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Bella at Midnight: The Thimble, the Ring, and the Slippers of Glass

Kate Reynolds

Reviewer: Kate Reynolds  
Reading Level: Intermediate, Young Adult  
Rating: Excellent  
Genre: Fantasy fiction;  
Subject: Princes--Juvenile fiction; Sex role--Juvenile fiction; Knights and knighthood--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;  

Bella has a happy life--she has been raised by a loving, though poor, family and has enjoyed a long friendship with Julian, who happens to be the fourth son of the king. Suddenly though, her world is turned upside down when Julian betrays her in a moment of thoughtless pride, and it is revealed that she is not the daughter of the peasants who raise her, but of a cold knight who summons her to live with him now. She moves in to an unfamiliar life where she must deal with the scorn of her new step-family. She puts up with it and makes the best of her situation by helping the cook and learning to read and write. Then she discovers a plan in progress that endangers the life of her friend, Prince Julian. Disguised, she runs away from her father's house in order to save her friend--and ends up bringing about peace with a neighboring land that they had been at war with for more than a century.

*Bella at Midnight* is a retelling of the Cinderella story, but with a number of original twists that make it an enjoyable, fresh read. Bella and Julian do not have love at first sight, but rather a lifetime friendship that develops into romance. There is no fairy godmother--only a caring aunt who provides her niece with a nice wardrobe for her daring attempt to rescue her prince. The story is written in the first person from different people. The tale told from the perspectives of the stepmother and the two stepsisters fleshes out those characters making them sympathetic in some respects--a widow with two daughters, fallen on hard times, bound in a marriage to a man who is still in love with his dead first wife. Everyone from intermediate to adult readers will enjoy this retelling.