

## **Kate DiCamillo - *Because of Winn-Dixie* - Grade 3**

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**Learning Objective:** The goal of this one day exemplar is to give students the opportunity to use the reading and writing habits they've been practicing on a regular basis to absorb deep lessons from Kate DiCamillo's story. By reading and rereading the passage closely and focusing their reading through a series of questions and discussion about the text, students will identify how and why the three main characters became friends.

**Reading Task:** *Students will silently read the passage in question on a given day—first independently and then following along with the text as the teacher and/or skillful students read aloud. Depending on the difficulties of a given text and the teacher's knowledge of the fluency abilities of students, the order of the student silent read and the teacher reading aloud with students following might be reversed. What is important is to allow all students to interact with challenging text on their own as frequently and independently as possible. Students will then reread specific passages in response to a set of concise, text-dependent questions that compel them to examine the meaning and structure of DiCamillo's prose. Therefore, rereading is deliberately built into the instructional unit. This serves two purposes: helping less fluent readers access a more complex text than they could independently and modeling for all students the necessity and process of returning to the text in order to absorb all it has to offer.*

**Vocabulary Task:** *Most of the meanings of words in the exemplar text can be discovered by students from careful reading of the context in which they appear. Teachers can use discussions to model and reinforce how to learn vocabulary from contextual clues, and students must be held accountable for engaging in this practice. Where it is judged this is not possible, underlined words are defined briefly for students to the right of the text in a separate column whenever the original text is reproduced. At times, this is all the support these defined words need. At other times, particularly with abstract words, teachers will need to spend more time explaining and discussing them. There is a longer discussion of this in the "Vocabulary" section of the Introduction. In addition, in subsequent close readings of passages of the text, high value academic ('Tier Two') words have been **bolded** to draw attention to them. Given how crucial vocabulary knowledge is for academic and career success, it is essential that these high value words be discussed and lingered over during the instructional sequence.*

**Discussion Task:** *Students will discuss the exemplar text in depth with their teacher and their classmates, performing activities that result in a close reading of DiCamillo's story. The goal is to foster student confidence when encountering complex text and to reinforce the skills they have acquired regarding how to build and extend their understanding of a text. A general principle is to always reread the passage that provides evidence for the question under discussion. This gives students another encounter with the text, helping them develop fluency and reinforcing their use of text evidence.*

**Writing Task:** *Students will respond to a series of text dependent questions and then write an informal explanatory essay. Teachers might afford students the opportunity to revise their essays after participating in classroom discussion or even rewrite their explanation after receiving teacher feedback, allowing them to refashion both their understanding of the text and their expression of that understanding.*

**Text Selection:** This exemplar text, taken from Kate DiCamillo's award winning novel of the same title introduces readers to some of the principal characters in the book and to the unique "talents" of the dog, Winn-Dixie.

**Outline of Lesson Plan:** This lesson can be delivered in two days of instruction and reflection on the part of students and their teacher, or spread over three days. Reasons for extending the discussion regarding *Because of Winn-Dixie* to three full periods of instruction include taking more time to unpack the rich array of ideas DiCamillo explores in this piece, taking more time to look closely at academic vocabulary, or even working at greater length with the writing prompt.

**Standards Covered:** The following CCS standards are the focus of this assignment: RL.3.1, 3-5; RF.3.3-4; W.3.2, 4-5; SL.3.1-2; L.3.1-5.

