

Because of Winn-Dixie

by Kate DiCamillo

A Teaching Guide

by Margaret Whisnant



Objective Tests
Thinking and Writing Prompts
and
Graphic Organizers for Writing

for
Because of Winn-Dixie
By Kate DiCamillo

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Because of Winn-Dixie

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Chapter One

Pages 7-12



Write either **True** or **False** in the blank before each statement.

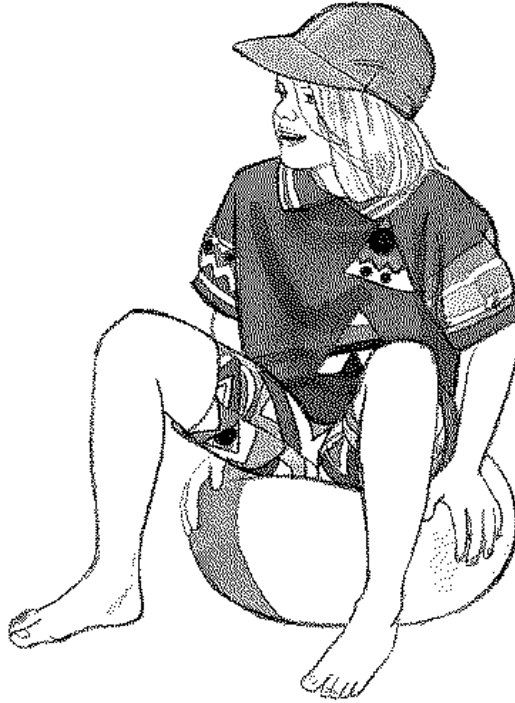
- _____ 1. India Opal Buloni's daddy was a preacher.
- _____ 2. Opal was at the Winn-Dixie grocery store because her daddy had sent her there.
- _____ 3. When Opal first saw him being chased by the Winn-Dixie manager and a whole army of employees, the dog looked terrified.
- _____ 4. The dog was big and ugly.
- _____ 5. The dog skidded to a stop in front of Opal and smiled right at her.
- _____ 6. After the dog knocked him over, the Winn-Dixie manager got red in the face, lost his temper, and started yelling at the animal.
- _____ 7. Opal claimed the dog as hers when the manager asked someone to call the pound.
- _____ 8. One of the grocery store employees named the dog Winn-Dixie.
- _____ 9. Once they were outside the store, Opal saw that the dog was skinny and he had bald patches.
- _____ 10. Opal found it hard not to immediately fall in love with a dog that smiled at her and had a good sense of humor.

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Chapter Two

Pages 13-19



Write the **letter** of the correct answer in the blank before each question.

- _____ 1. The summer that Opal found Winn-Dixie was also the summer that she and her daddy moved to Naomi (A) Florida, (B) Texas, (C) Louisiana.
- _____ 2. Opal thought of her daddy as “the preacher” because (A) that’s what everyone at the Open Arms Baptist Church of Naomi called him, (B) it was what he wanted everyone to call him, (C) he spent so much time preaching, thinking about preaching, or getting ready to preach.
- _____ 3. Before she was born, Opal’s daddy was (A) a missionary in India, (B) a manager at a Winn-Dixie grocery store, (C) a military officer.
- _____ 4. Opal’s daddy called her Opal instead of her first name because (A) he hadn’t wanted her to be named India in the first place, (B) it had been his mother’s name, and he had loved her lot (C) it was his favorite sister’s name.
- _____ 5. On the way home, Opal told Winn-Dixie (A) about her name and her daddy, (B) he would have to hide for a while, (C) that her daddy liked suffering people, but he didn’t like dogs at all.
- _____ 6. Which of the following was **not** true of Winn-Dixie? He (A) stunk, and Opal loved him with all her heart, (B) never wagged his tail, (C) limped like something was wrong with one of his legs.
- _____ 7. The reason Opal got to live in the all-adult Friendly Corners Trailer Park was (A) the other residents wanted at least one kid around, (B) it was the only place the church could find for the preacher, (C) the preacher was a preacher and she was a good, quiet kid.

