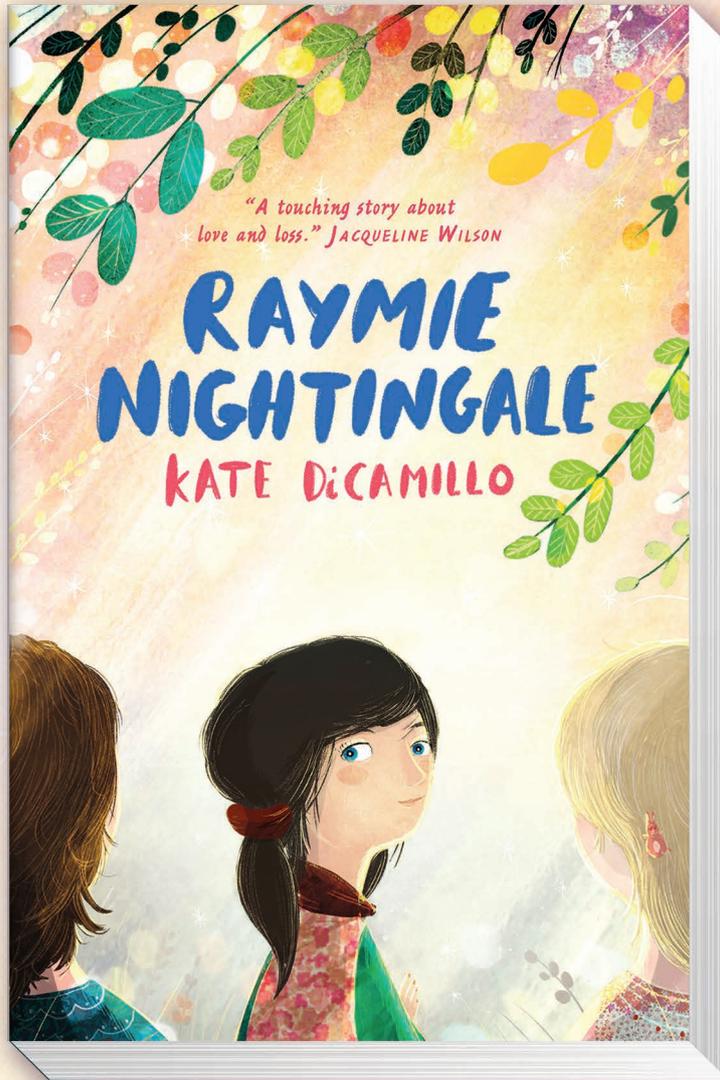




WALKER  
BOOKS

# TEACHERS' NOTES



ISBN 9781406373189 • £6.99 • Paperback • Age 9+

## About the Book

Raymie Clarke has come to realize that everything, absolutely everything, depends on her. And she has a plan: if she can win the Little Miss Central Florida Tire competition, then her father, who left town two days ago with a dental hygienist, will see Raymie's picture in the paper and (maybe) come home.

To win, not only does Raymie have to do good deeds and learn how to twirl a baton, but she also has to contend with Louisiana Elefante, who has a show-business background, and Beverly Tapinski, who's determined to sabotage the contest. As the competition approaches, loneliness, loss, and unanswerable questions draw the three girls into an unlikely friendship and challenge each of them to come to the rescue in unexpected ways.

[www.walker.co.uk](http://www.walker.co.uk)

