

# **Because of Winn-Dixie Study Guide**

## **Because of Winn-Dixie by Kate DiCamillo**

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## Overview

Because of Winn-Dixie is a story about a girl and her dog and about the search for what really matters in life. It is also a story about stories—stories of loss, love, and humor; stories about holding on and letting go. In the steamy humidity of small-town Florida, India Opal Buloni pursues her journey toward friendship, love, understanding, and acceptance.

New in town, Opal finds herself dwelling on her struggle to understand and accept why her mother left her, questioning why her father will not talk about her mother, and needing desperately to find a friend. She first finds this friendship in a dog she deems a "less fortunate" and names him after the place where they meet—WinnDixie. Because of this loveable canine's charm and devotion, Opal soon meets a series of other lonely town characters, each on his or her own journey to learn what the loner Gloria Dump names "the most important thing."

Winn-Dixie wraps his love around each character, brings Opal to them, and, with Opal's help, brings them all together. As a result, Opal learns valuable lessons about life and love, but it takes both heartbreak and painful confrontation to open the pathway toward healing before Opal discovers that letting go does not mean losing.

## About the Author

Kate DiCamillo was born March 25, 1964, in Merion, Pennsylvania. At the age of five, her family moved to Florida because her doctors felt the warm climate might cure her chronic pneumonia. There, DiCamillo read such books as *A Cricket in Times Square*, *The Twenty-One Balloons*, *The Secret Garden*, *The Yearling*, *Ribsy*, *Somebody Else's Shoes*, and all the Louisa May Alcott books. She also lists authors Carson McCullers and Harper Lee as her heroes.

DiCamillo earned a bachelor of arts degree in English from the University of Florida, and after returning to the North to live in Minneapolis, Minnesota, she began working full time in a used bookstore. She received a McKnight Artist Fellowship for Writers in 1998, and during a very cold winter in Minnesota, DiCamillo says she began to get terribly homesick for Florida.

In addition, the apartment building where she lived did not allow dogs and, for the first time in her life, DiCamillo was without a pet. In information posted on the Candlewick Press web site, she explains how her main character, India Opal Buloni, began to tell the story of *Because of Winn-Dixie*: I was suffering from a serious case of 'dog withdrawal.'

One night, before I went to sleep, I heard this little girl's voice (with a Southern accent) say, "I have a dog named WinnDixie." When I woke up the next morning, the voice was still talking, and I started writing down what India Opal Buloni was telling me.

The author drew from her own life as she recorded what Opal whispered to her.

DiCamillo's father left her family when she was very young, so she related well to Opal's grief over losing her mother. DiCamillo also drew on her love for the lifestyle she had experienced while living in a small town in Florida. She set Opal and Winn -Dixie right in the middle of a town where everyone knows everyone else.

Following a strict schedule, DiCamillo rose at four o'clock every morning to go to the computer to write before going off to work. As tough as it was, this dedication was rewarded when Candlewick Press purchased *Because of Winn-Dixie* and sent it out into the world where it garnered high reviews and was soon listed on the New York Times bestseller list. In addition, this "hymn of praise to dogs, friendship, and the South"— as DiCamillo describes her novel—captured a Parent's Choice Gold Award and "Best Book" designations by Publishers Weekly, School Library Journal, and Offspring Magazine. Finally, *Because of Winn-Dixie* received the distinction of being named an honor book for the Newbery Award in 2001.

Candlewick Press released DiCamillo's *The Tiger Rising* in March 2001. While DiCamillo is no longer working full time at the used bookstore, she still maintains a strict writing schedule, adhering to a goal of two pages a day, five days a week. When asked in an interview on Kidsreads.com about the recent success of *Because of WinnDixie*,



DiCamillo said: I am busier now than I ever imagined I would be; but I feel blessed in that I have found what I am supposed to be doing with my life. It's wonderful to tell stories and have people listen to them. Hands down, the biggest thrill is to get a letter from a kid saying, "I loved your book.

Will you write me another one?"



## Plot Summary

Pair lost human souls with one lost canine soul, and the result is an inspiring tale of resilience and resolve. India Opal Buloni moves to Naomi, Florida, when her father, the Preacher, is called to lead the Open Arms Baptist Church of Naomi. Opal knows no one and feels sad and lonely at having left her friends behind. The characters she meets along the way as a result of her new best friend, Winn-Dixie, prove that family is only as far as your nearest friend.

India Opal Buloni, 10, is growing up without a mother. Her father is a preacher who moves from town to town when called, and this leaves Opal at loose ends. When the story opens, Opal has entered the local Winn-Dixie grocery store. What she finds changes her life forever.

Opal finds the grocery manager screaming about a dog in the produce section. He's big, smelly, and funny. Instead of letting this creature be sent to the pound, Opal says he belongs to her. She calls him over to her using the first name she can think of--the name of the grocery store--and a fast and firm friendship is formed.

Throughout that first summer in Naomi, Opal makes friends with people from all walks of life largely because of Winn-Dixie. Winn-Dixie needs Opal and the Preacher, and they need him. Opal finds out that almost everyone loves dogs, and that opens many doors for her.

She befriends the seemingly friendless and brings them all together to form an extended family. Judging each other is not allowed, but the playing of music, enjoyment of candy, and love of Winn-Dixie is. Although Opal misses her mother terribly at the beginning of the book, that lonely sadness ebbs with help from her new family and Winn-Dixie.



# Chapter 1

## Chapter 1 Summary

Pair lost human souls with one lost canine soul, and the result is an inspiring tale of resilience and resolve. India Opal Buloni moves to Naomi, Florida, when her father, the Preacher, is called to lead the Open Arms Baptist Church of Naomi. Opal knows no one and feels sad and lonely at having left her friends behind. The characters she meets along the way as a result of her new best friend, Winn-Dixie, proves that family is only as far as your nearest friend.

India Opal Buloni enters the grocery store to buy a few items for her father and comes home with a dog. Just after walking into the local Winn-Dixie, Opal hears the store manager screaming about a dog in the grocery store. Tons of vegetables roll all over the floor, including tomatoes, green peppers, and onions.

Then she saw him. He was big. He was ugly. He didn't smell very good, either. Then something happened that Opal had never seen happen before: the dog smiled at her. He lifted his lips, showed all of his teeth, and grinned.

The dog ran over to the manager as if to thank him for having such a great time in the grocery store. The manager wanted the dog taken to the pound, but for Opal, this wouldn't do.

Opal told the manager that the dog was hers. She called him the first name she could think of: the name of the grocery store. She forgot the groceries she came for. Once outside, Opal checked the dog over carefully. He was big, but he was also very skinny. He had bald patches all over, and there were some places where the fur didn't grow at all. Opal sighed deeply and decided to take him home to the Preacher to see whether they could help him.

## Chapter 1 Analysis

This chapter introduces readers to the two main characters in this novel: Opal Buloni and Winn-Dixie. They both seem to be alone, and this is the first instance of the theme of loneliness that runs through the novel. Readers will also see that Opal stands up for those who can't stand up for themselves, which is quite a good trait for a little girl, especially one who just moved to a new town. The tension has begun as readers should wonder two things: what will happen when Opal comes home with a dog and no groceries, and who is the Preacher?





## Chapter 2

### Chapter 2 Summary

This particular summer, the summer Opal finds Winn-Dixie, happens to be the time when she and her father, the Preacher, move to Naomi, Florida. The Preacher, as Opal likes to call him, is the new minister at the Open Arms Baptist Church of Naomi.

As Opal walks home with Winn-Dixie, she tells him the story of her life, including how she and the Preacher have just moved to Naomi and that he is a good man. She confesses to being a little concerned about whether Winn-Dixie can live with her, but because he seems to be one who is "less fortunate" and just the sort the Preacher always tries to help, she's willing to give it a try.

Opal and Winn-Dixie arrive at The Friendly Corners Trailer Park where she lives with the Preacher. Because this is an "adult" trailer park, loud noises, particularly from children and dogs, are not welcome. Opal tells Winn-Dixie to sit and wait for her just outside her trailer.

The Preacher reminds her of her agreement not to bring home any dogs, but he then agrees to take a look. After calling him, Winn-Dixie sneezes and limps pathetically up the steps. After entering the trailer, he places his face in the Preacher's lap.

The Preacher takes one look at this ugly, matted, smelly dog and falls in love with him. Opal believes the dog will be a good influence for her father because he tends toward reclusiveness and lives like a turtle trapped inside its shell. He scratches Winn-Dixie behind the ears and tells him that he has just found himself a home.

### Chapter 2 Analysis

Readers will start to understand the relationship between Opal and the Preacher: father and daughter. She understands how to manipulate him quite well, but she also knows what it takes to get him to open up and experience the world. Opal pulls back a layer of loneliness for the Preacher by letting the readers in on a secret: he tends to live his life like turtle trapped inside its shell. This emotional reclusiveness is one of the themes that runs through the novel.



## Chapter 3

### Chapter 3 Summary

While bathing Winn-Dixie, Opal confesses to him that she doesn't have any friends in Naomi and that they are alike because they're orphans. Neither of them has a mother. She also confesses to him that she has been thinking about her mother a lot since they moved to Naomi. The Preacher thinks of her all the time, too.

Winn-Dixie stared hard at her as if to say that Opal should get the Preacher to tell her more about her mama. After Winn-Dixie is as presentable as he can be, Opal shows him to the Preacher. He is impressed. Not only did the dog look better, but he also smelled better.

It was right then that Opal decided to ask her father to tell her more about her mother. She wanted to know 10 things about her mother, one for each year she had been alive. Winn-Dixie nudged his nose against the Preacher's arm as if to agree with her and to try to get the Preacher to start talking. It works.

