

Flora & Ulysses

The Illuminated Adventures

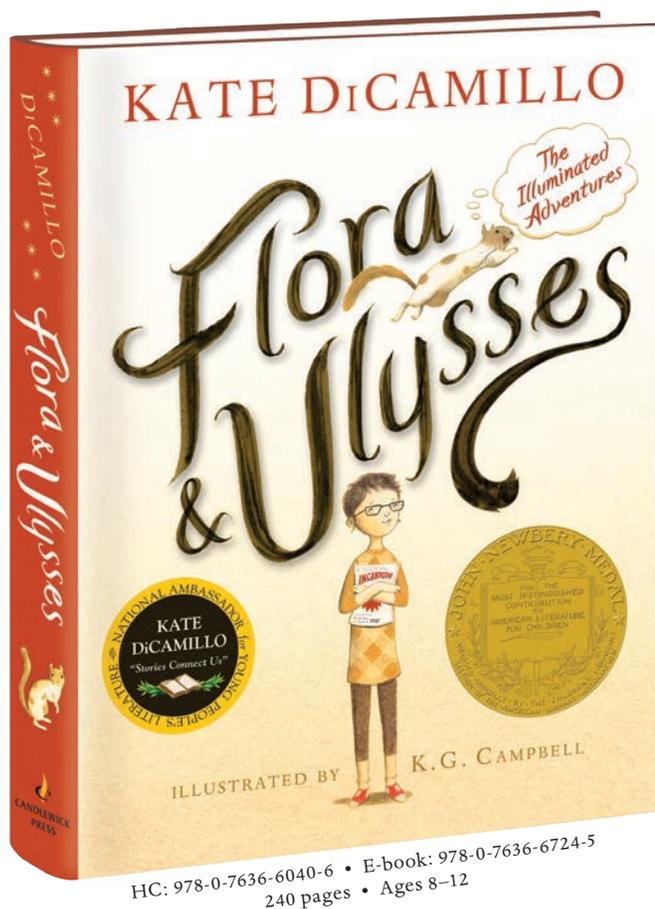
by
**KATE
 DICAMILLO**
 illustrated by
K. G. CAMPBELL

Winner of the 2014 Newbery Medal

About the Book

Ten-year-old Flora Belle Buckman and a superhero squirrel named Ulysses are the stars of this middle-grade adventure novel by the award-winning, best-selling author Kate DiCamillo. Incorporating her characteristic rich vocabulary, humor, and heart, the author delves into new territory by weaving comic-book elements (with the help of illustrator K. G. Campbell) into the narrative. Overarching themes of loneliness, hope, and love are key, intermixed with humor—both narrative and visual—that will have readers laughing out loud and cheering the story’s unforgettable characters.

Flora is living in a world where she doesn’t allow the possibility of hope. Her parents are divorced, and comic books are her favorite pastime. Flora feels alone and is prepared for the worst life has to offer when a random act of improbability connects her to Ulysses the squirrel, who becomes her champion. As both Flora and Ulysses begin to vanquish evil, they also help each other to believe, hope, and find love. Kate DiCamillo’s humor turns what could be a sad tale into a rip-roaring adventure, complete with lots of laughs and discoveries along the way. Here is a truly enjoyable opportunity to draw readers into a funny, superheroic, and heart-grabbing tale by a beloved author.



Common Core Connections

When used in the classroom, this guide will help students meet several of the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts, including the reading literature standards for key ideas and details, craft and structure, and integration of knowledge and ideas (**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL**), and the speaking and listening standards for comprehension and collaboration and for presentation of knowledge and ideas (**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL**). The questions in the guide can also be used as writing prompts for independent work. In addition, a teachers’ guide with more ideas for the classroom is available at www.candlewick.com.



Discussion Questions

Before reading:

1. We are going to witness the creation of a superhero! What are superheroes? How do we identify them? Where do we find them?
2. Flora Belle Buckman is a child with divorced parents. Her mom is busy writing romance novels, and her father lives in an apartment and visits only on weekends. Flora is a worrier and is prepared for the worst life has to offer, thanks to the wisdom she has learned from her comic books. But she also observes life with a sense of humor. Unexpectedly, friendship and love come into Flora's life. Think about your own friendships. How have they changed you?
3. Impossible things happen all the time. This story is filled with unlikely events that become life changing for many of the characters. When unexpected things happen to you, what do you do?
4. Sometimes it's hard to tell what is real and what is fantasy in a story. As you read this book, there will be things that you wonder about. Keep a list of things that you think are cool and that seem real in the story but probably aren't possible in real life.
5. Do you read comic books or graphic novels? Much of this story is told through the illustrations. What are some unique features of comic books? How are they different from regular books?

During and after reading:

1. What's in a name? This book includes funny names, literary names, rhyming names, and superhero names. Which character do you think has the most fun-sounding name? Which character has a name from classic literature? Which character wants his whole name used at all times? What, if anything, can a name tell us about a character?
2. *The Illuminated Adventures of the Amazing Incandesto!* is Flora's favorite comic book. It includes special bonus comics at the back of each issue including *Terrible Things Can Happen to You!* and *The Criminal Element Is Among Us*. Throughout the story, Flora refers to many of the life skills and themes that appear in her comics. One lesson is CPR. One theme is that "impossible things happened all the time" (page 21). What other things does Flora learn from her comics? Name some of your favorite sayings or lessons from her comic books.
3. Let's talk about superheroes. What makes Ulysses a superhero? Are there special requirements for being a superhero? Are there special things that all superheroes seem to have?
4. Flora describes herself as "a natural-born cynic" (page 6). What do you think that means? Dr. Meescham says that "Cynics are people who are afraid to believe" (page 129). Do you agree with her description? What things does Flora do that show she is a cynic? What things show that Flora is not a cynic? What, if anything, makes you feel cynical at times?
5. There is a turning point in the story when Ulysses, Flora, and her father go to the Giant Do-Nut. Describe the action that takes place at the Giant Do-Nut. How does this change things for Ulysses? For Flora? For Mr. Buckman?
6. The graphic-novel interludes show Ulysses flying at the Giant Do-Nut (pages 103–104), his vanquishing of Mr. Klaus the cat (pages 132–133), his cheering up Flora and proving his superpowers (page 153), and his escape from Flora's mother (pages 202–203). Does Ulysses believe he can fly when he first tries to? What details about his flying are captured in the pictures?