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Chapter Three

Pages 20-25



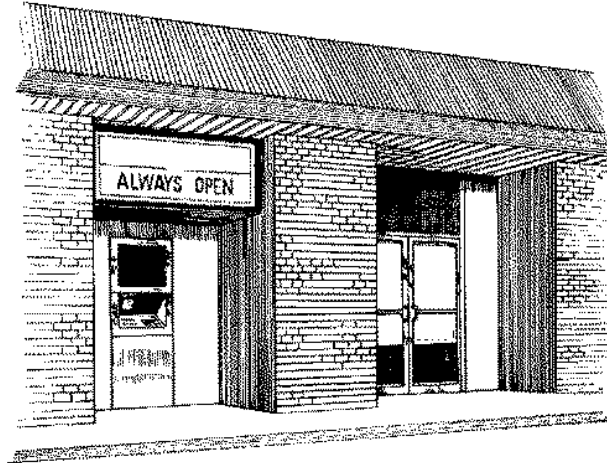
Write either **Yes** or **No** in the blank before each question.

- _____ 1. Did Winn-Dixie whine and bark while Opal was giving him a bath and brushing him with her own hairbrush?
- _____ 2. Though she had left when Opal was three years old, did Opal still have many clear memories of her mother?
- _____ 3. Did Opal think that both she and Winn-Dixie were almost like orphans?
- _____ 4. Had Opal been able to make several new friends in Naomi to replace the ones she had left behind in Watley?
- _____ 5. Did Opal think more about her mama since she and the preacher had moved to Naomi?
- _____ 6. Did Opal believe the preacher was still in love with her mama and that he hoped she would come back?
- _____ 7. Did Opal often ask the preacher to tell her things about her mama?
- _____ 8. Every time Opal tried to brush his yellow teeth with her toothbrush, did Winn-Dixie get into a sneezing fit?
- _____ 9. Did Opal's daddy agree to tell her ten things about her mama because Winn-Dixie thought he should?
- _____ 10. Was Opal ten years old?

Because of Winn-Dixie

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Chapter Five Pages 31-39



Winn-Dixie
howling
pews
tell on them

the preacher
little red tiles
her mama
a Pick-It-Quick store

a mouse
laughed and clapped
leftover crumbs
a soft patch of grass

catch it
empty
church
lonely

From the list above, choose the name, word, or phrase that fits each of the clues below and write it in the blank. **All** answers will be **used at least once**. **Some** answers will be used more than once.

- _____ 1. There weren't any of these in the Open Arms Baptist Church of Naomi.
- _____ 2. The Open Arms Baptist Church of Naomi was located in a building that used to be one of these.
- _____ 3. The congregation of the Open Arms Baptist Church of Naomi did this when the preacher asked them to pray for the mouse that Winn-Dixie dropped at his feet.
- _____ 4. Because the Open Arms Baptist Church of Naomi was kind of strange, Opal thought he would fit right in.
- _____ 5. The preacher couldn't stand the thought of hurting anything, not even one of these.
- _____ 6. It was the kind of noise that people in an all adult trailer park did not like to hear.
- _____ 7. When Winn-Dixie smiled at this person, he couldn't help smiling back.
- _____ 8. The people of the Open Arms Baptist Church of Naomi had never seen a dog do this to a mouse.
- _____ 9. Opal understood that being left behind probably made Winn-Dixie's heart feel this way.

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Whole Book Test



Write the **letter** of the correct answer in the blank.

- _____ 1. Opal found Winn-Dixie in (A) the produce department of the Winn-Dixie grocery store, (B) in a Winn-Dixie parking lot, (C) following the Winn-Dixie grocery store manager to the dumpster behind the store.
- _____ 2. Opal said the dog belonged to her because (A) she had always wanted a dog, (B) he was a beautiful animal, (C) the Winn-Dixie manager wanted to call the pound.
- _____ 3. Which of the following was **not** true of Winn-Dixie? He (A) stunk, was skinny, and had bald patches when Opal found him, (B) sneezed and smiled, (C) was wearing an old beat-up collar, but there were no identification tags.
- _____ 4. Why did Opal immediately fall in love with Winn-Dixie? He (A) had big pleading eyes, (B) had a good sense of humor, (C) was really cute.
- _____ 5. What season was it when Opal found Winn-Dixie? (A) spring, (B) summer, (C) fall.
- _____ 6. Opal and Winn-Dixie lived in Naomi (A) Georgia, (B) Mississippi, (C) Florida.
- _____ 7. Because he concentrated so hard on sermons and never looked out into the world, Opal's daddy reminded her of a (A) turtle, (B) cave bear, (C) a groundhog.
- _____ 8. Opal and the preacher lived in the all adult Friendly Corners (A) Apartments, (B) Condominium, (C) Trailer Park.
- _____ 9. Opal told the preacher Winn-Dixie needed her because he was (A) exactly what she had been looking for, (B) a Less Fortunate, (C) a rare, smiling dog.
- _____ 10. Opal's mama had (A) died when Opal was born, (B) disappeared the summer before she and the preacher moved to Naomi, (C) left when Opal was three years old.