**The Text: DiCamillo, Kate. *Because of Winn-Dixie***

Exemplar Text	Vocabulary
<p>I spent a lot of time that summer at the Herman W. Block Memorial Library. The Herman W. Block Memorial Library sounds like it would be a big fancy place, but it's not. It's just a little old house full of books, and Miss Franny Block is in charge of them all. She is a very small, very old woman with short gray hair, and she was the first friend I made in Naomi.</p> <p>It all started with Winn-Dixie not liking it when I went into the library, because he couldn't go inside, too. But I showed him how he could stand up on his hind legs and look in the window and see me in there, selecting my books; and he was okay, as long as he could see me. But the thing was, the first time Miss Franny Block saw Winn-Dixie standing up on his hind legs like that, looking in the window, she didn't think he was a dog. She thought he was a bear.</p> <p>This is what happened: I was picking out my books and kind of humming to myself, and all of a sudden, there was a loud and scary scream. I went running up to the front of the library, and there was Miss Franny Block, sitting on the floor behind her desk.</p> <p>Miss Franny sat there <u>trembling</u> and shaking.</p> <p>"Come on," I said. "Let me help you up. It's okay." I stuck out my hand and Miss Franny took hold of it, and I pulled her up off the floor. She didn't weigh hardly anything at all. Once she was standing on her feet, she started acting all embarrassed, saying how I must think she was a silly old lady, mistaking a dog for a bear, but that she had a bad experience with a bear coming into the Herman W. Block Memorial Library a long time ago, and she never had quite gotten over it.</p> <p>"When did it happen?" I asked her.</p> <p>"Well," said Miss Franny, "it is a very long story."</p> <p>"That's okay," I told her. "I am like my mama in that I like to be told stories. But before you start telling it, can Winn-Dixie come in and listen, too? He gets lonely without me."</p> <p>"Well, I don't know," said Miss Franny. "Dogs are not allowed in the Herman W. Block Memorial Library."</p> <p>"He'll be good," I told her. "He's a dog who goes to church." And before she could say yes or no, I went outside and got Winn-Dixie, and he came in and lay down with a "<i>huummmppff</i>" and a sigh, right at Miss Franny's feet.</p> <p>She looked down at him and said, "He most certainly is a large dog."</p> <p>"Yes ma'am," I told her. "He has a large heart, too."</p> <p>"Well," Miss Franny said. She bent over and gave Winn-Dixie a pat on the head, and Winn-Dixie wagged his tail back and forth and snuffled his nose on her little old-lady feet. "Let me get a chair and sit down so I can tell this story properly."</p> <p>"Back when Florida was wild, when it consisted of nothing but palmetto trees and mosquitoes so big they could fly away with you," Miss Franny Block started in, "and I was just a little girl no bigger than you, my father, Herman W. Block, told me that I could have anything I wanted for my birthday. Anything at all."</p> <p>Miss Franny looked around the library. She leaned in close to me. "I don't want to <b>appear prideful</b>," she said, "but my daddy was a very rich man. A very rich man." She nodded and then leaned back and said, "And I was a little girl who loved to read. So I told him, I said, 'Daddy, I would most certainly love to have a library for my birthday, a small little library would be wonderful.'"</p>	<p><i>To shake because of fear or the cold without trying to shake; when you can't stop yourself</i></p>

“You asked for a whole library?”

“A small one,” Miss Franny nodded. “I wanted a little house full of nothing but books and I wanted to share them, too. And I got my wish. My father built me this house, the very one we are sitting in now. And at a very young age, I became a librarian. Yes ma’am.”

“What about the bear?” I said.

“Did I mention that Florida was wild in those days?” Miss Franny Block said.

“Uh-huh, you did.”

“It was wild. There were wild men and wild women and wild animals.”

“Like bears!”

“Yes ma’am. That’s right. Now, I have to tell you. I was a little-miss-know-it-all. I was a miss-smarty-pants with my library full of books. Oh, yes ma’am, I thought I knew the answers to everything. Well, one hot Thursday, I was sitting in my library with all the doors and window open and my nose stuck in a book, when a shadow crossed the desk. And without looking up, yes ma’am, without even looking up, I said, ‘Is there a book I can help you find?’

“Well, there was no answer. And I thought it might have been a wild man or a wild woman, scared of all these books and afraid to speak up. But then I became aware of a very **peculiar** smell, a very strong smell. I raised my eyes slowly. And standing right in front of me was a bear. Yes ma’am. A very large bear.”

“How big?” I asked.

“Oh, well,” said Miss Franny, “perhaps three times the size of your dog.”

“Then what happened?” I asked her.

“Well,” said Miss Franny, “I looked at him and he looked at me. He put his big nose up in the air and sniffed and sniffed as if he was trying to decide if a little-miss-know-it-all librarian was what he was in the mood to eat. And I sat there. And then I thought, ‘Well, if this bear intends to eat me, I am not going to let it happen without a fight. No ma’am.’ So very slowly and carefully, I raised up the book I was reading.”

“What book was that?” I asked.

“Why, it was *War and Peace*, a very large book. I raised it up slowly and then I aimed it carefully and I threw it right at that bear and screamed, ‘Be gone!’ And do you know what?”

“No ma’am,” I said.

“He went. But this is what I will never forget. He took the book with him.”

“Nu-uh,” I said.

“Yes ma’am,” said Miss Franny. “He snatched it up and ran.”

“Did he come back?” I asked.

