



KATE DECAMILLO

"When I write, I sometimes stop and cup my hands, as if I am drinking water. I try; I want desperately to capture the world, to hold it for a moment in my hands."

Kate DiCamillo is "short. And loud," as she admitted on her website. Though she had trained to become an author, prior to 2000 DiCamillo had only published a few adult short stories in magazines. She worked in Minneapolis for The Bookman, a book distributor, in the children's department. It was during this time in Minneapolis, while she was missing the warm weather of Florida where she had spent much of her life, that DiCamillo began her first novel. Jennifer M. Brown, who interviewed the author for Publishers Weekly, reported: "This is what happened: she was just about to go to sleep when the book's narrator, India Opal Buloni, spoke to her, saying, 'I have a dog named Winn-Dixie.' DiCamillo says that after hearing that voice, 'the story told itself.' BECAUSE OF WINN-DIXIE was named a Newbery Honor Book after its publication, and three years later, THE TALE OF DESPEREAUX was awarded the prestigious Newbery Medal.

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Because of Winn-Dixie

By Kate DiCamillo

About This Book

At the start of Kate DiCamillo's Newbery Honor novel, ten-year-old India Opal Buloni has just moved to Naomi, Florida. Her mom has left the family, and her preacher father has been hiding in his old "turtle shell." All India Opal wants is a friend. That's when she finds Winn-Dixie, a stray dog she rescues at the local grocery store. Having Winn-Dixie for a dog is great. India Opal starts to meet people in town, her father starts poking out of his shell, and India Opal even begins to understand why her mother may have left. All of this happens because of Winn-Dixie.

Discussion Questions:

1. What brings India Opal and her father to Naomi?
2. Describe Winn-Dixie. What is it about him that makes him appealing to India Opal?
3. How does India Opal's father react to Winn-Dixie? How does she convince him to let the dog stay?
4. What are the ten things that India Opal's father tells her about her mother? Connect these ten things to the rest of the story. (For example, number three is "She liked to plant things." India Opal later plants a tree with Gloria Dump.)
5. Gloria Dump says that the most important thing in life is: "different for everyone. . . . You find out on your own. But in the meantime, you got to remember, you can't always judge people by the things they done. You got to judge them by what they are doing now." What do you think this means? What does this mean to you? Why is Gloria Dump so important to India Opal?
6. Who were some of your favorite characters in town? Describe them.
7. How does a Litmus Lozenge work? Would you want to try one? Why or why not?
8. What happens at the party to bring India Opal and her father together? What do you predict for their relationship in the future?
9. What does the title mean to you?

Resources referenced:

kidsreads.com, teenreads.com, bookrags.com, teachingbooks.com, multcolib.org, barnesandnoble.com,
And MPL Staff.