

Activity Guide



Because
of
**Winn-
Dixie**

Dear Educator,

My mother, Betty DiCamillo, was an elementary school teacher and I often rode to school with her. This meant that I was the first student to arrive and the last one to leave. My mother loved teaching. She couldn't wait to get to the classroom each morning and she hated to leave school at the end of the day. She cared, passionately, about children learning to read.

It is an incredible thing, then, for me to be writing you this letter, to know that my book *Because of Winn-Dixie* has been made into such a beautiful, funny, moving movie and that you, as teachers, will be able to share it, discuss it, and hopefully, delight in it with your students. Opal's story is about loss and love and friendship and forgiveness and community and hope. In short, it is about life. There is beauty and tenderness and despair in this movie, and because of those themes, the film has received a PG rating. It is my grand and outrageous hope that the movie will lead children to the book and that the book will lead them to other books and that because of Winn-Dixie, many children will become lifelong readers.

It's a lot to hope for, I know; but wouldn't it be a fabulous thing if that happened? I feel like it would be a tribute to my mother, and to teachers and librarians and educators everywhere.

Thank you for being part of that possibility . . .

With warm wishes,



Kate DiCamillo



Winn-Dixie and author Kate DiCamillo.

A Message from Walden Media

Walden Media is committed to a unique search. With teachers, librarians and after-school leaders we search for the best literature to faithfully adapt into the best films possible. With *Holes*, our first release, we saw how readily film helps people rediscover the literature from which it has been adapted. Now, thanks to our partnership with The National Collaboration for Youth (NCY), and The Heartland Film Festival, we have even greater hopes for demonstrating this powerful link between film and literature with our film *Because of Winn-Dixie*.

Working with NCY, whose member partners collectively reach 46 million children in the United States, we proudly developed this Activity Guide for use with the book and film. In the spirit of *Because of Winn-Dixie*, the Guide emphasizes the joys and importance of reading and of helping others, just as Opal did. We hope that our Guide enlists others in a call to action.

With its 2004 report *Reading at Risk*, the National Endowment for the Arts issued a call to action of its own. The report demonstrated that a steep decline in reading literature among all age groups also accounted for a decline in their civic engagement. We hope that this film and reading program begin a reversal of this trend. We believe in the life-changing power of reading literature, and that people encouraged to read will become more caring, engaged members of their communities.



Cary Granat & Micheal Flaherty
Co-Founders
Walden Media

Activities in this Guide target grades 2-5 and comply with national content and education standards for Language Arts, Social Studies, Visual Arts and Character Education. Each activity features adaptations for students who require additional literacy support and/or for whom English is a second language. For your own copy of *Reading at Risk* please see: www.nea.gov/chairman/index.html

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About the Film

Kate DiCamillo's Newbery Honor book comes to the screen as a lonely girl named Opal befriends a dog as unique as the name she gives him: Winn-Dixie. With his toothy grin, Winn-Dixie helps Opal and her neighbors come together, breathing life back into the town of Naomi, Florida. Follow Opal as she rediscovers friendship, community, and her father's love, all *Because of Winn-Dixie*. Directed by Wayne Wang, the film stars Jeff Daniels, Cicely Tyson, Dave Matthews, Eva Marie Saint, and AnnaSophia Robb as Opal. *Because of Winn-Dixie* opens nationally on February 18, 2005.



About Kate DiCamillo

Kate DiCamillo was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in 1964. For the first five winters of her life she got pneumonia. In 1969, with her mother and brother Curt, Kate moved to a small town in Central Florida where the climate was milder and easier on her lungs. She attended Rollins College and the University of Central Florida, eventually earning a B.A. in English from the University of Florida at Gainesville in 1987. At the University of Florida, professors told Kate that she had a "way with words." Kate began to dream of writing for a living.

"And for nine years after college," Kate says, she dreamed more about writing. "I wandered from job to job – selling tickets at Circus World, planting philodendrons in a greenhouse, calling bingo at a campground, running rides at an amusement park – and the whole time, I talked incessantly about being a writer and read books about writing and imagined, in great detail, my life as a writer." In 1994, Kate moved from Florida to Minnesota and got a job working in a book warehouse – as a "picker."

"I was assigned to the third floor," she says, "the floor where all the children's books were kept and I spent my days filling orders for bookstores and libraries. Before long I started reading what I was picking. I read picture books and poetry books and board books and one day, I picked up a novel written for children called *The Watsons Go to Birmingham, 1963*. Christopher Paul Curtis' book changed my life. I read it and decided I wanted to try to write a novel for kids. And so, during the worst winter on record in Minnesota, at a time when I was homesick for the warmth of Florida and suffering mightily from a disease I refer to as "dog withdrawal" (I was living in an apartment where no dogs were allowed), I started to write a story about the south, about friendship, about a girl and her dog. The story eventually turned into a book called *Because of Winn-Dixie*. Amazingly, Candlewick Press offered to publish it. And fourteen years after I started dreaming, the dream came true.

"Today, I make my living as a writer and the first thing I do every morning when I wake up is offer a small prayer of thanks. Then I sit down at my desk and get to work. I make myself tell the story that wants to be told."

Because of Winn-Dixie was named a Newbery Honor Book for 2001. Kate DiCamillo's second novel, *The Tiger Rising*, was a finalist for the National Book Award in the youth category. Her novel *The Tale of Despereaux: Being the Story of a Mouse, a Princess, Some Soup, and a Spool of Thread* was awarded the Newbery Medal in 2004.

A Book Recommendation to Remember

Grade levels: 2-5

Subjects: Language Arts, Character Education

National Standards:

- **Language Arts:** NCTE/IRA Standard 3: Evaluation Strategies
- **Character Education:** Chicago Public Schools Character Education Standard 1: Caring

Duration: One 45-minute class period

Materials: Read-aloud page, "A Book Recommendation to Remember"

Use this lesson to help students deepen their appreciation of *Because of Winn-Dixie's* thematic content by presenting the story of one child's introduction to the book and how it changed her life.

