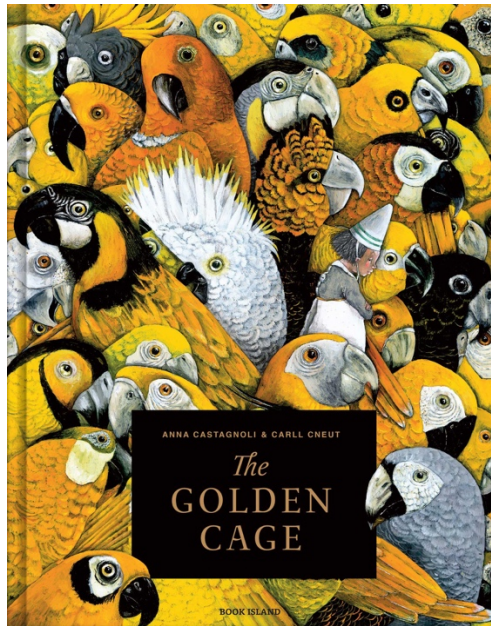


The Golden Cage

CREATIVE WRITING PROMPTS



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***The Golden Cage* features much beauty and also much darkness and has inspired many questions from readers around the world, many of which spark new and exciting thoughts about the story and the heroine, Valentina. Here, author Anna Castagnoli shares some of these new possibilities, and invites you to use them to create your own descriptive writing.**

Which one will you choose? Please let us know how you get on at info@bookisland.co.uk. Good luck and have fun!

Prompt 1: What must it be like to be Valentina?

One morning, some years ago, I woke up with this sentence in my head: "The Emperor's daughter was called Valentina, and she was unbearable." The sentence kept coming back until I felt the need to find out who this Valentina was, and so I sat down to write. When I finished, I felt that even though Valentina was terrible she was at the same time very lonely and frightened, and that I loved her very much despite her bad temper.

Try This Writing Task...

Can you imagine how, despite her terrible actions, Valentina might be lonely and frightened? What emotions do you think might have driven her to become so cruel to her servants? Write a journal entry, showing how Valentina might feel as she seeks out a bird for the Golden Cage.

Prompt 2: When a photograph feels like someone you know...

Who might this little girl be?

One day, I went into a shop that sold old photographs (I collect old photographs) and I found this photo that you see here. I immediately showed it to my husband and friends and asked them with a bit of agitation in my voice "Do you recognise this little girl?", "No", they replied. I ask you too: who do you think the little girl in the photo is?

Try This Writing Task...

Take a good look at this photograph and let your imagination fly... Who might the girl be? Where has she been and what awaits her? Why is she standing there on the balcony next to a bird cage? Give her a name and write the story that you feel is hers!



Prompt 3: What is life like for Valentina now her quest is over?

I often wonder what happened to Valentina after she completed her collection of exquisite birds. Maybe she has learned to be patient and nice to others, or maybe she has a new obsession! Perhaps she has left the palace and gone to live in a modest but cheerful city flat where her little bird sings to her every morning and maybe even talks to her. Would she be an Emperor's daughter everywhere she went? Perhaps she might live a different kind of life!

Try This Writing Task...

What life would you wish for Valentina? Do you think she might find some peace after her terrible actions? She has been used to a lot of power - will she continue to be powerful in her world, and what purpose will she use her power for next? Will she stay in the palace and become Empress or leave to live a different kind of life? Anything is possible!

Prompt 4: Imagination or reality - who can say what really happened?

"I have been asked many times if Valentina's story is true... I too would terribly like to know if Valentina's story is true, but I don't believe that this question has a simple answer. We like to think that something is either true or invented, and if it is invented, it's a lie. But the difference between what is invented and what is true is not so clear. Stories are like pollen in the air, moving between tellers and listeners, and sometimes we find that the flower they came from really did exist. Take the example of the boy who believed so much in the story of the City of Troy that he grew up to become the archeologist who found it!

Try This Writing Task...

Sometimes true stories are kept alive in verbal tales passed between people around a campfire. These tales later become folk tales and are written down, sometimes becoming fairy stories or even films! Write a folk tale telling the story of *The Golden Cage* as though from a village beyond the palace walls. Imagine how it would feel to know the people working as servants who never made it home from the palace! What do the villagers know of Valentina and her quest? How do they cope with her tyranny?



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