“No, I never saw him again. Well, the men in town used to tease me about it. They used to say, ‘Miss Franny, we saw that bear of yours out in the woods today. He was reading that book and he said it sure was good and would it be all right if he kept it for just another week.’ Yes ma’am. They did tease me about it.” She said. “I imagine I’m the only one left from those days. I imagine I’m the only one that even recalls that bear. All my friends, everyone I knew when I was young, they are all dead and gone.”

She sighed again. She looked sad and old and wrinkled. It was the same way I felt sometimes, being friendless in a new town and not having a mama to comfort me. I sighed, too.

Winn-Dixie raised his head off his paws and looked back and forth between me and Miss Franny. He sat up then and showed Miss Franny his teeth.

“Well now, look at that,” she said. “That dog is smiling at me.”

“It’s a **talent** of his,” I told her.

“It’s a fine talent,” Miss Franny said. A very fine talent.” And she smiled back at

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Winn-Dixie.

“We could be friends,” I said to Miss Franny. “I mean you and me and Winn-Dixie, we could all be friends.”

Miss Franny smiled even bigger. “Why, that would be grand,” she said, “just grand.”

And right at that minute, right when the three of us had decided to be friends, who should come marching into the Herman W. Block Memorial Library but old pinch-faced Amanda Wilkinson. She walked right up to Miss Franny’s desk and said, “I finished *Johnny Tremain* and I enjoyed it very much. I would like something even more difficult to read now, because I am an advanced reader.”

“Yes dear, I know,” said Miss Franny. She got up out of her chair.

Amanda pretended like I wasn’t there. She stared right past me. “Are dogs allowed in the library?” she asked Miss Franny as they walked away.

“Certain ones,” said Miss Franny, “a select few.” And then she turned around and winked at me. I smiled back. 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.

## Day One: Instructional Exemplar for DiCamillo’s *Because of Winn-Dixie*

### Summary of Activities

1. Teacher introduces the day’s passage with minimal commentary and students read it independently.
2. Teacher or a skillful reader then reads the passage out loud to the class as students follow along in the text. Teachers can reverse numbers 1 and 2 if they feel students need the support of hearing the text read aloud first.
3. Teacher asks the class to discuss the first set of text-dependent questions and perform targeted tasks about the passage, with answers in the form of notes, annotations to the text, or more formal responses as appropriate.

Text Passage under Discussion	Instructional Commentary/Guiding Questions For Teachers/Proficient Responses
<p>I spent a lot of time that summer at the Herman W. Block Memorial Library. The Herman W. Block Memorial Library sounds like it would be a big fancy place, but it’s not. It’s just a little old house full of books, and Miss Franny Block is in charge of them all. She is a very small, very old woman with short gray hair, and she was the first friend I made in Naomi.</p> <p>It all started with Winn-Dixie not liking it when I went into the library, because he couldn’t go inside, too. But I showed him how he could stand up on his hind legs and look in the window and see me in there, selecting my books; and he was okay, as long as he could see me. But the thing was, the first time Miss Franny Block saw Winn-Dixie standing up on his hind legs like that, looking in the window, she didn’t think he was a dog. She thought he was a bear.</p> <p>[read the intervening paragraphs]</p> <p>“Certain ones,” said Miss Franny, “a select few.” And then she turned around and winked at me. I smiled back. 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.</p>	<p><b>1. Introduce the passage and students read independently.</b></p> <p>Other than giving the brief definitions offered to words students would likely not be able to define from context (underlined in the text), avoid giving any background context or instructional guidance at the outset of the lesson while students are reading the text silently. This close reading approach forces students to rely exclusively on the text instead of privileging background knowledge and levels the playing field for all students as they seek to comprehend DiCamillo’s story. It is critical to cultivating independence and creating a culture of close reading that students initially grapple with rich texts like DiCamillo’s without the aid of prefatory material, extensive notes, or even teacher explanations. That being said two initial readings provide much support, but all coming from the text rather than outside of it.</p> <p><b>2. Read the passage out loud to the class as students follow along in the text.</b></p> <p>Asking students to listen to <i>Because of Winn-Dixie</i> exposes students a second time to the rhythms and meaning of her language before they begin their own close reading of the passage. Speaking clearly and carefully will allow students to follow DiCamillo’s story, and reading out loud with students following along improves fluency while offering all students access to this complex text. Accurate and skillful modeling of the reading also provides students who may be dysfluent with accurate pronunciations and syntactic patterns of English.</p>