7. How does Dr. Meescham support Flora, Ulysses, and Mr. Buckman? What do Dr. Meescham's stories tell you about her?
8. What is the funniest scene in the book for you? Describe it.
9. On page 135, we hear the promise "I will always turn back toward you." It is repeated many times throughout the story. What do you think it means?
10. Describe the relationship between Flora and William Spiver. In what ways are they the same? In what ways are they different?
11. Flora and Ulysses are both lost and trying to find home. Where do they end up? How does each one figure out how to get home?
12. On page 216, a miracle is said to occur and William Spiver is able to see again. What do you think happens?
13. Imagine this story told only as a comic book. How do you think it would be different?
14. There are many quirky characters in the story. Whom do you like best and why?
15. Throughout the story, Flora and her mother are at odds. How does this change in the end? What do we learn about Flora's mother that we didn't know?
16. What would you like to see happen next for Ulysses and Flora?

About the Author

Kate DiCamillo is the author of many beloved books for young readers, including *Flora & Ulysses* and *The Tale of Despereaux*, both of which received the 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 best-selling Mercy Watson series. About *Flora & Ulysses: The Illuminated Adventures*, she says, "I set out to tell the story of a vacuum cleaner and a squirrel. I ended up writing a book about superheroes, cynics, poetry, love, giant donuts, little shepherdess lamps, and how we are all working to find our way home." In 2014 she was named the National Ambassador for Young People's Literature. Kate DiCamillo lives in Minneapolis, where she faithfully writes two pages a day, five days a week, even when she doesn't feel like it.

About the Illustrator

K. G. Campbell is the winner of an Ezra Jack Keats New Illustrator Honor for *Lester's Dreadful Sweaters*, which was also awarded the Golden Kite Picture Book Illustration Award. He was born in Kenya but raised in Scotland, where he graduated from the University of Edinburgh. Campbell's love of art originally led him to study art history and explore interior design before he began illustrating children's books. "Illuminating the adventures of Flora and Ulysses has been," he says, "a vast and hilarious experience. What wonderfully oddball and lovable characters people this story. It was a joyful challenge to bring visual life to the cast."

K. G. Campbell lives in southern California.

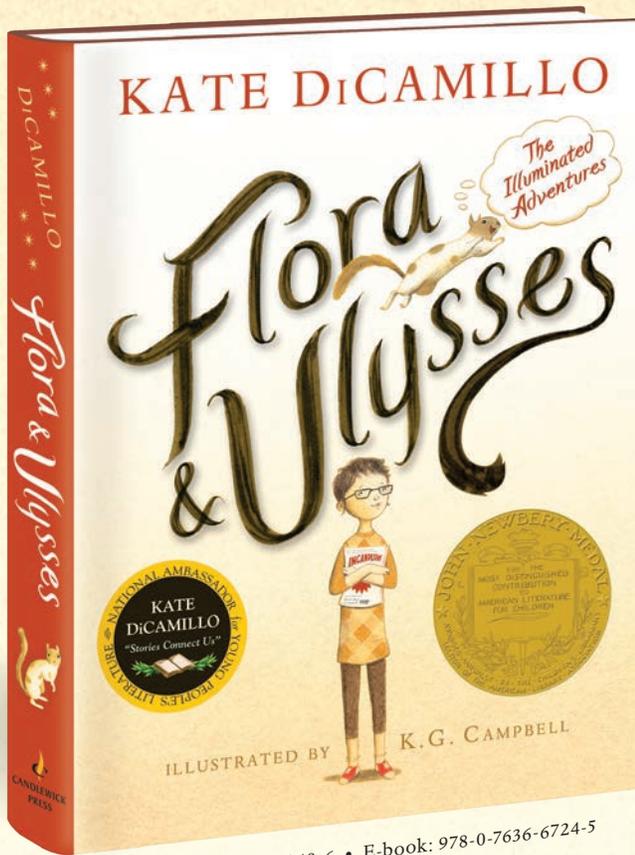
This guide was prepared by JoAnn Jonas, MLS librarian, reviewer, writer, and youth services specialist.



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Flora & Ulysses

The Illuminated Adventures



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by **KATE
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Flora is living in a world in which she doesn't allow for the possibility of hope. Her parents are divorced, and comic books are her favorite pastime. Flora feels alone and is prepared for the worst life has to offer when a random act of improbability connects her to Ulysses the squirrel, who becomes her champion. As both Flora and Ulysses begin to vanquish evil, they also help each other to believe, hope, and find love. Kate DiCamillo's humor turns what could be a sad tale into a rip-roaring adventure, complete with lots of laughs and discoveries along the way. Here is a truly enjoyable opportunity to draw readers into a funny, super-heroic, and heart-grabbing tale by a beloved author.



The following activities are written as prompts to use with your students to further explore the connections among the zany characters, the life-changing power of love and belief, and the influence that reading about these subjects can have on readers. This inspiring adventure will be one to add to your list of must-have books for the class.

COMMON CORE CONNECTIONS

By using the ideas in this guide, you can help your students meet the Reading Standards for Literature by focusing on students' demonstrated understanding of key ideas and details, craft and structure, and integration of knowledge and ideas. It also includes projects to help meet Language Standards, Writing Standards, and Speaking and Listening Standards.

If you are looking for specific standards for your state and grade level, visit the Common Core website at www.corestandards.org.