## Discussion Questions

1. Raymie recites a nursery rhyme every time she thinks about her father's leaving (page 9). Why do you think she continues to think of the nursery rhyme? How might a nursery rhyme make her feel better? Why does it anger her mother that Raymie recites the rhyme?
2. Why do you think Raymie calls Mrs Sylvester when she is feeling down? How does it help Raymie feel better?
3. What "appropriate" book would you bring to read to the elderly if you were volunteering at the Golden Glen?
4. On page 79, Isabelle tells Raymie that "good deeds are pointless". Do you agree with Isabelle? Why or why not?
5. There are hints throughout *Raymie Nightingale* about Beverly's home life, such as the way her mother reacts when she picks up Beverly from baton class (page 40), as well as the bruise under Beverly's eye (page 86) and her chipped front tooth (page 124). What do these things tell us? How do they help explain the way Beverly acts?
6. Louisiana and her grandmother often steal food in order to have something to eat, but Louisiana says it's OK because they are stealing to survive. Do you agree or disagree?
7. When the girls are at the Golden Glen, both Beverly and Louisiana do something brave: Beverly holds Alice Nebbley's hand when Alice asks, and Louisiana lets the yellow bird out of its cage. What do these actions tell you about the two girls' personalities?
8. How would you describe the tone of Raymie's voice at the beginning of the book as compared with the end? How does her tone change throughout the story?
9. In addition to Beverly and Louisiana, many characters are part of Raymie's journey, including Mr Option, Mrs Sylvester, Mrs Borkowski, Mr Staphopoulos, Isabelle, Martha, Ruthie, Louisiana's grandmother, Bunny/Buddy, the yellow bird and the janitor. Which characters do you think affect Raymie the most, and why? Use quotes from the book to back up your reasoning.
10. Kate DiCamillo uses foreshadowing throughout the novel to give hints about the ending of the book – for example, Louisiana saying, "We'll rescue each other" (page 93), Louisiana thinking Raymie's last name is Nightingale, and Raymie receiving the light from Mrs Borkowski in her dream (page 214). Did you catch these hints while you were reading? What was each hint foreshadowing? Why do authors include foreshadowing in their novels?

## Classroom Activities

Use these activities to extend your students' experiences with *Raymie Nightingale*.

1. Kate DiCamillo uses very specific word choices in *Raymie Nightingale*. After reading the novel, ask your students to look back at the vocabulary and choose five words they do not know. For each unknown word, ask the students to create a word map, which might include:

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

### Some examples of words that may be chosen:

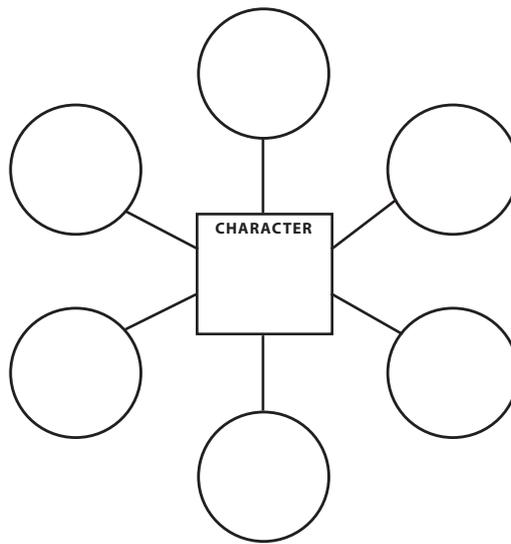
astonishment (page 207)	intention (page 12)
authoritative (page 117)	lingered (page 189)
bleak (page 79)	malevolent (page 32)
cacophony (page 123)	malingeringers (page 20)
concocted (page 204)	morose (page 229)
deceitful (page 132)	mournful (page 77, 78, 117)
despair (pages 13, 230)	objective (page 63, 64, 75, 84, 139)
dismay (page 14)	pang (page 38)
dubious (page 50)	prevailed (page 77)
emitting (page 121)	pronouncement (page 20)
envy (page 15)	prostrate (page 151)
glinted (page 49, 175)	rampage (page 203)
grubby (page 22, 36, 125)	revive (page 188)
hastily (page 204)	sabotage (page 28, 29, 31, 35, 51, 64, 96, 166, 174, 195)
implying (page 159)	scuffle (page 159)
insubstantial (page 154, 226)	

**Extension:** 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 the author chose each word she did instead of one of its synonyms.

2. Although Raymie is the protagonist of this novel, readers get to know Louisiana and Beverly as well. Each girl is unique and has specific traits that make her who she is. Explain to your class what character traits are and how authors use them to develop characters.

Ask your students to analyze the three main characters in *Raymie Nightingale* by creating a character web for each of the girls. For each web, make sure your students include the way the character feels, acts, and looks, as well as other aspects of her life. Next to each description/trait, ask students to use page numbers to note the place in the book where it appears.

