

# Comprehension

## Genre

**Realistic Fiction** is a made-up story that could have happened in real life.



## Evaluate

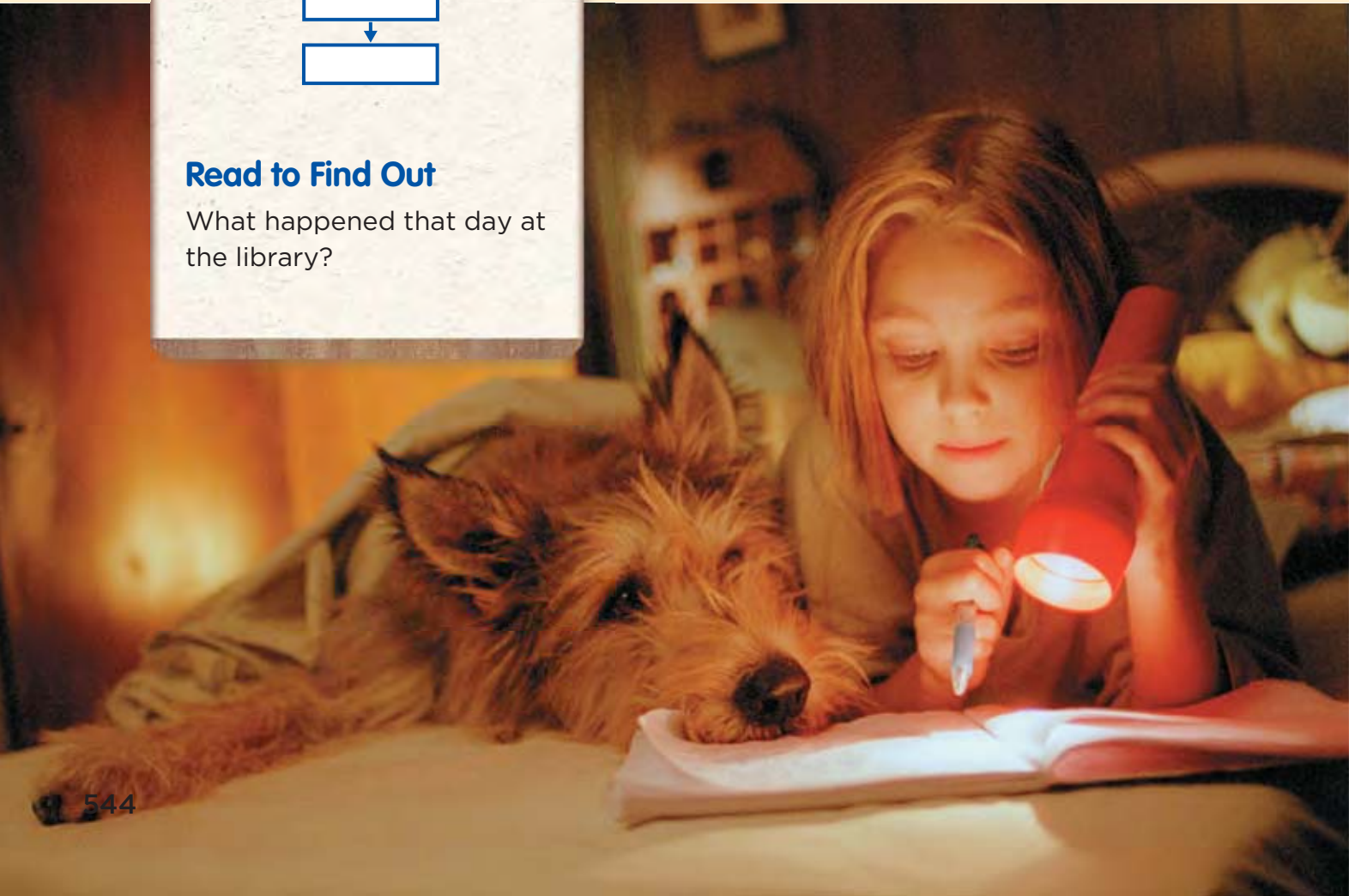
### Summarize

As you read, fill in your Summarizing Chart.

Event
↓
↓
↓

## Read to Find Out

What happened that day at the library?





Because  
of **Winn-  
Dixie**

by Kate DiCamillo



I spent a lot of time that summer at the Herman W. Block Memorial Library. The Herman W. Block Memorial Library sounds like it would be a big fancy place, but it's not. It's just a little old house full of books, and Miss Franny Block is in charge of them all. She is a very small, very old woman with short gray hair, and she was the first friend I made in Naomi.

