

EGMONT

USA

The False Princess

by Eilis O'Neal

Age: 12 Up

Summary:

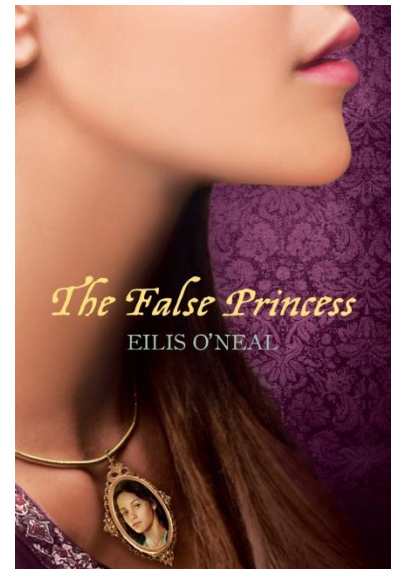
Princess and heir to the throne of Thorvaldor, Nalia's led a privileged life at court. But everything changes when it's revealed, just after her sixteenth birthday, that she is a false princess, a stand-in for the real Nalia, who has been hidden away for her protection. Cast out with little more than the clothes on her back, the girl now called Sinda must leave behind the city of Vivaskari, her best friend, Keirnan, and the only life she's ever known.

Sinda is sent to live with her only surviving relative, an aunt who is a dyer in a distant village. She is a cold, scornful woman with little patience for her newfound niece, and Sinda proves inept at even the simplest tasks. But when Sinda discovers that magic runs through her veins—long-suppressed, dangerous magic that she must learn to control—she realizes that she can never learn to be a simple village girl. Returning to Vivaskari for answers, Sinda finds her purpose as a wizard's scribe, rediscovers the boy who saw her all along, and uncovers a secret that could change the course of Thorvaldor's history, forever.

A dazzling first novel, *The False Princess* is an engrossing fantasy full of mystery, action, and romance.

Discussion Questions:

1. Despite personality differences that make them an unlikely pair, Sinda and Kiernan have a close bond. What do you think draws the two of them together?
2. After the spell that made Sinda appear to be the real princess is removed, her natural magic rises to the surface. Would you like to have magical powers of your own? If you could choose, how would you use your magic?
3. After she is cast out of the palace, Sinda is sent to live with her Aunt Varil, who comments that the King and Queen have ruined Sinda for a normal life. Do you agree with this? Do you think there was ever a chance Sinda could have lived happily in Treb with her aunt? Explain your answer.



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4. Why do you think Aunt Varil doesn't warn Sinda about her magic? Do you think she is right in her reasoning? Why or why not?
5. Why do you think that Philantha took Sinda under her wing after going without an apprentice for fifteen years? Cite examples from the text that support your reasoning.
6. Kiernan tells Sinda that he was kind to Nalia because he felt that the two girls were in the same boat. Do you agree? How do their situations differ and how are they the same?
7. When Sinda accuses Melanie of betraying Thorvaldor, Melanie says she would prefer to consider it righting an old wrong. What do you think? Do you think Melanie was justified in what she did? Why or why not?
8. "The crown used you and tossed you aside when it was finished with you. But they didn't have to. They could have helped you, rather than shipping you off to a backward village the same day." (pg. 252) Do you agree with Melanie? Could the King and Queen have handled things differently? What would you have done in their place?
9. Sinda risks her life to help save the same kingdom that cast her out after she had served her purpose. What would you have done if you were in her place? Would you have risked so much after what you had been through? Explain your answer.
10. "I've been thinking. It's like we were saying, out there on the road. Something's wrong here, in Thorvaldor, under all the things that are right. . . . And I've been thinking, maybe this, all this, maybe it happened so I'd know it. 'Cause I wouldn't have, if I'd grown up like I was supposed to." (pp. 313-314) Consider this statement. List the ways in which Mika's upbringing will help her be a better princess than she might have been if she had grown up at court.

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About the author:

Eilis O'Neal is the Managing Editor of the literary magazine *Nimrod International Journal*. She started writing at the age of three (though the story was only four sentences long and not very good), but she hopes that she's improved a great deal since then. She lives in Tulsa, Oklahoma, with her husband, Matt, and two dogs, Nemo and Zuul. *The False Princess* is her first novel.

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