**Character web example (you do not need to limit students to six traits):**



**Extension:** Create character maps for secondary characters as well. This is tougher, because secondary characters aren't described as extensively as main characters. Teach your class how to make inferences based on clues and allow students to include their inferences about secondary characters on these maps.

**Extension:** After students analyse the traits of each character, ask them to analyse two different webs, then complete a compare-and-contrast graphic organizer that looks at the characters' similarities and differences.

3. When Raymie, Louisiana and Beverly are first introduced to readers, they are very different from the characters they become by the end of the book. Discuss with your students the concept of first impressions and the saying "don't judge a book by its cover". Before starting the book, ask students to note their first impressions of these characters and let them know they will be comparing them later to their final impressions. Remind students to pay attention to what they know and think they know about each character as they read the first eight chapters.

At the end of page 39, stop and ask each of your students to create three tables (one for Raymie, one for Louisiana and one for Beverly). The left side of the table should be titled "First Impressions" and the right "Final Impressions". Students should then list what they know and think they know about each of the three girls on the left side of the table. When students have finished the book, ask them to use the right column to write what they've learned about the characters. You may want to tell your students to include page numbers for text that supports their statement.

After students complete the tables, tell them to choose Raymie, Beverly or Louisiana and write an essay comparing and contrasting their first and final impressions of that character. Ask students to include evidence from the text to back up their impressions.

CHARACTER NAME	
FIRST IMPRESSION	FINAL IMPRESSION

4. Louisiana and her grandmother have a very interesting way of reading books. Reread with your students pages 208 (from “Louisiana sighed” in paragraph five) to page 213 (“Louisiana rustled the pages of the book”). These pages depict Louisiana reading random sentences from a biography of Florence Nightingale, then creating her own narrative using the sentences she’s chosen.

Tell your students to recreate Louisiana’s way of reading and telling a story. Invite each student to choose a book they have never read. Ask them to flip to ten random pages and choose one or two sentences from each page. Then ask them to copy these sentences onto sticky notes and put the book aside.

Discuss with your students what narrative elements are and what needs to be included in a story. Make sure to cover characters, setting, conflict and plot development. Students will use this knowledge to write their own narratives using the ten to twenty sentences they just copied down.

**Extension:** After students write their narratives, ask them to predict what they think their chosen books are about, based on the sentences they copied. Then tell them to read the books and check their predictions.

5. Kate DiCamillo uses an abundance of figurative language to create imagery throughout *Raymie Nightingale*. Figurative language helps readers visualise what they are reading by comparing one thing with something else. Discuss with your students the difference between figurative and literal language and go over different kinds of figurative language (specifically idioms, personification and similes).

To illustrate how figurative language works, assign each student a different simile, idiom or personification from the book. Then have them each fold a sheet of paper in half vertically. Ask the

class to draw pictures of the *literal* meanings of the figurative language they were assigned on the left side of their paper. (For example, if a student is assigned the description “Small rocks leaped into the air,” he or she might draw little rocks with feet, jumping out of the way.) On the right side of their paper, students should draw the *figurative* meanings of their excerpts. (For example, “Small rocks leaped into the air” actually means that rocks are flying up naturally, not leaping on their own, so students might draw rocks moving normally into the air.)

After they are done with their illustrations, discuss with your students why each of the examples of figurative language was used, what image it painted in their heads, and what type of figurative language it is.

Examples of simile can be found on pages 16, 21, 23, 43, 54, 56, 66, 67, 88, 100, 126, 150, 171, 180 and 247.

Examples of personification can be found on pages 12, 38, 83, 90, 155, 185 and 225.

Examples of idioms can be found on pages 52, 68, 121 and 124.

**Note:** Not all of these examples would be easy to illustrate. Make sure to pick ones that best fit the level of students you are teaching. These are also not the only uses of these devices in the book. If you wish, students may find their own examples.

**Extension:** Symbolism, also a form of figurative language, uses an object to represent something else. In *Raymie Nightingale*, Raymie’s soul, Marsha Jean, Raymie receiving the light from Mrs Borkowski (page 214) and Archie all symbolize different things. Discuss with your students what symbolism is and what each of these objects symbolises.

