
Lesson 1

Because of Winn-Dixie

Introduction & Writing Assignment 1

Lesson 1 Directions

What is your favorite story? Think about it for a few minutes. Why do you like it so much? What makes a story “good”? Would you like to be a story writer someday?

Kate DiCamillo wanted to be a story writer, and she has written some wonderful stories!

[Go visit her website](#) to learn more about her and her work. From there you can explore her Facebook and Instagram accounts for even more information.

You are going to be reading one of Kate DiCamillo’s books called *Because of Winn-Dixie*.

Here is a passage from the book:

“And then the dog came running around the corner. He was a big dog. And ugly. And he looked like he was having a real good time. His tongue was hanging out and he was wagging his tail. He skidded to a stop and smiled right at me. I had never before in my life seen a dog smile, but that is what he did. He pulled back his lips and showed me all his teeth. Then he wagged his tail so hard that he knocked some oranges off a display ...”

There are a few things you should notice about the description above:

- Do you get a mental image of this scene? What in the description contributes to your getting a mental image?

- What descriptive words or phrases are used?

- When an author is writing fiction, she sometimes breaks the conventional rules of writing and grammar. Can you find at least two examples of where conventional rules are broken in the passage above?

- Why did the author break the rules, and what are the effects?

Do you have a dog or a pet? **Your assignment is to introduce me to your pet by telling me a story about something your pet did.** It can be something you thought was funny or brave or interesting in some way. When telling your story, choose your words carefully to give me a mental image of your pet, so I can “see” your pet in my mind, doing the events in your story.

If you don’t have a pet, you can relate a story about someone else’s pet, or write about a pet video you may have seen on television or on the Internet.

PREWRITING

Decide on what story or main event you want to tell. Complete the Writing Assignment 1 Worksheets (that follow this assignment) to define who is in your story, the setting, the order of things that happen (events), the tone of your story, as well as some descriptive words and dialogue you might use in your story.

DRAFTING

You will tell your story as a first-person narrative, using “I,” from your point of view as Opal did in the paragraph above from *Because of Winn-Dixie*. Using the notes you made on the worksheets, begin writing a rough draft of your story. Be sure to include descriptive words and phrases that bring your story to life.

You probably won’t get the story “right” on your first try. Go back and reread what you have written and look for places where it can be improved. Here is a little checklist you can use to review your own work:

Writing Assignment 1 Page 2

- Is the story told in a way that can be clearly understood?
- Does your story have a title? Can you explain why the title fits the story?
- Is your first sentence going to entice (tempt) your reader to continue reading?
- Are your sentences complete? If they are not complete sentences, do you have a good reason for ignoring writing and/or grammatical conventions?
- Do you have interesting descriptive words and phrases?
- Do you have interesting and descriptive action words to describe how people say their words and/or how actions are done?
- Is your ending satisfying to the reader? Will the reader “get” why the story is funny or sad or whatever words you chose to describe the tone of the story?
- Can your work be easily read? Have you made any typing mistakes (typos)?

Some writers spend years re-writing and making new drafts of their work--especially novels. You don't have years to do this because it is a relatively short assignment. However, you should put forth your best effort and take your time to make your story the best it can be.

PROMPT

When you finish the rough draft of your paper, ask someone you trust to read it. After reading your rough draft, he/she should tell you what he/she liked best about your work, which parts were difficult to understand, and ways in which your work could be improved. Reread your paper considering your critic's comments, and make the corrections you think are necessary. Prepare a final draft of your work.



Writing Assignment #1

Lesson 2

Because of Winn-Dixie

Chapters 1-3

Lesson 2 Directions

Pre-Reading

1. Preview (read through) the study questions for *Because of Winn-Dixie* Chapters 1-3.
2. Complete the Vocabulary Worksheet for *Because of Winn-Dixie* Chapters 1-3.

Reading

1. Read *Because of Winn-Dixie* Chapters 1-3.
2. Keep your study questions in mind as you read.

Post-Reading

1. Answer all of the study guide questions for Chapters 1-3.
2. Complete the Reader Response Assignment for Chapters 1-3.
3. Complete the Think About It page for Chapters 1-3.