### Chapter 3 Analysis

As Opal is bathing Winn-Dixie, she talks with him like a long-lost friend. She confesses to him that she misses her mother, and readers find out in this chapter that her mother left when Opal was just a baby. This left a great void of loneliness and hurt that has never healed for Opal or the Preacher. Opal wants to know more. Thanks to Winn-Dixie, she's not only finding out about her mother but also helping her father emerge from his shell.



# Chapter 4

## Chapter 4 Summary

Opal learns 10 things about her mother. Her mother was funny and loved to tell a good joke to make people laugh. She had red hair and freckles, just like Opal. She enjoyed planting things and could make anything grow nearly anywhere. Opal's mama could run fast. The Preacher said he couldn't ever let her get a head start, or he'd never catch her. Opal could run fast, too. Opal's mother couldn't cook, but she loved a good story and could sit and listen to them all day long. Opal's mother knew all of the constellations and could name them, but she didn't like being a preacher's wife. She didn't like the entire congregation judging her on what she was wearing or the things she cooked or how she sang.

As the Preacher talks to Opal, Winn-Dixie sits between them on the couch, his nose in the Preacher's lap and his tail in Opal's.

The ninth thing that Opal discovers about her mother is that she drank, and sometimes she couldn't stop. It caused fights between the Preacher and Opal's mother. The 10th thing the Preacher tells Opal about her mother is that she loved Opal very much. Even though she loved both Opal and the Preacher, however, she packed her bags and left them.

Opal and Winn-Dixie go back to her room, so she can write down all 10 things and memorize them. Opal wants to be able to recognize her mother if she ever comes back.

## Chapter 4 Analysis

This chapter gives readers insight into the themes of sadness and abandonment that are so pervasive at the beginning of this book. Readers may feel angry with Opal's mother for leaving them, but they don't know the entire story yet. Opal is actually being very open-minded for a 10-year-old when she makes sure to memorize the 10 things her father told her so that she could recognize her mother. Tension is heightened here because readers understand that there are always two sides to a story. Just what happened between the Preacher and his wife? Was it just her excessive drinking that caused her to leave them? Interested readers are piqued even though the name of Opal's mother is never disclosed.



# Chapter 5

## Chapter 5 Summary

Opal and the Preacher soon find out that Winn-Dixie does not like to be left alone. If he's tied up to a rope outside the trailer, he howls, and he howls so loudly that he disturbs other residents.

Opal convinces the Preacher to take Winn-Dixie with them to church, and so they do. Because the Open Arms Baptist Church of Naomi used to be a Pick-It-Quick store, it doesn't look like a typical church. There are no pews, the congregation brings its own folding chairs, and they all sit together in a circle.

The Preacher and Opal tie Winn-Dixie to a tree outside while they conduct services, but Winn-Dixie will have nothing of it. He howls and howls until Opal fetches him and brings him into church. Winn-Dixie lies down beside her and perks his ears up as though he were listening to the Preacher's sermon.

This is the part of the story where Winn-Dixie asserts himself. The Open Arms Baptist Church of Naomi is occasionally overrun with mice, and a mouse chooses this moment, during the Preacher's sermon, to appear. Winn-Dixie runs after the mouse, catches it, and brings it to the Preacher. After dropping the mouse at the Preacher's feet, he steps on the mouse's tail to keep him from going anywhere. The Preacher says a prayer for the mouse, picks it up by the tail, and tosses it out the front door. Everyone applauds his efforts.

Opal prays about her mother and tells God she's lonely. She has no children to play with, and the ones who are available don't want to be friends with her because she's the Preacher's daughter. She tells God she's lonely in spite of owning Winn-Dixie.

## Chapter 5 Analysis

The tension from the previous chapter is relieved, somewhat, by the spectacle of Winn-Dixie's catching a mouse in church. The theme of loneliness is heightened for Opal because readers know she talks to God about the children who don't want to play with her. Opal is sad, and the readers feel that sadness right along with her.



## Chapter 6

### Chapter 6 Summary

Opal spends a lot of her time that first summer in Naomi at the Herman W. Block Memorial Library. It's just a small house filled with books and staffed by one person: Miss Franny Block. The Library is named after her late father.

As Opal looks through the stacks of books to make her selections, she hears Miss Franny scream. She learns that Miss Franny saw Winn-Dixie outside the window to the library and thought he was a bear. Miss Franny tells Opal the story of how a bear came into the Herman W. Block Memorial Library, and she even permits Winn-Dixie inside to hear the story, too. Miss Franny becomes Opal's first new friend in Naomi.

### Chapter 6 Analysis

This is the first chapter where readers see Opal make a new friend besides Winn-Dixie. Miss Franny Block spends all of her time in the Herman W. Block Memorial Library and is a lonely soul. Although tension is not particularly high in this chapter, intrigue will be as readers wait to hear the story of how a bear got inside the library.



# Chapter 7

## Chapter 7 Summary

Miss Franny proceeds to tell Opal and Winn-Dixie the story of how a bear got into the library. Miss Franny was approximately Opal's age when this happened. Her father, Herman W. Block, built the library because his little girl loved to read, and he was rich.

She was sitting in the library one day with all the doors and windows open because it was summertime and hot when she noticed a shadow cross her desk. Without looking up from her book, she asked whether there was a book she could help someone find. And that's when she saw the bear.

The Bear was three times the size of Winn-Dixie. Although she was concerned that the bear might want to eat her, Miss Franny decided right then and there that she wasn't going to let that happen without a fight. She was reading *War and Peace* at the time, -- a very long book, and decided to throw it at the bear. This action startled him enough to make him leave, but not before he picked up the book and took it with him.

Just as Miss Franny, Opal, and Winn-Dixie become friends, Amanda Wilkinson enters the library and asks for help. Opal thinks that Amanda walks around with a pinched face all the time. Amanda pretends she doesn't see Opal, and she makes a snide comment about dogs being in the library. Miss Franny states that a select few dogs are permitted.

## Chapter 7 Analysis

Readers discover the story of the bear's visit to the Herman W. Block Memorial Library and the bravery of Franny Block. Tension is released when readers discover that no one was hurt and that Opal and Miss Franny and Winn-Dixie are now friends. Loneliness and sadness seems to evaporate when two souls find each other, but there's another outcast: Amanda Wilkinson.



## Chapter 8

### Chapter 8 Summary

After tender and loving grooming, Winn-Dixie begins to look more and more handsome. The bald spots fade away as fur grows in. Opal walks to the local pet shop, Gertrude's Pets, to see about buying a collar and leash for him.

Once inside the pet store, Opal finds a beautiful red leather collar and leash, but they cost more than her meager allowance can afford. She asks the man working there if she can have something called an installment plan where she can pay a little bit each week toward the balance of the collar and leash. That arrangement isn't acceptable to the owner, so Opal offers to sweep floors to pay off the balance.

In an effort to convince him to hire her, Opal explains that she's new in town, is trustworthy, and is the daughter of the Preacher at the Open Arms Baptist Church of Naomi.

The man in the store is named Otis. Opal explains that she needs to bring Winn-Dixie into the store, so he isn't lonely. It isn't until the store parrot, Gertrude, flies down from her perch to land on Winn-Dixie's head that Opal is hired to sweep floors and clean up every morning.

Just outside Gertrude's Pets, Opal sees a girl from church, Sweetie Pie Thomas. Sweetie Pie remarks that she's seen the dog in church and pats Winn-Dixie's head with such tender strokes that he becomes sleepy. Sweetie Pie invites Opal and Winn-Dixie to her sixth birthday party.

In the space of one day, Opal makes friends with Miss Franny Block, buys a collar and leash for Winn-Dixie, secures a job to pay for the collar and leash, and receives an invitation to a birthday party.

### Chapter 8 Analysis

Opal's resourcefulness leads her to making friends and getting a job in a place that she seems to like. It doesn't seem to matter that she's only 10; she's going to sweep floors and dust shelves to pay off the red leather collar and leash she has gotten for Winn-Dixie. At the end of the day, she no longer feels as lonely or sad, and it is all because of Winn-Dixie. Tension increases as readers wonder who Otis is and how he came to work in a pet store. Although it isn't yet disclosed, readers will find out about Otis' loneliness.



## Chapter 9

### Chapter 9 Summary

Just about everything that happens to Opal that summer happens because of Winn-Dixie. For instance, she never would have met her new friend, Gloria Dump, if it weren't for him. One day, after working at Gertrude's Pets, Opal was riding her bike and Winn-Dixie was running beside her when Winn-Dixie decided to take a detour into an overgrown front yard.

Dunlap and Stevie Dewberry--both shaved bald in the summer after Dunlap had contracted fleas from their cat--saw this happen and tried to warn Opal that her dog had gone into the witch's house. They teased her, saying that the witch likes to eat dogs. She ignored them.

Opal swung the gate open while Dunlap and Stevie rode away. She walked into the thickness of a deep jungle with every kind of flying bug and plant growing everywhere. She worried about losing Winn-Dixie and called out for him. She heard laughter and followed the sound to find Winn-Dixie eating peanut butter from an old woman's hand.

Opal didn't think she looked like a witch, and Winn-Dixie seemed to like her, so Opal introduced herself. The old woman introduced herself as Gloria Dump, and then she asked the dog's name. She laughed and offered Opal a peanut butter sandwich. As Opal ate, they sat and talked. Gloria admitted that she couldn't see very well, and so she asked Opal to tell her about herself. That way she could see Opal with her heart.

