

CANDLEWICK PRESS TEACHERS' GUIDE

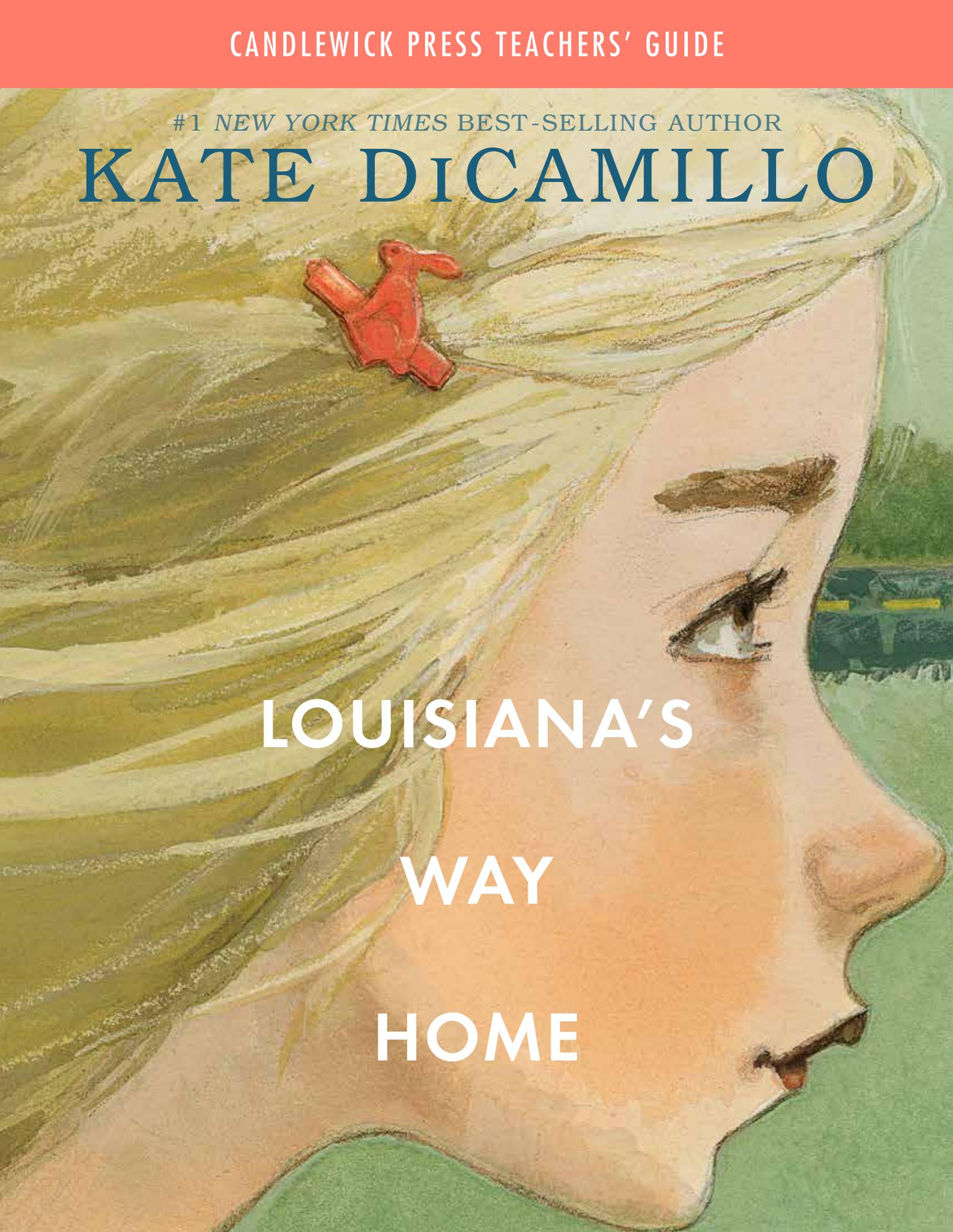
#1 NEW YORK TIMES BEST-SELLING AUTHOR

KATE DICAMILLO

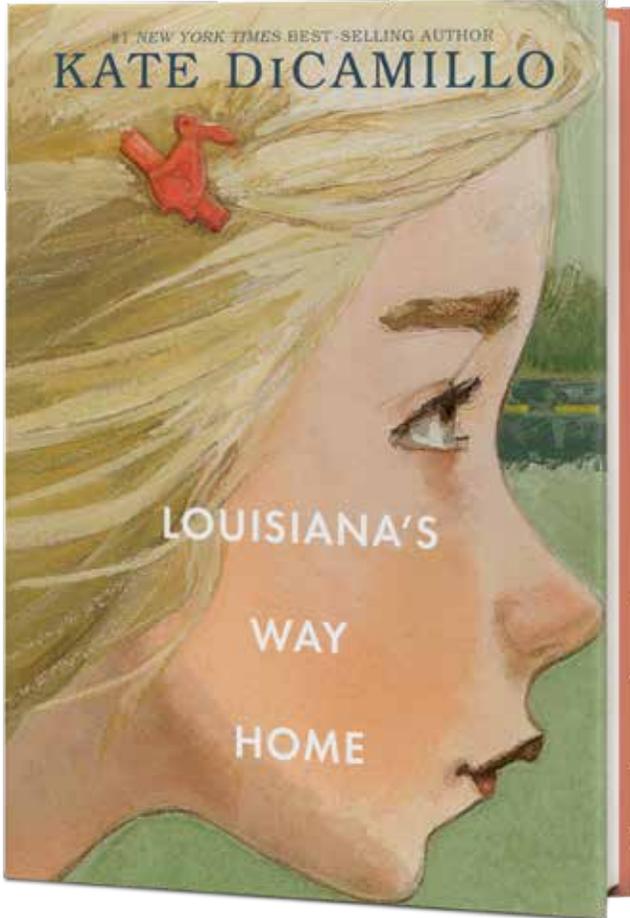
LOUISIANA'S

WAY

HOME



LOUISIANA'S WAY HOME



HC: 978-0-7636-9463-0 • Also available as an e-book

Common Core Connections

The Common Core Standards push readers to look closer when reading a text, examining the author's craft and analyzing word choice and narrative elements. Kate DiCamillo's novel *Louisiana's Way Home* includes complex characters, specific word choices, and a well-crafted plot that allow readers to delve deeply into the text. This teachers' guide includes discussion questions and language arts activities to be used in grades 3–6 in conjunction with reading the book as a whole group, small group, or combination. This guide could also be modified for use with a student who is reading the novel independently.

Notes throughout the guide correlate the questions and activities with specific Common Core Language Arts Standards. For more information on specific standards for your grade level, visit the Common Core website at www.corestandards.org.

About the Book

When Louisiana Elefante's granny wakes her up in the middle of the night to tell her that the day of reckoning has arrived and they have to leave home immediately, Louisiana isn't overly worried. After all, Granny has many middle-of-the-night ideas. But