Classroom Projects and Activities

RELATIONSHIPS

With your students, create a character map to explore the relationships in the book. Use your blackboard, white board, or a large sheet of paper. Put Flora's name in the center and circle it. Then ask students for names to add to the map. As you write these names around Flora's name, circle each one. Then have students come and draw lines between the characters that interact with each other. So that no characters are forgotten, encourage students to include Donald and Tootie Tickham, the Ulysses 2000X, Phyllis Buckman, George Buckman, William Spiver, Rita the waitress, the chef, Dr. Meescham, Mr. Klaus (the cat), Mary Ann (the lamp), and, of course, Ulysses. Once you have mapped the relationships, look and see who connects with whom. Is there any character who connects with everyone else?

WRITING PROMPTS

Use these prompts with your students for deeper consideration of the text:

1. Everyone changes in life, and we see many changes in Flora, Ulysses, William Spiver, and George Buckman during this story. Pick two characters and write about the changes they experience during the story. Use examples from the book to demonstrate these changes.
2. Both Flora and William Spiver need a friend. How do you make a friend? What things do you do to become friends? What actions do Flora and William Spiver take? Write a short paragraph about friendship using Flora and William Spiver as your examples.
3. If you were creating a superhero, what animal would you choose? Create your own superhero animal using Ulysses as a guide. You may want to include:
 - a superpower
 - a special name
 - how that character hides his or her superhero self
 - friends
 - enemies
4. Now that you have read the book, if you could give it a new title, what would it be? Write about your title and why you chose it. Use examples from the book to persuade your reader that this is a good choice.



VOCABULARY

The following sentences from *Flora and Ulysses: The Illuminated Adventures* are each missing a key vocabulary word. At the bottom of the activity is a list of the missing words. Find the word that fits the sentence. Then on the back or on a separate piece of paper, write a new sentence using that word or give the definition of the word.

1. Who can say what astonishments are hidden inside the most _____ being? (page 19)
2. "A _____ is someone with special powers, and he uses those powers to fight the forces of darkness and evil." (page 33)
3. "I've come to check and see if what I think happened yesterday actually happened, or if I'm the victim of an extended _____." (page 48)
4. "I prefer to be called William Spiver. It distinguishes me from the _____ of Williams in the world." (page 54)
5. "Wait a minute," said William Spiver. "Are you _____ that the squirrel typed those words?" (page 60)
6. Holy _____ occurrences! (page 75)
7. "Don't worry," said Flora. "You're a superhero. This _____ will be stopped!" (page 77)
8. "I'm engaging in _____. It *seems* as if the glasses have been glued to my head." (page 81)
9. The whole of the Giant Do-Nut became _____ calm. (page 105)
10. *The Criminal Element* said that sometimes it was wise to put criminals on the defensive by making "_____ or blatantly untrue comments." (page 106)

WORDS TO MATCH

hallucination	malfeasance	mundane	preternaturally	superhero
hyperbole	multiplicity	positing	slandorous	unanticipated



ART

Have students create their own comic-book superheroes. Ask them to tell the superhero's story with both words and pictures, using word bubbles as in a comic strip. After the comic strips are created, share them and discuss the process of this kind of writing.

Ask your students:

1. How hard is it to write in such limited space?
2. How do the words and pictures work together?
3. Did you choose to use color or black and white?
4. Was this hard to do or easy?

For each question, be sure to ask students to explain why.

POETRY

One of Ulysses's special powers is being able to write poetry, and poetry is found throughout *Flora & Ulysses*. Ulysses's first poem is on page 65, and on page 232 he writes the epilogue. Read Ulysses's poems aloud, then ask your students: What does Ulysses communicate in his poetry? How is communicating with poetry different from communicating with prose? Using your library as a resource, have students investigate different styles of poetry. Then invite them to write their own poetry. Challenge them to try to write a poem as if they were Ulysses.

This guide was prepared by JoAnn Jonas, MLS, librarian, reviewer, writer, and youth services specialist. She also prepared a discussion guide, with more ideas for the classroom, which is available at www.candlewick.com.

PHILOSOPHY

Pascal's Wager, introduced on page 129, will probably be a new concept to young readers. When it comes to Common Core reading and writing requirements, introducing logical thinking is of special interest.

Dr. Meescham says, "Cynics are people who are afraid to believe." She explains Pascal's Wager simply, by saying, "There was everything to gain by believing, and nothing to lose. . . . What do I lose if I choose to believe? Nothing!"

Have each student make a chart, labeling one column *Flora* and the other *Dr. Meescham*. Ask the class to compare and contrast the outlook of *Flora* (a self-proclaimed cynic) and *Dr. Meescham* (a believer) by listing the behaviors these characters exhibit that reflect their attitudes. After students finish the chart, have them write a paragraph explaining which character they think they are more like and why.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

KATE DICAMILLO is the author of many beloved books for young readers, including *Flora & Ulysses* and *The Tale of Despereaux*, both of which received the 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 best-selling *Mercy Watson* series. In 2014 she was named the National Ambassador for Young People's Literature.



ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

K. G. CAMPBELL is the winner of an Ezra Jack Keats New Illustrator Honor for *Lester's Dreadful Sweaters*, which was also awarded the Golden Kite Picture Book Illustration Award. He was born in Kenya but raised in Scotland, where

he graduated from the University of Edinburgh. Campbell's love of art originally led him to study art history and explore interior design before he began illustrating children's books.

FROM THE AUTHOR OF BECAUSE OF WINN-DIXIE

Kate DiCamillo

Mercy Watson to the Rescue

illustrated by Chris Van Dusen

visit us at www.candlewick.com



Have Mercy!

Dear Potential Friend of Mercy,

Pigs abound (Olivia! Toot! Freddy! Puddle! Wilbur! Oliver!), so I'd like to thank you for taking the time to think seriously about whether you possibly have room in your life for another porcine wonder.