Vocabulary Chapters 1-3 Part I

Below are the sentences in which the vocabulary words appear in the text. Read the sentence. Use any clues you can find in the sentence combined with your prior knowledge, and write what you think the bold words mean in the space provided.

1. "Please," said the manager. "Somebody call the **pound**."
"Wait a minute!" I hollered. "That's my dog. Don't call the **pound**."
2. Before I was born, he was a **missionary** in India and that is how I got my first name.
3. I was what the Friendly Corners Trailer Park manager, Mr. Alfred, called "an **exception**." And I told Winn-Dixie he had to act like an **exception**, too; specifically, I told him not to pick any fights with Mr. Alfred's cats or Mrs. Detweller's little yappie Yorkie dog, Samuel.
4. "Daddy, do you know how you always tell me that we should help those less **fortunate** than ourselves?"
5. Then he sneezed and some more papers **fluttered** to the floor.
6. He stood still for it, but I could tell he didn't like it. He looked **insulted**, and the whole time, he didn't show me his teeth or wag his tail once.
7. You could still see his ribs, but I **intended** to feed him good and that would take care of that.
8. Winn-Dixie looked up at the preacher and kind of gave him a **nudge** with his nose.

Vocabulary Chapters 1-3 Part II

Match the vocabulary words to their dictionary definitions.

- | | |
|--------------------|--|
| ____ 1. POUND | A. Moved with quick, light movements |
| ____ 2. MISSIONARY | B. Push gently |
| ____ 3. EXCEPTION | C. Place where stray pets are taken |
| ____ 4. FORTUNATE | D. Well-off; having good luck |
| ____ 5. FLUTTERED | E. Personally offended with unkind words |
| ____ 6. INSULTED | F. Something to which a rule does not apply |
| ____ 7. INTENDED | G. Someone sent to a foreign country to promote Christianity |
| ____ 8. NUDGE | H. Had in mind something you planned to do |

Study Questions Chapters 1-3

1. Why is the Winn-Dixie store manager so very upset?
2. How does India Opal Buloni become the owner of the big, dirty dog?
3. How does the dog get its name?
4. At what church is Opal's father the new preacher?



Study Questions Chapters 1-3 (2)

5. Why does Opal think of her father as "the preacher"?

6. Why does Opal's father give Winn-Dixie a home?

7. What does Opal tell Winn-Dixie about her mama?

8. As Opal is giving Winn-Dixie a good bath, what does she decide to ask her father?



Reader Response Entry Chapters 1-3

In the space below, write a substantial response to the chapters of the book you have just read. It could be your thoughts on one of the following: an idea presented, an event, a character's actions or attitude, a topic related in some way to something presented in this section of the novel, a response to a particular passage that stood out to you as you read, or you could write a creative response like a poem or song lyrics as long as it is relevant in some way to what you have just read.

Think About It Chapters 1-3

Think about and respond to these questions related to Chapters 1-3:

1. When Opal hollers out that the dog that is running around the Winn-Dixie store is her dog, she realizes she had done something big, and maybe stupid, too. Was it something big and maybe even stupid? Explain why.
2. Why does Opal think that because Winn-Dixie is a suffering dog her father will let her keep him?
3. Opal is the exception at the Friendly Corner Trailer Park. What is an exception? Why is Opal an exception? Why is it important for Winn-Dixie to be an exception, too?



Think About It Chapters 1-3 Page 2

4. When Opal tells the preacher the dog's name, she does so in a whisper because she does not want to distract from the moment when Winn-Dixie is able to make the preacher "poke his head out of his shell." Why do you think Winn-Dixie has this effect on the preacher?
5. How do you know when Winn-Dixie is happy or when he feels insulted?
6. Why does the preacher say, "I should have guessed you were going to be trouble."?
7. Since moving to Naomi, Opal says she misses her mama extra-extra hard, more than she ever did in Watley. Why does Opal miss her mama more than before?