

Opinion: What Have Other People Thought About *Ella Enchanted*?



How have people reacted to Gail Carson Levine's take on Cinderella? They've been enchanted—the response to *Ella Enchanted* has been overwhelmingly positive. In 1998, *Ella Enchanted* was voted a Newbery Honor Book by a committee representing the children's librarians of the American Library Association (ALA). You may see the silver medal on the book's cover. The Newbery selection committee called *Ella Enchanted* “an outstanding debut by talented newcomer Levine. She has . . . deepened our appreciation of the original tale.” The ALA also chose *Ella Enchanted* as one of 1998's Best Books for Young Adults and one of their Quick Picks for Young Adults.

Other people seem to agree. A reviewer from *School Library Journal* also felt Levine had deepened and enriched the original Cinderella story. The journal chose the book as one of its Best Books of 1997. *Publishers Weekly* did the same.

The ALAN (Assembly for Literature for Adolescents of the National Council of Teachers of English) *Review* also praised the author: “In a delightful and enchanting way, Levine has created a new lived-through experience with a well-known fairy tale.” *Booklist* called the book “superbly plotted.”

In an Amazon.com review of *Ella Enchanted*, Emilie Coulter notes that “Gail Carson Levine’s examination of traditional female roles in fairy tales takes some satisfying twists and deviations from the original.” She calls it “the most remarkable, delightful, and profound version of Cinderella you’ve ever read.”

The fairy-tale elements of the book seem to appeal to everyone who reads it, and the character of Ella is someone whom readers find especially appealing. The *Horn Book* described her as a heroine who “discovers her inner strength by combating her greatest weakness.” Readers admire Ella’s spirit and independence.

Ella isn’t just a book that adults think you should read—kids are excited about it, too. On a Web site where readers can post reviews, kids call it “awesome,” “creative,” and “excellent.” In 1999, students from schools all over Vermont voted to give Gail Carson Levine the Dorothy Canfield Fisher Children’s Book Award. The sponsoring committee believes *Ella Enchanted* “has all the marks of a classic in the making.”

Thinking about what other people think of *Ella Enchanted*

- What do you think it means when a reviewer describes a book as a “lived-through” experience?
- Would you give *Ella Enchanted* an award? If so, why?

Glossary



Below you will find a list of words used in *Ella Enchanted*. The words may be new to you, or used in an unfamiliar way. Knowing what they mean will help you better understand the novel.

artifice insincere, phony, or false behavior

centaur a mythological creature that is half man, half horse

chicanery trickery or deception

felicitous well-suited to a person or situation; delightful or happy

fortitude inner strength

garrulous talking too much; given to rambling, boring speech

gavotte a sixteenth-century French dance. At the end of the dance, the couple was expected to kiss everyone in the room!

gryphon a mythical creature with the head and wings of an eagle and the hind legs and tail of a lion. Often spelled *griffin*.

hapless unfortunate; unlucky

harpy a mythological creature, half woman and half bird, usually bad-tempered and abusive

hart a male of the red deer species; a stag

hoodwink to deceive someone

hydra a mythological swamp creature with many heads

marchpane the sweet we know as marzipan, a paste made of almonds and sugar

minx a bold, pert, or impudent girl who doesn't behave as she is expected to. Often, but not always, used with affection.

proximity closeness

recto the right-hand page of an open book (see **verso**)

siren a part-human woman who bewitches listeners with her irresistible singing. According to some myths, sirens lure sailors to their deaths by causing them to sail their ships into rocks.

swain male admirer; a beau or suitor

topiary bushes, trees, and shrubs that are trimmed and pruned to resemble animal, human, or decorative shapes

unwavering constant; never-changing

verso the left-hand page of an open book (see **recto**)

voluminous full, taking up lots of space; having many folds