Sadly, I can't make a case for my pig being better than any of those other pigs. In fact, she's worse: Mercy Watson is selfish, oblivious to others, and obsessed with the consumption of well-buttered toast. However, she is loved deeply, truly, madly by her human parents, Mr. Watson and Mrs. Watson.

Mercy Watson is *not* loved by Eugenia Lincoln, the elderly woman who lives next door. Eugenia loathes the pig. Eugenia despises the pig. Eugenia feels quite strongly that the pig should be removed to a farm forthwith. On the other hand, Baby Lincoln, the younger (as you might suspect), meeker, and milder sister of Eugenia, secretly harbors a deep and abiding affection for Mercy Watson.

It doesn't take a rocket scientist to predict that when you put these elements together—a selfish pig, proud human parents of a selfish pig, an outraged neighbor, and a secretly delighted neighbor—and shake them up a bit, you will get an explosion.

An explosion was exactly what I was after. I wanted to celebrate just how absurd and funny and chaotic and delightful life can be. But I was surprised to discover that no matter how many explosions occur, all of them instigated by Mercy, Mr. Watson and Mrs. Watson continue to love her, continue to see her in the best possible light. I've come to believe that that is what love is all about: somebody insisting, mercifully, on seeing us as better than we truly are.

So these books, meant to celebrate the absurdity of life, also celebrate (I hope) the delightful absurdity, the amazing blessing of love.

Will you be able to find room in your heart for a little absurdity? A little love? A not-so-little pig?

Will you be a friend to Mercy?

I hope so.

Your friend in porcine admiration,

Kate DiCamillo



HC: 0-7636-2270-2

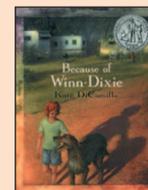


Coming Spring 2006!

HC: 0-7636-2332-6

To read the first chapter of *Mercy Watson to the Rescue*, go to www.candlewick.com

Don't miss these other award-winning, best-selling books by Kate DiCamillo:



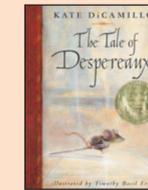
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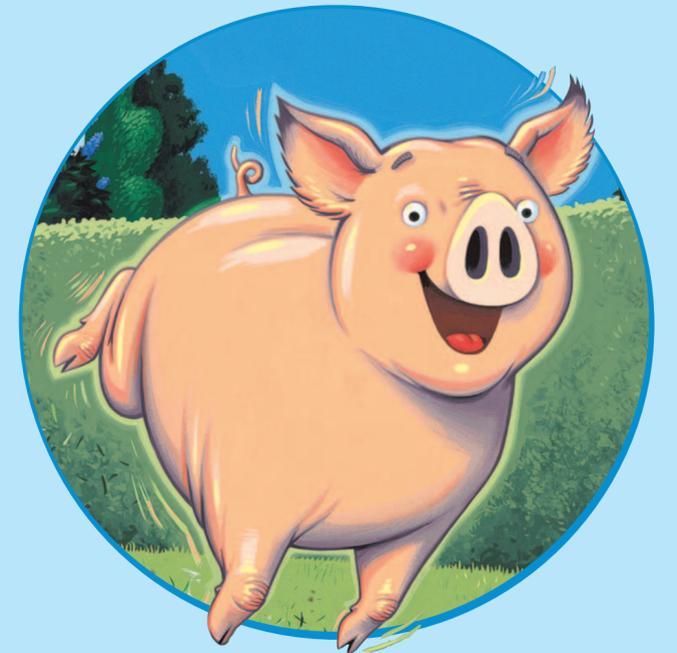


Mercy Watson Poster and Teacher's Guide: 0-7636-3027-6

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WELCOME TO THE WORLD OF

Mercy Watson



Introducing an exciting new series by
Newbery Medal-winning author

Kate DiCamillo

Teacher's Guide and
Classroom Poster
Inside!

Mercy Watson to the Rescue Teacher's Guide



About the Book

Mercy Watson, a food-obsessed pig with a fixation on toast, snuggles in bed with her owners. When the bed begins to fall through the floor, Mercy leaps out. The Watsons think she is getting help, but in fact she's gone next door in search of a snack. Mercy frightens her

neighbors, the elderly Lincoln Sisters, and they call the fire department, which arrives in time to save the Watsons. Mercy is hailed as the hero.

In the Classroom

Students and teachers will fall in love with Mercy Watson and this humorous early chapter book. Newbery Medal winner Kate DiCamillo has delivered the first of an engaging new series—complete with quality writing, lively art, and a witty plot—that will have beginning readers coming back for more. This book is perfect for integrating reading, writing, vocabulary, grammar, poetry, and communication skills—making it a complete language arts tool.

Prereading

Show the class the cover of *Mercy Watson to the Rescue*, but conceal the title. Ask students to look at the picture and guess what they think the book might be about. Why is the pig running? Does she look happy? Where do you think she is going? Look at the people in the window. What expression do they have on their faces? Why do you think they look like that?

A Toasty Tale

Mercy loves to eat—her favorite food is buttered toast. In honor of Mercy, create a class book in the shape of toast. Draw an outline of a piece of bread with the sentence starter *My favorite food is _____* and distribute to students. Have students complete and illustrate the book. Glue each page onto a piece of oak tag or beige construction paper to look like layers of bread or toast. Once the book is assembled, the class will have its very own toasty tale to share during story time. Keep the class book in the reading corner or displayed in the classroom.

You Said It: An Exercise in Figurative Language

Teach children the concept of figurative language by reading aloud the sentence on page 50: *The Watsons' bed sighed loudly and crashed all the way through the floor.* Ask students if a bed can really sigh. Ask, If a bed could talk, why do you think it would *sigh*? Then explain that authors can write a more exciting sentence by giving inanimate objects human traits. Have children practice using figurative language by replacing *sighed* in the sentence above. First, ask the class for suggestions that would keep the meaning of the sentence (such as *cried, screamed, or yelled*). Then ask them for words that might change the meaning (such as *sang, whistled, or laughed*). As an extension activity, request that students include one sentence containing figurative language during an assigned writing exercise (such as journal writing).

