

# Because of Winn-Dixie

Recommended for Grades 4-6

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## **Book Summary: Because of Winn-Dixie**

Opal moves to Florida with her father and misses her mother who left them when she was young. One day, on a visit to the grocery store, she comes across a stray dog that she claims and brings home. Winn-Dixie helps her to find friends around her through his various escapades—scaring Miss Franny in the library, which begins Opal’s friendship with the librarian, running into Gloria Dump’s yard, and meeting Otis in the pet shop. Winn-Dixie also helps her come to terms with the absence of her mother.

## **[SPOILER]**

Opal and Gloria host a party for their new friends, but during the party a thunderstorm starts and Winn-Dixie is lost. While searching for her dog, Opal comes to terms with things leaving. Winn-Dixie is found safe in Gloria’s house and they resume their party with what they have left.

## **Author Biography: Kate DiCamillo**

Kate DiCamillo was born on March 25, 1964 in Philadelphia. As a young child, she suffered from chronic pneumonia, causing her family to move to Florida when she was five years old. She attended the University of Florida, where she majored in English. Kate moved to Minnesota after graduation. She worked in a book warehouse for several years before publishing her first book, *Because of Winn-Dixie* (2000). She presently lives and works in Minneapolis, Minnesota, where she faithfully writes two pages a day.



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## Discussion Questions: Because of Winn-Dixie

1. Opal goes to the store and finds a dog there running around inside. When the manager says to call the pound, Opal tells him it's her dog. Why did she lie about the dog being hers? Who do you think is happier about the arrangement—Opal or Winn-Dixie? Why? What would you have done if you were Opal?
2. According to Opal, Winn-Dixie has a sense of humor. How does Winn-Dixie show a sense of humor? Do dogs you know have this? Why or why not?
3. Winn-Dixie doesn't like to be left alone so Opal starts taking him with her wherever she goes, even to church and the library. Why is Winn-Dixie allowed in these places? Should all dogs be allowed to go to those places? Why or why not? Why are some places pet-free?
4. Opal thinks that everything that happened to her that summer happened because of Winn-Dixie. What kinds of things did he do for her? Would Opal have ever become friends with Miss Franny, Sweetie Pie, Otis and Gloria if it hadn't been for Winn-Dixie? Why or why not?
5. Think about how you first met your friends. Were there certain events (like Opal finding Winn-Dixie) that led to you meeting and becoming friends with them? If so, what were they?
6. When Opal tells Gloria that Otis used to be in jail, Gloria tells her that people shouldn't be judged for what they did but rather they should be judged by what they're doing now. How are these two things different? How would you want people to judge you? Why?
7. Miss Franny shares her Littmus Lozenges with Opal that taste bitter and sweet. The candies remind Opal how life is like a Littmus Lozenge with the sadness and sweetness mixed together. Do you agree with her? Why or why not?
8. While reading *Gone with the Wind* to Gloria, Opal comes up with the idea to have a party. Why do you think she chose to invite only a handful of people? Why do you think she wanted the party to do for all those people?
9. During the party, a thunderstorm begins and Winn-Dixie disappears. Opal and her father go to look for him and they find he was at the party all along. What did Opal learn while she was searching for Winn-Dixie?
10. Opal spent a lot of time missing her mother, but by the end she says her heart isn't empty anymore. Why is it no longer empty? How has she changed since the beginning of the book?
11. What was Winn-Dixie's role in the book? How would the story have been different if Opal hadn't found him?



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