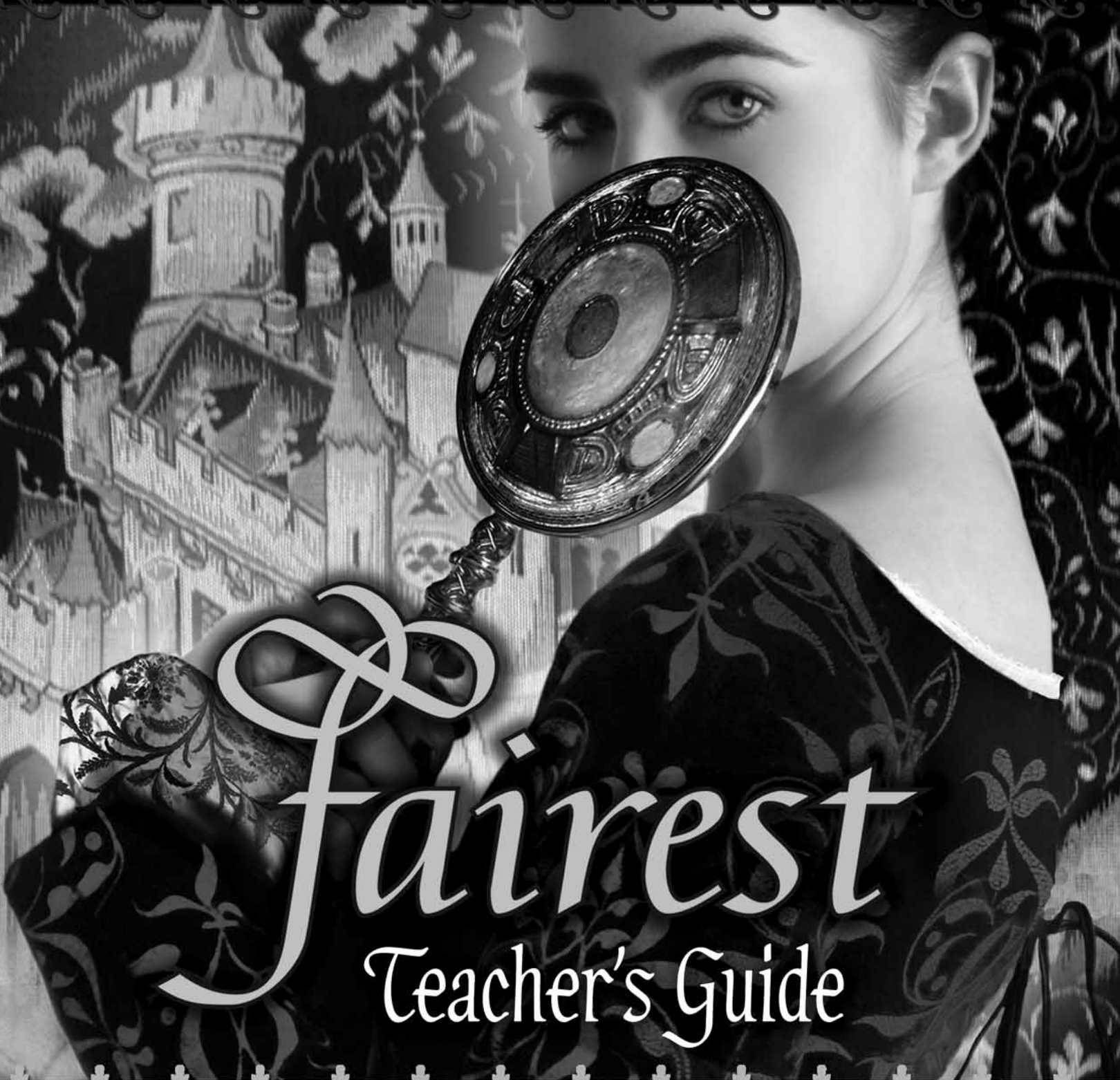


A new novel set in the world of *Ella Enchanted* from national bestselling author

Gail Carson Levine



\* With bonus writing exercises and lessons based on  
Gail Carson Levine's lively new nonfiction book

Writing Magic



### Fairest

Tr 0-06-073408-6 • \$16.99 (\$21.99)

Lb 0-06-073409-4 • \$17.89 (\$22.89)

Middle Grade Fiction

## About the Book

Born in the year of Thunder Songs, and abandoned at the Featherbed Inn in the Ayorthaian village of Amonta, young Aza is blessed with a beautiful voice. Unfortunately, her looks don't match her talent. The inn's guests scorn and insult her until she prefers to hide from their stares. Then, at the age of fourteen, Aza discovers a new way of singing, *illusing*, that makes her voice sound as if it's coming from another place. Her life is forever changed when the newly crowned Queen Ivi takes note of her ability. Through it all, Aza learns a powerful lesson—that you can't judge a person by her beauty and charm. Looks, as they say, can deceive.