this time, things are different. This time, Granny intends for them never to return. Separated from her best friends, Raymie and Beverly, Louisiana struggles to oppose the winds of fate (and Granny) and find a way home. But as Louisiana's life becomes entwined with the lives of the people of a small Georgia town—including a surly motel owner, a walrus-like minister, and a mysterious boy with a crow on his shoulder—she starts to worry that she is destined only for good-byes. (Which could be due to the curse on Louisiana's and Granny's heads. But that is a story for another time.)

Called "one of DiCamillo's most singular and arresting creations" by the *New York Times Book Review*, the heartbreakingly irresistible Louisiana Elefante was introduced to readers in *Raymie Nightingale*—and now, with humor and tenderness, Kate DiCamillo returns to tell her story.

Praise for *Louisiana's Way Home*

- ★ *Publishers Weekly*
- ★ *School Library Journal*
- ★ *Kirkus Reviews*
- ★ *Booklist*
- ★ *The Horn Book*



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Discussion Questions

COMMON CORE CONNECTIONS

These questions correlate to ELA Reading Standards for Literature: Key Ideas and Details RL.3–6.1, RL.3–6.3; Craft and Structure RL 3–6.6; and Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity RL 3–6.10.

Use these questions for reading check-ins, writing prompts, or classroom discussions.

