

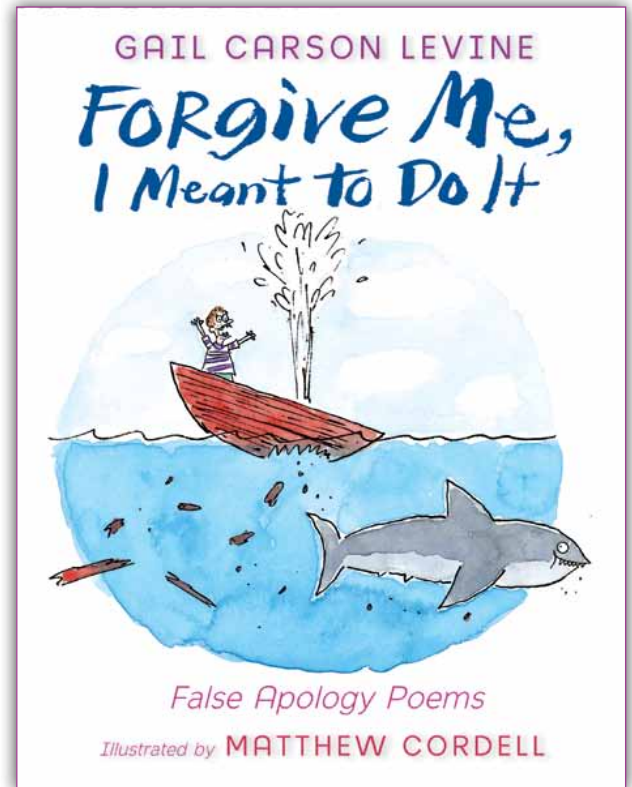
FORGIVE ME, I MEANT TO DO IT

By GAIL CARSON LEVINE Illustrated by MATTHEW CORDELL

TEACHING GUIDE

About the Book

The false apology poems in this wickedly funny collection are modeled after William Carlos Williams's poem "This Is Just to Say." These mean, sometimes scathing, and laugh-out-loud hilarious poems are written from the viewpoint of a wide variety of characters, both real and imagined, such as Snow White to the seven Dwarfs, the witch to Hansel and Gretel, Rapunzel to her prince, the train switchman to the Little Engine that Could, brothers to sisters, and children to parents. Enjoy!



Before Reading

A false apology could also be called a nonapology or a phony apology; but no matter the term, it is an insincere apology made by a person who is not really sorry about the effect of his or her actions or words. Have students read William Carlos Williams's poem "This Is Just to Say" and discuss why it is a false apology: How does the reader know the apology is not sincere? What might William Carlos Williams have said if he really was sorry? What is the tone of the poem? After discussing the poem, ask students to write a false apology poem for something they have done or said that they should be sorry for but really aren't. Have students share their poems with the class.

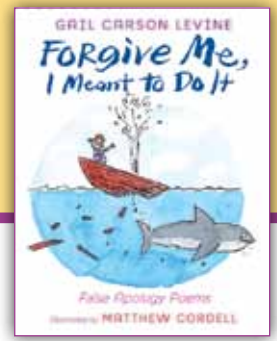
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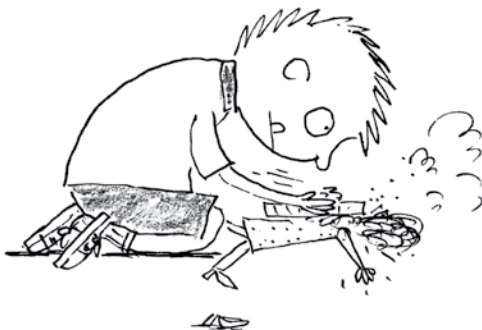
Writing Prompts

1. Dear Editor. Gail Carson Levine reveals something about herself in several of the poems. On page 18, we discover that she has intentionally made a decision about the placement of the Introduction that her editor does not like. And on page 48, we learn that she planned the order of the book for ten years. What could be her reason for placing the Introduction after the reader has read five poems? Why do you think the editor did not like her idea? After discussing with students, ask them to write a letter to the editor either in support of or disagreeing with the author's placement of the Introduction. Students should support their reasons with examples from the book.