### Chapter 9 Analysis

The theme of loneliness and abandonment rises again in the guise of one Gloria Dump. She is a woman who has long been thought odd, and neighbor children even call her a witch. The taunting of Dunlap and Stevie Dewberry--children from the Open Arms Baptist Church of Naomi--doesn't bother Opal as much as the possibility of losing her dog to an unsavory character, but Opal discovers that Gloria is really just a lonely old woman and is very nice. Opal has made another new friend, so the sadness that pervades both lives is lifted. Readers may recognize the theme of prejudice since the Dewberry boys have decided that Gloria is a witch without ever meeting or knowing her. Opal doesn't judge Gloria on a rumor but on who she is and how she treats Winn-Dixie.





# Chapter 10

## Chapter 10 Summary

Opal proceeds to tell Gloria Dump everything about herself. She tells Gloria about being a preacher's kid, the 10 things that she knows about her mother, and about finding Winn-Dixie in the produce department of the grocery store. After listening to Opal's story, Gloria suggests that the two of them plant a tree together. It's a "wait-and-see tree." Gloria explains to Opal that she'll have to wait for it to grow to see what it is.

Opal is enchanted. Gloria tells Opal that as long as this is her garden, Opal and Winn-Dixie are welcome any time they wanted to visit. After getting home, Opal tells the Preacher all about her day and what happened with the Dewberrys and Gloria Dump.

## Chapter 10 Analysis

Opal's life is changing. Although she may have been sad and lonely once, her life in this new town is getting better. At the beginning of the chapter, it appears that Winn-Dixie might have gotten into trouble by going into a strange yard. It turns out, though, that the owner of the house is very nice lady who likes Opal and Winn-Dixie. Appearances--like a stray, dirty dog and an old lady believed to be a witch--can be deceptive. Judgment without knowledge can lead one astray.



# Chapter 11

## Chapter 11 Summary

The night, a severe thunderstorm rolls through the town of Naomi, and the Preacher and Opal learn something about Winn-Dixie they didn't know: he is terrified of thunderstorms. Winn-Dixie wakes Opal up trying to get out of her bedroom.

She opens the door and he flies down the hallway toward her father's room. She tries to warn him, but just as her father opens the door to his bedroom, Winn-Dixie comes barreling through before she has the chance. The next thing they know, here comes Winn-Dixie again running back through the hallway into Opal's bedroom.

Three deafening cracks of thunder scare Winn-Dixie so much he runs right out of Opal's room, heads for the Preacher, and bowls him over. Opal is sure this behavior will get Winn-Dixie sent to a new home.

The Preacher explains to Opal that Winn-Dixie has a pathological fear of thunderstorms. Pathological fear is a fear one cannot be talked out of or reasoned with. There isn't anything Opal or her daddy can do to help Winn-Dixie, so they just watch him as he runs back and forth from bedroom to bedroom.

The storm finally dies down, and Winn-Dixie stops running. He finds the Preacher and Opal sitting on the couch waiting for him, and he crawls up in between them. Winn-Dixie puts his head in Opal's lap and his tail in the Preacher's lap, and they pet him until he calms down. Although Opal is still afraid that the Preacher will not want a dog that is afraid of thunderstorms, he surprises her. The Preacher tells Opal that they will have to keep a watchful eye on Winn-Dixie whenever they have thunderstorm and keep him inside, safe from harm.

## Chapter 11 Analysis

Suddenly, something happens that could get Winn-Dixie thrown out of his new home. A mighty thunderstorm blows into the town of Naomi, frightening Winn-Dixie half to death. He spends a good part of the night running back and forth, feeling lost and alone and afraid for his life. Although Opal worries that the Preacher will want to get rid of Winn-Dixie (leaving Opal alone and sad again) the opposite happens. The tension of the possibility of Opal's losing her best friend is released when the Preacher shows concern and caring for Winn-Dixie. The theme of judgment is a subtle one in this chapter. Winn-Dixie's behavior during a thunderstorm is at the seat of judgment, but so is Opal's opinion of what the Preacher will do after this display of fear. She's pleasantly surprised when her father doesn't react the way she thinks he will: to rid his life of all controversy.



# Chapter 12

## Chapter 12 Summary

Opal and Winn-Dixie show up for their first day of work at Gertrude's Pets. She and Winn-Dixie walk in and see all the animals out of their cages and in the middle of the room. Otis plays the most beautiful guitar music she's ever heard. Even Winn-Dixie becomes dreamy, uttering a big sigh and lying down on the floor with the other animals.

Otis looks up, sees Opal and Winn-Dixie and stops playing his guitar. When this happens, all the animals awaken from their dream state and start running around the store. When they have trouble getting the animals back into their cages, Opal suggests that Otis start playing his guitar again. This calms the animals and allows Opal to return them to their rightful cages.

Otis tells Opal his secret: he feels sorry for the animals being locked into cages because he himself has been in jail. He doesn't elaborate beyond that point and tells Opal to get busy with her sweeping.

Once again, Sweetie Pie is waiting for Opal outside the pet store. She tells her that her birthday party theme is pink. Opal begins thinking about everything that has happened to Winn-Dixie and her, and she works hard to remember them so she can tell her mother if she ever meets her.

## Chapter 12 Analysis

The theme of prejudice is apparent toward the end of the chapter in two places. Although Otis seems like a gruff man at first, Opal experiences a kind of magic when he plays his guitar for the animals, and they all stay quiet and listen to him. Then Otis says something that surprises Opal: he's spent time in jail, and that is why he took all of the animals out of their cages. There is some heightened tension with the knowledge that Otis is a former criminal, and Opal is a 10-year-old girl, but this tension is tempered with the knowledge that Otis has a magical ability to calm animals. Readers can infer that he isn't a dangerous man.



# Chapter 13

## Chapter 13 Summary

Opal and Winn-Dixie settle into a nice routine. Early every morning, they go to Gertrude's Pets and do their work. After finishing their work at Gertrude's Pets, Opal and Winn-Dixie visit Miss Franny Block at the library.

Opal's favorite place to be, however, is the garden at Gloria Dump's. Winn-Dixie knows when they are getting close as if he can already taste the peanut butter in his mouth. Stevie and Dunlap Dewberry continue to taunt Opal, even calling out that the Preacher's daughter is going to see a witch. Every day, Dunlap and Stevie Dewberry yell at her and every day she shouts back at them. Then she goes to Gloria's, she gets a peanut butter sandwich, and things are all right again.

Once Gloria even asked why Opal didn't want to be friends with Dunlap and Stevie. Opal said they were mean and stupid, and she would rather be Gloria's friend. Gloria always wanted to know what was going on in the world, and Opal always had plenty of stories to tell her.

## Chapter 13 Analysis

Any tension that has built from the prior chapters is released more completely in Chapter 13 with the knowledge of Opal's new life. Opal has a reason for living now and feels needed. Her isolation and sadness have turned into a feeling of contentment with her new friends and especially with Winn-Dixie.



# Chapter 14

## Chapter 14 Summary

Sometimes Opal tells Gloria stories that Franny Block has told her. Other times, she imitates Otis keeping the beat to his music with the pointy toes of his boots. Gloria tells Opal that she used to love to read books, but because her eyes are so bad now she can't do it anymore.

Opal confesses to Gloria one afternoon that Otis was a criminal. She wanted to know whether she should be afraid of him, and that's when Gloria takes Opal and Winn-Dixie over to a tree in her yard. Hanging from the tree are bottles on just about every branch. In fact, when the wind blows, the bottles clink together.

When Opal asks what the bottles are for, Gloria told her they were put there to keep the ghosts away. They are the ghosts of the bad things that Gloria has done in her life. Opal tells Gloria that her mother drank too much. Gloria tells Opal that she understood because she had been one of those people, too. Gloria tried to convince Opal not to judge people too harshly.

After Gloria walks back to her chair, Opal remains and stares at the bottle tree. She wonders whether her mother has a tree like the one Gloria has. She also wonders whether she is a ghost to her mother in the same way her mother was a ghost to her.

## Chapter 14 Analysis

The theme of sadness is pervasive in this chapter. Readers learn a little more about Gloria--that she drank heavily and can no longer see very well--which increases reader empathy for her. Also, it is sad when Opal gazes up at the bottle tree and wonders about her own mother. There is such a deep sadness in this young girl, and that sadness draws Gloria and Opal together.



# Chapter 15

## Chapter 15 Summary

There are times when Miss Franny Block suffers seizure-like symptoms in the middle of telling stories. Winn-Dixie, who likes to hog the only fan in the library, is sitting by Miss Franny's side when she has a seizure. She shakes so violently that she reminds Opal of how Winn-Dixie looked when he was reacting to a loud thunderstorm.

One day at the library, Opal decides that she wants to read a book to Gloria Dump. She asks Miss Franny for a suggestion, and together they decide upon *Gone with the Wind*.

That's when Opal learns about Miss Franny's great-grandfather, Mr. Littmus W. Block. Just as Opal and Winn-Dixie are settling in for a good story, Amanda Wilkinson crashes through the library door. Amanda is very demanding, but Miss Franny does not let her take over. After all, she is about to tell the story of her great-grandfather Littmus.

## Chapter 15 Analysis

While this chapter is not very exciting--with the exception of the discovery that Miss Franny Block may have epileptic seizures--it's important because of the introduction of Franny Block's great-grandfather, Littmus W. Block. The sadness of Amanda Wilkinson is as noticeable as she is when coming into the library, as if being noticed will somehow make her feel better.



# Chapter 16

## Chapter 16 Summary

Miss Franny tells Amanda and Opal that Littmus was only a 14-year-old boy when the Civil War began. Littmus enlisted and left his mother and three sisters behind to be a war hero.

He was miserable. Hungry all the time, covered with lice and fleas, Littmus spent his days and nights being shot at. When the war was over, he walked back home and found that there was no home to greet him. The Yankees had burned down his home, and his sisters had died of typhoid fever. His mother was also dead, and his father had died on the battlefield. The Civil War made Littmus an orphan.

