

Teacher Guide

Grades 5–6

Because of Winn-Dixie

Kate DiCamillo



NEW WAYS TO LEARN READING,
WRITING, & CRITICAL THINKING



Novel Units® Single-Classroom User Agreement for Non-Reproducible Material

With the purchase of electronic materials (such as ebooks and print-on-demand teaching activities) from a Novel Units, Inc. (Novel Units) Web site, or that of a Novel Units authorized dealer's Web site, the customer (the purchaser or person for whom this product was purchased) is granted a single-classroom user license, which entitles the customer to use these materials for a single classroom (or home) only.

Sharing the digital files or reproduction of any part of this publication in any way or by any means for additional classrooms (or homes), an entire school, or a school system; by for-profit institutions and tutoring centers; or for commercial sale is strictly prohibited.

Reproduction of any part of this Teacher Guide is strictly prohibited.

Use of the materials for anything other than classroom instruction is a violation of Novel Units intellectual property rights. Novel Units retains full intellectual property rights on all proprietary products, and these rights extend to electronic editions of print books or materials, excerpts of print books or materials, and individual teaching activities offered for sale in digital format.

To obtain more information, or, if you would like to use Novel Units products for additional purposes not outlined in the single-classroom license (described above), please contact customercare@ecslearningsystems.com.

BECAUSE OF WINN-DIXIE

by
Kate DiCamillo

Teacher Guide

Written by
Mina Watts and
Debbie Triska Keiser

Note

The 2009 Candlewick Press paperback edition of the novel, © 2000 by Kate DiCamillo, was used to prepare this guide. The page references may differ in other editions. Novel ISBN: 978-0-7636-4432-1

Please note: Please assess the appropriateness of this novel for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading and discussing it with them.

ISBN 978-1-60878-311-3

Copyright infringement is a violation of Federal Law.

© 2013 by Novel Units, Inc., Bulverde, Texas. All rights reserved. Reproduction of any part of this product is strictly prohibited. No part of this publication may be translated, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted or shared in any way or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise) without prior written permission from Novel Units, Inc. Reproduction of any part of this publication for multiple school terms, an entire school or for a school system, by for-profit institutions and tutoring centers, or for commercial sale is strictly prohibited.

Novel Units is a registered trademark of ECS Learning Systems, Inc. Printed in the United States of America.

ECS Learning Systems, Inc. recommends that the purchaser/user of this publication preview and use his/her own judgment when selecting lessons and activities. Please assess the appropriateness of the content and activities according to grade level and maturity of your students. The responsibility to adhere to safety standards and best professional practices is the duty of the teachers, students, and/or others who use the content of this publication. ECS Learning Systems is not responsible for any damage, to property or person, that results from the performance of the activities in this publication.

Publisher Information

For a complete catalog, contact—

Novel Units, Inc.

P.O. Box 97

Bulverde, TX 78163-0097

Web site: novelunits.com

For more digital resources, visit:
ecslearningsystems.com

Table of Contents

Summary.....	3
About the Author	3
Characters	4
Initiating Activities	5
Vocabulary Activities	6
Six Sections	7
Each section contains: Summary, Vocabulary, Discussion Questions, and Supplementary Activities	
Post-reading Discussion Questions	18
Post-reading Extension Activities	20
Assessment	21
Scoring Rubric	30

Skills and Strategies

Critical Thinking

Predictions, brainstorming,
analysis, compare/contrast,
inferences

Comprehension

Creative thinking, identifying
attributes, supporting judgments,
cause/effect

Literary Elements

Point of view, literary
devices, character analysis,
conflict/resolution, story
mapping, theme

Vocabulary

Crossword puzzle, word map,
usage, synonyms, definitions,
limericks

Writing

Journal entry, freewriting,
persuasive writing, poetry, short
story, sequel, report, alternate
ending

Listening/Speaking

Scene reenactment, oral
presentation, discussion

Across the Curriculum

Literature—author research, *Gone
with the Wind*, other novels about
pets; Health/Safety—health codes
regarding animals in public places;
Social Studies—missionary trips,
history of Florida, the Civil War;
Science—constellations, thunder;
Art—map, sketch, painting,
collage, cover design, print
advertisement; Research—candy
origins; Viewing—*Because of Winn-
Dixie* film (2005); Music—song
selection

Chapters One–Four

One day in the Winn-Dixie grocery store in Naomi, Florida, India Opal Buloni encounters a scruffy, happy-go-lucky dog. To save the dog from the pound, Opal claims he belongs to her. Opal's father, the new preacher at the Open Arms Baptist Church of Naomi, grudgingly allows Opal to keep the dog. As she grooms her new dog, whom she names Winn-Dixie, Opal begins talking about her absent mother. This leads Opal to ask her father about her mother. The preacher agrees to tell Opal ten things about her mother, including that she was funny, could run fast, couldn't cook, enjoyed stories, and loved Opal very much.