2. Fairy Tales and Nursery Rhymes. One of the reasons the poems are so easily understood and funny is that they stem from well-known and beloved stories, often of the oral tradition. Voices for Gail Carson Levine's new apology creations come from fairy tales like "Hansel and Gretel," "Snow White and the Seven Dwarves," "Jack and the Beanstalk," and "Rapunzel," as well as nursery rhymes such as "Itsy Bitsy Spider," "Humpty Dumpty," and "Jack and Jill." Ask students to select a character with a unique voice in either a fairy tale or a nursery rhyme and write a false apology poem from that character's point of view.

3. Brothers and Sisters and Parents—Oh My! Family relationships are fraught with emotions and supply ample experiences for false apology poems. Ask students to think of a time when they were embarrassed, angered, or saddened by a member of their family and to write a false apology poem about that incident from the perspective of the family member in question. Alternatively, they can write a false apology poem about a time when they embarrassed, angered, or saddened a member of their family.

4. A Poem for Any Occasion. Brainstorm with students about different types of greeting cards (thank-you cards, congratulations cards, birthday cards, etc.) and how they commemorate personal experiences in people's lives. Discuss with students how Gail Carson Levine uses personal experiences in addition to fairy tales and nursery rhymes as the basis for her false apology poems, and then have students use the false apology poem model to create greeting cards for different occasions. Each student can write a poem and copy it inside a folded piece of paper, then illustrate the exterior. Have students share their creations and post them around the room.

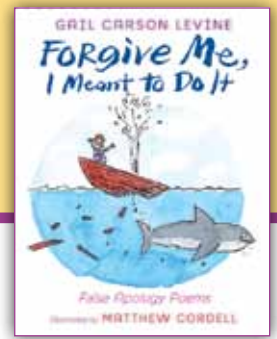


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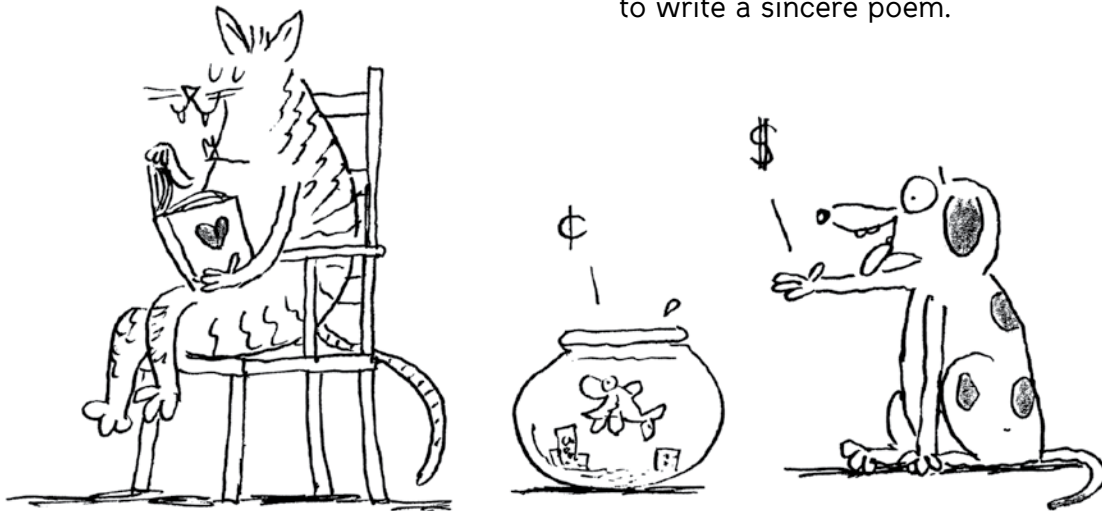


5. Wall of Fame. Ask each student to select an author or illustrator—Gail Carson Levine, Matthew Cordell, William Carlos Williams, or someone else—and investigate his or her life. Have them note, in particular, factual information about writing or illustrating careers, styles, and processes. Then, individually or in small groups, ask students to write biographies for the authors and illustrators they've chosen. Post the biographies along with samples of the authors' and illustrators' works to create a literature-themed "Wall of Fame."

6. My Favorite Poem.

Ask students to choose their favorite poem from the book and to write a letter to Gail Carson Levine telling her why it is their favorite selection. Students can post their letter on Ms. Levine's blog (go to www.gailcarsonlevine.com and click on "blog" at the top of the page).

7. A Poem in Two Voices. Ask students to assume the voice of the person to whom one of the poems is addressed and to respond in poem form to the person who wrote the false apology. Students can respond using William Carlos Williams's model to write a tongue-in-cheek verse, or they can choose to write a sincere poem.