It all started with Winn-Dixie not liking it when I went into the library, because he couldn't go inside, too. But I showed him how he could stand up on his hind legs and look in the window and see me in there, **selecting** my books; and he was okay, as long as he could see me. But the thing was, the first time Miss Franny Block saw Winn-Dixie standing up on his hind legs like that, looking in the window, she didn't think he was a dog. She thought he was a bear.

This is what happened: I was picking out my books and kind of humming to myself, and all of a sudden, there was this loud and scary scream. I went running up to the front of the library, and there was Miss Franny Block, sitting on the floor behind her desk.

“Miss Franny?” I said. “Are you all right?”

“A bear,” she said.

“A bear?” I asked.

“He has come back,” she said.

“He has?” I asked. “Where is he?”

“Out there,” she said and raised a finger and pointed at Winn-Dixie standing up on his hind legs, looking in the window for me.

“Miss Franny Block,” I said, “that’s not a bear. That’s a dog. That’s my dog. Winn-Dixie.”





“Are you **positive**?” she asked.

“Yes ma’am,” I told her. “I’m positive. He’s my dog. I would know him anywhere.”

Miss Franny sat there trembling and shaking.

“Come on,” I said. “Let me help you up. It’s okay.” I stuck out my hand and Miss Franny took hold of it, and I pulled her up off the floor. She didn’t weigh hardly anything at all. Once she was standing on her feet, she started acting all embarrassed, saying how I must think she was a silly old lady, mistaking a dog for a bear, but that she had a bad experience with a bear coming into the Herman W. Block Memorial Library a long time ago and she never had quite gotten over it.

“When did that happen?” I asked her.

“Well,” said Miss Franny, “it is a very long story.”



### Summarize

Summarize the story so far.

“That’s okay,” I told her. “I am like my mama in that I like to be told stories. But before you start telling it, can Winn-Dixie come in and listen, too? He gets lonely without me.”

“Well, I don’t know,” said Miss Franny. “Dogs are not allowed in the Herman W. Block Memorial Library.”

“He’ll be good,” I told her. “He’s a dog who goes to church.” And before she could say yes or no, I went outside and got Winn-Dixie, and he came in and lay down with a “huummmppff” and a sigh, right at Miss Franny’s feet.

She looked down at him and said, “He most certainly is a large dog.”

“Yes ma’am,” I told her. “He has a large heart, too.”

“Well,” Miss Franny said. She bent over and gave Winn-Dixie a pat on the head, and Winn-Dixie wagged his tail back and forth and **snuffled** his nose on her little old-lady feet. “Let me get a chair and sit down so I can tell this story properly.”





**B**ack when Florida was wild, when it **consisted** of nothing but palmetto trees and mosquitoes so big they could fly away with you,” Miss Franny Block started in, “and I was just a little girl no bigger than you, my father, Herman W. Block, told me that I could have anything I wanted for my birthday. Anything at all.”

Miss Franny looked around the library. She leaned in close to me. “I don’t want to appear prideful,” she said, “but my daddy was a very rich man. A very rich man.” She nodded and then leaned back and said, “And I was a little girl who loved to read. So I told him, I said, ‘Daddy, I would most certainly love to have a library for my birthday, a small little library would be wonderful.’ ”

“You asked for a whole library?”

“A small one,” Miss Franny nodded. “I wanted a little house full of nothing but books and I wanted to share them, too. And I got my wish. My father built me this house, the very one we are sitting in now. And at a very young age, I became a librarian. Yes ma’am.”

“What about the bear?” I said.

“Did I mention that Florida was wild in those days?” Miss Franny Block said.

“Uh-huh, you did.”

“It was wild. There were wild men and wild women and wild animals.”

“Like bears!”

“Yes ma’am. That’s right. Now, I have to tell you, I was a little-miss-know-it-all. I was a miss-smarty-pants with my library full of books. Oh, yes ma’am, I thought I knew the answers to everything. Well, one hot Thursday, I was sitting in my library with all the doors and windows open and my nose stuck in a book, when a shadow crossed the desk. And without looking up, yes ma’am, without even looking up, I said, ‘Is there a book I can help you find?’

“Well, there was no answer. And I thought it might have been a wild man or a wild woman, scared of all these books and afraid to speak up. But then I became aware of a very **peculiar** smell, a very strong smell. I raised my eyes slowly. And standing right in front of me was a bear. Yes ma’am. A very large bear.”

“How big?” I asked.

“Oh, well,” said Miss Franny, “perhaps three times the size of your dog.”



“Then what happened?” I asked her.

“Well,” said Miss Franny, “I looked at him and he looked at me. He put his big nose up in the air and sniffed and sniffed as if he was trying to decide if a little-miss-know-it-all librarian was what he was in the mood to eat. And I sat there. And then I thought, ‘Well, if this bear intends to eat me, I am not going to let it happen without a fight. No ma’am.’ So very slowly and very carefully, I raised up the book I was reading.”

