



The party is over and Eleanor, the owner of the glass slipper has been found and carried off to the castle by Prince Charming to live “happily ever after.” But Ella, a free and independent spirit with an abundance of common sense, finds herself constricted by the stifling conventions of royalty and repulsed by their treatment of the servant class. She is unable to even light her own fire, much less perform any of the everyday tasks that have been second nature to her for so long. Instead, all of her days are filled with boring lessons on how to act like a proper lady and future queen, and ruled by the strict and stuffy Madame Bisset who is horrified by Ella’s lack of ‘proper’ social graces. Ella only sees Prince Charming in the presence of a chaperone, and their meetings are awkward and stilted. Unable to talk to the servants because of their ‘lowly status,’ Ella has no friends among the royalty, and feels useless and lonely. Then Lord Reston, her religious teacher, has a stroke and is saved only by the quick actions of Ella and the servant girl Mary. Rather than being commended, however, Ella is chastised by Madame Bisset for acting unladylike. When Jed, Reston’s eldest son, takes his place as Ella’s religious tutor, Ella finds that she finally has some friends in the castle in Jed and Mary. However, she begins to question the entire situation in which she finds herself and her feelings about Prince Charming as well. After all, she really doesn’t know the prince but was only swept off her feet by his good looks. Is he really someone interesting? Does he really think at all, or are all of his actions directed by his father and servants? Is he really someone with whom she wishes to spend the rest of her life? Does she really want to be a coddled, pretty princess/queen with no freedom to do as she pleases or power to affect her own life? Read *Just Ella*, by Margaret Haddix