## Discussion Questions

1. Gail Carson Levine based *Fairest* on the tale of "Snow White," by the Brothers Grimm. What are the similarities and differences between *Fairest* and "Snow White"? Compare and contrast the characters, plot, and setting. What details has Gail Carson Levine changed or adapted to create her own version of the classic fairy tale?
2. Explain the importance of music in Ayorthaian society. How is it used in daily life? What similarities, if any, do you see in our own culture? Why is music and singing especially meaningful to Aza? Explain its role in her life.
3. What is *illusing*? Can people in our world *illuse*? How does Aza do it? Why is she reluctant to tell no one but her family about her newly developed skill? Why does she then agree to *illuse* for Queen Ivi? Is it worth the compensation she receives? Explain. How does Aza feel about the deception? What would you do if you were in her situation?
4. Aza says that her parents have her work behind the scenes at the Featherbed Inn because of the way she looks. What are her parents' reasons for doing this? Do you agree with their decision to keep Aza out of sight? Why? What effect does this have on her? How do people respond to her when her appearance changes?
5. What initially attracts Aza and Ivi to each other? What do they have in common? How do you think Aza and Ivi would have been different if they had never met? Consider both positive and negative consequences of the relationship.
6. Was Queen Ivi fairly punished by King Oscaro? What punishment do you think she deserves? Explain.
7. What is beauty? If you were to ask Aza this question, what do you think she would say? How does Aza's concept of beauty—and her feelings of self-worth—change and grow over time? What are the reasons for this change? Why and how does she attempt to change her physical appearance? What is the result? In what ways is the Ayorthaian obsession with beauty—and Aza's response to it—mirrored in our own society?
8. Like Ella, in Gail Carson Levine's 1998 Newbery Honor Book *Ella Enchanted*, Aza is cursed at birth. What is Aza's curse? Is there more than one? How does she overcome it? What similarities do you see in the paths that both Ella and Aza take toward peace and happiness?





### Writing Magic

Creating Stories That Fly

Tr 0-06-051961-4 • \$16.99 (\$21.99)

Pb 0-06-051960-6 • \$5.99 (\$7.99)

Middle Grade Nonfiction

## About the Book

Newbery Honor author Gail Carson Levine has spent many years teaching creative writing workshops to young people in her hometown. In her lively nonfiction book, *Writing Magic*, the best-selling author and fairy tale master shares her secrets to good writing, illustrating her advice with anecdotes and experiences from her own writing life.

## Writing Exercises

Here are four activities based on the extensive writing lessons offered in *Writing Magic*.

### 1. The Writer's Oath

I promise solemnly:

1. To write as often and as much as I can,
2. To respect my writing self, and
3. To nurture the writing of others.

I accept these responsibilities and will honor them always.

Gail Carson Levine's *Writer's Oath* will help any person to become a better writer. Now personalize the oath for yourself. Make up one more rule that you think will help you to be a better writer. Copy *The Writer's Oath*, adding your own rule to the list. Put the Oath somewhere you will see it often.

### 2. Begin with the Beginning

How do you know where a story should start? In this exercise, you will write a story about a character's trip to somewhere he or she has never been before. Pick the location and start the story three different ways:

- a. Begin your story at the moment the character arrives at the trip location. Write a page and then stop.
- b. Begin your story at the moment the character leaves his or her house. Write a page and then stop.
- c. Begin your story at the moment the character finds out that he or she will be taking the trip. Write a page and then stop.

Read through your three first pages. Which one makes you most eager to keep writing the story? Think about why and then keep writing the story.

### 3. Know Your Characters

It's hard to write much of a story until you get to know your characters. Thinking about personality traits will give good insight into how your character will behave and how he or she might affect the overall story. Fill in as much as you can of this guide to create a character. You can use the character you wrote about in exercise #2, or if you want, you can start over completely.

- Name (including any nicknames):
- Age:
- Physical appearance:

- Family members and pets:
- Best friend:
- Describe his/her room:
- Items in his/her pockets or knapsack:
- Hobbies:
- Favorite sports:
- Talents, abilities, or powers:
- Relationships (how s/he acts with others):
- Fears:
- Faults:
- Good points:
- What s/he wants most:

### 4. Details, Details

Details are at the heart of a story—they are what turn a basic outline into a story. Use this exercise to expand a single sentence into a whole paragraph.

Write a short sentence in which the character you created in exercise #3 goes somewhere, does something, and has an emotion about it. For example, "Sarah walked down the street, knocked on her neighbor's door, and smiled when the door opened." Now, picture the scene as if it is happening in front of you, noticing every detail. Sarah is walking down the street. What sort of weather is it? What is she wearing? What smells does she notice? How does she feel when she gets to her neighbor's? Can she tell from looking if anyone is home? What makes Sarah smile? These types of details make a story interesting and make it feel more real. Now, take your starting sentence, and turn it into a full paragraph, asking yourself questions like those above. Then, fill in the paragraph with the details that you choose, and you may see a story beginning to take shape.



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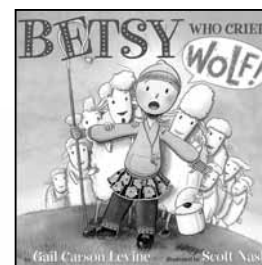
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