



## Gail Carson Levine

**Ella Enchanted**  
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**When you started writing *Ella Enchanted* did you imagine that it would one day become a movie?**

No. I didn't think it would get published. Everything I'd written till then had been rejected. If it was published, I thought it might sell a few thousand copies and go out of print. I thought if I was lucky I could write more books and get them published, too. I still pinch myself over the way things have worked out.

**As the author of the book, how involved were you in the production of the movie?**

Not very. I had what are called consulting rights, which meant that the producer had to send me the script. I had the opportunity to comment, but the producer and director had no obligation to act on my comments.

The script is very different from the book, and so is the movie. My comments about plot weren't acted on. But my comments about obedience were. I said there had to be consistency in the way Ella responds to orders. She could follow commands figuratively or literally, but it needed to be the same throughout. In my book, Ella follows the meaning of commands. If she were told to hold her tongue she'd be silent. In the movie Anne Hathaway actually grabs her tongue and holds it. So it goes the other way in the movie, but it's consistent.

My husband and I were given the opportunity to go to Ireland to watch three days of shooting. We were just observers, although Miramax did have my very own director's chair ready for me! The filming was fascinating, and I'll never watch a movie in exactly the same way again. They only shoot the tiniest pieces at a time, only a few lines, which they film over and over until the director is satisfied. We were told that the director and producer were happy if they got a minute of usable film out of a whole day of shooting. And, since it was Ireland, the film crew had to stop frequently in the middle of a scene to wait for the weather to go back to what it had been at the beginning.

A mime was brought in to help. The idea was that Ella's body would process a command before her mind caught up. The mime helped Anne Hathaway reflect that idea in her movements. Isn't that interesting?

**When did you first see the movie? Were there any changes to your characters? If so, how did the changes make you feel? Did they make you think about the story differently?**

I've only seen the movie once, in November or December, I think, and not all the special effects were in place then. The movie is so different from the book that it's hard to compare them. There are new characters. For example, Char's parents are dead in the movie, and he has an evil uncle who has a talking snake as a sidekick.

The changes made me remember some of the choices I'd made when I wrote the book ten years ago. For example, I had thought of adding a political dimension. I'd thought of having Kyrian policies toward the exotic creatures be inhumane. But ultimately I decided not to. Interestingly, the movie does just that.

**What part of *Ella Enchanted* was your favorite to write? Was this also your favorite portion of the movie?**

I loved writing the letters Char and Ella exchange when Char is in Ayortha, but they're not in the movie at all! I loved writing Ella's flirtation with the Earl of Wolleck when Ella's under the influence of the torlin kerru, but that's not there either.

The movie is fun, and the book is fun. I wouldn't have wanted a somber interpretation, so I'm glad about that, and I love Anne Hathaway's performance. If I'd had the choice of anyone in the world to play Ella, I don't think I could have chosen better.

**Do you have any suggestions for fans of *Ella Enchanted* the book before they see *Ella Enchanted* the movie?**

To fans of the book, I'd suggest regarding the movie as a separate creative act. You might want to think about the choices the screen writers made and why they may have gone in the direction they did. But I hope you have the breadth and sense of humor to encompass both movie and book.

For those who haven't read the book, I hope you'll start reading!

And to everyone, don't be *too* obedient!