Winn-Dixie had fallen asleep on the floor next to Amanda and Opal and had begun to snore loudly. She really wanted to hear how Littmus survived after losing everything and everyone he had loved, and Winn-Dixie's snoring was drowning out Miss Franny.

## Chapter 16 Analysis

Amanda Wilkinson is introduced as a more sympathetic character when she joins Opal and Winn-Dixie to listen to the story of Miss Franny Block's great-grandfather. The theme of sadness once again runs through this chapter, not only in the story about Littmus, but also in the beginnings of understanding Amanda.



# Chapter 17

## Chapter 17 Summary

Right after returning home from the war, Littmus made a very important decision. After weeping over the loss of his family and his home, Littmus realized that he had a yearning for a piece of candy. He hadn't had candy in years, but he decided that since the world was such a sorry place, he was going to make sure that he could put something sweet in it.

Littmus started a candy factory after the Civil War that still stands today, although it was abandoned. Littmus created the Littmus Lozenge--a candy that became world famous for its mixture of sweet and sad. At that point, in the story, Miss Franny opens her desk drawer and reveals an enormous cache of Littmus Lozenges.

Both Opal and Amanda like the candy. Amanda is the first to say that, although it was tasty, it made her think of sad things. That is the key to the Littmus Lozenge. The secret ingredient is sorrow.

Opal understands that. She feels sad that she has had to move away from Watley, Florida, and leave all her friends. Opal also feels sad about being teased so much by the Dewberry boys, and she misses her mother. Amanda says that she misses Carson. When she says this, she sounds like she is about to cry and runs out of the library.

Opal can't figure out how someone could put sweet and sad into a candy, and Miss Franny tells her that that was how Littmus made his fortune. He was able to manufacture a piece of candy that tasted sweet and sad at the same time. Opal asks whether she can take some pieces of candy to Gloria and Otis. Miss Franny gives her as many as she wants.

Opal checks out *Gone with the Wind* and heads for Gloria Dump's place. When she rides past the Dewberry's, she thinks about what Gloria said about judging people too harshly and waves at them instead of shouting at them. Opal thinks it is nice that Amanda Wilkinson likes a good story as much as she does, but now she is curious about the identity of Carson.

## Chapter 17 Analysis

Readers are beginning to find out more and more about the characters in this story. For instance, Franny Block's great-grandfather--the source of her family's fortune--was able to create a quite unusual piece of candy that combined sweet and sad in the same piece. Not only did he fight in the Civil War, but he was also responsible for creating a confection that has one of the story's themes sewn right into it. Amanda reveals that she misses someone named Carson. Readers may be curious as to who Carson is to



Amanda. The taste of the growing friendship between Amanda and Opal is like the Littmus Lozenge: bittersweet.



# Chapter 18

## Chapter 18 Summary

Opal immediately gives Gloria a Littmus Lozenge. Gloria remembers the candy very well and says that it tastes sweet, but it also tastes like people leaving. Opal says she has a second surprise for her and reveals the copy of *Gone with the Wind*, announcing that she'd be happy to read it to her.

Opal reads chapter one loudly and clearly, making sure to keep all of Gloria's ghosts away. Gloria listens well and tells Opal that the book and the candy are the best surprise she's ever had.

That night, Opal gives the Preacher a Littmus Lozenge and tells him a little bit about it. He agrees that there is sadness mixed in with root beer and strawberry. This is when Opal tells her daddy the story of Littmus W. Block.

The Preacher confronts Opal about calling the Dewberry boys bald-headed babies. Mrs. Dewberry had complained to the Preacher, and the Preacher said that Opal owed them an apology. She was surprised at this but agrees that she will apologize. Opal finds out that Carson is Amanda's brother who drowned at the age of five.

Opal can't fall asleep right away. She thinks about how life is very much like a Littmus Lozenge--sweet and sad all rolled into one. She likes the word her father used to describe the candy: melancholy.

## Chapter 18 Analysis

The sadness of previous chapters is released when readers feel the bond of family among the Preacher, Opal, and Winn-Dixie. Readers will also begin to see the threads of family that friends can create by just being together. The mystery of who Carson is and what he means to Amanda is resolved, and the tenderness that Opal feels for Gloria, especially in wanting to keep her ghosts away, makes this chapter fulfilling.



# Chapter 19

## Chapter 19 Summary

The next day, Opal gives Otis a Littmus Lozenge and asks the most pressing question on her mind: why did Otis go to jail?

Otis explains that he was not a dangerous man, and then he decides to tell the story of how he ended up in jail. He was playing his guitar on the sidewalk. Sometimes people would put money in a hat for him. It was during one of these concerts that the police confronted him and told him that he needed to stop playing his guitar in public.

He didn't want to stop. He kept right on playing his music, and when one of the police officers tried to handcuff him, Otis hit him. That's how he ended up in jail. The owner of Gertrude's Pets doesn't mind if Otis plays his guitar and, the pet store is the only place he plays. Opal takes her time sweeping and cleaning up because she wants to keep Otis company. She doesn't want him to feel lonely like she'd felt. She doesn't want him to be filled with the kind of emptiness she has when she thinks of her mother.

## Chapter 19 Analysis

The tension about Otis's imprisonment is released. Readers learn that he did not commit a heinous crime. Otis should not have hit a policeman, but readers' faith is restored when they hear that he was jailed merely because he was playing music in public. The tension of whether or not Opal is safe around Otis is also released in learning the circumstances around Otis's imprisonment. The theme of loneliness appears at the very end of the chapter when Opal takes her time cleaning the pet store so that Otis won't be lonely. In addition, the theme of abandonment by her mother will become more important to Opal's character.



# Chapter 20

## Chapter 20 Summary

After telling Gloria about Otis's confinement, Opal reads Chapter 2 of *Gone with the Wind* featuring Scarlett O'Hara in attendance at a big barbecue. This chapter gives Opal her next big idea: a party for all of her new friends. Gloria agrees to open her yard for the party. Opal and Gloria spend the afternoon planning the menu. There will be egg salad sandwiches and punch. Opal wants to invite all her friends to the party, and Gloria makes her promise to invite Stevie and Dunlap Dewberry as well.

The Preacher says he will come, Miss Franny Block wants to come, and even Amanda Wilkinson will be there. When she asks the Dewberry Brothers, they agree to attend as well. Otis is the only one who doesn't want to come.

People make Otis nervous. However, Opal tells him that she will clean the store free for an entire week if he will come to her party. Once he is convinced that he won't have to talk to people, Otis agrees.

## Chapter 20 Analysis

Plans for a grand party are under way. Excitement is in the air and so is happiness. Opal wants to do this for her new friends--friends that are quickly becoming her new family. Sadness, loneliness, abandonment, and prejudice are put away in favor of happiness.



# Chapter 21

## Chapter 21 Summary

Opal and Gloria decide to have the party at night so it will be cooler outside. They spend the day of the party decorating the yard with multicolored crepe paper and luminaria. Gloria teaches Opal how to make egg salad and cuts the crusts off the bread so that it looks fancy. Even Winn-Dixie gets to sample the egg salad.

The yard looks pretty with all the lighted candles, and Miss Franny Block, tottering on high heels, is the first to arrive. She has brought an entire bowl full of Littmus Lozenges. After introducing Franny to Gloria, Sweetie Pie arrives with her mother, and then Amanda walks in. The next thing the group hears is the screechy voice of Gertrude, the parrot, from the pet store. Otis has arrived.

Otis shows Opal the large jar of pickles he brought for the party. She thinks they will be perfect with egg salad sandwiches and punch. Opal speaks to Otis in a very calm and soothing voice to try to get him to join the party and the people.

## Chapter 21 Analysis

Party preparations are under way, and the only tension readers feel at this point is Otis's extreme shyness at not wanting to join a group of people. Readers see the two seams of loneliness and sadness start to evaporate as the chapter moves on, and Opal takes on the role of nurturer for Otis in the same way that Otis nurtures the animals in his charge.



## Chapter 22

### Chapter 22 Summary

Before Otis can leave the party, Opal introduces him to the Preacher. After introductions are finished, Opal introduces Otis to Amanda and Miss Franny Block and then to Gloria Dump. For the first time, Opal sees Otis smile.

Gloria asks the Preacher to bless the party. After the blessing, a huge thunderstorm rolls into town, drenching everyone and the party. Amanda suggests that they all get inside quickly, but not before the rain comes pouring down.

### Chapter 22 Analysis

Although this chapter is a short one, it brings together all the people in Opal's life. It also raises tension for Opal: a thunderstorm is the one thing her best friend cannot stand. What will happen? Will Winn-Dixie run away and leave Opal forever?



# Chapter 23

## Chapter 23 Summary

Amanda helps Miss Franny get out of the rain and into Gloria's kitchen as Opal watches the rain come down and soak her party. Then she sees Otis. She begs him to come in out of the rain.

Everyone is shaking themselves off like wet dogs. Then Opal realizes she doesn't see Winn-Dixie anywhere. In her excitement to get people and food into the kitchen, she's forgotten about him. Opal had forgotten to protect Winn-Dixie from the thunderstorm.

Gloria gives the Preacher and Opal some flashlights and umbrellas so they can look in the yard for Winn-Dixie. Just as they begin to look for the dog, the Dewberry Brothers show up. In the midst of her concern, Opal has to be reminded to welcome Dunlap and Stevie Dewberry to the party.

Dunlap Dewberry offers to help Opal find Winn-Dixie. Opal tries not to cry. Gloria tells Opal that she can't hold on to something that wants to leave. She just has to appreciate what she has at the time she has it. Gloria wishes Opal good luck in finding her best friend. The last thing Opal sees as she turns away from the house is the porch light shining off Dunlap Dewberry's bald head. It makes her sad.