Papier-Mercy Piggy Bank

Have students create their own cute Mercy piggy bank with this fun art activity. The following items are needed: balloons, old newspapers, flour-water glue,* egg cartons, masking tape, pink tempera paint, pink pipe cleaners, googly eyes, and markers. Let each student blow up a balloon for the pig's body and then tear 1-inch strips of newspaper. Then have them dip the strips of newspaper in the flour glue and wrap them around the balloon. Keep wrapping until the balloon is completely covered. Have at least two to three layers surrounding the balloon, letting it dry overnight after each layer. When all the layers are dry, pop the balloon, which can remain in the bank. Then separate five egg carton sections (one for each leg and one for the snout). Use masking tape to attach them to the body, and then paint the pig. Make a small hole at the tail end of the pig and insert a pipe cleaner into the hole. Then shape the pipe cleaner into a spiral. Glue on the googly eyes, and make two nostrils on the snout with a marker. Along the top of the pig's body, carefully cut a slot large enough to fit any coin. If the class decides they would like to remove the coins, the Mercy piggy bank can be broken open like a piñata. (*Flour-water glue recipe: Mix 1 cup of flour with 1 cup of water until the mixture is thin and runny. Stir into 4 cups of boiling water. Simmer for about 3 minutes, then cool.)



All in the Word Family

Use the words *pig* and *toast* in this delightful story to springboard into various spelling and phonics lessons. Begin with the word family *-ig*. Write *ig* several times on different pieces of small sentence strips and insert them into a pocket chart. (If a pocket chart is unavailable, use chart paper or a chalkboard.) Ask students for words that rhyme with *pig* and have them volunteer to write the beginning consonant on the sentence strip to complete the word (such as *big, fig, or wig*). Then let children create their own *-ig* family booklets. In marker, write *ig* on a small piece of oak tag, measuring approximately 5½ x 8½ inches (one for each child). Cut out small pieces of white paper, about 4 x 2 inches. Stack eight pieces onto each piece of oak tag, staple at the top, and distribute to each student. Have students write the beginning consonants on each piece of white paper. When each piece of paper is flipped, it makes a different *-ig* word. This is a wonderful phonetic awareness activity as it incorporates oral segmentation and oral blending. It is also a great introduction to spelling and handwriting. Students can also learn the sound *oa* in the CVVC (consonant – vowel – vowel – consonant) pattern of *toas* in the word *toast* by repeating the same activity, for example *coat, boat, oat, roast, and boast*.

Fact vs. Opinion

Eugenia Lincoln has a lot of opinions. Hold a class discussion about the difference between fact (truths) and opinion (beliefs). On chart paper, draw a T-table and write the heading **FACT** on the left and **OPINION** on the right. Then read the following sentences to the class (feel free to create additional sentences) to determine if they are fact or opinion. *Pigs like to eat. Pigs do not sweat. Pigs are clean animals. Pigs should not live in houses. Pigs shouldn't be kept as pets. Pigs ought to be on leashes.* Hang the table in the classroom and have children do some research on pigs to see if they put the statements in the proper category. Children should use the library and Internet to conduct their research. For younger students, this activity is a good introduction to searching for information.

The Great Pig Debate

Children are masters at debating, so here's an activity to foster such skills. Pose the following question to the class: Which makes a better pet—a pig or a dog? (Feel free to substitute any animal besides dog.) Model the art of debating by having a whole-class debate. Then divide the class into groups of four to five students and assign one side of the dispute to each group. Different groups could debate different topics related to pigs, depending on ability level, or all the groups could present arguments for the same issue. To help each group arrange their thoughts, have them write at least five reasons defending their position.

Then have two groups go head to head in front of the rest of the class. Continue until all groups have had their turn. This activity promotes both social and writing skills.

Help Is on the Way

Eugenia Lincoln calls the fire department to report “a crisis of an uncertain nature” and states her address. Ask students if they'd know what to do in a crisis and if they know their address and phone number. Hold a class discussion about when to call and when *not* to call the fire department. Perhaps invite a local firefighter to come speak to the children about the role of the fire department in the community. Then have students work with their caregivers to complete a personal summary sheet in the event of their own crisis. Information should include address, phone number, etc. Call the homework assignment: “In Case of an Emergency!”

Sing-Along

Every night, Mr. and Mrs. Watson sing to Mercy:

*“Bright, bright is the morning sun,
but brighter still is our darling one.
Dark, dark is the coming night,
but oh, our Mercy shines so bright.”*

Copy the song onto chart paper and analyze its rhyme and rhythm. Underline the last line of each sentence to show the rhyming words. Discuss why the word *bright* is used in association with the sun and conversely why the word *dark* is used to refer to night. Challenge students to write their own songs to describe Mercy. Share with the rest of the class. Find or draw an outline of a pig, add lines within the body, and have the students write their song in the pig. Each pig song could be displayed around the classroom.

A Pig by Any Other Name

Mercy gets hailed as a *porcine wonder*. Ask students if they know what *porcine* means. Explain that it is another word for *pig-like*. Have students define the following terms related to the porcine wonder: *swine, hog, boar, sow, gilt, piglets*. Children can use any reference material they choose (such as a dictionary or library books). Move the discussion to parts of speech, in particular nouns and verbs. *Sow* as a noun refers to a pig, but *sow* as a verb means “to plant.” Ask students to cite a similar example from *Mercy Watson to the Rescue* (such as *toast*). Challenge students to find further examples in their reading. As an extension, introduce homophones, words that sound the same but are spelled differently.

A Reproducible Activity What Happened Next?

Can you remember everything that happened in *Mercy Watson to the Rescue*? Summarize the story by putting the following six sentences into proper order.

