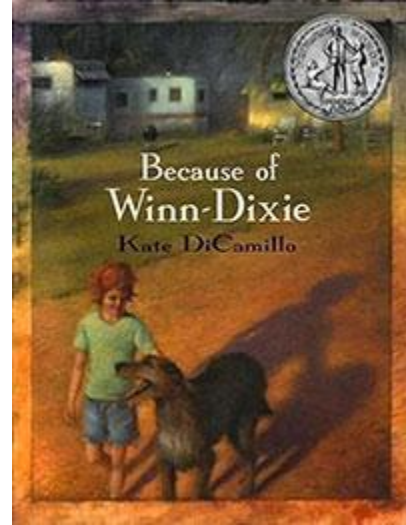


Because of Winn-Dixie by Kate DiCamillo
(Candlewick, 2000)

Opal's summer in a new town goes from boring to almost magical when her new dog, a stray she picked up in the Winn-Dixie grocery store, helps her make friends with a variety of unusual people.



Discussion Questions

1. Let's talk about the first sentence of the book.
 - a. Is this a good beginning? Why or why not?
 - b. Why do you think the author chooses to start the story this way?
2. Why does Opal call her father "the preacher"? What does this tell us about her? About him?
3. Opal describes her father as a turtle pulling his head into his shell.
 - a. Why does she describe him this way?
 - b. Is it accurate?
 - c. How does he change as the book unfolds? Or is it Opal that changes?
4. Why does the Preacher let Opal keep Winn-Dixie? Is this realistic?
5. Why does Opal tell Winn-Dixie that she doesn't have any family, even though she does have the preacher? (p. 21)
6. Why is Opal afraid to ask the Preacher about her mother? How does Winn-Dixie help her ask?
7. Her father agrees to tell her 10 things about her mother. Why ten? Why does he say to Winn-Dixie: "I should have guessed you were going to be trouble," when Opal asks about her mother?
8. Let's talk about the 10 things. What are they? Why are these the things he tells her? How are they important
 1. She was funny
 2. She had red hair and freckles
 3. She liked to plant things
 4. She could run fast
 5. She couldn't cook
 6. She loved a story
 7. She knew all of the constellations
 8. She hated being a preacher's wife
 9. She drank
 10. She loved Opal.
9. How does Winn-Dixie help Opal make friends? Is it really because of Winn-Dixie, or might Opal have made those friends anyway?
10. Do you think Miss Franny Block's story of the bear was true? Why or why not? Is it important whether or not it is true?
11. On page 51 pinch-faced Amanda arrives and says "I finished Johnny Tremain..." What does this tell us about her?

12. When Gloria asks Opal about herself, Opal says “because I had been waiting a long time to tell some person everything about me, I did,” What does this mean? Why is Gloria the one she chooses to tell?
13. Is the scene where Opal finds Otis playing to the animals realistic? Why do they all stay calm when he plays? How does he usually get them back in their cages? What does this scene tell us about him?
14. On page 96 Gloria tells Opal that she “learned what is the most important thing....It’s different for everyone.” What do you think she means by this? What do you think her most important thing is? What about Opal’s? Yours?
15. Why does Miss Franny say: “War is hell?” Is she swearing there? Then she says that “War...should be a cuss word, too.” What does she mean by this? Is she right? (pp. 105-106)
16. After Miss Franny tells Opal and Amanda about how Littmus lost everything, Opal says “It was important to me to hear how Littmus survived after losing everything he loved.” (p. 109) Why?
17. How are the Littmus Lozenges important to the story? How do they help Opal understand the people around her? Why does she like them even though they make her feel sad?
18. Why does Opal decide to have the party? Who is it for?
19. Why does she decide to invite Amanda to the party? Why does Amanda agree to come?
20. How does the party help everyone who comes to it? Is it a success despite the rain?
21. Why is opal so angry when her father tells her it is time to give up on looking for Winn-Dixie?
22. On p. 165 read: “Baby...He started to cry.” How is this important to the story?
23. How does this summer make Opal miss her mother more, and change her thoughts and feelings about her mother and father?
24. When her father tells Opal that her mama did leave something behind: “You,” how is that important? Why do you think her mother left? Why do you think her mother left her behind?
25. On page 181 Opal says of her father: “he smiled at me real big. It was a good thing to see.” Why does she say this?
26. What about the ending?
 - a. Did it work?
 - b. Was it realistic that Winn-Dixie was hiding under the bed all along?
 - c. How was the ending a culmination of everything that happened that summer?
27. How is magic important to the story? Is this a realistic story? Is it a fairy tale?