Classroom Activities

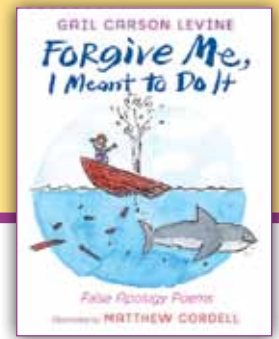
1. Corroborating Evidence. Ask students to select a poem written about a fairy tale or nursery rhyme with which they are familiar. Have each student write a one-page paper justifying the false apology poem and citing evidence from "the text" of the fairy tale or nursery rhyme. For example, is there evidence in "Snow White" that she did not like the dwarves' habits? If so, what is it? Have students practice and present their justification to the class. Have the class select the paper that makes the best case for the false apology.

2. Pick Your Puzzle. Ask students to select partners, and have each pair choose a poem written about a story with which they are familiar. Then instruct each pair to make a crossword puzzle about the original story using the free puzzle maker at www.puzzle-maker.com, with the goal of stumping the rest of the class. Once finished, students can exchange puzzles and try to solve them, ultimately guessing the poem to which the puzzle relates.

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3. Comical Apologies. Have students pick a favorite false apology poem to represent in three or four illustrated cartoon panels. Encourage students to add dialogue and character thoughts, to use exaggeration, and to take liberties with selected lines, as needed, to create the comic strip. Post them around the room.

4. Picture This. Ask each student to choose one of the characters that falsely apologizes—for example, the cow in the beanstalk poem, or the alien in the spaceship poem—and imagine its life outside of the poem. Have students illustrate a scene or story about the character they've chosen using a variety of media such as watercolor, chalk, pen and ink, pencils, or digital media. Collect all the illustrations and bind them into a “cast of characters” book to be displayed in the school library.

5. Drama-rama. Divide students into pairs, and have partners share the poems they chose and the poems they wrote for the “A Poem in Two Voices” writing prompt above. Each pair can stage dramatic readings of the Gail Carson Levine poems they chose and their response poems using props, costumes, and background music to make their performances more entertaining.



David Levine

About the Author

Gail Carson Levine's first novel, *Ella Enchanted*, was a Newbery Honor Book. Gail is also the author of *A Tale of Two Castles*; the *New York Times* bestsellers *Fairest and Ever*; a nonfiction book about writing, *Writing Magic*;

Dave at Night; *The Wish*; *The Two Princesses of Bamarre*; the picture books *Betsy Who Cried Wolf* and *Betsy Red Hoodie*; and six Princess Tales books: *The Princess Test*, *The Fairy's Mistake*, *Princess Sonora and the Long Sleep*, *Cinderellis and the Glass Hill*, *For Biddle's Sake*, and *The Fairy's Return*. She grew up in New York City and now lives in the Hudson River Valley of New York.

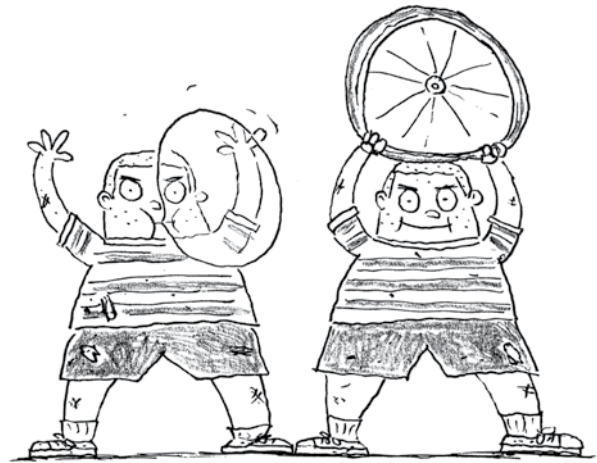


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Julie Halpern

About the Illustrator

Matthew Cordell lives in the suburbs of Chicago with his wife, writer Julie Halpern, and their daughter, Romy. He is the author and illustrator of *Trouble Gum* and the illustrator of *Toot Toot Zoom!*, *Mighty Casey*,

Righty and Lefty, and *Toby and the Snowflakes*, which was written by his wife. You can visit him online at www.matthewcordell.com.

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Teaching guide prepared by Susan Geye, Coordinator of Library Services, Everman Independent School District, Everman, Texas.