Description:

This activity provides students with the opportunity to reflect on some of *Because of Winn-Dixie's* themes while also learning about the power of a good book recommended by a wise adult. It can be used before reading the book and seeing the film, as a background-building exercise to preview thematic content. It can also be used after students have read the book and seen the movie.

Objectives:

- to listen to a non-fiction story about a young student's introduction to the book *Because of Winn-Dixie*;
- to build background for some of *Because of Winn-Dixie's* thematic content;
- to summarize the story's key details;
- (if used before reading the book and seeing the film as a pre-viewing/background building lesson) to make predictions about what other themes one might find in *Because of Winn-Dixie*;
- to speculate about why the book was recommended;
- to reflect on the merits of caring about other people;
- (if used after reading the book and seeing the film) to revisit the story and discuss its accuracy in summarizing some of *Because of Winn-Dixie's* thematic content.



Useful Resources:

To view First Lady Laura Bush's lists of recommended reading for children, families, and adults, see:
www.whitehouse.gov/firstlady/initiatives/education/recommendedreading.html

To learn more about the White House and to see the latest installment of the adventures of Barney the White House Dog, see:
www.whitehouse.gov/kids

Procedures:

1. Read aloud to students the accompanying page, "A Book Recommendation to Remember."
2. With students, summarize the article's main points. You may wish to do this by writing: WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN, and WHY on the chalkboard and filling in key details under each word after the article is read.
3. Encourage students to discuss why Mrs. Bush cared enough about Pari to reply to her letter with a book and letter.
4. Invite students to reflect on whether *Because of Winn-Dixie* might help other people who feel lonely, and why.

Adaptations:

For students who are able to read it on their own, reproduce the read-aloud pages. Students for whom English is a second language may benefit from having the pages made into a transparency and referred to on an overhead projector as they are read aloud.

Assessment:

Assess students on the basis of their ability to recall factual information from the article and their ability to make inferences about questions 3 and 4 in Procedures.

Extensions:

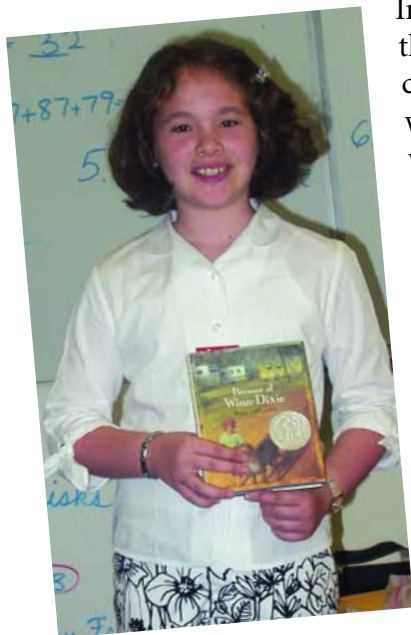
- Invite students to compile a list of children's books recommended to them by adults they admire. Make sure students ask why particular books are being recommended to them. Students may enjoy comparing their lists and sharing them in class or making a display in the library of recommended books.
- Students may enjoy writing a letter to Mrs. Bush, to let her know their opinion of *Because of Winn-Dixie* – as a book and as a film.

A Book Recommendation to Remember

This is a story about reading books, a ten-year-old girl, loneliness, and the power of reaching out to others. It's a story like *Because of Winn-Dixie* – except for one thing. *Because of Winn-Dixie* is a novel written by Kate DiCamillo. This story really happened.

In this story, the girl's name is Pari, not Opal. Pari doesn't have a dog like Winn-Dixie – even though she'd like to. And it isn't *Gone with the Wind* that Pari reads aloud like Opal reads to Gloria Dump. In this story, Pari reads a biography, to herself. Until one day when Pari writes a letter...

In California, a nine-year-old girl named Pari Cariaga enjoyed reading about the wives of the presidents, often called the First Ladies. When she finished the one book she had about First Ladies, Pari wanted to know more. She went to the bookstore with her parents and found a biography of First Lady Laura Bush, wife of President George W. Bush.



In reading Mrs. Bush's biography, one of the things Pari discovered is that Mrs. Bush is an only child. Pari also learned that Mrs. Bush played with dolls when she was young, pretending she was their teacher and her dolls were her students.

Pari has dolls too. "American Girl" dolls, to be exact – dolls named Samantha, Felicity, Kit, and Nellie, Samantha's friend, and an unnamed "American Girl Today" doll she named Anne.

During the summer, Pari was feeling very sad because she too is an only child. She started crying in her mother's lap. Hard. Really hard. And it just so happened that her father walked in the door and said, "Well, why don't you write a letter to Laura Bush? It might make you feel better."

Pari wrote a draft and then re-wrote it. "Dear Mrs. Bush," her letter began:

*My name is Pari Cariaga. I am nine years old. I am an only child and sometimes I get so sad I just burst into tears and cry in my mother's lap. My mother had a miscarriage when I was two. Can you please tell me what you used to do to keep yourself company?
Sincerely, Pari Cariaga.*

She sent off the letter. And that was that.

In early September, Pari came home from school and found a big manila envelope addressed to her, lying in the middle of the kitchen table. Pari, being very curious

A Book Recommendation to Remember

when she comes home from school each day, had a sense that something was definitely up. Her parents didn't open the envelope. Maybe they had a hunch about its contents and were being nice by pretending not to be curious about it. That's what she thought.

When Pari opened the envelope, the first thing she noticed was the book. Even though it was wrapped in paper, Pari could see the title through the thin wrapping paper. And there was a letter. "Dear Pari," it began. Pari was amazed. Mrs. Bush had written back:

Thank you for your letter. I remember being lonely as a child at times and understand how you feel. Finding ways to help other people is a good way to make friends. Perhaps your mother could help you find a Girl Scout troop or a girls club to join. Or maybe a teacher could help you organize a pen pal club to write to children your age in another part of the United States or in another country.