1. A few times throughout the book, Louisiana breaks the fourth wall and talks to us, the readers, directly (such as on page 9). How does this choice change the way the reader feels about the story?
2. Louisiana chooses to drive when her granny is too ill to do so. Do you think Louisiana made the right choice? What other choices did she have? Remember, the story is set in October 1977.
3. Using the information Louisiana shares on pages 61–62, what can you infer about Louisiana’s and her granny’s experiences before they got to Florida?
4. Louisiana’s love of animals is displayed over and over again in the story. After you have witnessed Louisiana interact with or talk about Archie, Buddy, Ernest, and Clarence, what can you infer about Louisiana as a person?
5. On pages 69 and 101, after encounters with Burke Allen, Louisiana says she is feeling hopeful. Why did these encounters with Burke change Louisiana’s mood? Was Louisiana right in feeling hopeful? Use text evidence to support your answer.
6. When she hears Miss Lulu play her organ for the first time, Louisiana can hardly listen because Miss Lulu’s heart is “clearly not involved with the music at all” (page 72). What did Louisiana mean by this? What did Miss Lulu’s way of playing tell us about her as a person? Is there evidence through the rest of the text to support your idea?
7. Louisiana is afraid of heights. We all have fears; some are irrational and others have reasons. What is something you fear and why?
8. How did Granny use the dangers of the county home to keep Louisiana complacent with the type of life they were living? What else did Granny do to make Louisiana feel like she had no other choice but to live the way they did?
9. Bernice is not a very pleasant person most of the time. What do you learn about Bernice throughout the story that may explain why she is so grumpy?
10. When Louisiana goes to sing at the funeral, she ends up envisioning things that aren’t there and then fainting. Why did she have the visions? Why did they cause her to faint?
11. Granny gives Louisiana lots of advice, and she begins her letter by telling Louisiana to “be brave.” But Louisiana is tired of being brave (page 116). She is also tired of persevering (page 10), imposing (page 12), keeping her mouth shut (page 94), and leaving places (page 173), and she struggles with lying and swindling people. What else does Louisiana seem to be tired of? Find evidence in the text. What advice do adults give you that you are tired of hearing? Why?
12. At the end of the story, we learn that Louisiana has been writing to her granny and says she forgives her. This forgiveness is more for Louisiana than Granny, as she mentions that she is not going to go looking for her. Why do you think Louisiana chose to write to Granny? What does the power of forgiveness do for Louisiana?

Classroom Activities

Use these activities to extend your students' experience with *Louisiana's Way Home*.

Vocabulary

Research shows that discussing vocabulary within the context of reading is one of the most effective ways to learn vocabulary, and Kate DiCamillo uses very specific word choices in *Louisiana's Way Home*.

WORD MAP

After reading the novel, have your students look back at the vocabulary and choose five words they do not know. For each unknown word, have students create a word map. The map could include:

- the student's guessed definition based on context clues
- the dictionary definition
- what part of speech the word is
- one or two synonyms
- one or two antonyms
- the sentence from the book that the word appears in
- an illustration of the word
- the relevant word parts (prefixes, suffixes, roots)
- associations for the word

Word Map

sentence from the book:	dictionary definition:	
guessed definition:	word:	synonyms:
part of speech:	illustration:	antonyms:
prefixes, suffixes, roots:		associations:

Here are some examples of words that may be used and the page where they first appear in the novel. Note that some words may be in the text more than once.

