

Literature Circle Questions

Use these questions and the activities that follow to get more out of the experience of reading *Just Ella* by Margaret Peterson Haddix.

1. What does Ella do at the very beginning of the story that Madame Bisset says she must never do again? Why does Madame Bisset object to what Ella has done?
2. What important decision does Ella make before going to the ball? What does she hope will happen at the ball?
3. Describe how Mary helps Ella escape from the castle. Why do you think Mary was willing to take this risk?
4. Why is Ella mistaken for a peasant on her trip to Suala?
5. Describe Prince Charming's attitude about helping the poor. What do his comments on page 27 say about the Prince as a person?
6. During her journey to Suala, Ella says she wishes she had visited Mrs. Branson before leaving the village. Imagine you are Mrs. Branson and Ella has come to you for advice. What advice would you give Ella to help her on her journey?
7. How do the books on medicine and farming help Ella in Suala? If you had to leave your home and could only take two books, which books would you take? Briefly explain your choices.
8. Imagine you are Jed and the King has allowed you to lead a peace mission to Suala. What would you say to the leaders of Suala to persuade them to end the war?
9. How would you describe Ella's feelings about Lucille? Use evidence from the text to support your description.
10. What do Prince Charming and Jed Reston have in common? Compare the two men, including their personalities and their feelings for Ella. What do you think Ella would say is each man's strength and weakness?
11. Reread Ella's description of the ball beginning on page 62. Describe one way in which this description differs from the fairy tale version of *Cinderella* and one way in which it is similar.
12. Near the end of the story, we learn Ella is considering studying to be a doctor. Do you think she would make a good doctor? Why or why not? Use evidence from the text to support your argument.

13. On page 56, Ella says that on the night of the ball “I’d changed my life all by myself.” Do you agree with this statement? Be sure to include examples from the story in your answers.
14. On her journey to Suala, Ella overhears two soldiers telling the fairy tale version of Ella’s story to a peasant. Later, Ella wonders “why did everyone like that story so much when it wasn’t true? Why was everyone so eager to believe it?” In your own words, explain why you think the version of the story the soldiers told was so popular.
15. Why do you think the author chose to end the book with Ella and Jed in separate places? If you could continue the story, would you bring the two characters together again? Why or why not?

Note: These questions are keyed to Bloom’s Taxonomy as follows: Knowledge: 1-2; Comprehension: 3-5; Application: 6-8; Analysis: 9-10; Synthesis: 11-12; Evaluation: 13-15

Activities

1. In the story you just read, we learn that Cinderella did not need any magic to get to the ball. Instead, there are real-life explanations for the slippers, the coach, and for why Ella needed to be home by midnight. Think of other fairy tales that you know. Choose a scene in which something appears to happen by magic and rewrite the scene with a real-life explanation, as the author did with Cinderella’s trip to the ball.
2. Choose a character from the book and draw a picture of this person. What is he or she wearing and doing? Is this character happy or sad? Compare your drawing to a friend’s drawing. How are your pictures similar? How are they different?
3. At the end of the story, Ella reads a letter from Jed. Imagine you are Ella. Write a letter back to Jed letting him know how things are going at the camp and what your plans are for the future. Are you still thinking about becoming a doctor? Do you have any questions about people back at the castle?

Other Books by This Author

Among the Brave, Simon & Schuster (May 2004)

Escape from Memory, Simon & Schuster (September 2003)

Among the Betrayed, Aladdin Library (August 2003)

Among the Barons, Simon & Schuster (June 2003)

Among the Imposters, Aladdin Library (October 2002)

Among the Hidden, Aladdin Library (March 2000)

Running Out of Time, Aladdin Library (February 1997)