Hobbies, such as arts and crafts, are one way to keep yourself company. I never felt lonely when I was reading. From the time I was very young, my parents read to me a lot, and I learned to love books. My favorite was Little House on the Prairie. My mother read it to me, and when I was older, I read it to myself. She also took me to the library almost every week to check out books. I loved seeing all the books and couldn't wait to read them.

I hope you like reading. The more you read, the better you will do throughout school and the more opportunities you will have. And for the rest of your life, as long as you enjoy reading, you will always have a friend by your side, ready to go with you on the most interesting of adventures. Enclosed is one I hope you will like.

Pari opened the package. It was a copy of *Because of Winn-Dixie*, inscribed by Mrs. Bush.

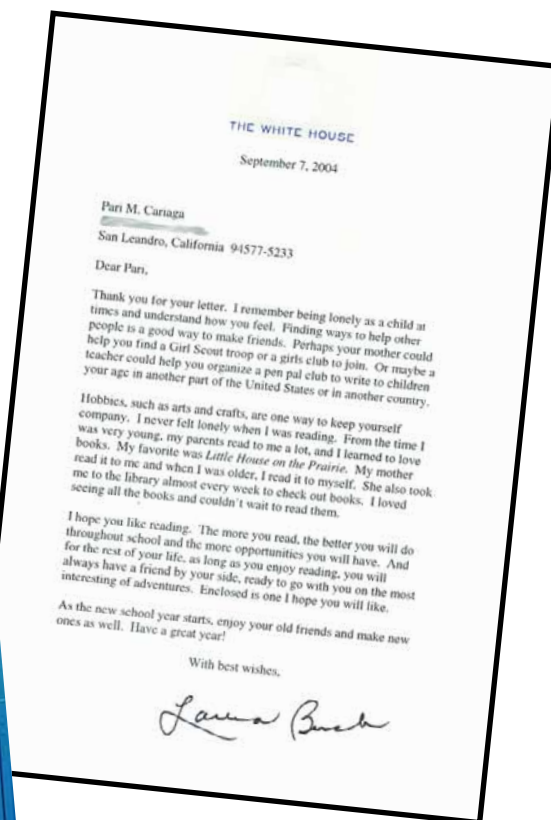


Not long after, a reporter wrote a story in the local newspaper about Pari's letter and Mrs. Bush's reply. And one Sunday at her church, Pari's pastor asked if Pari would stand. He told everybody in the parish how brave he thought Pari was by writing the letter. But Pari didn't think she was being brave. "I was just speaking my feelings," she said.

Pari's mother hopes that her daughter's story will let other children know that they too can reach out: to their moms, their dads, to the President of the United States, and to the First Lady – and never to be afraid to take that chance and reach out.

Recently Pari turned ten. This past Christmas Pari got a Christmas card from the White House. It was addressed to her.

And not long ago, Pari Cariaga stood before three hundred people and told a true story about a reading a biography and loneliness and a manila envelope with a book and letter inside from First Lady Laura Bush, letting Pari know that as long as she reads, Pari will always have a friend by her side, just like Opal, did because of Winn-Dixie.



In Search of Winn-Dixie

Parts One and Two

Grade levels: 2-5

Subjects: Language Arts, Visual Arts

National Standards:

- **Language Arts:** NCTE/IRA Standard 4: Communication Skills; Standard 6: Applying Knowledge
- **Visual Arts:** CNAEA Standard 2: Using Knowledge of Structures and Functions

Duration: Two 45-minute class periods

Materials: Copies of the novel *Because of Winn-Dixie*, student worksheets, a set of thin strips of paper marked 1-10 for each student, pencils, and markers or crayons

Use this two-part lesson to: 1) summarize character traits of Winn-Dixie found in the novel, and 2) make a drawing of Winn-Dixie, illustrating those traits.

Objectives:

- to locate and identify ten visual characteristics and character traits about Winn-Dixie found in the novel;
- to summarize traits through the language convention of a list;
- to convey and depict Winn-Dixie's different expressive features by making a drawing before seeing the film, based on the list of traits compiled.

Procedures:

1. Distribute copies of the novel *Because of Winn-Dixie* to students for review.
2. Briefly summarize each chapter by inviting students to discuss scenes in which Winn-Dixie is present.
3. Review with students words and phrases used to describe Winn-Dixie's physical appearance and character traits.
4. After reviewing, distribute ten paper strips to each student. Invite students to use the ten strips to mark ten places where the novel tells them something interesting about Winn-Dixie.
5. When they have finished book-marking the text, pass out the student worksheet "In Search of Winn-Dixie: Part One."
6. Invite students to complete the worksheet by making a list of ten things they now know about Winn-Dixie from their reading. Encourage students to use the pages they have book-marked when writing their lists.
7. Offer interested students the opportunity to share lists with the class.
8. Invite students to draw a picture of Winn-Dixie based on the contents of their lists on the student worksheet "In Search of Winn-Dixie: Part Two."

Adaptations:

Some students may benefit from composing lists in small groups. Students who are able to work independently can find relevant passages in the novel on their own. Students for whom English is a second language may benefit from having Winn-Dixie's attributes listed on the chalkboard before completing the worksheet.

Assessment:

Design a rubric to assess students on their summaries of facts and information about Winn-Dixie, as demonstrated in their lists and/or in their drawings.

Extensions:

- Interested students may want to make a list of ten things they have learned about either Opal or the preacher, and then draw a picture of them.
- Make a gallery of pictures of Winn-Dixie with student's lists posted next to their pictures.

Useful Resources:

The skill of summarizing develops slowly over time – even college students still have a hard time doing it. The ability to summarize requires "comprehension, evaluation, and condensation skills, as well as frequent transformations of presented ideas." To read more about making use of summarizing as a reading comprehension activity, see the classic text: *How to Increase Reading Ability* (ninth edition) by Albert J. Harris and Edward R. Sipay, New York: Longman, 1990, from which this quote is taken.



In Search of Winn-Dixie

Part One

NAME _____ DATE _____

Look through each chapter of *Because of Winn-Dixie*. Find ten places in the book that tell about Winn-Dixie. Then write ten things you know about Winn-Dixie on the lines below. Write in complete sentences.