Something to Think About. . . Something to Write About. . .

(Chapter by Chapter)



Chapter One

Opal went to the grocery store for a box of macaroni-and-cheese, white bread, and tomatoes, and she came back with a dog.

- What is your favorite how-I-got-my-pet story?
- Write a narrative about the event from the *animal's point of view*.

When Opal found him, Winn-Dixie was running amuck in the grocery store.

- How do suppose Winn-Dixie became a smelly, skinny, raggedy stray? What could possibly have caused a dog with a sense of humor to become homeless?
 - Did Winn-Dixie find Opal or did Opal find Winn-Dixie? Explain your answer.
-

Chapter Two

Opal introduced Winn-Dixie to her father as a Less Fortunate.

- Would you call Opal's technique *deceitful* or *shrewd*? Explain your choice. Include your word's definition as part of your answer.
- What word do you think best describes the preacher's reaction to Winn-Dixie—*sympathetic* or *evasive*? Add details to explain your choice.
- Which *two words* from the following list do you think is the best description of Winn-Dixie's personality? Use the words' definitions as part of your answer.

friendly
amiable

goofy
endearing

exuberant
undisciplined

cowardly
spontaneous

Chapter Three

Opal was lonely because she has left her friends behind in Watley, and she had been thinking about her mama extra-extra hard.

- Why do you think the preacher moved from Watley to Naomi?
 - In what way(s) did Winn-Dixie and Opal seem to be in the same boat?
 - Why do you suppose Opal was hesitant to talk to the preacher about her mama? How did Winn-Dixie help her?
 - Do you think there is something wrong with people who talk to their pets the same way they talk to humans? Why or why not?
-

Something to Think About. . .

Something to Write About. . .

(Whole Book)

No doubt you know a thing or two about pushing numbers around to find the answer to a problem. Many problems, however, do not involve numbers. When there is something you want, a goal you wish to reach, or a situation you wish to change, you are encountering a problem. Good problem solving requires making one or more good choices that will get you exactly what you want or need. This rule applies to adults and young people alike.

When Opal saw that Otis needed to play his guitar so the animals running amuck all over Gertrude's Pets could be captured, she demonstrated her ability as a problem solver. Some of the other characters had the knack as well.

Make notes about how a character solved each of the following problems. Then write a composition about **Problem Solvers**.

- Opal found a stray dog that she wanted to keep, but she had to get the preacher's approval.
- Opal wanted Otis to come to the party at Gloria Dump's house.
- Gloria Dump knew that Opal should stop being stubborn and make friends with Stevie and Dunlap Dewberry.
- A bear wandered into the Herman W. Block Memorial Library while Miss Franny Block was there.
- Winn-Dixie couldn't stand to be left alone.

(See **Graphic Organizer #1** Page 56)

Teacher's note: Use this writing activity as a basis for a second assignment about the steps Opal took to deal with her grief and loneliness—the story theme. Another possibility is to ask students to identify several more story problems—The Dewberry boys' fleas, Litmus W. Block's sad homecoming, Gloria Dump's drinking, the preacher's loneliness, Sweetie Pie's wish for a pet, Amanda Wilkinson's loss, Otis' need for an audience, etc.—and follow the same format as the prepared graphic organizer. Still another variation is to have students identify small problems they solve every day and write about their accomplishments.

Gloria said *You can only love what you've got while you've got it*. Explain what each of the following characters have to love while they have it:

Gloria Dump
Amanda Wilkinson
Miss Franny Block
Gloria Dump
Stevie and Dunlap Dewberry
Sweetie Pie Thomas
the preacher
Opal
Winn-Dixie

Problem Solvers

No doubt you know a thing or two about pushing numbers around to find the answer to a problem. Many problems, however, do not involve numbers. When there is something you want, a goal you wish to reach, or a situation you wish to change, you are encountering a problem. Good problem solving requires making one or more good choices that will get you exactly what you want or need. This rule applies to adults and young people alike.

