



Get **UP CLOSE** with the series applauded as “not your average biographies... meaty fare... honest and engaging” by *The Horn Book Magazine*. Every Up Close title features in-depth information and remarkable photographs, and is perfect for classrooms, libraries, and history buffs!

**RACHEL CARSON**

by Ellen Levine  
 HC 978-0-670-06220-1  
 PB 978-0-14-241046-2

**JOHNNY CASH**

by Anne E. Neimark  
 HC 978-0-670-06215-7  
 PB 978-0-14-241047-9

**W. E. B. DU BOIS**

by Tonya Bolden  
 HC 978-0-670-06302-4

**ELLA FITZGERALD**

by Tanya Lee Stone  
 HC 978-0-670-06149-5

**BILL GATES**

by Marc Aronson  
 HC 978-0-670-06348-2

**JANE GOODALL**

by Sudipta Bardhan-Quallen  
 HC 978-0-670-06263-8

**ROBERT F. KENNEDY**

by Marc Aronson  
 HC 978-0-670-06066-5  
 PB 978-0-14-241044-8

**HARPER LEE**

by Kerry Madden  
 HC 978-0-670-01095-0

**THURGOOD MARSHALL**

by Chris Crowe  
 HC 978-0-670-06228-7

**ELVIS PRESLEY**

by Wilborn Hampton  
 HC 978-0-670-06166-2  
 PB 978-0-14-241148-3

**RONALD REAGAN**

by James Sutherland  
 HC 978-0-670-06345-1

**THEODORE ROOSEVELT**

by Michael Cooper  
 HC 978-0-670-01134-6

**BABE RUTH**

by Wilborn Hampton  
 HC 978-0-670-06305-5

**JOHN STEINBECK**

by Milton Meltzer  
 HC 978-0-670-06139-6

**OPRAH WINFREY**

by Ilene Cooper  
 HC 978-0-670-06162-4  
 PB 978-0-14-241045-5

**FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT**

by Jan Adkins  
 HC 978-0-670-06138-9  
 PB 978-0-14-241244-2

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**



TANYA LEE STONE was an editor for thirteen years before becoming the author of more than eighty books for children, including the critically acclaimed *Sandy's Circus: A Story About Alexander Calder*. As an undergraduate, she studied English and history at Oberlin College, and music and voice at Oberlin Conservatory. She also holds a Masters in Education. Stone lives in Vermont and often travels to schools to talk about books with young people.

Please visit her at [www.tanyastone.com](http://www.tanyastone.com).



**Viking Children's Books • Puffin Books**  
 Divisions of Penguin Young Readers Group  
[www.penguin.com/teachersandlibrarians](http://www.penguin.com/teachersandlibrarians)

This discussion guide has been provided by Penguin Young Readers Group for classroom, library, and book club use. It may be reproduced in its entirety or excerpted for these purposes.

**DISCUSSION GUIDE**



**UPclose:** *Ella Fitzgerald*  
**JAZZ LEGEND**  
 a twentieth-century life by **TANYA LEE STONE**

While reading **Up Close: Ella Fitzgerald**, ask your students to think about the following questions. Answers can either be written individually or discussed in groups to make for an interesting and thought-provoking classroom conversation.

## COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

---

What was the Great Migration? Why did Ella's family move? Where did they go? What were conditions like in their new city?

Describe the Harlem Renaissance. How did it impact Ella?

What chain of events was triggered by Ella's mother's death? How did she react to these constant changes?

Why did Ella sing at the Apollo? Who was Chick Webb? In what ways did he contribute to Ella's becoming a star?

Why did Billie Holiday resent Ella? Do you think she was justified in doing so? Why or why not?

How did Ella and Chick's musical tastes change as they became popular? How did Ella's personal life change with her success?

What business troubles led to the demise of the Chick Webb Band after Chick died? Do you think Ella had any impact on the band's breaking up? Why or why not?

When did Ella's popularity pick back up, and why? Explain the conflicts between Moe Gale and Milt Gabler's management styles and visions for Ella's career.

What reasons are given in chapter 5 as to why scat was a natural evolution for Ella's singing?

In what ways did Ella play a part in ushering in "a new era of jazz" in 1947? Which emotions were reflected in the new sound?

Who was Norman Granz? What was his radical plan for the jazz industry? How did he combat racism in his career?

Why couldn't Ella sign a contract with Granz in 1950?

Describe Ella's behavior before most of her performances. Why do you think she was so hard on herself? Have you ever been nervous about something even when others told you not to be? What did you do to calm yourself down?

How do we know that Ella was extremely secretive about her personal life and feelings? What effect did this have on her friendships and on her career?

Compare and contrast Ella's relationships with her managers with those she had with her husbands.

Who was Louis Armstrong? According to him, what made Ella a star?

What does it mean in chapter 8 when Ella is called a "fairy godmother to all children"?

Examine the obstacles that plagued Ella in the mid-1960s. Which challenge do you think was the most difficult for her to deal with?

What happened with the record *Ella in Rome*? How did this affect Ella's career in the late 1980s?

What is Ella's legacy to her fans, to the music industry, and to the world? List examples from the text to illustrate your point. Now that you have read her biography, what do you think Ella would have wanted most to be remembered for?

## CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS & ACTIVITIES

---

Listen to some of Ella Fitzgerald's records in your class. Try to listen to songs from as many different points in her career as possible to get an idea of her skill and range. Then, think about your favorite song and imagine Ella singing it. How might it sound different? What would you like about the way Ella performs the song? At which points do you think she might scat or bebop?

In the Author's Note, Tanya Lee Stone explains that many reports of Ella's life are inaccurate. At your school or local library, research past newspaper and magazine articles about the singer and choose one that you believe documents facts about her incorrectly. Using evidence from the text to support your analysis, present your findings to your class and listen to those of your classmates. Which details seem to be the most commonly mistaken? Why do you think that is?

Norman Granz crusaded against racial discrimination by striking deals with nightclub owners that would allow his clients to perform at their venues. Pretend that you are one such owner who has just had Ella perform on your stage. Write a letter to Granz describing the experience. Explain why you held a bias against her in the first place, provide details about her performance and the audience reaction, and let Granz know if you would be willing to host Ella or other black musicians again. If your views changed, why? Or why did they not? Have you learned anything through this experience?