Ten things I know about Winn-Dixie:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

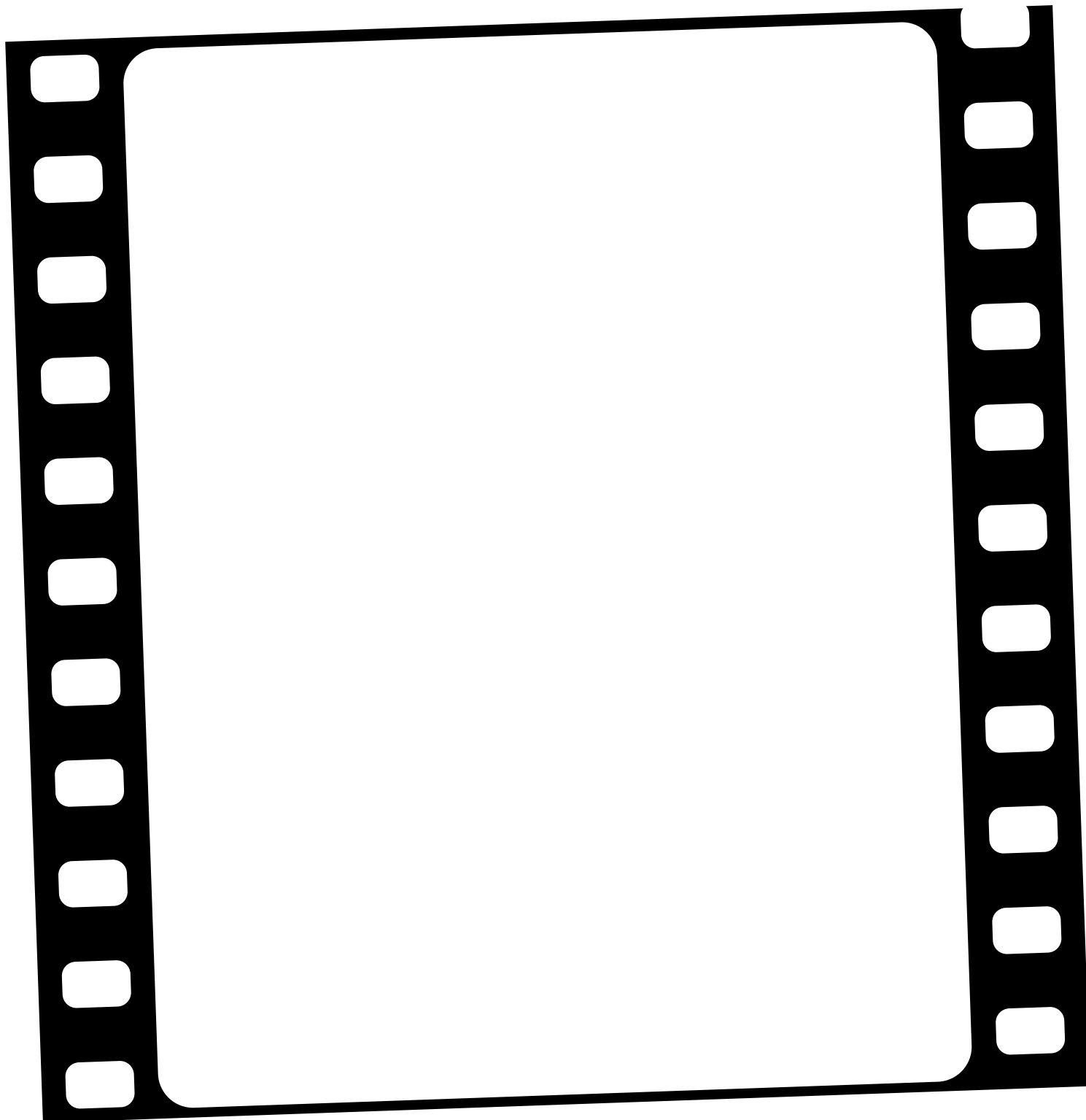
10. _____

In Search of Winn-Dixie

Part Two

NAME _____ DATE _____

Imagine that you are making the movie *Because of Winn-Dixie*. You have to find just the right dog to play the part of Winn-Dixie. Use the list of 10 things you know about Winn-Dixie to help you draw a picture of what you think Winn-Dixie should look and act like.



The Benefits of Reading Aloud to Others

Grade levels: 2-5

Subjects: Language Arts, Social Studies, Character Education

National Standards:

- **Language Arts:** NCTE/IRA Standard 1: Reading for Perspective
- **Social Studies:** NCSS Standard 4: Individual Development and Identity
- **Character Education:** Chicago Public Schools Character Education: Standard 7: Traits of Kindness and Helpfulness

Duration: Two 45-minute class periods

Materials: Read-aloud page, "The Benefits of Reading Aloud to Others"

Use this lesson to highlight the merit of reading aloud as demonstrated in *Because of Winn-Dixie* and in a related real-life example.

Description:

At the center of *Because of Winn-Dixie* is the power of story-telling – whether read aloud from a classic novel or told straight from the heart. Through reflection on what happens in *Because of Winn-Dixie* and what can happen in real life, this lesson provides students with opportunities to expand their understanding of the power of reading or telling stories to others.

Objectives:

- to summarize the role of reading aloud in *Because of Winn-Dixie*;
- to practice reading aloud for comprehension, fluency, and expressiveness;
- to read aloud to others in one's school or in the larger community;
- to write about caring for others by reading aloud to them.

Procedures:

1. Discuss with students what happens as Opal reads the 1,037 page-long novel *Gone With the Wind* aloud. What happens to Gloria Dump? To Opal and Winn-Dixie?
2. What other stories does Opal tell Gloria Dump? Why? What stories does Gloria Dump tell Opal? Why?
3. Read to students the story "Barks of Approval for Literacy" on the accompanying read-aloud page.
4. Encourage students to discuss why some kids like to read to dogs instead of to other people.
5. Ask students whether they think the dogs understand that by listening they know they are being kind.
6. Invite students to discuss ways in which this real-life story is related to *Because of Winn-Dixie*.
7. Challenge students to tell what they think Molly Miller's mother means when she says, "Words and stories are expressions of love." Would Opal and Gloria Dump agree? Would Winn-Dixie?

