

## BOOKTALK

### *The Egyptian Cinderella*

by Shirley Climo / illustrated by Ruth Heller

The author has retold three other Cinderella stories: *The Irish Cinderlad*, *The Korean Cinderella*, and *The Persian Cinderella*. She carefully chooses just the right verb, noun, or adjective to make the reader truly visualize the characters and happenings of the stories. Ruth Heller's bright illustrations provide a feast of colors and carefully researched images. The Author's Note tells us that this Cinderella tale is one of the oldest recorded. It was written down by a Roman historian in the first century B.C. History tells us that the tale is based on some true events as the Pharaoh Amasis did marry a Greek slave girl named Rhodopis in the fifth century B.C.

A young girl named Rhodopis is kidnapped and taken away from her home in Greece. She is sold as a slave to a kind but elderly Egyptian man who never seems to notice her mistreatment by the household servants. Her name means "rosy-cheeked" because her skin is burned red from the hot Egyptian sun while the other girls have dark and coppery skin. Rhodopis befriends the animals and, despite her hard life, finds joy in singing and dancing. One day when her master sees her dancing joyfully, he rewards her with a pair of lovely rose-red slippers gilded with gold. Although Rhodopis is not taken along to see the Pharaoh when he holds court for all his subjects, she gains the Pharaoh's attention when one of her tiny slippers is stolen by a great falcon, symbol of the god Horus. The bird drops the tiny slipper onto the lap of a bored and yawning Pharaoh who is holding court. Amasis is determined to find the owner of the slipper and, of course, the search eventually leads him to Rhodopis who is able to show him the shoe's mate.

The tale ends with a comment by the Pharaoh that shows that even in ancient times, when slavery was common, and there was little acceptance of class differences, the beginnings of tolerance were present when a pharaoh dared to marry a slave. Amasis describes Rhodopis as "the most Egyptian of all ... for her eyes are as green as the Nile, her hair as feathery as papyrus, and her skin the pink of a lotus flower."

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**MOTIFS AND IDEAS**

- 📖 Rhodopis, “rosy cheeked,” is a slave girl with no family or friends
- 📖 she is mistreated by the servant girls who make fun of her
- 📖 friends with animals like the ones found in *Yeh-Shen*, *Turkey Girl*, and *Angkat*
- 📖 her master admires her tiny feet and gives her slippers
- 📖 falcon steals one slipper and gives it to the Pharaoh
- 📖 Pharaoh searches for owner of slipper
- 📖 Rhodopis becomes Pharaoh’s queen

**CONNECTIONS**

Using atlases, encyclopedias, and/or Internet websites, research the following:

- ★ why all the faces in the story are in profile
- ★ clothing of the Egyptians
- ★ Horus, Egyptian sky god
- ★ Nile River Valley
- ★ papyrus
- ★ Egyptian jewelry

**VOCABULARY WORDS**

- |        |        |         |          |
|--------|--------|---------|----------|
| barge  | gilded | Memphis | soar     |
| coaxed | heed   | nimble  | summoned |
| din    | linen  | papyrus | talons   |
| gawked | maiden | scoffed | tunic    |

**Choose the word that matches its meaning:**

- |   |               |
|---|---------------|
| 1. .... flat-bottomed boat                    | a. tunic      |
| 2. .... to call for the presence of someone   | b. gild(ed)   |
| 3. .... claws; usually of a bird of prey      | c. coax(ed)   |
| 4. .... to persuade or convince               | d. scoff(ed)  |
| 5. .... a loud noise                          | e. Memphis    |
| 6. .... an unmarried girl or woman            | f. talons     |
| 7. .... to pay attention; to notice           | g. din        |
| 8. .... to cover with a thin layer of gold    | h. maiden     |
| 9. .... modern day Cairo; a city on the Nile  | i. heed       |
| 10. .... a simple slip-on article of clothing | j. summon(ed) |
| 11. .... to mock or make fun of               | k. barge      |

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- ADJECTIVE: a word used to modify a noun or a pronoun (for example, nimble)  
NOUN: a word used to name a person, place, thing, or idea (for example, river)  
VERB: a word used to express action or a state of being (for example, summon)

Sort each italicized word into the correct column according to how it is used in the phrase.

<i>royal</i> barge	<i>servant</i> girls	Amasis <i>searched</i>	beautiful <i>slippers</i>
did not <i>heed</i> her	dance like a <i>stork</i>	girls <i>gawked</i>	You <i>splattered</i> mud
<i>dainty</i> slippers	clumsy <i>sandals</i>	he <i>commanded</i>	Horus <i>sends</i> me a sign
stolen by <i>pirates</i>	breeze <i>blew</i>	<i>mighty</i> bird	<i>Rhodopis</i> pretended
<i>distant</i> city	<i>rose-red</i> slipper	of the <i>falcon</i>	<i>winked</i> and <i>sparkled</i>
<i>rosy</i> gold	plain <i>tunic</i>		

ADJECTIVE

NOUN

VERB

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**MONTAGE** — a group of various items related to one topic.

1. Your teacher will assign you to a partner or into a group to create a montage about *The Egyptian Cinderella*.
2. The montage will be done on large poster paper. Put the names of the students who work on your montage on the front of your poster and include the title and author of the book.
3. Use at least six of the items below and check off the boxes of the ones that you use.
4. Label each item and write a caption explaining how it relates to *The Egyptian Cinderella*.
5. Present your montage to your classmates.

- ★ Rhodopis (the main character)
- ★ something that shows a Cinderella motif
- ★ the Nile River (part of the setting)
- ★ the servant girls (characters)
- ★ animals in the story
- ★ Amasis (an important character)
- ★ plants and/or flowers of Egypt
- ★ something that shows the setting of the story (ancient Egypt)
- ★ an important incident from the plot of the story
- ★ a symbol of ancient Egypt

### Suggestions

Plan what to include on your montage and list the items as you plan. If you intend to bring items or materials from home, or print out pictures, labels, titles, or captions from your own computer, be sure to write a reminder in your homework assignment book. Decide how you will present your poster to the class and practice what you will say. Speak clearly and look at your classmates as you talk about your work. It usually works best if two persons hold the poster and one student presents.

A montage is most effective when it includes a variety of colors and textures. The strong verbs and descriptive adjectives used by author Shirley Climo help the reader or listener to imagine the story. The illustrations by Ruth Heller are colorful and not only help to tell the story in picture form, but also reveal details about life in ancient Egypt. Materials that can be used to make effective montages include cloth, aluminum foil, beads, dried flowers, colorful magazine cutouts, ribbon, wrapping paper, tissue paper, lightweight jewelry (that can be attached to a poster with a staple or tape), printouts from Internet photos, and letters and words made with markers, construction paper, chalk, pencil, ink or designed and printed from a computer.