When Opal saw that Otis needed to play his guitar so the animals running amuck all over Gertrude's Pets could be captured, she demonstrated her ability as a problem solver. Some of the other characters had the knack as well.

Use the form below to make notes and then write a composition about **Problem Solvers**.

Problem: Opal found a stray dog that she wanted to keep, but she had to get the preacher's approval.

How she solved the problem:

Problem: Opal wanted Otis to come to the party at Gloria Dump's house.

How she solved the problem:

Problem: Gloria Dump knew that Opal should stop being stubborn and make friends with Stevie and Dunlap Dewberry.

How she solved the problem:

Problem: A bear wandered into the Herman W. Block Memorial Library while Miss Franny Block was there.

How she solved the problem:

Problem: Winn-Dixie couldn't stand to be left alone.

How he solved the problem:

About Your Teaching Guide

Objective Tests

The objective tests have multiple functions. In addition to their obvious application, they also serve as tools that can *improve **comprehension skills** by providing practice in understanding plot structure and recognizing important story elements.*

Rationale:

Focus on the Plot. . .

Whether they are aware of their ability or not, all good readers sense the **rhythm** of the **connected** events that compose the plot of a novel, and consequently **comprehend** the story. They are in tune with cause and effect, behavior and consequence, sequence—the heartbeat of the narrative.

This “plot rhythm” forms the framework for the objective tests. The chain of events that tell the story have been pulled from the novel and reformatted into a series of sequential questions, none of which require **interpretation**. They are intended to **draw student attention to the fact that something happened**, not to what the incident means. That comes later.

In addition to their testing function, teachers may use the pages to strengthen their students’ ability to **Summarize**: With only the questions as a guide, have students write a summary of the chapter. For a set of ten questions, limit the number of sentences they may write to seven or fewer. When they work with twenty or more questions, allow no more than twelve sentences.

Report the News: Ask your students to write a newspaper article based on the events identified in a set of questions and the *who, what, when, where, why* elements. Some information needed to complete this assignment may be located in previous chapters.

Twist the Plot: Choose one or two questions from each chapter and change its answer—true to false, no to yes, etc.—to demonstrate how changing a single (or several) events would (or would not) change the story. This process can be used to help students become proficient in distinguishing major plot movers from minor story details.

The Characters. . .

Too often, when they are asked to describe a story character’s personality, the only answer many students can muster is “nice.” This portion of the Novel Teaching Pack, coupled with related activities from ***Something to Think About, Something to Write About***, is a well of opportunities for those teachers who wish to eradicate “nice” from their students’ vocabularies!

Questions that identify a character’s personality and/or motivation are purposely and carefully included with the plot movers. Again, the questions do not require **interpretation**. They simply establish that someone did or said something—knowledge that is invaluable when character analysis is required.

Implied Meaning and Story Clues. . .

The objective tests include items that establish the existence of story components carrying **implied meaning**. **Story clues** that tantalize the reader with hints of future events also appear as question. At this point in the novel study, as before, **interpretation** is not the goal. **Awareness** of the **facts** is the target.

Developing/Improving Listening Skills. . .

Listening skills are rightfully included on every list of state competency requirements. Rather than always requiring students to answer test questions on a printed page, why not surprise them occasionally by doing the test orally and meeting competency goals at the same time?

Discussion Guide Capability. . .

The objective tests are helpful discussion guides. Use individual items on these pages to draw student attention to sequence, cause and effect, story clues (foreshadowing), character traits, recognizing and interpreting implied meanings, etc. These “thinking out loud” sessions are an **important building block** for the next learning phase.

Something to Think About. . .

Something to Write About. . .

In this section, students pack up what they already know about the novel and go exploring into its every nook and cranny. Some activities require the simplest interpretation or application, while others will challenge the most proficient thinkers. There is a high probability that young scholars, even reluctant ones, will label some of the selections as *fun*.

Rationale:

Guidelines. . .

Most of the items in this section are based on the skills presented in the *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives (Bloom's Taxonomy)*. There are two reasons for this choice. First, it mirrors the Novel Teaching Pack's primary purpose of building a variety of sophisticated thinking skills on a foundation of basic knowledge. Second, in following the taxonomy guidelines, activities that correlate with many state educational standards emerge automatically.

