

Ella

author: Diane Richards

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Synopsis

author	Diane Richards
readBy	Alexandra Grey
inLanguage	english

In the vein of *The Paris Wife* and *The Personal Librarian* comes this debut novel, a magnificent work of “biographical fiction” that reimagines the turbulent and triumphant early years of Ella Fitzgerald, arguably the greatest singer of the twentieth century.

When fifteen-year-old Ella Fitzgerald’s mother dies at the height of the Depression in 1932, the teenager goes to work for the mob to support herself and her family. When the law finally catches up, the “ungovernable” adolescent is incarcerated in the New York Training School for Girls in upstate New York—a wicked prison infamous for its harsh treatment of inmates, especially Black ones. Determined to be free, Ella escapes and makes her way back to Harlem, where she is forced to dance for pennies on the street.

Looking for a break into show business, Ella draws straws to appear at the Apollo Theater’s Amateur Night on November 21, 1934. Rather than perform a dance routine directly after “The World Famous Edwards Sisters” number, the homeless Ella, wearing men’s galoshes a size too big, risks everything when she decides to sing *Judy* instead. Four years later, at barely twenty-one, Ella Fitzgerald has become the bestselling female vocalist in America.

Diane Richards’s Ella Fitzgerald is inspiring and intriguing—an emotionally rich, psychologically complex character, a flawed mother and wife who struggles with deep emotional scars and trauma and battles racism, sexism, and colorism as she learns to find her voice on the stage. *Ella* takes us from the brothels, speakeasys, and streets of Depression-era New York City to the grand hotel suites where Ella, now older and wiser, looks back on her life and finally confronts the demons from childhood that torment her.

Compelling and rich in historical detail, *Ella* is a remarkable debut novel about an extraordinary woman.

Reader's comments

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