absconded (page 171)	dire (page 37)	intervened (page 6)	sentiment (page 53)
agitated (page 191)	dirge (page 219)	intervention (page 157)	shun (page 21)
ails (page 179)	dispense (page 163)	irrelevant (page 36)	signage (page 27)
anticipated (page 106)	divine (page 194)	irrevocableness (page 6)	soliciting (page 119)
array (page 56)	emerged (page 51)	jabbed (page 68)	splotches (page 4)
ascertained (page 61)	emphatic (page 58)	junction (page 36)	staggering (page 44)
averting (page 153)	enrage (page 108)	kaleidoscope (page 74)	stargazing (page 3)
baffled (page 87)	exasperated (page 16)	macadam (page 32)	swampy (page 48)
balm (page 160)	excavating (page 61)	mercy (page 59)	swooping (page 92)
behold (page 88)	exploits (page 40)	mirage (page 193)	systemic (page 47)
blissfully (page 153)	fateful (page 105)	nonetheless (page 10)	taxidermy (page 34)
breadth (page 107)	ferocious (page 57)	ominous (page 119)	tragic (page 5)
bristly (page 67)	glared (page 88)	pang (page 35)	unceasing (page 89)
burnished (page 37)	glinted (page 95)	perpetual (page 89)	untoward (page 156)
callused (page 139)	grim (page 52)	persevering (page 10)	utterances (page 102)
cavorting (page 64)	hobbled (page 21)	populace (page 83)	vain (page 4)
ceased (page 44)	hoodwinked (page 75)	practical (page 7)	vale (page 155)
cogitating (page 80)	huffing (page 75)	probable (page 75)	verge (page 179)
compromised (page 87)	hurtling (page 115)	profound (page 47)	vestibule (page 56)
confronted (page 5)	implications (page 154)	provisions (page 5)	vicious (page 54)
constellation (page 3)	impose (page 12)	reckon (page 93)	wafted (page 74)
contemplated (page 57)	inadvertently (page 152)	reckoning (page 2)	weariness (page 173)
deceitful (page 104)	ineffectual (page 164)	rectify (page 174)	wily (page 42)
descended (page 124)	infinitesimally (page 114)	recuperate (page 49)	winsome (page 184)
despair (page 15)	inquiries (page 155)	resenting (page 88)	woe (page 17)
desperate (page 40)	insight (page 157)	rotary (page 63)	wondrous (page 72)
desperation (page 7)	insubstantial (page 31)	rustling (page 114)	
destiny (page 3)	intensifies (page 94)	salvation (page 81)	
diminished (page 64)	interfere (page 33)	sanctuary (page 76)	

SYNONYMS

To further the discussion about the author's word choices, look at synonyms for the words Kate DiCamillo uses and have a discussion with your students about why she chose the word she did instead of one of its synonyms.

MOOD

Many of Kate DiCamillo's word choices evoke specific moods. Give your students a section of text where Louisiana is not in a particularly good mood (such as pages 6–7) and another where she is in a better mood (such as pages 212–213). Ask them to pull out words that suggest the mood.

Extension: Give students some words from the word list above and have them try to guess the mood at that point of the story based on the word choice. Then have them check their predictions.

COMMON CORE CONNECTIONS

ELA Reading Standards for
Literature: Craft and Structure
RL.3–6.4.

Predicting

Louisiana's curse is mentioned throughout the story, but it isn't until Granny's letter that the reader truly understands what the curse is. Starting with its introduction on page 2, have your students predict what the curse is each time it is mentioned.

Original prediction (page 2): I believe Louisiana's family's curse is

Updated prediction (page 22): Based on what I've learned now,

Updated prediction (page 30): Based on what I've learned now,

Updated prediction (page 89): Based on what I've learned now,

Updated prediction (p. 106): Based on what I've learned now,

Updated prediction (p. 123): Based on Granny's letter, I now know Granny's curse is _____

_____ based on _____.

Extension: Now that you know Louisiana is not related to Granny and has no connection to the sundering, do you believe the curse is hers? Why?

COMMON CORE CONNECTIONS

ELA Reading Standards for Literature: Craft and Structure RL.3–6.1.

Characters

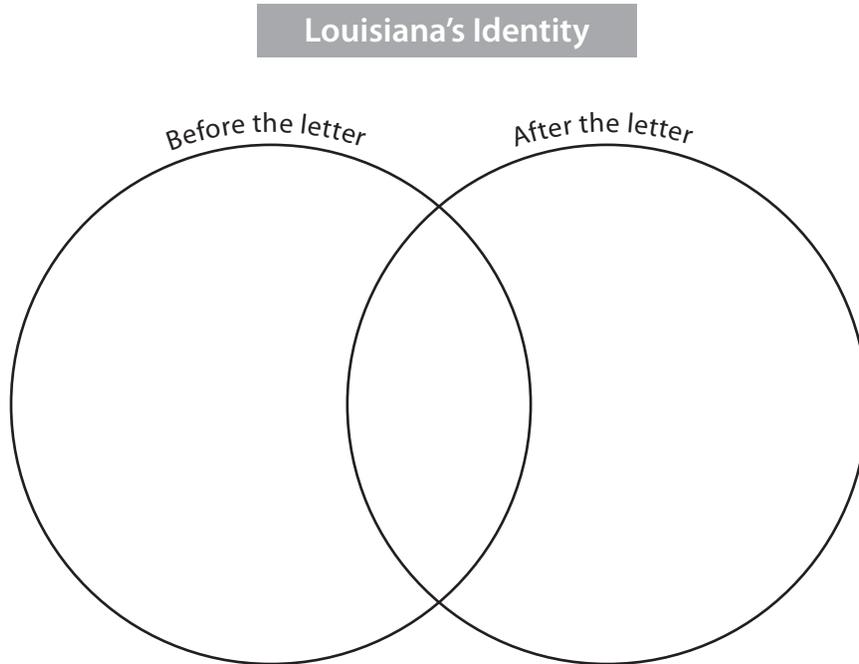
Every person we meet leaves an impression on us, and they may leave a different impression on someone else. The same is true for characters in books. For example, Bernice sees Louisiana as a burden who is lazy and not fulfilling her end of a bargain. Burke sees Louisiana as a new friend, nice but challenging. Miss Lulu, Reverend Obertask, Burke’s family, and Granny all see Louisiana differently. Readers may see Louisiana as a young girl who is in a very difficult situation, needs help, and is doing everything she can to survive. As a class, make a list of Louisiana’s character traits based on how each character perceives her. Then assign students their own character to complete the same activity (in pairs or independently).

