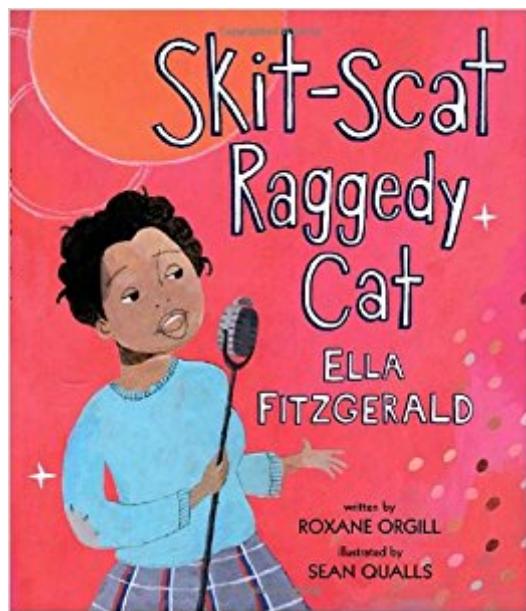


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# Skit-Scat Raggedy Cat: Ella Fitzgerald



## Synopsis

A swinging bio of young Ella Fitzgerald, who pushed through the toughest of times to become one of America's most beloved jazz singers. When Ella Fitzgerald danced the Lindy Hop on the streets of 1930s Yonkers, passersby said good-bye to their loose change. But for a girl who was orphaned and hungry, with raggedy clothes and often no place to spend the night, small change was not enough. One amateur night at Harlem's Apollo Theater, Ella made a discovery: the dancing beat in her feet could travel up and out of her mouth in a powerful song and the feeling of being listened to was like a salve to her heart. With lively prose, Roxane Orgill follows the gutsy Ella from school-girl days to a featured spot with Chick Webb's band and all the way to her number-one radio hit "A-Tisket, A-Tasket." Jazzy mixed-media art by illustrator Sean Qualls brings the singer's indomitable spirit to life.

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 820L (What's this?)

Hardcover: 48 pages

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Age Range: 5 - 9 years

Grade Level: Kindergarten - 4

## Customer Reviews

Grade 3-6 As the title cleverly indicates, this book describes how the poor, raggedy cat scat-sang her way into jazz history. Orgill begins with Fitzgerald as a child dancing to her mother's records and closes with the 21-year-old woman joining the Chick Webb Band in Harlem. The interim includes frank, but not frightening, descriptions of Fitzgerald's tenure in an abusive orphanage and of the impoverished days when she slept where she could and sang on the streets for money. The prose

account of Fitzgerald's life often includes sound effects that recall her unique vocal style. For instance, she does not run away from the orphanage, she dashes off in a skit-scat skedaddle. Snatches of her famous songs are woven throughout the narrative. Meanwhile, Qualls firmly establishes himself as a leading illustrator of jazz biographies for children. He uses rich reds and blues to illustrate the history of this quintessentially American art form, just as he did for Jonah Winter's *Dizzy* (Scholastic, 2006) and Carole Boston Weatherford's *Before John Was a Jazz Giant* (Holt, 2008). His mixed media of acrylic, collage, and pencil capture the richness of Fitzgerald's life and song. The back matter provides plenty of resources for further reading, listening, and Web exploration. Mary Landrum, Lexington Public Library, KY Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Having separately displayed a knack for capturing the spirit of jazz in words and pictures, Orgill (*If I Only Had a Horn: Young Louis Armstrong*, 1998) and Qualls (illustrator of Carole Boston Weatherford's *Before John Was a Jazz Giant*, 2008, and Jonah Winters' *Dizzy*, 2006) team up here for a stylish portrayal of young Ella Fitzgerald: "a rough-tough raggedy cat on the outside, but inside she was milky and silky and soft and shy." Orgill recounts how Fitzgerald earned nickels dancing the Lindy Hop on the streets of Yonkers before moving to Harlem, where she would begin her tremendous career, trusting in her talent and persevering in spite of the bandleaders who thought she wasn't pretty enough. Occasional lyrics pop on the page and suggest that this might make a good read-aloud, but the fairly lengthy text will require dedicated attention. It's always a gamble how kids will respond to the allure of jazz, but there's no question that Orgill and Qualls know what makes it so catchy: it's slinky, rhythmic, and joyful, and on full display in both the lively text and swinging artwork. Grades 2-4. --Ian Chipman

My daughter really loves music and this book is a great intro to Ella Fitzgerald. She loves it.

Anything by or about Ella is worthwhile.

I read this to my 4th graders and began by playing the song "A Tisket, A Tasket" prior to reading the book...when we got to the lyrics in the book it was great to see how the students connected the book and the music. It helped them realize that this was a "real story". It is an excellent overview of Ella's life.

Accurate and detailed biography of one of my favorite jazz singers. Definitely for older elementary since it includes some of the more rough parts of Ella's childhood experiences.

This is a well written account of Ella Fitzgerald's determination to be a great singer and dancer against all odds. The story is written well for children, and can be an inspiration for those who have goals that they would like to achieve.

The best children's book that I read on The life of Ella Fitzgerald. Great for introducing young ones to the art of scat singing. Fantastic writing. Fabulous art work.

Heard about the book online and bought it immediately to share Ella's inspiring story with my 6 year old. My bad: this is not a book for small children. Although illustrated beautifully, it's written in a very awkward style that doesn't lend itself well to "storytime". It also pulls no punches: all the poverty, abuse, body image, and racism are right there on the surface, making it a major bummer despite the uplifting finale.

Great book for older kids

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