Adaptations:

For students who are able to read it on their own, reproduce the read-aloud page. Some students may benefit from reading it aloud to one another in pairs. Students for whom English is a second language may benefit from building additional background by hearing the book *My Dog Rosie* read aloud before the article is read. (See Useful Resources.)

Assessment:

Assess students on their translation of the maxim offered in the article into their own words, and on how they apply it to *Because of Winn-Dixie* or to their own lives.

Extensions:

- Invite students to discuss what would happen if literacy instruction in school occurred using dogs as helpers.
- Some students may find it engaging to turn the read-aloud page into a comic book. (Sequence is important, as is word choice and picture selection for each panel.)
- Interested students may want to make a list (by page count) of the longest chapter books they've ever read. This can lead to math activities using the concepts of rate and time.
- Bring in a copy of the novel *Gone With the Wind* by Margaret Mitchell so that students can see its page length first hand and then assess its difficulty. (See Useful Resources.)
- Encourage students to write a short reflection that begins with the sentence stem: *Words and stories are expressions of love when –*

Useful Resources:

See what happens when a young child and two dogs spend the day together in the picture book *My Dog Rosie* by Isabelle Harper and Barry Moser. New York: Scholastic Books, 1999 reprint edition.

Gone With the Wind by Margaret Mitchell. New York: Warner Books, oversized edition, 1999. This edition is as long as Opal describes: 1,037 pages.

The film *Gone With the Wind* (1939, now rated "G") was directed by Victor Fleming, who was simultaneously directing the motion picture *The Wizard of Oz*. *Gone With the Wind* is available on DVD and VHS.



Read about what happens when, just as Opal does, children are encouraged to read aloud to a grateful and kind – but very different – audience.

Barks of Approval for Literacy

Friendly Dogs Make Great Listeners for Young Readers in Free Library Program

by Joey Bunch, The Denver Post, December 6, 2004

To prevent literacy from going to the dogs, Douglas County (CO) canines are helping retrieve it through the “Bark for Books” program.

This week, dozens of Douglas County children will work on their reading skills by reading to a canine friend, thanks to a union of Douglas County Libraries and Denver Pet Partners.

Dogs help kids of all ages build confidence in their reading and speaking abilities, organizers said. And, it seems, dogs make excellent listeners.

“We’re finding that even kids who have trouble reading love to read to a dog,” said Aspen Butterfield, a library system spokeswoman. “The kids have a lot of fun, and a dog, unlike a parent or teacher, isn’t likely to say, ‘You’re doing it all wrong; read faster.’”

Kids also learn that words and stories are expressions of love, said Katie Miller, mother of 7-year-old Molly, who will be attending one of two sessions this week in Douglas County.

“She’s an only child, but she loves her dolls and kitty cat,” Miller said of her daughter. “If this makes her love books more, then I can’t do enough to make it happen.”

Parents are banned from the room while kids learn to entertain a friendly pooch. Children are often ecstatic to explain to their parents how they tell stories to dogs, said Randi Bolton, who worked with the library system to set up “Bark for Books.”

She loans out her two docile Rottweilers for kids to train with. Rosie, her 8-year-old, is a favorite.

“The kids always pick *My Dog Rosie*,” she said.

“It’s amazing how all the kids want to read that because of my dog Rosie.”

After participating in the program, organizers hope children will want to read to their own pets.

The program started last summer, and dozens have taken the course. Other metro-area libraries are launching similar programs to bring in Reading Education Assistance Dogs.

The literacy effort is nothing to sniff at, supporters said.

“There is a very special, totally uncritical, and calming connection between the dogs and the readers,” said Priscilla Queen, outreach coordinator for Douglas County Libraries.

“The positive experience with books improves literacy and promotes the library in a unique and personal way.”

The sessions are free, but participants must sign up in advance.



Doing As Opal Did

Grade levels: 2-5

Subjects: Language Arts, Social Studies, Character Education

National Standards:

- **Language Arts:** NCTE/IRA Standard 2: Reading for Understanding
- **Character Education:** NCSS Standard 5: Individuals, Groups, and Institutions
- **Character Education:** Chicago Public Schools Character Education Standard 1: Caring; Standard 9: Responsibility

Duration: One 45-minute class period

Materials: Read-aloud page, "Doing As Opal Did"

Use this lesson to examine the merit of helping other people – as depicted in *Because of Winn-Dixie*, and in real life.

Description:

Opal helped people in the community of Naomi, Florida and was helped by them in turn. Students can appreciate what it means to volunteer their time and effort like Opal did and can be motivated by real-life examples of students who can take action on others' behalf.

Objectives:

- to summarize the ways in which Opal helped people in Naomi, Florida;
- to read a real-life example of students who have made a difference in their community in response to a problem they felt needed to be solved;
- to reflect on age-appropriate ways students can demonstrate their concern for others the way Opal and the two students in the non-fiction article did;
- to contemplate the connection between caring and responsibility.

Procedures:

1. Ask students to name some of the ways Opal helped these neighbors in Naomi: Gloria Dump, Miss Franny Block, and Otis.
2. How did Opal's relationships with Amanda Wilkinson and the Dewberry brothers change from the beginning to the end of the story? What caused this change?
3. Encourage students to describe times they have helped other students at school. Ask them why they decided to be a good neighbor.
4. Invite students to listen to a real-life example about others who, like Opal, decided to do something for others.

Useful Resources:

For more information about Cell Phones for Soldiers, see www.cellphonesforsoldiers.com

The Foundation for a Better Life offers a wide variety of testimonials about people of all ages who do good deeds in daily and ordinary ways. To see the Foundation's award-winning poster campaign, or read a collection of real-life stories arranged alphabetically by theme, like *Believing in Others*, *Forgiveness*, and many, many more, see: www.forbetterlife.org

Generation Fix: Young Ideas for a Better World by Elizabeth Rusch and Pamela Hobbs (Hillsboro, Oregon: Beyond Words Publishing, 2002) tells about plucky, real kids like Ryan Tripp, who broke two world records by riding his lawnmower across the country and then mowing the lawns at all fifty state capitols – all to raise awareness of organ donation. This collection of stories provides examples of what happens when ordinary kids decide to be extraordinary neighbors.