6. Florence Nightingale is mentioned throughout the book, but we are never told about her entire life, just given snippets suggesting who she was. Divide your class into collaborative groups and ask each one to research a different time period in Florence Nightingale’s life. Tell the groups to develop presentations with their research and present them in chronological order.

**Extension:** Discuss with students why the title includes Florence Nightingale’s last name. What is the significance? Why was it chosen?

**Extension:** Ask students to use what they researched for their presentations to complete research papers with bibliographies. Before sending students off to research, be sure to explain how to cite sources so they can take notes correctly.

7. The narrator’s point of view directly influences the way events are described. Select a scene within the book that is witnessed by Raymie, Louisiana and Beverly and discuss with students the way the scene would be written if it were shown from Louisiana’s or Beverly’s point of view. What might be described differently? Is there information that the other characters have that Raymie doesn’t, or vice versa? How might the tone change?

After discussing the scene as a class, divide students into pairs and have each pair choose their own scene. Invite the pairs to discuss the same questions that were discussed with the whole

group regarding their new scenes. Then the pairs should rewrite the scenes from both of the other characters' points of view.

8. *Raymie Nightingale* takes place in 1975. Compare and contrast 1975 with the modern day. What are the biggest differences?

Discuss the way the story might be different if it took place today. What would the biggest changes be? Are there any scenes that simply would not have happened today?

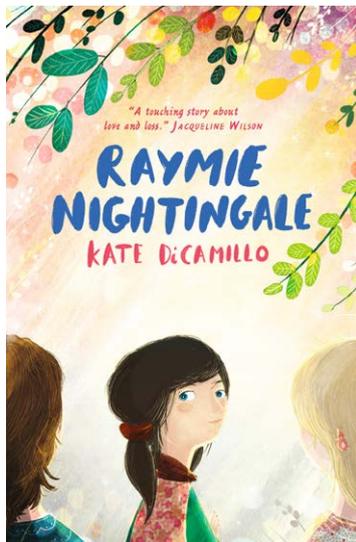
After the discussion, ask students to choose a scene and rewrite it as if it were taking place in the modern day.

## About the Author

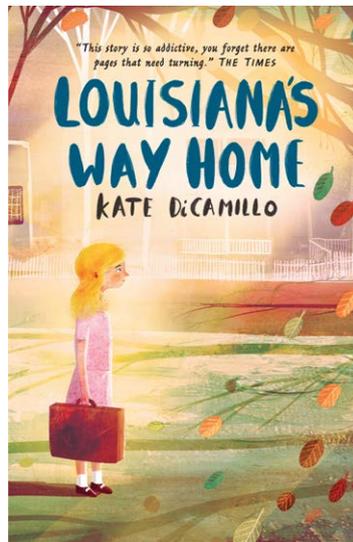


Photo by Catherine Smith

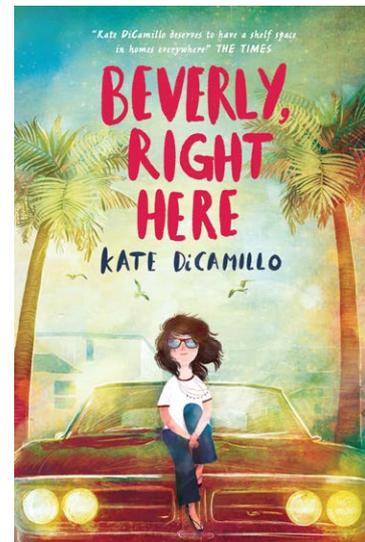
**Kate DiCamillo** is one of America's most well-regarded storytellers, author of *The Tale of Despereaux* and *Flora and Ulysses*, both of which have been awarded the prestigious Newbery Medal; *Because of Winn-Dixie*, which received a Newbery Honor; *The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane*, which won a Boston Globe-Horn Book Award; and the bestselling Mercy Watson series. Born in Philadelphia, she grew up in Florida and now lives in Minneapolis, USA, where she faithfully writes two pages a day, five days a week.



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