“What book was that?” I asked.

“Why, it was *War and Peace*, a very large book. I raised it up slowly and then I aimed it carefully and I threw it right at that bear and screamed, ‘Be gone!’ And do you know what?”

“No ma’am,” I said.

“He went. But this is what I will never forget. He took the book with him.”

“Nuh-uh,” I said.

“Yes ma’am,” said Miss Franny. “He snatched it up and ran.”

“Did he come back?” I asked.

“No, I never saw him again. Well, the men in town used to tease me about it. They used to say, ‘Miss Franny, we saw that bear of yours out in the woods today. He was reading that book and he said it sure was good and would it be all right if he kept it for just another week.’ Yes ma’am. They did tease me about it.” She sighed. “I imagine I’m the only one left from those days. I imagine I’m the only one that even recalls that bear. All my friends, everyone I knew when I was young, they are all dead and gone.”

She sighed again. She looked sad and old and wrinkled. It was the same way I felt sometimes, being friendless in a new town and not having a mama to comfort me. I sighed, too.



Winn-Dixie raised his head off his paws and looked back and forth between me and Miss Franny. He sat up then and showed Miss Franny his teeth.

“Well now, look at that,” she said. “That dog is smiling at me.”

“It’s a talent of his,” I told her.

“It is a fine talent,” Miss Franny said. “A very fine talent.” And she smiled back at Winn-Dixie.

“We could be friends,” I said to Miss Franny. “I mean you and me and Winn-Dixie, we could all be friends.”

Miss Franny smiled even bigger. “Why, that would be grand,” she said, “just grand.”



### Summarize

How did they become friends? Leave the details out of your summary.





And right at that minute, right when the three of us had decided to be friends, who should come marching into the Herman W. Block Memorial Library but old pinch-faced Amanda Wilkinson. She walked right up to Miss Franny's desk and said, "I finished *Johnny Tremain* and I enjoyed it very much. I would like something even more difficult to read now, because I am an **advanced** reader."

"Yes dear, I know," said Miss Franny. She got up out of her chair.

Amanda pretended like I wasn't there. She stared right past me. "Are dogs allowed in the library?" she asked Miss Franny as they walked away.

"Certain ones," said Miss Franny, "a select few." And then she turned around and winked at me. I smiled back. I had just made my first friend in Naomi, and nobody was going to mess that up for me, not even old pinch-faced Amanda Wilkinson.

# Because of Kate

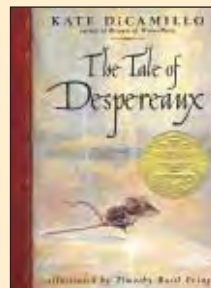
**Kate DiCamillo** wrote this story while she was shivering in Minnesota one winter. Kate had moved there from Florida and was very homesick. She also felt sad because she was not allowed to have a dog in her apartment. When Kate went to sleep, she dreamed she heard a girl say she had a dog named Winn-Dixie. Kate started writing the story as soon as she woke up.

*Because of Winn-Dixie* became the first book that Kate published. It won a Newbery Honor, which is one of the most respected awards a children's book can receive. She is also the author of *The Tiger Rising* and of *The Tale of Despereaux: Being the Story of a Mouse, a Princess, Some Soup, and a Spool of Thread*, which received the Newbery Medal in 2004.

When Kate wrote *Because of Winn-Dixie*, she would get up early every day to write two pages before leaving for her job at a bookstore. She no longer works at the bookstore, but she still writes two pages every morning.



## Other books by Kate DiCamillo



Find out more about Kate DiCamillo  
at [www.macmillanmh.com](http://www.macmillanmh.com)

## Author's Purpose

This selection is realistic fiction—a made-up story that has true-to-life details. What was the author's purpose for writing? Why do you think so?



## Comprehension Check



### Summarize

Use your Summarizing Chart to help you summarize *Because of Winn-Dixie*. Include the most important plot events.

Event
↓
↓
↓

### Think and Compare



1. Summarize the **peculiar** story that Miss Franny Block tells Opal. Focus on the main events of her story. **Evaluate:**  
**Summarize**
2. Reread pages 548–552 of *Because of Winn-Dixie*. What does Miss Franny mean when she says she never had quite gotten over it? **Analyze**
3. What funny story would you share with a new friend?  
**Apply**
4. Why are Miss Franny Block and Opal a good match for each other? **Evaluate**
5. Read “A Library Card for Emilio” on pages 542–543. How is Emilio like Opal in *Because of Winn-Dixie*? How are they different? Use details from both selections in your answer. **Reading/Writing Across Texts**