My character:	
How the reader perceives my character:	How Louisiana perceives my character:
How Granny perceives my character:	How Burke perceives my character:
How Bernice perceives my character:	How Miss Lulu perceives my character:
How Reverend Obertask perceives my character:	How Burke’s mother perceives my character:

Extension: “I guess you can never say what riches people contain” (page 78). Bernice makes this statement after she hears Louisiana sing and realizes she has judged Louisiana unfairly. Each character in the book also contains riches that may not be evident at the beginning. Break students into seven groups, one for each supporting character (Bernice, Burke, Miss Lulu, Reverend Obertask, Burke’s mom, Burke’s grandfather, and Granny), and have students look through the book to determine what “riches” each character has. Have them write a character analysis paragraph stating what they believe and including evidence from the text.

Identity

Louisiana feels as though her identity is thrown into question when she receives the letter from Granny. Have your students create a Venn diagram examining Louisiana's identity before and after the letter: what no longer exists because it was a lie, what now exists because she has found the truth, and what has stayed the same.



Symbolism

Throughout *Louisiana's Way Home*, Kate DiCamillo uses symbolism that may not at first be evident to the reader. Below is a list of items that may have symbolized something more in the story:

- the Blue Fairy (page 28)
- holding hands (page 179)
- the sky gets darker and the stars get brighter (page 213)
- the North Star (page 216)

Separate your class into four groups and assign each of them one of these symbols. Ask them to explain the meaning of their symbol and to provide evidence from the text to support their conclusions.

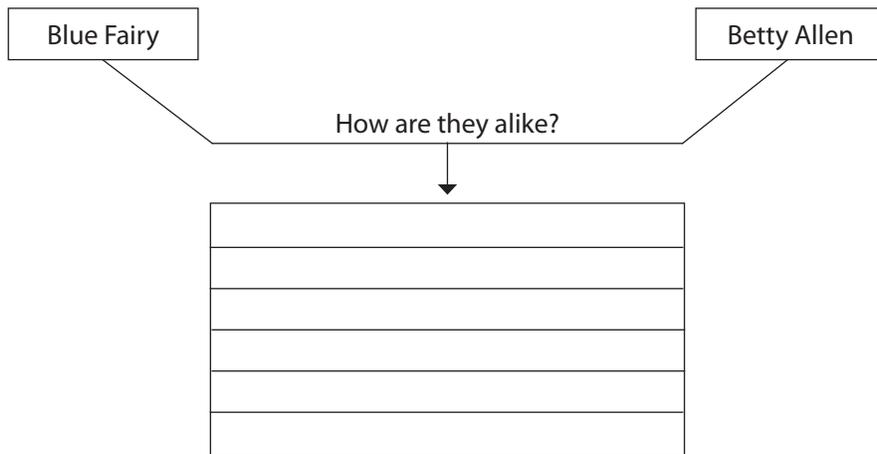
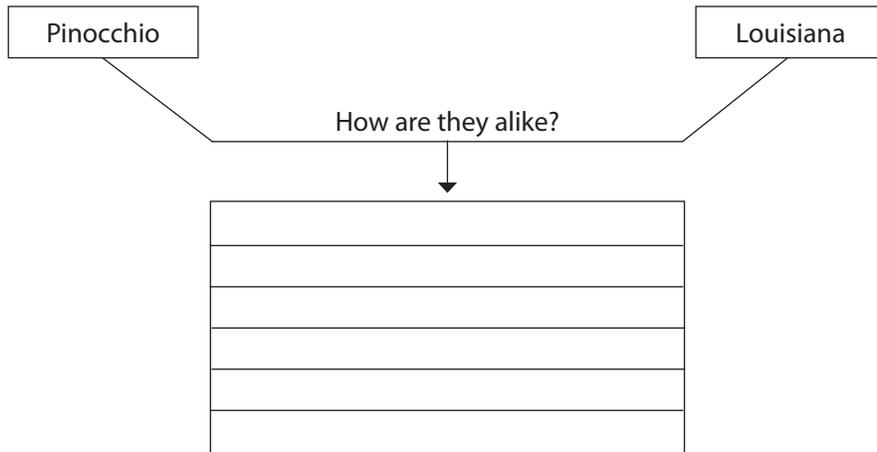
Extension: Crows typically symbolize death and are seen as bad omens, but that was not the case for Clarence. Discuss with your students how Clarence defied the stereotypical symbolism of crows. What did Clarence symbolize in this story?