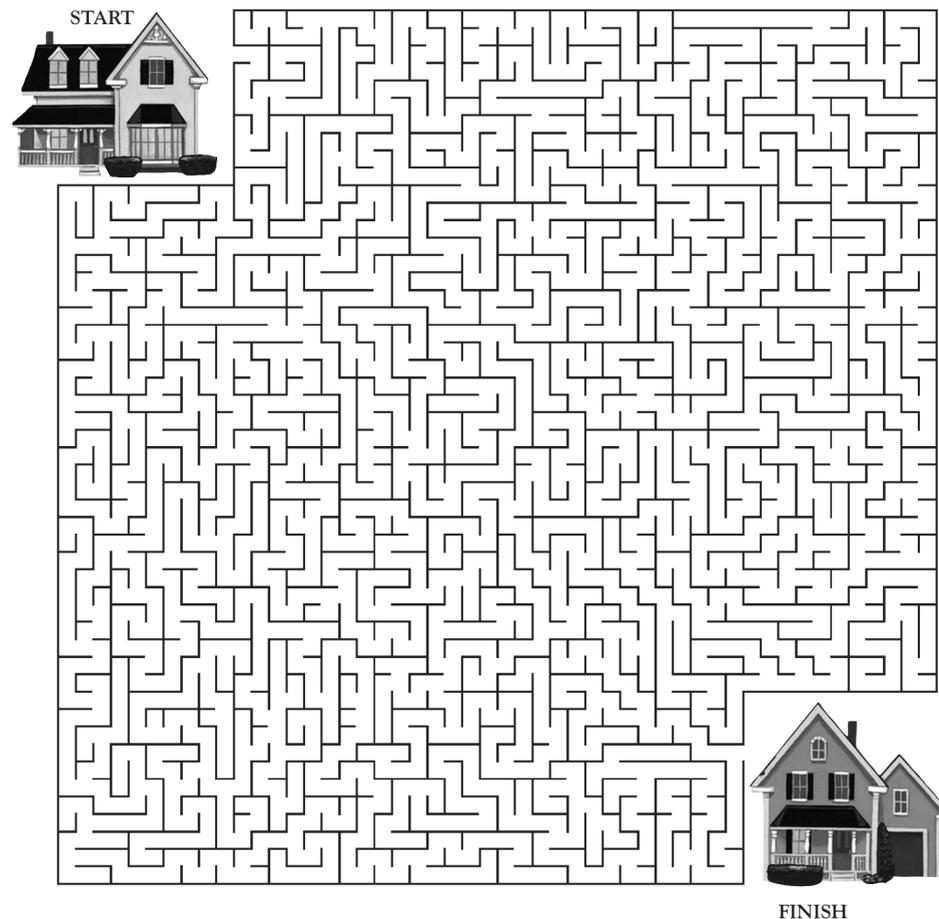


- _____ Mercy goes to look for sugar cookies.
- _____ Baby Lincoln thinks a monster is at her window.
- _____ Mercy crawls into bed with the Watsons.
- _____ The fire department saves the Watsons.
- _____ Everyone has breakfast.
- _____ Eugenia Lincoln calls the fire department.