Vocabulary

skidded
missionary
distracted
sermons
exception
specifically
matted
insulted
twitched
nerve
nudge
constatations

Discussion Questions

1. How does the author use the opening paragraph of the novel to draw the reader into the story? *(Answers will vary, but students might mention that the author begins with a “mini-summary” of how Opal found a dog at the grocery store and then backtracks to recount the actual details of what happened. The author uses humor by comparing how Opal was supposed to get at the store [macaroni-and-cheese, milk, rice, and tomatoes] to what she actually got [a dog]. After reading this first paragraph, the reader will likely want to know the rest of the story.)*
2. What is Opal's first impression of the dog in the grocery store? *(Opal describes the dog as a “big, ugly dog that “looked like he was having a real bad day.” [p. 8]. Opal is obviously intimidated by the dog, even if she doesn't think he is particularly attractive. She is especially appreciative of the way the dog “smiles” at her.)*
3. Why do you think Opal rescues the dog in the grocery store? *(Answers will vary, but most students will likely realize that Opal feels sorry for the dog and believe he is special. The dog's energy and silliness lead Opal to claim him, even though she knows this might be foolish of her.)*
4. In what ways does Winn-Dixie actually seem to already belong to Opal? *(The dog listens when Opal calls him, even responding to the name she gives him. He lets her go in the produce department and then obediently follows her out of the store. He even remains still while Opal examines him once they are outside. At the end of Chapter One, the dog walks alongside Opal all the way home.)*
5. Why did Opal and her father move to Naomi, Florida? What is Opal's only complaint about her father? *(Opal and her father moved to Naomi because Opal's father accepted an offer to become the new preacher at the Open Arms Baptist Church of Naomi. Opal's only complaint about her father is that “he spends so much time preaching or thinking about preaching, [and] getting ready to preach” [p. 13] that she doesn't feel very connected to him. She even refers to him as “the preacher” rather than using a term of endearment. It also seems that Opal has to do many traditional “adult” household tasks, such as grocery shopping, because her father is too busy with his work.)*
6. Why do you think Opal compares her father to “a turtle hiding inside its shell” (p. 16)? *(Answers will vary but might include that Opal feels her father dwells in his own world, only occasionally poking his head into the real world [i.e., Opal's world]. Opal might also feel that her father has built a protective barrier between himself and the real world. Perceptive readers might conclude that Opal's father has been hurt in the past, judging from the absence of Opal's mother.)*

7. Discuss how Opal convinces her father to let her keep Winn-Dixie. (*Opal begins the conversation by reminding her father about what he preaches—that people should help the less fortunate. Next, Opal presents Winn-Dixie as a “Less Fortunate” who needs her help. Winn-Dixie seals his own fate by plopping his shaggy head in the preacher’s lap, making even the preacher realize how much the dog needs a loving home.*)
8. How does Opal improve Winn-Dixie’s appearance? (*Opal bathes the dog, dries him, and brushes his fur. Though she cannot do anything immediately about his thin frame, she intends to feed him well. Opal even attempts to brush the dog’s teeth with her own toothbrush.*)
9. What does Opal feel she has in common with Winn-Dixie? Why do you think she feels so comfortable talking to the dog? (*Opal concludes that since neither she nor Winn-Dixie has much of a family, they are “almost like orphans” [p. 21]. She also assumes that Winn-Dixie probably doesn’t remember much about his mother, just like Opal can’t remember much about hers. Answers will vary, but Opal likely feels comfortable talking to Winn-Dixie because [1] she feels she and Winn-Dixie have amazingly similar situations, [2] the dog seems to pay attention, understand, and almost respond to her words, [3] Opal does not have any friends in Naomi, so Winn-Dixie is the first living thing she has confided in, [4] her father is too busy with his work to spend much time with her, and [5] she likely has mixed feelings about her mother, who left long ago.*)
10. What is the preacher’s reaction to Opal asking for details about her mother? Why do you think he reacts this way? (*The preacher freezes when Opal asks him to tell her ten things about her mother, although he eventually agrees to do so. Answers will vary but might include that the preacher is not prepared for Opal’s question and that speaking about a woman he still loves is painful for him.*)
11. How does the details the preacher gives Opal about her mother reveal his mixed feelings about his wife? (*The preacher tells Opal many delightful things about her mother [e.g., that she was funny, grew plants well, could run fast] and was knowledgeable about stars and planets], but he also tells Opal that he and she had a drinking problem “and left behind a lot she didn’t leave one thing behind” [p. 29]. Though he remembers his wife affectionately, the preacher obviously resents that she abandoned her husband and child.*)
12. **Prediction:** How will Opal’s and her father’s relationships change as a result of Winn-Dixie’s presence in the house?

Supplementary Activities

1. Health: Read about health codes in your state regarding animals in public places, particularly in places where food is sold or consumed. Write two or three paragraphs explaining why you think the store manager in the novel ordered Winn-Dixie removed from the store.
2. Social Studies: Conduct supervised research on missionary trips to various countries. Then, participate in a class discussion about the purpose of missionary trips and what Opal’s father’s participation in one such trip might reveal about his character.
3. Science: Research a constellation of your choice (e.g., the Big Dipper, Ursa Major, Cassiopeia, Draco), and diagram your chosen constellation either digitally or on paper.

Conflict

The **conflict** of a story is the struggle between two people or two forces. There are three main types of conflict: person vs. person, person vs. nature or society, and person vs. self.

Directions: The characters experience some conflicts in the story. In the chart below, list the names of three major characters. In the space provided, list a conflict each character experiences. Then, explain how each conflict is resolved in the story.

Character:

Conflict

Resolution

Character:

Conflict

Resolution

Character:

Conflict

Resolution