Comparisons

The story of Pinocchio is mentioned throughout the novel. Before beginning this discussion, knowledge of the story of Pinocchio is needed. Your class can read the entire text of *The Adventures of Pinocchio*, read a shorter adaptation, or watch the Disney version of the tale. After students have a basic

understanding of the story, ask them how Pinocchio’s and Louisiana’s stories are similar. As a class, complete a comparison chart.

The Blue Fairy specifically was mentioned over and over by Louisiana. Discuss with your students why Louisiana may have chosen the Blue Fairy as a character to cling to. Then have them look at page 202, where Betty Allen is compared to the Blue Fairy. How are the Blue Fairy and Betty Allen similar? Complete a comparison chart.

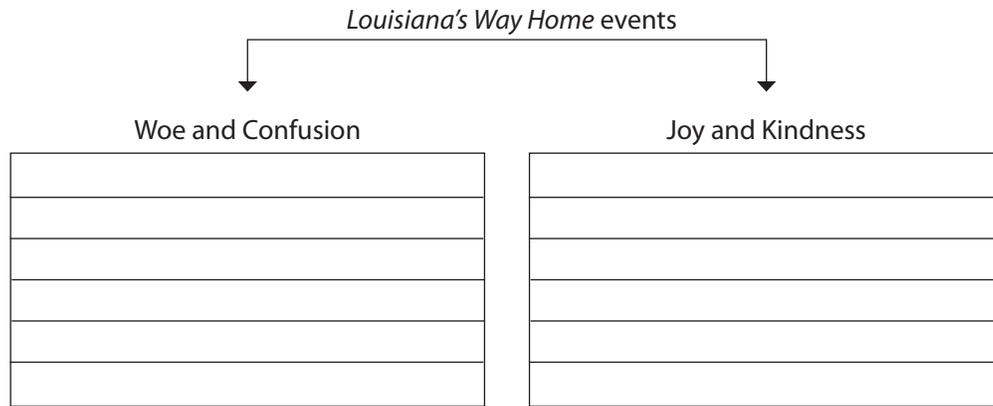


Extension: Using the comparison charts the class created, have students write a comparison paragraph with additional text evidence.

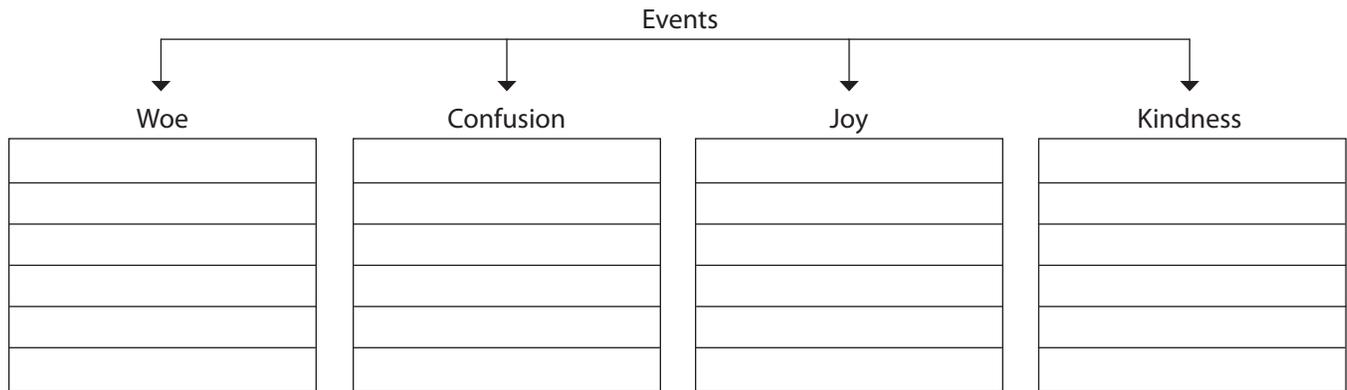
Woe and Confusion or Joy and Kindness?