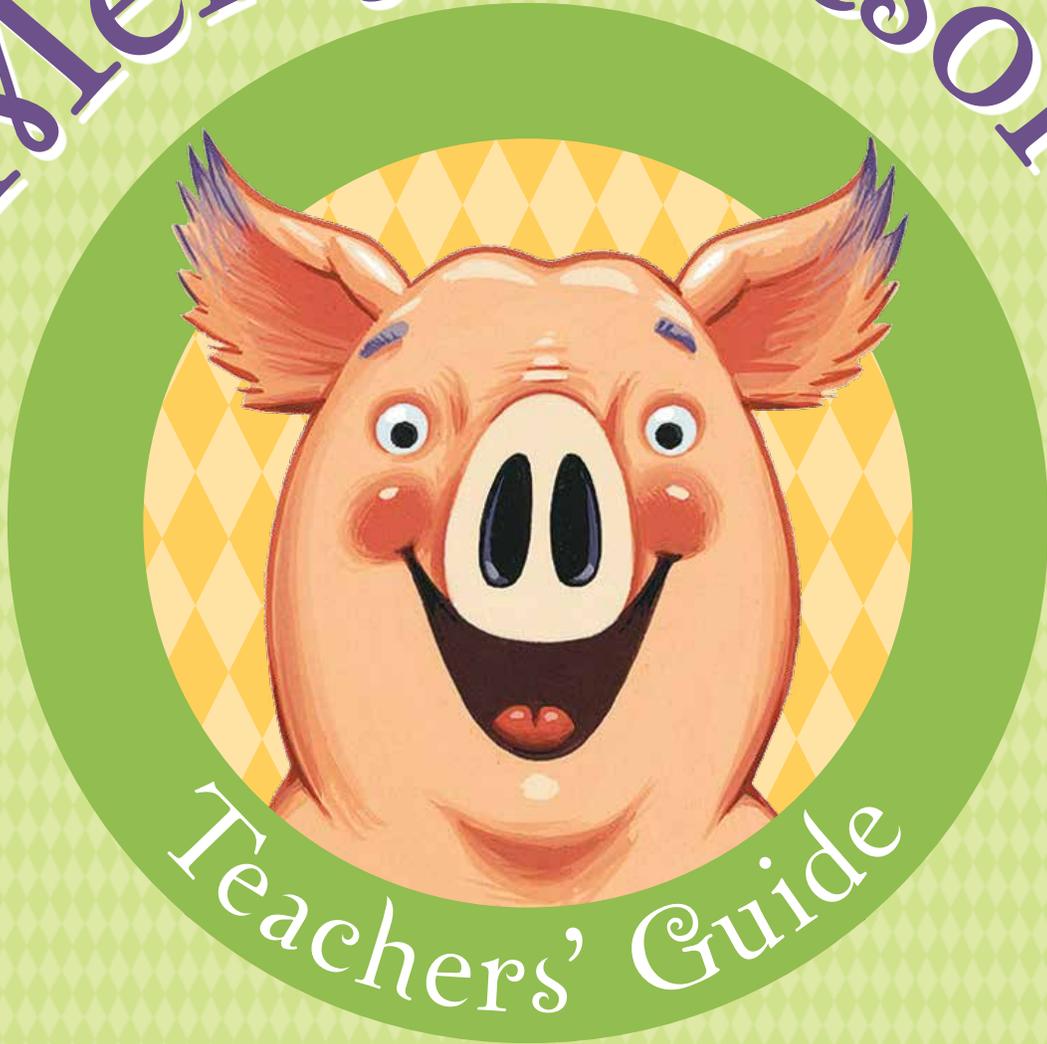


A Reproducible Activity Mercy to the Rescue!

Help Mercy find some sugar cookies. Draw a route from the Watsons' house to Eugenia and Baby Lincoln's house.



Mercy Watson



 *Mercy Watson to the Rescue*

 *Mercy Watson: Princess in Disguise*

 *Mercy Watson Goes for a Ride*

 *Mercy Watson Thinks Like a Pig*

 *Mercy Watson Fights Crime*

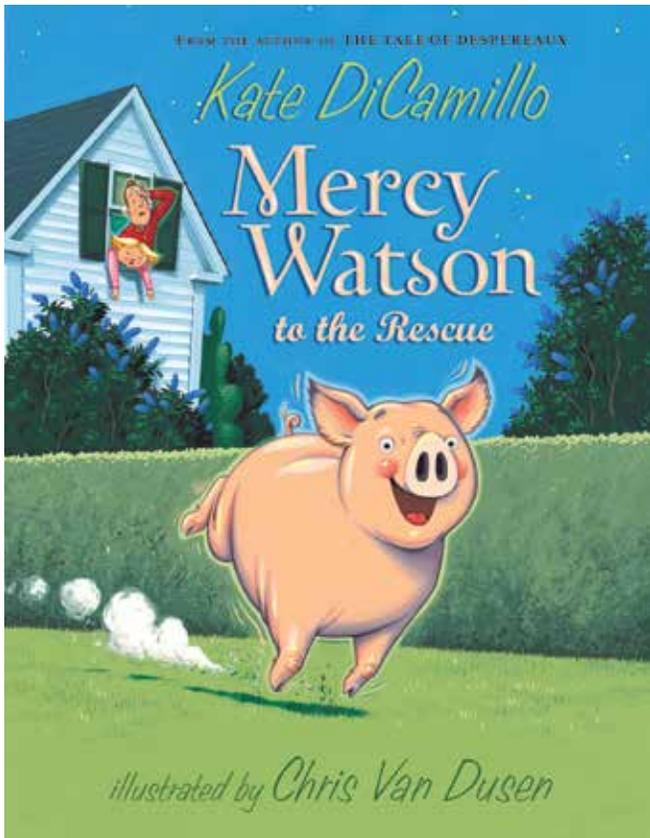
 *Mercy Watson: Something Wonky
This Way Comes*

by Kate DiCamillo

illustrated by Chris Van Dusen



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About the Book

To Mr. and Mrs. Watson, Mercy is not just a pig—she’s a porcine wonder. And to the portly and good-natured Mercy, the Watsons are an excellent source of buttered toast, not to mention that buttery-toasty feeling she gets when she snuggles into bed with them. This is not, however, so good for the Watsons’ bed. BOOM! CRACK! As the bed and its occupants slowly sink through the floor, Mercy escapes in a flash—“to alert the fire department,” her owners assure themselves. But could Mercy possibly have another emergency in mind—like a sudden craving for their neighbors’ sugar cookies?



CANDLEWICK PRESS

Mercy Watson to the Rescue

Kate DiCamillo
illustrated by
Chris Van Dusen



Common Core Connections

This teachers’ guide, with connections to the Common Core, includes an array of activities to accommodate the learning needs of most students in grades K–3. Students are called upon to be careful readers without jeopardizing the pleasure they gain from reading. It is best to allow students to read the entire story before engaging in a detailed study of the work.

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

COMMON CORE CONNECTIONS

RI.K.5: Identify the front cover, back cover, and title page of a book.

RI.K.6: Name the author and illustrator of a text and define the role of each in presenting the ideas or information in a text.

RI.1.6: Distinguish between information provided by pictures or other illustrations and information provided by the words in a text.

RL.3.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, distinguishing literal from nonliteral language.

L.3.5: Demonstrate understanding of word relationships and nuances in word meanings.

L.3.5.A: Distinguish the literal and nonliteral meanings of words and phrases in context.

L.3.5.B: Identify real-life connections between words and their use.

L.3.5.C: Distinguish shades of meaning among related words that describe states of mind or degrees of certainty.

RL.2.4: Describe how words and phrases (e.g., regular beats, alliteration, rhymes, repeated lines) supply rhythm and meaning in a story, poem, or song.



RF.1.2: Identify the main topic and retell key details of a text.

Prereading

Show the class the front and back covers of *Mercy Watson to the Rescue*, but conceal the title. Note the names of the author and illustrator. Ask students to look at the picture and guess what they think the book might be about. Why is the pig running? Does she look happy? Where do you think she is going? Look at the people. What expressions do they have on their faces? Why do you think they look like that? Then turn to the title page of the book and ask what additional guesses students can make knowing the title.

You Said It: an Exercise in Figurative Language

Teach children the concept of figurative language by reading aloud this sentence on page 50 from *Mercy Watson to the Rescue*: “The Watsons’ bed sighed loudly and crashed all the way through the floor.”