Organization. . .

Chapter-specific activities are grouped and presented according to their corresponding sets of **Objective Test** page(s). Having led students through the basics for each chapter (or selected section), teachers may shop in this section for activities to optimize student understanding and interest. Armed with a firm grasp of each successive chapter, students are more likely to anticipate, embrace, and enjoy the next section. By repeating the process, students are also mastering concepts and intricacies connected to the **whole** novel.

The **Whole Book Activities**, as their name indicates, require a grasp of the theme(s), characters, implications, etc. as they apply to the full novel. These pages are a teacher's smorgasbord of culminating possibilities.

Levels of Difficulty. . .

A broad spectrum of **difficulty levels** to accommodate the needs of individual students, including the gifted, is an integral part of this component. However, **all** items from this section are intended to **challenge** and **sharpen** thinking abilities.

Activities. . .

Something to Think About/Something to Write About includes activities that require students to choose and use precise, appropriate, and meaningful **vocabulary**. These exercises involve choosing a word or a group of words to describe a character's personality or behavior. The following example is from *Because of Winn-Dixie*.

Opal comforted Winn-Dixie during thunderstorms, holding on to him tight so that he wouldn't run away. She decided that the best way to comfort Gloria was to read a book to her, loud enough to keep the ghosts away.

From the list of words below, all of which can correctly describe Opal's behavior, which *two* do you think are the best? Cite facts from the story and the words' definitions to support your choices.

| | | | |
|--------------------|----------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| <i>empathetic</i> | <i>compassionate</i> | <i>nurturing</i> | <i>warmhearted</i> |
| <i>sympathetic</i> | <i>loving</i> | <i>devoted</i> | <i>benevolent</i> |
| <i>unselfish</i> | <i>generous</i> | <i>thoughtful</i> | <i>considerate</i> |

In each case students work with a given collection of terms, all of which can be correctly applied to the character(s) in question. However, the individual words have varying strengths of meaning. It is the student's task to analyze both the character's behavior and the words, make choices, and then cite events from the story to support his/her selection.

Teachers may opt to narrow the choices to fewer words, choose words for individual students, divide the class into groups and offer a specific set of words to each group, or use the assignment as it is written. Whatever the technique, it is here that the word *nice* can be knocked off the shelf, shattered on the floor, and swept out the door. No longer necessary. Useless. Gone!

Other items in this section challenge students to . . .

| | |
|--|--|
| <i>create drawings, diagrams, photos, maps,</i> | <i>make predictions</i> |
| <i>form opinions and theories</i> | <i>understand point of view</i> |
| <i>cite “evidence” from the story to support their</i> | <i>imagine</i> |
| <i>explanations and opinions</i> | <i>categorize</i> |
| <i>connect personal experience to story situations</i> | <i>engage in research and data gathering</i> |
| <i>become familiar with and identify literary elements</i> | <i>recognize and perceive story theme(s)</i> |
| <i>analyze story characters and events</i> | |

Note: Inclusion of activities will vary with each novel title.

Options, options, and more options. . .

Something to Think About, Something to Write About is purposely jam-packed to give teachers **pick-and-choose options** for

| | |
|---|--|
| <i>individualizing assignments</i> | <i>homework</i> |
| <i>group work</i> | <i>short-term and long-term projects</i> |
| <i>whole class activities</i> | <i>differentiating assignments for two or more classes</i> |
| <i>capitalizing on student interest</i> | |

Graphic Organizers

Ideas for the graphic organizers are pulled from the chapter or whole book activities and expanded into a writing assignment. Priority is given to those topics that allow a student to relate personal experiences, make choices, empathize with a story character, and/or imagine.

Structure. . .

The organizers do not repeat a set pattern of circles, squares, lines, etc., prescribed for a particular type of writing. Each one is tailored to a **specific idea** pulled from the novel. **Structured directions** for **organizing** the topic support the student at this stage of the process so that **writing** is the major focus.

Final Note

The Novel Teaching Packs are designed for use as supplementary material. They are not intended to be a total program. However, this work does provide a core resource for busy teachers and eager students as they strive to become competent readers. Thanks for choosing one of our products for your classroom.



Margaret Whisnant, Author