Stella tried and tried to please her stepmother, but it was impossible. She wondered why her father had ever married this woman.

Her mother died three years before. She and her mother had been best friends. Everything Stella did her mother praised her and told her what a wonderful daughter she was.

Her stepmother was just the opposite. She told her over and over again that no one would ever love her, she would never be pretty, she would never be smart, and she would never be successful at doing anything.

Unfortunately, Stella believed her.

Stella loved to spend time with her friends. She liked to go to the park and sit for hours talking about fun things. They would laugh and giggle when talking about boys. It was fun to talk about what boy liked which girl. Whenever the girls teased Stella about a boy, she would blush and get red in the face. Actually, she liked it. She wanted a boyfriend.

Her stepmother told her that she was silly to think like that. She told Stella that sitting and talking to her friends about boys was childish. She would never have a boyfriend. She needed to grow up and be responsible.

Stella did not want to go to university. She wanted to be a hairdresser. She liked to have her friends over and they would brush each other’s hair and put pretty bows and ribbons in it. Then they would dance around the room having fun.

Her stepmother told her she was never going to be good at anything, especially a
hairdresser. She told Stella she had to study hard in order to go to the best university. Then with a good education, she could get a good job. Then when her parents were older she would be able to take good care of them.

Stella loved to dress up. Sometimes she would put makeup on her face and put her hair up in different ways. She liked to stand in front of the mirror, dreaming about going to a beautiful party, and meeting many different people. She even dreamed of being a princess.

Her stepmother would yell at her when she did this. She told her she should not dream about things like that. She was not pretty and a prince would never want to marry someone like her.

She would say, “That’s only a dream! It’ll never come true.”

Stella liked to buy magazines and look at the pretty models. She would imagine herself walking on a red carpet and there would be many people taking her picture. She dreamed of being a famous model or a movie star.

Her stepmother told her she should stop being so foolish. She would never be a famous movie star. She was too ordinary. She would only fail if she tried.

Stella loved to go to the cinema to watch movies. Her favorite movies were about romance. She loved to sit and dream about a handsome man who would come and carry her away to his home along the ocean. She would have many kids and they would be happy together.

Her stepmother told her she would never find a handsome man and that she should not dream about such things. She would just be disappointed in her life if she dreamed about that all the time.

Stella liked to listen to pop music. She had dreams of being a famous singer and many people would come to see her perform. They would all sing her songs and have her picture on the walls in their rooms.

Her stepmother told her to stop singing. She said her voice was terrible and that she would never be good enough to be a famous singer.

Stella liked to play sports, especially soccer. She played on a team and she scored many goals. She enjoyed playing soccer and the other players liked her a lot. She had
daydreams of playing for the national team. She would be a national hero!

Her stepmother told her the chances of her being on the national team were impossible.

She would say, “There are so many other girls better than you. Don’t waste your time thinking about that. It will never happen.”

Stella liked to draw in her drawing book. She had pencils, paints, and colored chalk. When she was bored, she would sit on the floor in her room and draw pictures of dresses and fashions. She loved to make the clothes long and elegant. She saw herself having her designs in a fashion show. Many models were wearing her clothes walking back and forth showing the most important fashion buyers her clothes and after the show they would stand up and cheer.

Her stepmother told her to throw her drawings away. They were terrible and no one would buy such ugly clothes. She told her that being a famous fashion designer was never going to happen. She would never be good enough.

Stella played the violin in school. She was first chair in the orchestra. She practiced her violin every day. She loved the sound of the violin and she fantasized about being in the city orchestra and playing a solo in front of the audience. They would clap and ask for more.

Her stepmother told her to close the door to her room. She said the noise of the violin made her upset. She told Stella that she played so badly, that no one would want to listen to her play. She said the strings squeaked and that the music did not sound like music at all. She told her it would be better if she stopped playing the violin.

Stella did as her stepmother told her, put her violin into the case, and then put it under her bed.

Stella signed up to be a model in a fashion show at school. She picked out the clothes she was going to wear very carefully. The kids at school liked the styles she chose. She showed the outfits to her stepmother.

Her stepmother said Stella looked funny. She said Stella didn’t look like a model. She was too short, too fat, and too ugly to be a fashion model. She said she shouldn’t make herself look foolish by walking in front of everyone looking like that.
Stella liked to write. She liked to write stories about her friends, and of how they would go on great adventures. She had a big book of stories. Sometimes she would share her stories with her friends and they would always ask her for more.

Her stepmother found her book and read the stories. She told Stella the stories were boring and they did not have any imagination. She told her she was wasting her time writing. She should work harder to get better grades in school, not spending her time writing silly stories.

