

Reflections:

A Student Response Journal for...

Dacey's Song

by Cynthia Voigt

written by Amber Reed

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Chapter 1

1. Dacey rarely gets to spend time alone to think. She finally gets a moment to herself, which she spends lounging in the shade of the mulberry tree and gazing at the branches. Create a diary entry about a place where you go to be alone. Why is this place special to you?
2. Dacey's dream comes true when she gets a sailboat, but her hopes are dashed when the boat immediately sinks. All the time and effort she put into dragging the boat to the water seem pointless. Instead of getting upset, however, Dacey begins planning how to make her boat seaworthy. Write about a character from a book or movie who faces a situation in which he or she becomes more determined after failing to reach a goal. In your opinion, what characteristics contribute to the character's ability to persevere?
3. James and Gram are surprised by Dacey's calm reaction when the sailboat sinks because they know how important the boat is to her. Write a paragraph about a time when you were surprised by someone's reaction. Describe the situation and explain how the person's reaction differed from what you expected.
4. Imagine that you are a reporter who happened to be present when Dacey's boat sank. Write the headline and the article that appears in the newspaper the next day, but recap the events in a humorous way.
5. Gram explains to Sammy, who is young, that looks can be misleading when she says, "You can't judge a book by its cover." Sammy is still confused because he cannot relate to the saying. Compose a letter to Sammy explaining the meaning of this aphorism, and use examples, either real or fictional, to support your explanation.

Response Journal

6. Dicey tells her family about her new cleaning job at Millie's grocery store. The job calls for hard work and very little pay, but Dicey is excited to have the challenge and responsibility. Compose a brief job description of either your first job or, if you have not started working, the job you want. Include the job's duties and the requirements needed for the position, including any additional skills that may help job performance.
7. During dinner, Gram broaches the topic of adopting the children. After a brief discussion, the children decide that, even if their mother returns, adoption is a good idea. What do you think of their choice? Create a dialogue between you and a friend about whether you think their decision to be adopted is appropriate. Discuss what you consider to be the advantages and disadvantages. For example:

Friend: Gram has the right intentions, but she is just too old to adopt four children. Besides, they have a mother.

You: Well, I think that...

8. Maybeth has difficulty with her math class, so Dicey decides to tutor her. After Dicey's demonstration with apple slices, Maybeth still does not understand the concept of fractions. The failed attempt to tutor her sister leaves Dicey feeling frustrated and makes Maybeth more confused. Choose one of the following activities to complete.
- A. Consider how upset and frustrated Dicey feels when she cannot tutor Maybeth. Write a paragraph about a similar experience when you or someone you know had difficulty explaining or teaching something to someone.
- B. Consider how confused and discouraged Maybeth feels because she cannot understand fractions. Write a paragraph about a similar experience when you or someone you know had difficulty understanding something in class or from a tutor.

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9. James explains to Dacey that he feels like an outcast wherever they live, saying, "Some people, they're always outsiders, wherever they are." Dacey shares James' sentiments, but she tries not to let it bother her. People may feel ostracized by society for a variety of reasons. Choose a character from a book or movie that is an outcast of society. Explain why this character is shunned or mocked, and how you think he or she feels from the treatment. In your opinion, does the character deserve this treatment, or is society at fault?
10. Dacey settles into a comfortable routine that she hates to have disrupted. After school, she works for an hour in the grocery store, spends an hour scraping her boat, then helps with dinner and housework. Every evening, Dacey helps Maybeth with schoolwork before doing her homework, and then reads boat books for an hour before bedtime. Create a list of your daily routine, and then write a brief summary about your schedule. Are you consistent on a day-to-day basis, or does your schedule fluctuate?
11. Restoration of the sailboat is important to Dacey; she reads up on the subject and works on the boat daily. Compose an informative speech to present before your class about your hobby or special interest. The speech should include an introduction, body, and conclusion. Be sure that you maintain clarity for your audience by focusing on your main topic, limiting your points, and by using effective transitions between ideas.

Chapter 2

12. In class, Dacey notices that the students form into groups of town kids, black kids, and country kids. Dacey, however, remains distant from her peers because she does not feel as if she fits in anywhere. Teenagers tend to form cliques in real life. Write an editorial for your school paper about the groups or cliques found in your school. Define the groups and give your opinion of why they are formed. For example, what do the members have in common? Do you identify with any of these groups?

Response Journal

13. Mr. Chappelle addresses the topic of conflict in literature with his class, and Wilhemina asks, “What about conflict between an individual and the society he lives in?” Compose a short essay about a character from another book that deals with this type of conflict. Clarify the reason for the dispute, and explain if the cause of the tension seems reasonable. In your essay, provide at least two options that may resolve the conflict.
14. Mr. Chappelle calls on Dicey for another example of a conflict, and she suggests that a conflict can arise between a person and him- or herself. Consider what you know about Dicey’s character so far, and explain why you think she gave this suggestion. How is Dicey having a conflict with herself? Use examples from the text to support your answer.
15. Maybeth exhibits an impressive musical talent, and her music teacher, Mr. Lingerle, wishes to give her weekly piano lessons. In order to pay for the lessons, the children’s allowances are reduced and Gram forfeits the money that Dicey gives her. Even though a reduced allowance will prolong her boat restoration project, Dicey is willing to sacrifice her allowance for Maybeth’s sake. Create a diary entry about someone you know or someone you have heard of who has made a sacrifice for another person’s benefit. How easy do you think it was for this person to make the sacrifice?
16. James is assigned to write a report on the Pilgrims, so he tries to think of an angle that will be interesting to the rest of the class. Write a paragraph about a period or event in American history that you like or think is interesting. Explain why this time appeals to you.
17. Dicey’s science teacher announces that the students must work with lab partners for the next two weeks, but there are an odd number of students in the class. Dicey is sure that she will be left without a partner, but she prefers to work alone. Suppose that you need to convince someone like Dicey that group work can be beneficial. Make a list of at least five advantages to working in a group or with partners.

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18. As the Tillerman children adapt to their new life with Gram, Dacey begins to feel that her siblings are becoming distant from her. She is used to being in control and being the authoritative voice in their lives, but now they turn to Gram for guidance. What advice would you give to Dacey about her concern? Write a letter to her offering your advice about the issue. In the letter, explain whether you think that she is overreacting.

Chapter 3

19. A letter arrives from Boston that contains information about the Tillerman children's mother, and Dacey eagerly waits for Gram to open it. Gram, however, is not eager to open the letter, and Dacey becomes impatient to hear the news. Write a magazine article titled "How to Improve Your Patience." The article should relate three ways for someone to improve his or her self-control, with a brief explanation or example for each technique.
20. After Gram and Dacey read the letter, Gram tries to warn Dacey about the difficulties of life. Gram believes that she encounters many disappointments in life because she is an optimistic person, and she does not want Dacey to have the same problem. Think about your outlook on life. Construct an autobiographical page about whether you consider yourself to be an optimistic or pessimistic person. Discuss how your attitude affects your life.
21. Dacey becomes acquainted with Jeff, a boy who plays the guitar and sings to Dacey after school. Dacey thinks that he is musically talented and wants him to meet Maybeth someday. Think about a friend who has a particular talent. Write a letter to this friend discussing his or her skill, and mention why you admire or appreciate this ability.
22. Dacey is amazed to learn that Millie is illiterate, and she cannot imagine how Millie has managed to get through life. Create a list of five ways that the ability to read affects your life.