Louisiana writes, “In some ways, this is a story of woe and confusion, but it is also a story of joy and kindness” (pages 17–18). As a class, in groups or pairs, or independently, have your students take the main events of the story and decide if each fits under the “woe and confusion” category or the “joy and kindness” category.

Categorizing



Extension: Underneath each category, have the students further separate what fits under woe, confusion, joy, and kindness.



This guide was created by Kellee Moye, a middle-school reading coach and teacher from Orlando, Florida. She is the coauthor of the blog *Unleashing Readers*, an author of teaching guides, a member of the 2016–2018 ALAN Board of Directors, a member of NCTE, ALAN, and ALA, and the chair of the 2014 Amelia Elizabeth Walden Award committee.

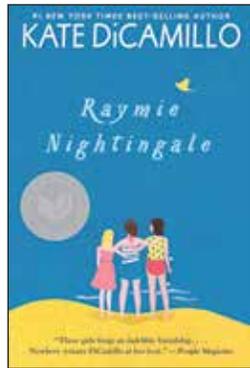
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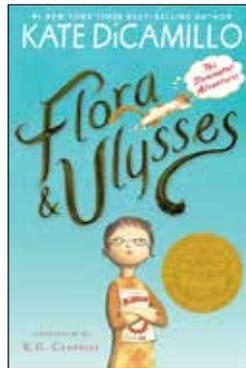
Photo by Catherine Smith

Kate DiCamillo is one of America's most beloved storytellers. She is a former National Ambassador for Young People's Literature and a two-time winner of the Newbery Medal, for *The Tale of Despereaux* and *Flora & Ulysses*. She notes, "I think of myself as an enormously lucky person: I get to tell stories for a living." Born in Philadelphia, she grew up in Florida and now lives in Minneapolis.

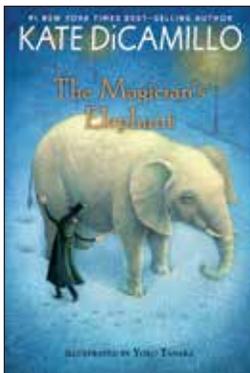
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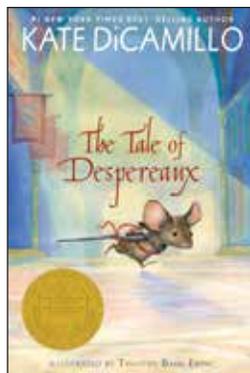
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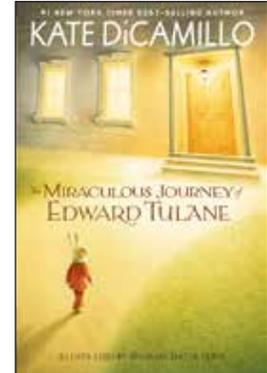
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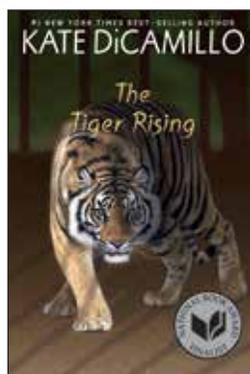
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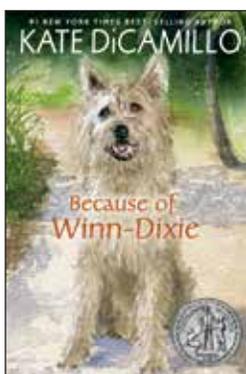
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