

Individual Learning Packet

**Teaching Unit**

**Dacey's Song**

by Cynthia Voigt

written by Robert Furlong

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Item No. 201613

# Dicey's Song

## Note to the Teacher

*Dicey's Song* is a coming-of-age novel about four children who must go to live with their grandmother, whom they have never met, after their mother has a nervous breakdown.

The protagonist is a 14-year old girl who must struggle with such issues as the loss of her mother, her new relationship with her grandmother, and her changing sense of identity as she moves away from the role of caregiver for her younger siblings. Students will enjoy Voigt's realistic portrayal as they explore Dicey's journey into young adulthood. This novel does deal briefly with Dicey's physical maturation and should be handled delicately. Those students who are young or too immature may have difficulty handling such subject matter.

All references come from the first Simon Pulse edition of *Dicey's Song*, March 2002.

# Dicey's Song

## Objectives

*By the end of this Unit, the student will be able to:*

1. cite incidents that mark the text as a coming-of-age story for Dicey.
2. discuss the title's significance to the story.
3. discuss Dicey's growth over the course of the novel.
4. identify examples of various types of conflict (man vs. man, man vs. himself) in the novel.
5. discuss Gram's evolution over the course of the novel.
6. recognize examples of similes and personification.
7. find sensory images that enhance the description of the setting.
8. compare and contrast Dicey and Mina, Dicey and Gram, as well as Dicey and Sammy.
9. cite incidents from the story to illustrate conflict between, and integration of, the themes of "holding on," "letting go," and "reaching out."
10. discuss how poetic devices, such as alliteration, personification, etc. can be used to enhance the effectiveness of prose.
11. cite incidents from the story to illustrate the following themes:
  - Every person is unique, and, therefore, has valuable contributions to make.
  - Facing adversity often brings people closer together.
12. discuss how Dicey's mother's illness has affected Dicey

# Dicey's Song

## Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. Discuss how Gram changes from the beginning of the story to the end. What events from earlier in her life might have been responsible for her disposition in the beginning? What events in the story affect her outlook and her personality?
2. Compare and contrast Dicey and Mina. How are their life experiences different, what do they have in common, and what can they learn from each other?
3. How does Millie fit into the story? Compare her to any other character in the book? Does Dicey learn anything from being around her?
4. From what perspective is this novel written; who is the narrator? Is the narrator able to know what any or all of the characters are thinking?
5. In one of the first classroom scenes, Mr. Chappelle leads a discussion about the role of conflict in literature. What different purposes does Voigt achieve by including this discussion?
6. One thing that Dicey has to let go of is her role as the caretaker of her siblings. What are some of the ways she copes with this change?
7. What role(s) does Dicey play in her relationship with Sammy? Are there any similarities in their personalities or experiences that might help Dicey to understand Sammy?
8. Discuss the relationship between Dicey and Jeff. Do you think their relationship will change or develop in the future? Why or why not?
9. What are some similarities between Dicey and Gram? How do you think they each feel about their relationship? Do you think they will grow closer or further apart as Dicey gets older?
10. What impact do you think the loss of her mother has had on Dicey's personality? Describe how you think this experience has influenced her relationship with at least two other characters.
11. How would you describe the relationships among the four Tillerman children? How have the difficulties they faced together affected their sense of kinship and teamwork? Are there any examples of them working as a team in the story?
12. Discuss Mr. Lingerle's relationships with the Tillerman children and Gram. How have both sides been affected by knowing one another?

# Dicey's Song

## Chapter One

### Vocabulary

**confer** – compare views; trade opinions  
**enamel** – a type of smooth, glossy surface  
**fallow** – uncultivated, unplanted  
**marsh** – an area of soft, wet land  
**mottled** – multicolored, spotted  
**turgid** – swollen  
**turpentine** – a type of paint thinner  
**underpinnings** – things or ideas that serve as a foundation

1. Find a passage in this chapter or the italicized introduction that illustrates the author's use of sensory images to describe the area around Gram's farmhouse.

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2. What was Dicey's reaction when the sailboat sank at the dock? Why was her grandmother surprised by this reaction?

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3. What had been Dicey's "...single biggest worry all summer long"?

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4. Who are Dicey's three siblings, and why does she feel responsible for them? What kinds of worries has she had about each of them?

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## Chapter Six

### Vocabulary

**Bach** – (1685-1750) a German musician and composer

**chillblains** – (usually spelled chilblains) sores on the skin caused by exposure to extreme cold

**domestic** – pertaining to the home

**minstrel** – an entertainer during medieval times who traveled singing and reciting poetry

**minuet** – a style of song and dance, popular during the time of Bach

**pert** – lively

**recommence** – start again

**reminiscing** – thinking and talking about old memories

1. Find a passage in this chapter that illustrates the author's use of sensory images to describe the approaching winter.

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2. How does Dicey describe her mother's hair? What literary device is the author using here?

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3. What does Dicey's conversation with Gram about her report card tell us about their relationship and about Gram's personality?

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4. How does Dicey react when Jeff comes into Millie's store? Why do you think she acts this way?

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4. When Dicey goes shopping in Boston, the man in the wood store tries to comfort her by telling her how he thinks of the world. When he describes the world using a simile, what does he say?

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5. Immediately following her conversation with the man, what decision does Dicey make?

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6. As Dicey shops, she decides to buy Christmas presents for her brothers and sister, and she also purchases some gloves for Gram. Why does Dicey want to give the gloves to Gram right away?

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