

Little People, **BIG DREAMS**

Ella Fitzgerald



Written by M^a Isabel Sánchez Vegara

Illustrated by Bàrbara Alca

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Lincoln
Children's Books



Little Ella grew up in Yonkers, New York,
with her mother, stepfather, and sister.
She had a beautiful voice
and loved to sing jazz.



But one day, tragedy struck. Her mother died suddenly in a car accident. Ella was heartbroken.

Ella went to live with her aunt, but she didn't like her new life. She started skipping school and got into trouble, so she was sent to a strict school as punishment. She was treated very badly there—so one day, she ran away . . .





Ella made a living by singing and dancing on the street corners of Harlem. The street was her first stage!



But one night, she entered a competition to perform on a real stage—at one of the most famous theaters in New York. She was very nervous, but dazzled the crowd with her sweet, tuneful voice. She won first prize!

That night, Ella was so excited she couldn't sleep. She imagined herself singing on an even bigger stage, accompanied by her very own orchestra.



It wasn't long before big band leader Chick Webb offered Ella her first singing job. Together, they traveled all over the country performing in jazz clubs. Ella's career was taking off!



Ella never sang a song the same way twice.
She turned somersaults with her voice and learned
to imitate every instrument in the band.



She used her songs to express how she felt and made up new sounds on the spot. Sometimes she invented new words, like "Dubi-dubi-dubu-daba" . . .



She also sang slow songs as sweet as lullabies.
Her velvety voice wrapped around the audience
like a blanket.



Eventually, Ella decided it was time to leave the band and go solo.

All the jazz greats wanted to perform with her. The telephone didn't stop ringing!





Ella tried every musical style, from bop to swing. Her voice growled, swooped, and soared. She mastered show tunes, pop, opera, and blues, taking her music to new places until the day she retired.

And that's how little Ella became the First Lady of Song.
As she always said, "It isn't where you came from;
it's where you're going that counts."



ELLA FITZGERALD

(Born 1917 • Died 1996)



c. 1930



1938

From an early age, Ella Fitzgerald had a passion for dance and an ear for music. She grew up in New York, around the time the biggest names in jazz were performing in the city. Young Ella would take the train to Harlem to see her favorite musicians. But her life changed forever in 1932, when her mother died in a car accident. Ella was only 15, and she found it hard to adjust to life without her. She was sent to a strict school, known as a reform school, but she was treated badly, so she ran away. This was the time of the Great Depression in America, when people were struggling to make ends meet, and Ella had to dance on the streets of Harlem to make enough money to survive. But one night, at age 17, she entered



c. 1940



1965

the Apollo Theater's amateur talent competition. Ella was planning to dance, but changed her mind when she saw another dance act perform. She decided to sing instead. Ella won first prize and was later spotted by band leader Chick Webb. Together, they had a hit with a song called "A-Tisket, A-Tasket." Ella went on to have a 50-year musical career. She recorded over 2,000 songs and worked with all the jazz greats. She was the first African American woman to win a Grammy, adding 12 more to her collection throughout her lifetime. With her sweet, uplifting voice and talent for rhythm, Ella became known as the "First Lady of Song"—and one of the best jazz singers of the 20th century.