the miseries she could inflict on me, I’d never imagined this. I’d thought of injuries, and I’d imagined terrible embarrassment, but I’d never thought of this kind of hurt” (page 81). How is the hurt she feels at ending her friendship with Areida similar to the conflict she feels at the prospect of marrying Char? How is this curse of obedience potentially dangerous to everyone she loves or befriends?
7. Why do you think Ella is finally able to break her curse of obedience when she initially refuses to marry Char? What does Ella mean when upon breaking the curse she says, “In that moment I found a power beyond any I’d had before, a will and a determination I would never have needed if not for Lucinda, a fortitude I hadn’t been able to find for a lesser cause. And I found my voice” (page 226)?
8. Do you think Lucinda finally learns the damaging effects of big magic by the end of the novel? Why or why not?
9. Lucinda’s spells don’t always work as she intends them. Ella’s father does not transform into a loving person after he is cast into eternal love with Dame Olga and Ella finds ways to make mischief despite her obedience spell. What difference is there between choosing to do good and being forced into it?
10. How does Ella’s knack for learning languages help her in social situations? What effect does she have when she speaks or attempts to speak to others in their native tongue?
11. Why does Ella attend the three balls that the king throws for Prince Charmont and risk getting caught by her stepfamily and by the prince himself?

About The Author:

Gail Carson Levine grew up in New York City and has been writing all her life. She and her husband, David, and their Airedale, Jake, live in a two-hundred-year-old farmhouse in Brewster, New York. *Ella Enchanted* is her first book for children.