## Chapter 23 Analysis

Tension ratchets up when a thunderstorm interrupts the party. While Opal is busy trying to gather everyone and everything into Gloria Dump's kitchen so the party isn't ruined, she remembers she hadn't protected Winn-Dixie from the thunderstorm. This sadness practically paralyzes her as she realizes she is capable of causing sadness, as well as receiving sadness. The tension over finding Winn-Dixie is not released by the end of the chapter as two lonely figures, the Preacher and Opal, brave the thunderstorm to find him.



# Chapter 24

## Chapter 24 Summary

Opal and the Preacher search for Winn-Dixie. She's glad it's raining so the Preacher won't see her crying. They walk past the Dewberry's house, the Herman W. Block Memorial Library, and Gertrude's Pets. They can't find him anywhere.

To pass the time, Opal lists 10 things about Winn-Dixie that she could write on posters to find him. It's the same exercise she did when memorizing the 10 things about her mother.

The Preacher and Opal look for Winn-Dixie for a long time. Finally, the Preacher says they need to get back to the party. It was then that Opal finally tells the Preacher what she has been thinking all along: that he gives up too easily, that he pulls his head inside of his shell, and lets life go on without him. She accuses him of letting her mother run off without trying to make her stay.

The Preacher starts to cry. He is upset about losing his wife, but he is also upset about losing Winn-Dixie. In fact, the Preacher becomes so upset that he starts to shake, and Opal has to put her arms around him to comfort him. The Preacher tells Opal that he doesn't think her mother will come back, ever.

The Preacher tells Opal that the best and only thing his wife left him was Opal. Opal isn't ready to give up on Winn-Dixie, and the Preacher agrees they should keep looking.

## Chapter 24 Analysis

This chapter presents the climax of the story. Readers have been waiting for Opal to tell her father how she feels about him, and this occurs while the two are looking for the one common thread in their lives: Winn-Dixie. The climax of the novel comes in two stages: when the Preacher tells Opal that he doesn't think her mother is coming back, and just as important, when Opal tells her father that she believes he gives up too soon on things and on people. They agree that looking for Winn-Dixie is very important. It becomes clear to readers that the Preacher was deeply hurt when his wife left, and it's something he must live with every day. The themes of loneliness and sadness are ending.





# Chapter 25

## Chapter 25 Summary

As the Preacher and Opal return to Gloria Dump's house, they hear music coming from the open kitchen door. There's a kitchen full of people, and Opal admits to the crowd that she and the Preacher were not able to find Winn-Dixie.

Gloria Dump holds Sweetie Pie on her lap and tells Opal why she can't find Winn-Dixie. He was in the house all along. Winn-Dixie had fallen asleep underneath Gloria Dump's chair.

Opal is so happy to see her best friend that she falls to her knees and throws her arms around his neck. Then Gloria tells the story of how they found Winn-Dixie.

Not long after the Preacher and Opal had left, Gloria asked Otis to play music for the party. As she looked over at Otis, he smiled brightly. Both Miss Franny and Gloria asked Otis to play different songs from their childhood, and then they heard a sneeze. They looked around, and realized it was Winn-Dixie. He had hidden underneath Gloria's bed.

Otis continues to play his guitar and slowly, little by little, Winn-Dixie emerges from underneath Gloria Dump's bed. He is covered head to tail in "dust bunnies," and he looks like a ghost. Opal thanked Gloria and everyone in the house for taking good care of him. While Otis plays some more, Opal sneaks out to Gloria's ghost tree.

## Chapter 25 Analysis

Any tension from the previous chapter has now been released when Opal finds Winn-Dixie safe at Gloria Dump's house. All of Opal's new friends appear to be having a good time at the party. Even Otis is smiling as people finally get to appreciate his musical talent. There's one more thing Opal must do, however, before the book concludes, and at the end of the chapter, she leaves the party to do it.



# Chapter 26

## Chapter 26 Summary

The rain finally stops and the sky clears. Opal walks over to Gloria Dump's ghost tree. There is no wind, so the bottles aren't rattling against each other. Opal talks to the ghost tree as though it were her mother. She tells her that the 10 things she knows about her aren't enough.

However, the most important thing she tells the ghost tree is that her heart doesn't feel empty anymore. She has filled it up with new friends that have become her family. As she stands and looks at the tree, Opal realizes she hasn't checked on her own tree that she and Gloria had planted. As she is checking its height, Dunlap Dewberry comes out to talk with her.

It is on this night that Dunlap Dewberry and Opal Buloni become friends. She even races him back to the house and beats him. Everyone is still sitting in the kitchen listening to Otis play his guitar. Winn-Dixie comes out from beneath Gloria's chair and leans against Opal. Opal leans against her father.

Sweetie Pie announces that the group should sing a song for Winn-Dixie. Everyone agrees and begins to sing. Opal listens very carefully so that she can learn the song properly.

## Chapter 26 Analysis

All the tension is released, and readers should feel confident that Opal will be just fine. Winn-Dixie has a permanent home in a town where everyone loves him, and, for now, sadness resulting from loneliness, prejudice, and abandonment are things of the past.



# Characters

## India Opal Buloni

Ten-year-old Opal (as her father calls her) has just moved to the town of Naomi, Florida, and knows no one. Her father, the Preacher, has been called as the new minister of the Open Arms Baptist Church of Naomi.

Opal's very first friend in Naomi is a dirty, stray dog she finds in the Winn-Dixie grocery store. Together, they make friends all over town, but there's a sadness in Opal's heart that even Winn-Dixie can't salve: Opal's mother left her and the Preacher when Opal was a baby.

The sadness Opal feels is echoed in the other characters she meets, but through the sharing her friendship and fellowship, Opal is able to heal her heart and creates a family from the friends she's chosen.

## The Preacher

Opal's father is the new minister at Open Arms Baptist Church of Naomi. His deep hurt over losing his wife to alcohol and having to care for an infant is manifested in his inability to deal with conflict.

Opal describes him as "hiding in his turtle shell" and "pulling his head into his shell." Although he's a likeable fellow and quite tolerant, readers don't get to know him well until the end of the book when he finally breaks down and cries over the loss of Opal's mother.

The Preacher has held out some hope that his wife would return but finally admits to Opal that she's never coming back. Once he does this, he begins to heal his own heart so that he can help others heal theirs.

## Winn-Dixie

A dirty, stray dog wanders into the Naomi, Florida, Winn-Dixie grocery store and causes a stir. While the manager is screaming, Opal watches as the dog creates a mess in the produce department.

Instead of returning home with groceries, Opal brings home a dog she's named after the store. He's big and smelly and smiles with all his teeth showing. Opal needs him as much as her needs her.

Throughout that first summer in Naomi, Opal makes friends because of Winn-Dixie. She meets Miss Franny Block, Gloria Dump, and Otis. Although they're all adults and Opal's



only 10, Winn-Dixie is the great equalizer. He's funny, smart, and kind, which is the perfect entry into an adult world.

## **Mr. Alfred**

Mr. Alfred is the manager of the Friendly Corners Trailer Park where Opal and the Preacher live.

## **Miss Franny Block**

Miss Franny owns and runs the only library in Naomi, Florida. The Herman W. Block Memorial Library is named after Miss Franny's father, who built it for her when she was young.

## **Amanda Wilkinson**

Amanda is a resident of Naomi, Florida, and becomes a friend to Opal.

## **Otis**

Otis works in Gertrude's Pets and is befriended by Opal and Winn-Dixie.

## **Gertrude**

Gertrude owns Gertrude's Pets and is a character in name only. Readers never see her. Gertrude is also the name of a pet parrot living in the pet store.

## **Sweetie Pie Thomas**

Sweetie-Pie is a 5-year-old girl from Open Arms Baptist Church of Naomi and is the first to invite Opal to a birthday party.

## **Gloria Dump**

Gloria is a lonely woman living in a neighborhood house with an overgrown front yard. Opal and Winn-Dixie make friends with her and spend every afternoon reading to her and enjoying Gloria's peanut butter sandwiches. Gloria's house is the site of Opal's first party where she gathers all her new friends.



## **Dunlap and Stevie Dewberry**

These two boys are brothers who taunt Opal and Winn-Dixie. They also attend Open Arms Baptist Church of Naomi with their family.

## **Littmus W. Block**

Littmus is Miss Franny Block's great-grandfather, who fought in the Civil War and invented the Littmus Lozenge.

## **Artley W. Block**

Artley is Littmus W. Block's father.



## Objects/Places

### Winn-Dixie Grocery Store

The Winn-Dixie is the grocery store where Opal finds her first friend in Naomi, Florida, a stray dog she names Winn-Dixie.

### Friendly Corners Trailer Park

Opal, Winn-Dixie, and the Preacher reside in a trailer in the Friendly Corners Trailer Park.

### The Herman W. Block Memorial Library

This library is owned and run by Miss Franny Block. Opal spends a lot of time here the first summer she lives in Naomi.

### Open Arms Baptist Church of Naomi

Open Arms Baptist Church is the church where the Preacher works and where many residents of Naomi go to worship.

### Gertrude's Pets

Gertrude's is a pet shop in the town of Naomi where Opal secures a red leather collar and leash for Winn-Dixie in exchange for sweeping the floors and straightening up every morning. Gertrude's is also where Opal and Winn-Dixie meet a new friend named Otis. He's in charge of the pet shop.

### Gloria Dump's House

Gloria's home is a haven for Opal and Winn-Dixie. Winn-Dixie first discovers this house when he runs through an overgrown front yard to find Gloria Dump, a kind woman who is happy for company and a good story. This home is also the location of Opal's first party in Naomi.

