

Little People, BIG DREAMS

TEACHERS' GUIDE



Ella Fitzgerald

Little People, BIG DREAMS

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\$15.99 US/\$18.99 CAN

ISBN: 9781786030870

Ages: 4 to 8 (Grades: PreK to 2)

32 pages

Hardcover, 7.6 x 9.5 inches



LEARNING OBJECTIVE:

Ella Fitzgerald has delighted millions with her signature combination of grace, style, and undeniable love of music. Despite traumatic childhood experiences, Ella managed to tap into a reserve of determination, perseverance, and undeniable talent to become the Queen of Jazz.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS IN THIS UNIT

1. What is Ella Fitzgerald famous for doing?
2. What happened to Ella when she was young that changed her life?
3. What daring thing did Ella do while living at her aunt's house?
4. How did Ella get started performing?
5. What special qualities about Ella's voice helped her become famous?
6. Why is Ella known as the First Lady of Song?

CLASSROOM DISCUSSION TOPICS

1. Young Ella loved to sing jazz music. Ask the class what they know about jazz. Have them suggest what their favorite forms of music are and why. Ask them to list ways in which music is important in their lives.
2. Why do you think Ella didn't like living with her aunt? What sort of things do people do when they are unhappy? What other ways are there of dealing with unhappiness?

3. Ella is described as running away from home. Ask the class what types of things can happen if you run away. Do the students think Ella was brave? Do the students think she managed well on her own? Ask them to consider her sentiment, "It's not where you're from, it's where you're going that counts." What do they think she meant by that? How might the students apply that idea to their own lives?

4. The book describes Ella as "turning summersaults with her voice." Ask the class what the author means by that. Why do they think Ella never sang a song the same way twice?

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

1. Ella is described as being able to "imitate every instrument in the band." Play a recording of a jazz band, and have students try to identify the instruments. Then see if they can imitate those sounds like Ella could. Ask the students to experiment singing with nonsensical words, like "Dubi dubi dubu daba." If you haven't already, play one of Ella's songs and ask the class what they think of her unique sound.

2. Ask the students to create a poem about Ella using the following words: *bop, swing, growled, soared, pop, opera, blues*. Ask for volunteers to perform their poems, either spoken rhythmically or sung in a style that Ella would appreciate.

3. Encourage the class to explore Ella's official website, www.EllaFitzgerald.com. They can see more photos of her, listen to her songs, read quotes both by her and about her, and discover more of her copious achievements and awards.

4. Oral story: Have the class select one of Ella's song titles. One student will say the title out loud, and the next person adds a sentence, going all the way through the class. Some suggestions: *Can't We Be Friends, Day Dream, Fly Me To The Moon, A Foggy Day, I Didn't Know What Time It Was, I'm Making Believe, I've Got The World On A String, It's Only A Paper Moon, On The Sunny Side Of The Street, Pick Yourself Up, Stairway To The Stars, Wacky Dust, Why Can't You Behave?*