For its comprehensive list of age and developmentally-appropriate volunteer organizations see: www.generationfix.com/volunteer/volunteer_orgs.htm

The Goodness of Ordinary People: True Stories From Real Americans by Faith Middleton (New York: Random House, 1996) is a book of true stories by adults and kids who called into a talk radio show to answer questions about helping or being helped by others such as: "Who believed in you at a critical time?" The stories are reminders that "there is no better way to strengthen character than to recognize it wherever it exists."

5. Read aloud "Kids On a Mission to Help Soldiers Phone Home."
6. Ask students to summarize what Brittany Bergquist and her younger brother Robbie did for soldiers in the armed services, and why.
7. Define with students what it means to be responsible.
8. Challenge students to explain why caring for others is a way to show responsibility and to describe what they plan to do to make their communities better places to live.

Adaptations:

For students who are able to read it on their own, reproduce the read-aloud pages. Students for whom English is a second language or who need additional literacy support can follow along as you read from a transparency of the read-aloud pages on an overhead projector. Students may also benefit from having definitions of "care" and "responsibility" read aloud from a classroom dictionary, and written on the chalkboard.

Assessment:

Assess students on the connections they are able to make between Opal's care for others and the work done by the Bergquists, and on students' explanations of the links between care and responsibility.

Extensions:

Invite students or young people from your community who volunteer their time and efforts on behalf of others to come to your classroom and make a presentation about their work. The power of such testimonial is especially meaningful when given by students.

Doing As Opal Did

Page One

Read the inspiring story of what a difference two students are making – in their community and in the world.

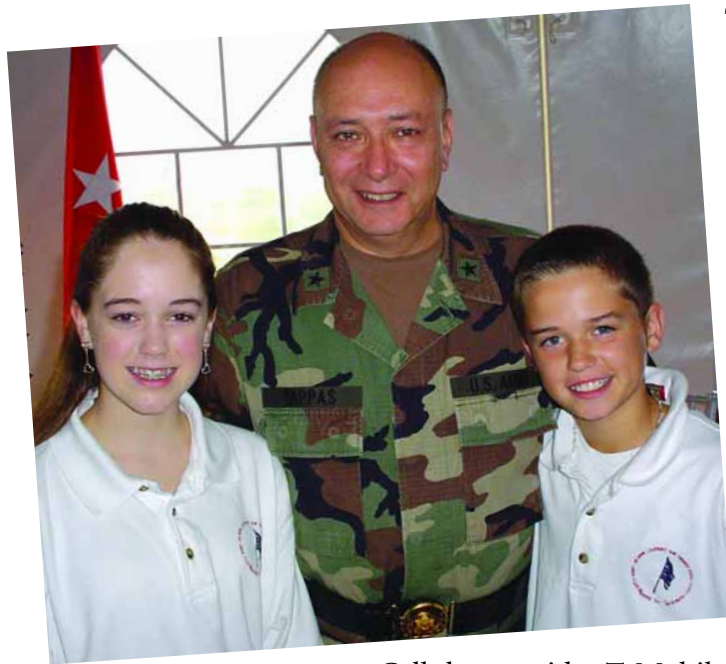
Kids On a Mission to Help Soldiers Phone Home

by Ken Maguire, Associated Press Writer, from The Boston Globe, December 23, 2004

For all the billions of dollars being spent on the war in Iraq, 14-year-old Brittany Bergquist is surprised that the Army doesn't do what she and her little brother do: help soldiers phone home.

"I'm kind of happy that they didn't supply them," she said, "because we've always wanted to do something for the soldiers."

With \$14 from their piggy banks, she and her 12-year-old brother Robbie started Cell Phones for Soldiers. In less than eight months, the organization has provided \$250,000 worth of prepaid calling cards for American soldiers in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Kuwait.



Brittany and Robbie Bergquist being thanked by the National Guard for their volunteer efforts.

They raise money by collecting old cellular phones and selling them to companies that refurbish them for resale on the Internet, then use it to buy the calling cards.

"I'm so happy that we can help them," said Brittany, an eighth-grader from Norwell, MA.

It all started in April, when the family heard about a Massachusetts soldier who ran up \$7,600 in cell phone charges calling home from Iraq.

Cellular provider T-Mobile forgave much of the bill. But Brittany and Robbie figured there must be other soldiers – including their cousin, Donnie Williamson – who are stationed in Iraq and want to call home more often but can't afford it.

The Bergquist kids pooled their funds – \$14 – and got friends to kick in another \$7. They opened a bank account at South Shore Savings Bank, which was so impressed it contributed \$500.

Doing As Opal Did

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Yard sales followed, and newspaper articles. Soon, national TV news crews were calling and the kids gave live interviews on morning shows.

Hundreds of schools and organizations, from Hawaii to Georgia, have started local chapters and become drop-off centers for used cell phones.

"It's hard doing everything," Brittany said. "But it doesn't matter to us. We think about how hard the soldiers work every day and they don't have a choice to stop."

Recently, the Internal Revenue Service granted Cell Phones for Soldiers nonprofit status.

Many large companies have told the Bergquists they were waiting for the nonprofit status so their contributions are tax deductible, said their father, Bob Bergquist, a science teacher at Norwell Middle School. Mother Gail is also a teacher.

One challenge for the Bergquists has been identifying troops before they deploy, because once they are overseas it gets harder to contact individual soldiers. The Pentagon only delivers mail from family or friends; un-addressed bulk mailings are prohibited.

"We fortunately live in an American society that's very generous (but) it overwhelmed our mailing system in the past," said Army Lt. Col. Joe Yoswa, a Defense Department spokesman.