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<p>This is what happened: I was picking out my books and kind of humming to myself, and all of a sudden, there was a loud and scary scream. I went running up to the front of the library, and there was Miss Franny Block, sitting on the floor behind her desk.</p> <p>Miss Franny sat there <u>trembling</u> and shaking.</p> <p>“Come on,” I said. “Let me help you up. It’s okay.” I stuck out my hand and Miss Franny took hold of it, and I pulled her up off the floor. She didn’t weigh hardly anything at all. Once she was standing on her feet, she started acting all embarrassed, saying how I must think she was a silly old lady, mistaking a dog for a bear, but that she had a bad experience with a bear coming into the Herman W. Block Memorial Library a long time ago, and she never had quite gotten over it.</p> <p>...</p> <p>“Back when Florida was wild, when it consisted of nothing but palmetto trees and mosquitoes so big they could fly away with you,” Miss Franny Block started in, “and I was just a little girl no bigger than you, my father, Herman W. Block, told me that I could have anything I wanted for my birthday. Anything at all.”</p> <p>Miss Franny looked around the library. She leaned in close to me. “I don’t want to <b>appear prideful</b>,” she said, “but my daddy was a very rich man. A very rich man.” She nodded and then leaned back and said, “And I was a little girl who loved to read. So I told him, I said, ‘Daddy, I would most certainly love to have a library for my birthday, a small little library would be wonderful.’”</p> <p>“You asked for a whole library?”</p> <p>“A small one,” Miss Franny nodded. “I wanted a little house full of nothing but books and I wanted to share them, too. And I got my wish. My father built me this house, the very one we are sitting in now. And at a very young age, I became a librarian. Yes ma’am.”</p>	<p><b>3. Ask the class to answer a small set of text-dependent guided questions and perform targeted tasks about the passage, with answers in the form of notes, annotations to the text, or more formal responses as appropriate.</b></p> <p>As students move through these questions and reread DiCamillo’s story, be sure to check for and reinforce their understanding of academic vocabulary in the corresponding text (which will be <b>boldfaced</b> the first time it appears in the text). At times, the questions themselves may focus on academic vocabulary.</p> <p><b>(Q1) Why was Miss Franny so scared by Winn-Dixie? Why was she “acting all embarrassed?”</b></p> <p>Miss Franny thought Winn-Dixie was a bear. When she realized he was a dog, she was embarrassed because she thought Opal would think she was a “silly old lady, mistaking a dog for a bear.”</p> <p><b>(Q2) How did the Herman W. Block Memorial Library come to get its name?</b></p> <p>The library was a gift to Miss Franny from her wealthy father. When she was a little girl, “a very rich man” told her she could have “anything she wants” for her birthday. So, Miss Franny asked for a library. She wanted a “little house full of nothing but books”. Herman W. Block was Miss Franny’s father.</p> <p>Both events are fairly straightforward, but it is important for students to understand them, as they set the stage for what is to come.</p>

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<p>“He went. But this is what I will never forget. He took the book with him.”</p> <p>“Nu-uh,” I said.</p> <p>“Yes ma’am,” said Miss Franny. “He snatched it up and ran.”</p> <p>“Did he come back?” I asked.</p> <p>“No, I never saw him again. Well, the men in town used to tease me about it. They used to say, ‘Miss Franny, we saw that bear of yours out in the woods today. He was reading that book and he said it sure was good and would it be all right if he kept it for just another week.’ Yes ma’am. They did tease me about it.” She said. “I imagine I’m the only one left from those days. I imagine I’m the only one that even recalls that bear. All my friends, everyone I knew when I was young, they are all dead and gone.”</p> <p>She <u>sighed</u> again. She looked sad and old and wrinkled. It was the same way I felt sometimes, being friendless in a new town and not having a mama to comfort me. I sighed, too.</p> <p>Winn-Dixie raised his head off his paws and looked back and forth between me and Miss Franny. He sat up then and showed Miss Franny his teeth.</p> <p>“Well now, look at that,” she said. “That dog is smiling at me.”</p> <p>“It’s a <b>talent</b> of his,” I told her.</p> <p>“It’s a fine talent,” Miss Franny said. A very fine talent.” And she smiled back at Winn-Dixie.</p> <p>“We could be friends,” I said to Miss Franny. “I mean you and me and Winn-Dixie, we could all be friends.”</p> <p>Miss Franny smiled even bigger. “Why, that would be grand,” she said, “just grand.”</p>	<p>Questions 3-5 trace the sequence of events that led to the three characters becoming friends and prepare students for the writing prompt at the end of the lesson.</p> <p><b>(Q3) Opal says, “She looked sad and old and wrinkled.” What happened to cause Miss Franny to look this way?</b></p> <p>Students should realize that she was thinking about friends and people who are no longer alive, and that she does not have any friends now: “All my friends, everyone I knew when I was young, they are all dead and gone.”</p> <p><b>(Q4) What were Opal’s feelings when she realized how Miss Franny felt?</b></p> <p>Students should realize that Opal felt she and Miss Franny were both lonely: “It was the same way I felt . . . friendless . . .”</p> <p><b>(Q5) Earlier in the story, Opal says that Winn-Dixie “has a large heart, too.” What does Winn-Dixie do to show that he has a “large heart”?</b></p> <p>Students should see that Winn-Dixie was responding to Opal and Miss Franny feeling sad when he looked between them and showed Miss Franny his teeth: “Winn-Dixie raised his head off his paws and looked back and forth between me and Miss Franny. He sat up then and showed Miss Franny his teeth. ‘Well now, look at that,’ she said. ‘That dog is smiling at me.’”</p> <p><i>To let out a long, deep breath because of tiredness, sadness, or another feeling</i></p>