### Ghost Tree

The ghost tree is located in Gloria's yard where bottles hang from limbs in memory of every bad thing she's ever done in her life.

## **Littmus Lozenge**

The Littmus Lozenge is the candy that made the Block family rich and famous.



# Setting

The time setting of the novel is unclear, but these events could not have happened before Winn-Dixie grocery stores opened in the 1940s and probably did not occur until after the late 1960s when divorce was more commonly accepted in the South. For the physical locale, DiCamillo sets this charming story in Naomi, Florida, where everyone knows everyone—or at least, people think they know each other. The various settings in the novel emphasize this contrast between what appears to be real and what is real.

The town is populated with seemingly stereotypical characters: a lonely little girl; a preoccupied father; an aging southern belle; a witch in a haunted house; and a criminalized, simple-minded man, among others. DiCamillo plunks them all on the fringes of this small, Southern town and turns a loveable mongrel loose among them, using the "expected" friendliness to assist her characters and emphasize their problems. She focuses on those people who live on the edge of this friendliness, those who are outcast or alone for various reasons, and she uses her settings to emphasize the hurt and need caused by isolation, gossip, and snobbery. In so doing, she creates memorable, rather than stereotypical characters.

The settings within the town also require the reader to look more closely at the characters and their environs. Opal's father is the new preacher at the Open Arms Baptist Church in Naomi. But the church is not actually a church; it is a former Pick-It-Quick store where the congregation sits on lawn chairs. However, it is a friendly place.

The members even welcome Winn-Dixie when he succeeds in catching one of the mice that populate the building.

Opal and the preacher move into the Friendly Corners Trailer Park, which is an all-adult residency. Opal, age ten, explains why she was allowed to live there, "because the preacher was a preacher and I was a good, quiet kid . . . 'an exception.'"

The all-adult setting only intensifies Opal's feelings of being "an exception" and feeds her sense of loneliness.

As the story opens, DiCamillo immediately captures the reader's attention by creating an unusual meeting in a very common setting, a grocery store. Opal explains, "my daddy, the preacher, sent me to the store for a box of macaroni-and-cheese, some white rice, and two tomatoes and I came back with a dog." The setting for this meeting reinforces the theme of the odd and unusual which is prevalent in the text. Shoppers do not expect to meet dogs in grocery stores. This particular use of setting prepares the reader for the unusual characters that follow and sets the tone for the rest of the story. From start to finish, the contrasts between the expected and the unexpected keep the story moving.

Other venues in the story such as the library, the pet store, and Gloria Dump's backyard, offer more atypical settings for the discovery of answers to Opal's questions.





Miss Franny, the librarian, turns out to be far more than the "sad and old and wrinkled" woman she appears to be. She has wonderful stories and magical candy to share. At the pet store, Opal discovers Otis's ability to mesmerize the animals with his music, which he never plays for people, and she also learns he is an ex-prisoner.

Gloria Dump's backyard shelters ghosts under trees covered in bottles. These settings symbolize exactly what Opal is searching for: a library is a place where people go to find information and knowledge; the pet store is a place where love can be found; and Gloria Dump and her backyard offer the companionship and comfort that Opal seeks. The settings also enhance the intimate mood of the novel. The library is located in the personal setting of a house, the pet store is filled with soothing music, and Gloria Dump's secluded backyard shuts out the rest of the world. In each of these locations, DiCamillo creates a quiet place conducive to sharing and listening.

In addition, the hot, humid weather in Florida also aids the plot. The sudden thunderstorms expose Winn-Dixie's terrible fear and sets up the climactic scene between Opal and her father.



# Social Sensitivity

Because of *Winn-Dixie* not only tells a delightful story, but also it addresses several socially sensitive and pertinent issues that many young people encounter today.

The story includes references to alcoholism, prejudice, the elderly, death, single-parent families, and the importance of community.

Opal's mother is an alcoholic, as is Gloria Dump. However, the contrast between how the two women deal with alcoholism is clearly evident and used to aid Opal in finding solutions to her own problems.

Opal's mother abandons her family, leaving Opal to struggle with self-doubts and insecurities. She remembers very little about her mother and searches for anything that will keep her mother alive to her, similarities between them, stories, "Just ten things, that's all," she tells her father. She also does this when she loses *Winn-Dixie*: "I memorized it so if I didn't find him, I would have some part of him to hold on to." Not knowing who to blame for her mother's departure, she unconsciously blames her father, widening the emotional distance between them. In contrast to Opal's mother, Gloria Dump remains to combat her alcohol problem. The whiskey bottles on the tree serve to remind her of her past, and she is honest with others about her drinking problem.

This honesty provides Opal with the assurance that each person makes his or her own choices about dealing with problems, thus relieving Opal's concern that perhaps she was the reason her mother left.

DiCamillo paints an all-too-common picture of how prejudice affects group and individual relationships. Her characters are mostly social outcasts: Miss Franny, the elderly woman shut away inside her library and her memories; Otis, ostracized because he was arrested once for a nonviolent, petty offense; Amanda, perceived as cold and distant; and Gloria, known as the witch in town because she lives alone and keeps to herself. Opal learns valuable lessons about prejudice and gains invaluable friendships when she heeds Gloria Dump's advice not to judge people.

The isolation of the elderly is also addressed in the novel. Miss Franny and Gloria are both older women, isolated by those around them because of their perceived peculiarities or physical ailments. It is not until Opal dares to take the time to really notice them that their gifts are recognized.

Another issue explored in the novel is the single-parent family. The preacher struggles with his own pain and sense of abandonment as he attempts to perform his job and to be a father to Opal. Unfortunately, he is not aware of how his preoccupations with these other things are perceived by Opal, and alternately, Opal is not aware of what her father is experiencing. Becoming aware of the needs of everyone involved in a familial crisis, then attempting to change what needs to be changed is a challenge many single-parent families must confront.

All these issues emphasize one possible solution to these problems—the importance of community. DiCamillo builds a family unit for Opal, providing mentorship, friendship, companionship, and self-esteem by bringing together the individual characters. The problems are not completely abolished, but what is accomplished is a strengthening of courage, a feeling of belonging, and most importantly, a sense of hope.

# Literary Qualities

Because of Winn-Dixie is a quest story in which the structural and literary elements combine to create a sense of intimacy. Each character has an individual journey to make, but when they are brought together by Opal and Winn-Dixie, they are bound together by the answer to one central question: What is the most important thing?

DiCamillo uses the first-person point of view to allow Opal to speak directly to the reader. Opal carries the reader breathlessly through the first chapter with nonstop sentences made up of long phrases often joined by "and" and lacking punctuation. This breathless, confiding voice immediately involves the reader in the excitement of Opal's quest.

The intimate, conversational approach to narrative also allows DiCamillo to establish divisions between the beginning, the middle, and the end of the story. Opal interrupts her narrative in chapter 1 with "This is what happened." The chapters that follow introduce the reader to the three main characters (Opal, Winn-Dixie, and the preacher), set up their individual problems, and establish the central conflict of the story.

Again, in chapter 6, Opal stops her tale and addresses the reader with "What happened was this." In these chapters, the reader meets and learns about the other characters who will have significant influences on Opal's quest. Finally, in the last chapter, DiCamillo allows Sweetie-Pie's dialogue to bridge the climax and the final scene, "Tell what happened," Sweetie-Pie said. "Tell about that dog." What follows spotlights the last and final lesson Opal will learn about holding on and letting go.

DiCamillo's technique of telling stories within the main story also calls attention to the individual characters and themes and furthers the intimacy between the reader and all the other characters. As each character is introduced into Opal's life, a new story is told, and in each, the author emphasizes the importance of sharing oneself and of listening to others. First, there is WinnDixie, who listens patiently while Opal tells him everything about her life. Miss Franny's story is given the same attention as WinnDixie and Opal sit patiently listening. Otis plays his music for the pet shop animals that stand still and listen as if mesmerized.

Gloria Dump invites Opal to "tell me everything about yourself" and to emphasize the importance of this invitation, Opal says, "I had been waiting for a long time to tell some person everything about me... . I could feel her listening with all her heart, and it felt good."

The commonalities DiCamillo's characters share despite outward differences also draws the characters together. Each has lost something or someone they loved, and yet each has survived. That each survives after suffering such losses is important to Opal 35 for three reasons: first, it reassures her that she is not alone in her pain; second, it teaches her that she will survive the loss; and, finally, it allows her to eventually recognize what is most important.



Through all the stories, DiCamillo emphasizes the truth that life, like the Littmus Lozenge candy, holds both the sweet and the sad. Each character struggles to accept this; each finds strength to do so in part through the friendships established. "Do you think everybody misses somebody?"

Opal asks, and Gloria replies, "I believe, sometimes, that the whole world has an aching heart."

Biblical undertones in the text also relate to intimacy. Ruth, of the Old Testament, loved her mother-in-law Naomi and vowed to make her people, "my people," just as Opal makes the outcasts of Naomi her people. Like the Ten Commandments, Opal needs to know ten things about her mother and ten things about Winn-Dixie. Further suggestions of the Bible are found in Gloria Dump's admonishments to Opal not to judge others and to forgive.

DiCamillo also employs a specific technique in developing the character of the preacher. To Opal, and to the reader as well, the preacher is "the preacher" throughout most of the text until the final confrontational scene between him and Opal. That his title and not his name is used for address or reference sets him apart from the others, allowing the reader to experience the emotional distance that Opal herself is experiencing. But after the climactic scene where the issue of his emotional isolation is confronted, Opal refers to the preacher as "daddy," and the reader is allowed to better understand his initial emotional distance and to clearly ascertain his growth and change by the end of the story.