He says soldiers can use phone banks and Internet cafes, but it's up to them to pay the fees out of pocket. Using a cell phone in Iraq can cost a soldier up to \$3 a minute in roaming charges, according to Bob Bergquist.

The Bergquists have traveled to Minnesota, Texas, Louisiana, and New York to personally hand out calling cards to soldiers about to be deployed to war zones.

They've made sacrifices; Brittany skipped a statewide cheerleading competition, and Robbie has missed big soccer and hockey games.

"We have a scrapbook that we keep," Robbie said. "We look back at what we've done. It always helps keep us motivated."

The daily e-mails from soldiers and their families also help. One wrote: "Hearing from family members is what keeps a soldier going and gives them the drive to get the job done and get home."

A woman e-mailed in September from Fort Stewart, Ga., after seeing the Bergquists on "The Tony Danza Show."

"My husband is going to Iraq in January for a year," she said. "He has been to Bosnia and Korea. So, we really understand the need for phone calls to take place. I have two beautiful girls (who) love to speak to their dad."

Helping families stay connected is the biggest reward, Brittany said.

"That's a big motivation, for families to know where their sons and daughters are at all times," she said.

They also get e-mails from people who oppose the war. "We tell them we're not supporting or endorsing the war," Bob Bergquist said. "What we're concerned about are the soldiers.... What we want to do is support them."

The Bergquist kids have quickly become role models. Brittany will be featured in an upcoming issue of *Teen People* magazine, and she and Robbie are profiled on the official Web site of Mary-Kate and Ashley Olson. *Good Housekeeping* and *Parade Magazine* are also doing stories.

But all the attention won't distract from their mission, the kids said.

"I think we're going to be doing this forever," Brittany said. "As long as there are troops not home, we'll be doing this."

Because of You!

Grade levels: 2-5

Subjects: Language Arts, Character Education

National Standards:

- **Language Arts:** NCTE/IRA Standard 4: Communication Skills
- **Character Education:** Chicago Public Schools Character Education Standard 1: Caring

Duration: Two 45-minute class periods

Materials: Student worksheet, copies of the book *Because of Winn-Dixie*, writing materials

Use this lesson to encourage reading *Because of Winn-Dixie* aloud to others and writing a reflection about the experience of doing so.

Description:

This lesson gives students a firsthand experience with story-telling and reading aloud to others, and experience in the ways in which such activity fosters connection with others.

Objectives:

- to summarize the role of reading aloud in *Because of Winn-Dixie*;
- to practice reading aloud for comprehension, fluency, and expressiveness;
- to read aloud to others in one's school or in the larger community;
- to write about caring for others by reading aloud to them.

Procedures:

1. Invite students to name their favorite chapters of *Because of Winn-Dixie* and explain why.
2. Ask them to think about how they would introduce the chapter to someone unfamiliar with the story. What would they have to tell someone in order for the reading of a specific chapter to make sense?
3. With other teachers, arrange a time when your students can read to students in other classes. It's particularly gratifying for older students to read to younger students, whenever possible.
4. Pair students up and give them time to practice reading their chapters aloud with a partner from class. Listeners can offer feedback about reading smoothly, reading with expression, and successfully reading harder words found in the chapter.
5. Encourage students to bring the pictures they drew of Winn-Dixie to show the person to whom they'll be reading.
6. Ask students to fill out items 1–4 on the Student Page before they read aloud, and the rest of the items after they finish.
7. Provide a time in class for students to reflect on the experience of caring for others by inviting them to read from their completed student pages.

Useful Resources:

As many wise teachers already know, a Running Record allows you to record and assess a child's reading behavior as he or she reads aloud from a book. For more information, see New Zealand educator Marie Clay's classic text *Becoming Literate: The Construction of Inner Control*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2000 edition.

Educators Publishing Service (Cambridge, MA) produces a comprehensive phonics series many teachers find extremely helpful called "Explode the Code." For more information see: www.epsbooks.com

Across decades of research and writing, the late Jeanne Chall underscored one point tirelessly: "Teacher-centered approaches to reading instruction result in higher achievement overall, with particular benefits for children of lower socioeconomic status and those with learning difficulties." See Dr. Chall's last book, *The Academic Achievement Challenge: What Really Works in the Classroom?* by Jeanne Chall. New York: Guilford Press, 2000.

Because of Winn-Dixie is available in unabridged CD and audiocassette formats, read aloud by actress Cherry Jones. See: Listening Library, Inc., A Division of Random House, at www.listeninglib.com

8. Challenge students to read their chapters to older adults in the larger community, filling out a student page when they have done so.
9. Compile student pages and send particularly telling ones to us here at Walden Media and we'll post them in the Educator's section of our Web site. We'll only use students' first names. Make sure you tell us where you and your students are from and the name of your school. Send your submissions to:

Walden Media
274 Washington Street, 7th floor
Boston, MA 02108
Attn: Randy Testa

Adaptations:

For students who need extra support, you may want to make photocopies of the chapter so that they can then mark difficult words for ease of pronunciation. Students for whom English is a second language may benefit from listening to the chapters they have selected. (See Useful Resources.)

Assessment:

Assess students on the basis of their oral reading improvement. You may want to do an adapted "Running Record" of each student before and after they read aloud to someone from outside of class to gauge improvement over time. (See Useful Resources.)

Extensions:

- Interested students may be motivated to read the entire book aloud to others. Contact local senior citizen centers to set up this opportunity. This would be in the spirit of Opal and Gloria Dump.
- Make buttons for students who have successfully completed the activity which say: *I'm a Read-Aloud Reader!*

Because of You!