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Miss Franny looked around the library. She leaned in close to me. "I don't want to **appear prideful**," she said, "but my daddy was a very rich man. A very rich man." She nodded and then leaned back and said, "And I was a little girl who loved to read. So I told him, I said, 'Daddy, I would most certainly love to have a library for my birthday, a small little library would be wonderful.'"

"You asked for a whole library?"

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"It's a **talent** of his," I told her.

"It's a fine talent," Miss Franny said. A very fine talent." And she smiled back at Winn-Dixie.

"We could be friends," I said to Miss Franny. "I mean you and me and Winn-Dixie, we could all be friends."

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**(Q6) Opal and Miss Franny have three very important things in common - What are these?**

- As noted in question 4, both characters are lonely.
- In the very first sentence of the passage, Opal says, "I spent a lot of time that summer at the Herman W. Block Memorial Library." Therefore, it is a reasonable inference that Opal likes books. Similarly, Miss Franny said, "When I was a little girl I loved to read." And when told that she could have anything she wanted for her birthday, she replied, ". . . I would most certainly love to have a library."
- Opal, of course, likes Winn-Dixie, and there is evidence that Miss Franny does as well: "Well now look at that . . . 'That dog is smiling at me.'" Also, ". . . she smiled back at Winn-Dixie."

## Day Two: Explanatory Writing Assignment for DiCamillo's *Because of Winn-Dixie*

### Directions for Teachers and Students / Guidance for Teachers

The title of this selection is *Because of Winn-Dixie*. Using your answers from the questions above and class discussion, explain why this is an appropriate title for the selection. Be sure to clearly cite evidence from the text for each part of your answer.

A proficient answer should have at least two parts:

- Students should explain - using evidence from the text - how Winn-Dixie looking into the library was the cause of Miss Franny falling, which in turn led to the story about the bear and Opal's realization that she and Miss Franny were both lonely.
- They should then relate how Winn-Dixie's response to Miss Franny ("That dog is smiling at me") endeared her to Winn-Dixie and led Opal to suggest that they could be friends.

The answer should show a clear understanding of how this progression of events led to the three characters becoming friends. An answer pulling on more from the text would include that Winn-Dixie's "talent" and "huge heart" were traits that made all this possible.

## Examples of NON-TEXT DEPENDENT QUESTIONS

Was there ever a time where an animal scared you?

Should Ms. Franny have felt embarrassed?

Can bears really eat people?

From basals

- As you read this story think about plants and animals in Florida
- How can an older woman make her library safe from unwanted visitors
- This author has won prizes for her books. Why? Find a part of this story you think could win a prize. — This of course asks the student to have a grasp of the criteria that publishers use in awarding prizes
- Then of course there was the activities in the TE in the Differentiated Instruction section asking students to do research on wildlife and plant life in Florida and how to safeguard libraries from “unwanted visitors”
- In *Because of Winn-Dixie* Opal tells about her experiences after moving to a new town. Think about a time that you were a newcomer to a place or situation. Now use vivid words to write a memoir about that experience. --- In addition to having very little to do with the selection this question assumes that all 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> graders have had that experience. More insidiously and as with all these questions it privileges students who have discussed these types of questions with adults- usually children from more educated families.

## Examples of TEXT DEPENDENT BUT TRIVIAL QUESTIONS

What book was Miss Franny reading when the bear came into the library?

What did the men say when they were teasing Miss Fanny?

Why was Miss Franny sitting on the floor when Amanda met her?

What did Miss Franny say when Amanda asked if dogs were allowed in the library?

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