These techniques and approaches work together to strengthen the sense that this story is a shared intimacy—one in which the reader invests a strong emotional interest with the characters and their plights.



# Themes

## Loneliness

Loneliness exists on several levels in different characters. It's usually tied into another theme. For Opal, she's lonely because she's moved to a new town and has no friends. As she grows older, she misses having a mother around like her other friends. This abandonment causes her to feel even lonelier because she's unlike other kids.

The Preacher is lonely because he lost the companionship of his wife. His daughter can't take her place and he throws himself into his work. While he and Opal have a friendly relationship, it isn't until the end of the book that he breaks down enough over the loss of her mother that he lets Opal see who he really is.

Otis' loneliness exists because of his enforced reclusiveness. After being arrested and put in jail because of playing his guitar in public, Otis has confined himself to Gertrude's Pets, playing only for the animals. While he'll speak with customers of the store and to Opal who has come to work there to pay off the collar and leash she purchased for Winn-Dixie, he doesn't go out in public and interact with others his own age.

Gloria's loneliness has grown out of being judged as something she isn't, which leads to her abandonment. Neighborhood boys, the Dewberrys, have pronounced that Gloria is a witch because they don't understand her. This belief may come from others in town, which leads to Gloria's being left totally alone. It isn't until she meets Winn-Dixie and Opal that Gloria is seen for her strength of character and kindness.

Amanda Wilkinson has experienced the loss of her younger brother, and this familial loss is something she and Opal have in common. Miss Franny is also lonely and has been so for a long time. Her entire life consists of operating the Herman W. Block Memorial Library. She suffers from epilepsy, which sometimes causes people to shy away. Her abandonment because of this disease is a cause of her loneliness.

## Emotional Reclusiveness/Sadness

These two themes co-exist for many of the characters. Tucking away emotions, as the Preacher does, or refusing to interact with others out of embarrassment over a past indiscretion as Otis does, robs characters of the joys and sorrows of life.

Opal is one of the only characters who isn't an emotional recluse. Her sadness stems from lack of knowledge and abandonment by her mother and sadness at having to leave her friends behind when she and her father moved to Naomi. Up until this time, Opal knew very little about her mother. She finally prodded the Preacher into telling her 10 things about her that Opal could memorize in case she ever met her.



Gloria's failing eyesight keeps her physically reclusive, which also keeps her at arms length emotionally. Her sadness results from the prejudice shown to her by other people together with past mistakes she can't take back.

Otis is a character who is emotionally reclusive as a direct result of his past behavior. There are those in town who judge him because of his criminal past and, therefore, abandon him. He finds solace only with the animals in Gertrude's Pets, who love him unconditionally.

## Abandonment

Abandonment is a theme readers will recognize in many ways. There's emotional abandonment and physical abandonment as well as a mixture of the two. The character suffering most from both physical and emotional abandonment is the Preacher.

His wife abandoned him emotionally long before she left him. Her drinking was something she couldn't leave, so she left her family. The Preacher was then left to raise Opal (readers are never learn how old Opal was when her mother left). The Preacher became emotionally withdrawn from his daughter, so he wouldn't have to face her questions about her mother.

Opal feels the Preacher's emotional distance but doesn't make waves. She co-exists well with him yet intuitively sees his way of keeping himself safe: tucking himself inside like a turtle ducks its head inside its shell. Opal's mother physically and emotionally abandons her although Opal admits that she has very little memory of her. The lack of memory causes her pain and makes her ask questions.

Franny Block has kept herself at a distance from everyone since she was a child. The Herman W, Block Memorial Library is her real home but it isn't until Opal and Winn-Dixie arrive that she blossoms.

Otis also distances himself from people in general because it's easier to be alone than to have people get to know him. The explanation he may give himself for this behavior is his embarrassment over his past, but that isn't the real reason. He's shy and doesn't know how to relate to people the way he can relate to animals.

Gloria Dump is physically abandoned by neighbors and townsfolk because she's eccentric and has a handicap. She sits in her yard, listens to the bottles on her mistake tree clank against one another, and relives every mistake she's ever made. She knows that people around town talk about her, but her spirit is still vital. Through the party, Opal and Winn-Dixie make sure that people get to know her and come to be unafraid of her.

## Judgment

Out of all the themes, this one weighs the heaviest on the characters. The judgment of one by another is a terrible burden to bear and to hear. All the solitary characters, Miss



Franny, Amanda, and Otis, share the same trait. They are characters who are judged by their pasts and not the present.

Opal and Winn-Dixie are able to string these characters together in a necklace of extended family. Gloria hosts the party, Otis provides entertainment that is greatly appreciated, and Amanda and Miss Franny join in.

It's Otis who is the most changed character as a result of the party at the end of the novel. It isn't until the party when he takes the chance to interact with other adults because of Opal and Winn-Dixie, that he opens himself up to praise and appreciation. Although the reader never sees it, the reader can assume that this party changes Otis' life.

The Dewberry boys are judged by Opal as unsavory characters, but it turns out that Dunlap Dewberry is a good sort and just wants to be friends with Opal. Once she gives him a chance to be nice to her, she realizes that he's a good boy and she might have some fun with him.





## Themes/Characters

Through her characters and their relationships, DiCamillo poses several themes.

Opal, as well as each of the other characters, is confronted with issues such as love, loss, and friendship. Brought together, the characters gain wisdom and valuable lessons about what it means to hold on, to let go, to listen, and to share. Ultimately, Opal discovers what is really important.

Opal is a frank, funny, lonely little girl who fears upsetting her father. But with Winn-Dixie at her side, she decides to ask him about her mother who left them. She then memorizes what her father tells her because, as she says, "I wanted to know those ten things inside and out. That way, if my mama ever came back, I could recognize her, and I would be able to grab her and hold on to her tight and not let her get away from me again."

Opal's need is not just to hold on to the memory of her mother, but to have her own fears calmed, to know that she is safe and loved. Because her father is so preoccupied with his work and his own hurt, he does not recognize the kind of reassurance his daughter desperately needs. As she watches him with Winn-Dixie during one of the dog's fits, Opal tells the reader, "I loved the preacher so much... I loved him because he was going to forgive Winn-Dixie for being afraid. But most of all, I loved him for putting his arm around Winn-Dixie like that, like he was already trying to keep him safe."

Throughout the story, Opal expresses her loneliness and her need to have someone to hold on to. She talks to God about being lonely; she adopts Winn-Dixie because he does not "belong to anybody;" and she takes him everywhere because being "left behind probably made his heart feel empty." Opal relates to this because she feels the same way. Her need to hold on to her mother's memory is strong, and she searches for ways to do it: memorizing things about her, collecting stories she hopes one day to tell her, and trying to be good so that no one else will leave her.

Opal's new friends hold on to things, as well. Miss Franny holds on to her library and the Littmus Lozenge candy to remind her of the past because all her friends and family are dead. Otis keeps his music to himself for fear of being returned to jail.

Gloria Dump hangs her empty whiskey bottles on a tree so she does not forget past mistakes. Amanda, holding on to the pain of losing her little brother, shuts herself off from other people. And, finally, the preacher holds in his emotions, fearful, too, of losing again if he loves too much.

But Winn-Dixie shows them the way to let go of their pain. DiCamillo uses the dog to teach the other characters what they must hold close. But, like the Littmus Lozenge with its blend of sweetness and sorrow, these people must first learn to accept that life holds both joy and pain and consists of both holding on and letting go. Miss Franny learns that she does not have to be lonely in her library full of books. She learns that sharing her



stories can bring companionship. Otis, by sharing his music with others, gains self-confidence and friends.

Amanda eases her sorrow over her brother's death by allowing other people to be her friends. Gloria, by sharing the wisdom she has gained, also gains friends and helps others discover what is really important.

Opal learns about letting go when she loses Winn-Dixie. "I was supposed to hold on to him," she says. But Gloria Dump replies, "There ain't no way you can hold on to something that wants to go, you understand?"

Searching frantically for Winn-Dixie, Opal and her father come face to face with reality when the preacher says, "it's time to give up." In her desperation, Opal blames him for giving up on her mother, for letting her mother leave. Fortunately, Opal recognizes her father's hurt and fear in his response, and she also recognizes his very deep love for her, which was all she really needed to know. Despite his role as a catalyst, WinnDixie also discovers a new way to react to his own fears and, in the process, teaches Opal one more important lesson: letting go does not mean losing.



# Style

## Point of View

*Because of Winn-Dixie* is written entirely in first person. This style allows the readers to get to know Opal on an intimate level. Readers see events through her eyes and get to know her through her thoughts and actions.

Although the first-person point of view belongs to Opal, characters are also unmasked through a first-person storytelling device. Miss Franny Block tells Amanda and Opal the story of her family through Littmus Block's Civil War experiences. Otis confesses his criminal past to Opal and recounts the story of how he landed in jail.

It isn't until the end of the book, though, that readers feel compassion for the Preacher. Up until that time he is a character seen through Opal's eyes. He's compassionate toward his daughter and Winn-Dixie, but readers feel the true weight of his hurt when he breaks down and cries with Opal when they can't find Winn-Dixie during a thunderstorm.

First person narration is used by the author to join many characters together through the eyes of Opal. This perspective helps readers empathize with each of the characters' travails and take part in their joys.

## Setting

This novel is set entirely in a Southern town called Naomi, Florida. While setting can sometimes be a character in itself, it's decidedly missing in this book.

It is the characters--Opal, the Preacher, Amanda, Miss Franny, Otis, Gloria, and Winn-Dixie--who are the town of Naomi. The only thing readers know about Naomi is that there is a Baptist church, a Winn-Dixie grocery store, a pet store, a library, and houses there.