Part One

NAME _____ DATE _____

1. The chapter I want to read aloud is: _____

2. It tells about: _____

3. The main characters in it are: _____

4. The three most important things to know that have already happened in the story (before my chapter) are:

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

5. I read my chapter to: _____

on _____

6. They told me they liked the part when: _____

because _____

7. I learned that when I read aloud to someone like Opal did, I show that I care because:

Grade levels: 2-5

Subjects: Language Arts, Visual Arts

National Standards:

- **Language Arts:** NCTE/IRA Standard 2: Reading for Understanding
- **Visual Arts:** CNAEA Standard 1: Understanding and Applying Media, Techniques, and Processes

Duration: Two 45-minute class periods

Materials: Web access to: www.walden.com/winndixie_qa, copies of the novel *Because of Winn-Dixie*

Use this lesson to explore with students the process by which a novel – a print medium – is brought to life on the screen – a visual medium.

Description:

This exercise offers students insight into the process and responsibilities involved in bringing *Because of Winn-Dixie* to the screen, as described by the movie's screenwriter and producer.

Objectives:

- to summarize with students ways in which reading a book and seeing a movie are similar and different ways to tell a story;
- to consider the choices a storyteller can make about the way to tell a story, whether in words, with pictures, in music, through dance, or in motion pictures;
- to read a real-life story about how and in what ways *Because of Winn-Dixie* was brought to the screen;
- to reflect on the importance of literature and the visual and performing arts in telling stories across time.

Procedures:

1. Invite students to briefly summarize their favorite parts of *Because of Winn-Dixie*.
2. Arrange students in small groups and ask them to prepare a presentation of one scene from the book for the whole class – without using any words.
3. Challenge each group to strategize successful ways to tell the story in pantomime. Ask students to predict what they think will be the most challenging part of this exercise.
4. After all students have presented their brief scenes, invite them to discuss what happens when the story is told without words. When is this most successful? When does it present problems? This can serve as an introduction to a definition of the word *adaptation*.



5. Write definitions for the following words on the chalkboard.

These words appear in the online interview listed in the Materials section of this activity: *screenwriter, producer, adaptation, adapt, translates, potential, dialogue, whirlwind, direct, cast, "voiceover," suffered, complimentary.*

6. Read aloud to students the online interview with Joan Singleton, the screenwriter and producer of *Because of Winn-Dixie*, stopping to define the words on the chalkboard when you come upon them in reading the interview aloud.
7. Invite students to share their opinion of what they think was most difficult for Joan Singleton in working on the adaptation, and why.
8. Challenge students to explain what they think the famous dancer Isadora Duncan meant when she said, "If I could tell you what, I meant, I wouldn't need to dance."

Adaptations:

Some students may benefit from having the interview reproduced as a set of transparencies displayed on an overhead projector so they can follow along as you read. Because the interview is in a question-and-answer format, you may also wish to read and discuss a few questions and answers at a time, over two class periods. Students for whom English is a second language may also benefit from seeing the definitions on the chalkboard or at their desks on a handout.

Assessment:

Assess students on their ability to describe and reflect upon the process whereby Joan Singleton adapted the novel *Because of Winn-Dixie*.

Extensions:

The DVD *Holes* contains an interview with author Louis Sachar in which he discusses the process of adapting his own novel into a screenplay. For ordering information see www.walden.com/holes then click on BUY THE DVD at the bottom of the page.

Useful Resources:

The Alliance for a Media Literate America (AMLA) is committed to promoting media literacy education that is focused on critical inquiry, learning, and skill-building. Visit them at: <http://amlainfo.org>.

The Children's Literature Network provides education for adults who are passionate about encouraging kids to read. For more information see: www.childrensliteraturenetwork.org/about.html



We hope this Activity Guide demonstrates the care we take in creating movie adaptations of great literature. Dana Gioia, Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, summarizes his broader perspective on why caring about literature is vital.

Why Reading Literature Matters

Reading at Risk is not a report that the National Endowment for the Arts is happy to issue. This comprehensive survey of American literary reading presents a detailed but bleak assessment of the decline of reading's role in the nation's culture.... (The) report can be ... summarized in a single sentence: literary reading in America is not only declining rapidly among all groups, but the rate of decline has accelerated, especially among the young....

More than reading is at stake. As this report unambiguously demonstrates, readers play a more active and involved role in their communities. The decline in reading, therefore, parallels a larger retreat from participation in civic and cultural life. The long-term implications of this study not only affect literature but all the arts – as well as social activities such as volunteerism, philanthropy, and even political engagement.

What is to be done? There is surely no single solution to the present dilemma, just as there is no single cause. Each concerned group – writers, teachers, publishers, journalists, librarians, and legislators – will legitimately view the situation from a different perspective, and each will offer its own recommendations. The important thing now is to understand that America can no longer take active and engaged literacy for granted.

Reading is not a timeless, universal capability. Advanced literacy is a specific intellectual skill and social habit that depends on a great many educational, cultural, and economic factors. As more Americans lose this capability, our nation becomes less informed, active, and independent-minded. These are not qualities that a free, innovative, or productive society can afford to lose.

From the Preface to *Reading at Risk: A Survey of Literary Reading in America: A Report from the National Endowment for the Arts.*

For your own copy of *Reading at Risk* please see: www.nea.gov/chairman/index.html



These behind-the-scenes photos from the set of *Because of Winn-Dixie* show Director Wayne Wang's attentiveness to creating a faithful adaptation.



Because of Winn- Dixie

TWENTIETH CENTURY FOX AND WALDEN MEDIA PRESENT A WAYNE WANG FILM "BECAUSE OF WINN-DIXIE"
JEFF DANIELS CICELY TYSON DAVE MATTHEWS EVA MARIE SAINT AND ANNASOPHIA ROBB MUSIC BY RACHEL PORTMAN
MUSIC SUPERVISOR DEVA ANDERSON COSTUME DESIGNER HOPE HANAFIN CO-PRODUCER BECKI CROSS TRUJILLO FILM EDITOR DEIRDRE SLEVIN PRODUCTION DESIGNER DONALD GRAHAM BURT
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY KARL WALTER LINDENLAUB, ASC, bvk EXECUTIVE PRODUCER RALPH SINGLETON PRODUCED BY TREVOR ALBERT JOAN SINGLETON BASED ON THE NOVEL BY KATE DICAMILLO
SCREENPLAY BY JOAN SINGLETON DIRECTED BY WAYNE WANG
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