

The Tiger Rising

Recommended for Grades 4-7

Book Summary: The Tiger Rising

Rob and his father move to Lister to work in a motel after the death of his mother. One day he finds a tiger in the woods, which becomes his secret. He befriends a strange girl, Sistine, and when he shows her the tiger, she insists they have to let it be free.

Rob struggles with the decision and seeks the advice of Willie May, another motel worker who tells him the story of how she let her pet bird free. Sistine and Rob show her the tiger but she tells them that letting a tiger free is much different than freeing a bird. Beauchamp, the motel owner and owner of the tiger, entrusts Rob with the keys for him to feed the tiger, which makes Sistine more insistent than ever that they must free the tiger.

[SPOILER]

Rob unlocks the cage and lets the tiger free. He and Sistine watch it run off into the woods until it is killed by Rob's father. Willie May told him as soon as she knew what they were planning to do so that Rob's father could save them. When he sees the tiger dead, all the anger Rob had suppressed from his mother's death comes out and it allows him to finally accept that she is gone. He promises that he will tell Beauchamp about letting the tiger go.

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: The Tiger Rising

1. When Rob first came across the tiger in the cage, he considered it luck. Why would finding the tiger be lucky? What kinds of things do you consider lucky when you find them?
 2. Why do all the kids bully Rob? Why does the new girl, Sistine, not like him either? What would you do if you were in Rob's situation?
 3. Sistine is saved from the bullies when Rob gets their attention and makes them chase after him. Afterwards, she scolds him for running away from the bullies. Why is running away from bullies never a good idea? What are some better ways to handle them?
 4. Willie May's theory about Rob's legs is that all his sadness collected in them because he won't let it rise to his heart. Everyone at school thinks he's contagious. What do you think the real problem with his legs is? Does it have anything to do with his mother? Why or why not?
 5. Why do you think Rob told Sistine about the tiger? Should he have kept the secret to himself? Why or why not? Who do you trust with your secrets? Why is it important to keep secrets?
 6. Sistine wants to release the tiger, but Rob argues "It ain't our tiger to let go". Sistine replies, "It's our tiger to save." Who do you think is right? Why?
 7. When Sistine asks about his mother, Rob tells her he's not supposed to talk about her because he and his dad purposely moved to Lister so they could get on with their lives and stop talking about her. Should events in the past be forgotten? Why or why not? What do you think would happen if someone only remembered the good memories and forgot the bad ones?
 8. When Willie May meets Sistine, she tells the girl "ain't nobody going to come and rescue you. You got to rescue yourself." What did Willie May mean? How do her words relate to Sistine's personal life? How to they relate to the tiger?
 9. How is letting the tiger free different than Willie May letting Cricket free? Do some animals belong in cages? Why or why not?
 10. How did the tiger's death help Rob and his father? Why did the tiger have to die? What do you think might have happened if the tiger was allowed to go free?
 11. Rob's father promises he will tell their boss he shot the tiger if Rob admits to letting it out. How do you think Beauchamp will react about the tiger? What will happen to Rob and his father? To Sistine?
 12. What was the significance of the tiger in the story?
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