The town of Naomi doesn't pulse with life. It exists merely because these characters live there. Readers discover a history through Miss Franny Block and her ancestors. Naomi has been around as long as the Civil War, at least, and probably before that. Its most notable citizen was Littmus Block, maker of the Littmus Lozenge.

## Language and Meaning

Meaning in this novel isn't difficult or obtuse. It's straightforward. It's what's *behind* the meaning that engages readers. It's the unanswered questions in the back-story like why couldn't Opal's mother stay with the family? What was Otis' life like before he was arrested and put in jail? What did Gloria Dump do that was so bad she had to remind herself of her sins on a daily basis? Did the Preacher ever work hard enough to hang on



to his wife? Every character has some ghosts in his or her past. It's what they do that binds them together.

While Opal's language is that of a simple girl, she's clearly intelligent and intuitive. She has an ability to read other people and respond to unspoken needs. Sometimes, Winn-Dixie is the best icebreaker.

Dogs have a language and meaning all their own, and Winn-Dixie is no exception. He not only worms his way into the hearts of the Preacher and Opal, but he also opens the hearts of new friends. What other dog would be allowed into Miss Franny's coveted library? Dogs aren't allowed into Gertrude's Pets (unless in a cage for sale), but Otis breaks down and lets him come in. He even strikes up a friendship with a contentious parrot.

Winn-Dixie likes everyone unconditionally and helps teach the characters that everyone is special in his or her own way. Differences aren't as important as kindness and courtesy.

## Structure

*Because of Winn-Dixie* is told in 26 chapters. Each chapter has a main event and enough action to propel the reader forward. Chapters aren't divided as a matter of time. The entire story occurs over a summer. The chapters introduce and expand a character and the place he or she calls home one at a time.

Each chapter builds on the one before it. There's never a time when the author removes the reader from Opal's world in Naomi, nor does she allow readers to learn the thoughts of any character but Opal.

This kind of structure is like pulling a drawstring on a bag. Each character is added to the string until the necklace is full. Once that occurs, they're all drawn together as an extended family. This happens at Opal's first party given at Gloria Dump's house. While the author leaves the future to the reader's imagination, it's believable that these new friends will remain so for the rest of their lives, all because of one dog.



## Quotes

"It's hard not to immediately fall in love with a dog who has a good sense of humor."  
(Chapter 1, page 12)

"My daddy is a good preacher and a nice man, but sometimes it's hard for me to think about him as my daddy, because he spends so much time preaching or thinking about preaching or getting ready to preach." (Chapter 2, page 13)

"Sometimes he reminded me of a turtle hiding inside its shell, in there thinking about things and not ever sticking his head out into the world." (Chapter 2, page 16)

"They say he's still hoping she'll come back. But he doesn't tell me that. He won't talk to me about her at all. I want to know more about her. But I'm afraid to ask the preacher; I'm afraid he'll get mad at me." (Chapter 2, page 22)

"And when the mouse tried to get away, Winn-Dixie put his paw right on the mouse's tail. Then he smiled up at the preacher. He showed him all his teeth."(Chapter 5, page 37)

"I had just made my first friend in Naomi, and nobody was going to mess that up for me, not even old pinch-faced Amanda Wilkinson." (Chapter 7, page 51)

"Well," he said, after a minute, "it's a fear that goes way beyond normal fears. It's a fear you can't be talked out of or reasoned out of." (Chapter 11, page 75)

"I loved the preacher so much. I loved in because he loved Winn-Dixie. I loved him because he was going to forgive Winn-Dixie for being afraid. But most of all, I loved him for putting his arm around Winn-Dixie like that, like he was already trying to keep him safe." (Chapter 11, page 78)

"I feel sorry for them being locked up all the time. I know what it's like, being locked up." (Chapter 12, page 82)

"I swear, it about wore me out yelling at Dunlap and Stevie Dewberry everyday; by the time I got to Gloria Dump's yard, I felt like a soldier who had been fighting a hard battle." (Chapter 13, page 90)

"Child," said Gloria Dump, "I know that. I'm the one who put 'em there. I'm the one who drank what was in 'em." (Chapter 14, page 95)

"But in the meantime, you got to remember, you can always judge people by the things they done. You gotta judge them by what they're doing now." (Chapter 14, page 96)

"There ain't no way you can hold on to something that wants to go, you understand? You can only love what you got while you got it." (Chapter 23, page 159)



"You always give up!" I shouted. "You're always pulling your head inside your stupid old turtle shell. I bet you didn't even go out looking for my mama when she left. I bet you just let her run off, too." (Chapter 24, page 165)

# Adaptations

Because of Winn-Dixie is Kate DiCamillo's first book. Her second book, *The Tiger Rising*, also deals with relationships. Rob Horton, the main character, has recently lost his mother, moved to a new town, and discovers a caged tiger in the woods behind the motel where he lives. The story explores issues of death, grief, unexpressed emotions, and the importance of friendships. It is also available on cassette, published in 2001 and narrated by Dylan Baker for Bantam Books.

Readers interested in stories exploring the relationship between people and their dogs will find *My Dog Skip*, by Willie Morris, similar in tone to *Because of Winn-Dixie*.

For those seeking stories about similar familial relationships, Joan Bauer's *Hope Was Here* and *Rules of the Road* both explore variations of this theme, one with a missing mother and the other with an absentee father. Toby, in Kimberly Willis Holt's book, *When Zachary Beaver Came to Town*, also seeks understanding after his mother leaves the family: like Opal Buloni, Toby is faced with finding a new definition of family and security within nontraditional structures.



## Topics for Discussion

1. Why does Opal decide to claim WinnDixie as her dog? What is it about WinnDixie that people like? How does this decision affect her life and the lives of the other characters?

2. Why is Winn-Dixie afraid of thunderstorms? How does he react to them?

How does this relate to one of the themes of the story?

3. List the ten things Opal learns about her mother. Relate these to other events or characters in the story. For instance, does Opal look like her mother?

4. Recount the stories told by Miss Franny, Otis, and Gloria. How do these stories help Opal?

5. Describe why Opal does not like the Dewberry boys. What causes her to change her mind?

6. Why does Gloria ask Opal to plant a tree? How does the tree's name relate to Opal?

7. Gloria is important to Opal for several reasons. Identify and discuss some of these.

8. Explain how the Littmus Lozenge relates to the story. What does it represent to each character? Is it a sad thing, a good thing? Explain.

9. What do you think would happen if DiCamillo wrote a sequel to this story?





## Essay Topics

What is it that causes Opal to let go of her hurt feelings about being abandoned by her mother?

Why didn't the preacher want to talk to Opal about her mother?

Is it just the alcoholism and desertion by his wife that makes the preacher the way he is?

How did Winn-Dixie bring everyone together?

Compare and contrast the meaning of an extended family.

Explain how abandonment touches everyone's lives.

Will Dunlap Dewberry and Opal remain friends? If yes, why? If no, why not?

Why does Miss Franny keep herself locked away in the library?

What did Gloria Dump mean when she said that someone can't hold on to something that wants to go?

What is a pathological fear and why does it happen?

Why do people judge others?

What is it about Gloria Dump that makes Stevie and Dunlap Dewberry think she's a witch?



## Ideas for Reports and Papers

1. Identify family members or neighbors who seem isolated and lonely. Do an interview with that person, and write about what you learn. Then present your story as a gift to them.
2. Write a report on a community service that addresses the needs of the elderly, alcoholics, or single-parent families.
3. Write a paragraph based on a meeting in an unusual setting.
4. Research a "bottle-tree." Find out how many different cultural interpretations there may be.
5. Choose your favorite candy, and report the history and making of it.
6. The title of the novel suggests the theory of cause and effect. Study this theory, and write a report on one cause/ effect that particularly interests you.

This could relate to science, history, psychology, people, and/or relationships.

7. Miss Franny tells of the military service of her ancestor. Identify a veteran in your family. Interview that family member, then write a report on what you learn about veterans or the war in which that person fought.

8. Visit a local animal shelter or pet store.

Report on what you find there.

9. Write ten things you remember about someone you miss.

10. Opal possesses good social skills. What are these skills? Research how children develop social skills and how the lack of these skills affects behavior.

## Further Study

Brown, Jennifer M. "Flying Starts: Kate DiCamillo." *Publishers Weekly* (June 26, 2000): 30. This is a brief article about the author's life, influences on her writing, and her first novel.

"DiCamillo, Kate." In *Something about the Author*, Vol. 121. Detroit: Gale, 2001. This is a brief introduction to DiCamillo's work that also provides biographical information.

DiCamillo, Kate. "The Wishing Bone." *Riverbank Review* (Winter 2001/2002): 14-16.

This article by DiCamillo discusses the writing process and relates a childhood experience which, for her, holds the same "magic."

H., C. M. Review of *Because of Winn-Dixie*.

*The Horn Book* (July, 2000): 455. This is a short book review of the novel.

## Related Websites

Maughan, Shannon. "A Talk with Kate DiCamillo." <http://www.kidsreads.com/authors/au-dicamillo-kate.asp>. 2001.

A brief interview with the author is presented concerning her life as a writer, influences on her writing, and her new book *Tiger Rising*.

"Speaking with Kate DiCamillo about *Because of Winn-Dixie: A Hymn of Praise to Dogs, Friendship, and the South*."

Candlewick Press-Authors & Illustrators <http://www.candlewick.com/authill.asp?b=Author&m=bio&id=1989&pix=n>. Accessed March 30, 2002. This publisher's web site includes the author's biographical information and comments on her work.

Swindle, Michael. "Winn-Dixie Woebegone, but Winsome and Wise." Books & Authors <http://63.147.65.175/books/winndix O917.htm>. September 17, 2000.

This site features a synopsis of the story and brief book review.



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