Stella studied hard for her tests. She did all her homework. She did very well in school and her teachers liked her. She was asked to be on the math team by her math teacher.

Her stepmother told her she needed to study harder. She told her that being on the math team was a waste of time.

She told her, “There are so many other children better in math than you. You will make the team fail if you are on it.”

Her stepmother felt it was better for Stella to stay home and study for school rather than to be on the math team.

Stella liked to go shopping for clothes. She knew how to find good clothes for low prices. She watched for sales and when stores were giving out coupons. She liked to wear the latest fashions. She always wanted to look her best in school.

Her stepmother told her she looked silly in the clothes she wore. She told Stella that she was wasting her money. She told Stella she should wear the clothes that her stepmother bought for her. They were more practical. Stella hated the clothes she got from her stepmother, but she wore them anyway to make her stepmother happy.

Stella began to believe all that her stepmother was saying to her. She quit all the things she used to do. She did not go to the park, she did not have her friends over, she stopped dressing up, she quit going to the movies, she stopped listening to music, she dropped off of the soccer team, she did not draw, she put her violin in its case and put it under her bed, she didn’t go to the fashion show, she put her writing book in her desk, she told the teacher she could not be on the math team, and she began to wear the clothes her stepmother bought for her.
Day after day, she just sat in her bedroom reading her textbooks preparing for university. She believed that would please her stepmother.

After that, her stepmother left her alone. She never came into her room. She no longer had to tell Stella what to do.

One day, her father went to her room after he arrived home from work. He asked Stella why she had changed so much. He asked her why she wasn’t with her friends, why she was always alone in her room, why she stopped going to the movies, why she wasn’t listening to music, why she quit playing soccer, why she wasn’t drawing anymore, why she had stopped practicing the violin, why she wasn’t on the math team and why she was wearing such different clothes.

Stella told him everything her stepmother had said. She said that her stepmother was right. She was never going to succeed in anything unless she focused on her studies. Stella said she agreed with her stepmother and that she would do what she said.

Her father took her into his arms. He held her close, and then he apologized.

“I’m so sorry Stella. I had no idea she was saying those things to you. Your mother was so proud of you, and so am I. We are going to make some big changes around here. First of all, I want you to have your life back. You are an amazing person. You are so beautiful and smart. I could not be prouder of you. Everything you do, you do the very best you can. I cannot expect any more of you. I love you and I want the best for you,” her father said as tears ran down his face.

“Thank you daddy. I needed to hear that. I love you too,” Stella said with a big smile and tears running down her cheeks while she held onto her dad.
**VOCABULARY** *(Match the word its definition)*

1. wondered ____
2. opposite ____
3. blush ____
4. makeup ____
5. handsome ____
6. disappointed ____
7. famous ____
8. fashions ____
9. fantasized ____
10. squeak ____

- a. cosmetics, to make beautiful
- b. trends, styles,
- c. dream, think about
- d. questioned, pondered
- e. cheeks turn red
- f. good looking man
- g. well known
- h. the other side, contrast, opposed
- i. frustrated, saddened, upset
- j. shrill noise, screech

**TRUE / FALSE**

1. Stella’s mother died. T / F
2. Stella wanted to be barber. T / F
3. Stella liked to sing. T / F
4. Stella was not very good at math. T / F
5. Stella wanted to be a professional soccer player. T / F
6. Stella’s step-mother was a kind person. T / F
7. Stella liked to go shopping. T / F
8. Stella played the piano. T / F
9. Stella wore the clothes her step-mother chose for her. T / F
10. Stella’s father apologized. T / F
MULTIPLE CHOICE

1. Where did Stella dream of living? ____
   a) in the city
   b) by the ocean
   c) with her parents
   d) on an island

2. What team at school was Stella invited to join? ____
   a) math team
   b) swimming team
   c) fashion design team
   d) debate team

3. Who told Stella she was not good at doing anything? ____
   a) her mother
   b) her father
   c) her teacher
   d) her step-mother

4. What did her father say to her? ____
   a) listen to your step-mother
   b) do well in school
   c) change your clothes
   d) your mother would be proud of you
COMPREHENSION: (Write a complete sentence to answer the question.)

1. Where did Stella go to talk about boys?
______________________________________________________________

2. What sport did Stella play?
______________________________________________________________

3. What instrument did Stella play?
______________________________________________________________

4. What happened to Stella’s mother?
______________________________________________________________

5. What team at school was she asked to join?
______________________________________________________________

6. Who liked the clothes Stella chose?
______________________________________________________________

7. Where did Stella meet her friends?
______________________________________________________________

8. What did Stella’s mother want her to do about school?
______________________________________________________________

9. Where did Stella put her violin?
______________________________________________________________

10. Why did Stella cry?
______________________________________________________________