Then ask your students:

- Can a bed really sigh?
- If the bed could sigh, why do you think it would?
- What does the sentence mean?
- What might the author have been trying to convey by this choice of wording?

Explain that the author chose to make her sentence more interesting (and funny) by imagining that the bed sighed like a person carrying a heavy load. Ask students to practice using figurative language by replacing *sighed* in the sentence above with other words. (You may wish to write the sentence on a sentence strip or chalkboard.) Ask the class for substitute words that would retain the basic meaning of the sentence, such as *moaned*, *whimpered*, or *groaned*. Then ask them for words that might change the meaning, such as *sang*, *whistled*, or *laughed*.

Sing-Along Rhyme Time

Every night, Mr. and Mrs. Watson sing to Mercy:

“Bright, bright is the morning sun,
but brighter still is our darling one.
Dark, dark is the coming night,
but oh, our Mercy shines so bright.”

Copy the song onto chart paper and analyze its rhyme and rhythm. Underline the last line of each sentence to show the rhyming words. Discuss why the word *bright* is used in association with the sun and conversely why the word *dark* is used to refer to night. Challenge students to write their own songs to describe Mercy. Display the pig songs around the classroom.

What Happened Next?

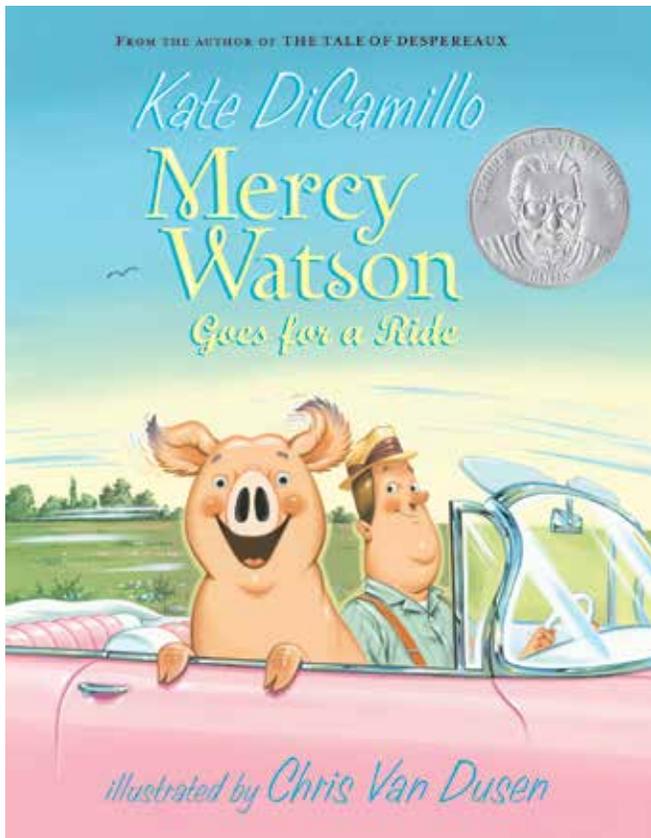
Using the reproducible page, have your students summarize the story by putting the six sentences into proper order.

What Happened Next?

Can you remember everything that happened in *Mercy Watson to the Rescue*?
Summarize the story by putting these six sentences into proper order.



- ___ Mercy goes to look for sugar cookies.
- ___ Baby Lincoln thinks a monster is at her window.
- ___ Mercy crawls into bed with the Watsons.
- ___ The firefighters save the Watsons.
- ___ Everyone has breakfast.
- ___ Eugenia Lincoln calls the fire department.



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About the Book

Mr. and Mrs. Watson's porcine wonder, Mercy, loves nothing more than a ride in the car. It takes a fair amount of nudging and bribing and a "You are such a good sport, darling" to get the portly pig out of the driver's seat, but once the convertible is on the road, Mercy loves the feel of the wind tickling her ears and the sun on her snout. One day the Watsons' motoring ritual takes an unexpected turn, however, when their neighbor Baby Lincoln pops up in the back seat in hopes of some "folly and adventure"—and in the chaos that ensues, an exuberant Mercy ends up behind the wheel!



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Mercy Watson

Goes for a Ride

Kate DiCamillo
illustrated by
Chris Van Dusen



Common Core Connections

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COMMON CORE CONNECTIONS

L.2.4: Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade 2 reading and content, choosing flexibly from an array of strategies.

L.2.4.A: Use sentence-level context as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.

L.2.4.B: Determine the meaning of a new word formed when a known prefix is added to a known word.

L.2.4.C: Use a known root word as a clue to the meaning of an unknown word with the same root.

L.2.4.D: Use knowledge of the meaning of individual words to predict meaning of compound words.

L.2.4.E: Use glossaries and beginning dictionaries, both print and digital, to determine or clarify the meaning of words and phrases.

L.2.5: Demonstrate understanding of word relationships and nuances in word meanings.

L.2.5.A: Identify real-life connections between words and their use.

L.2.5.B: Distinguish shades of meaning among closely related verbs and closely related adjectives.

W.2.3: Write narratives in which they recount a well-elaborated event or short sequence of events, include details to describe actions, thoughts, and feelings, use temporal words to signal event order, and provide a sense of closure.



Folly!

Eugenia Lincoln refers to the Mr. Watson's Saturday drive with Mercy as "folly" (page 14).

Ask your students:

- What does *folly* mean? After students' ideas are put forward, check a dictionary (as a group or individually) and write the definition on a chalkboard.
- What are some synonyms for *folly*? List them on the board.
- Why does Eugenia think the rides are folly, while Mr. Watson and Mercy think they are great fun?
- Baby thinks the rides are both folly and fun. Can this be true?

Have each student write and draw about one of their own follies (a time when they acted foolishly or recklessly). Optional: If this activity is done in the fall, have students write or draw on leaf-shaped paper. Post the entries on a class bulletin board entitled "Fall Follies."



Mercy's Seat-Belt Crusade

Mercy flew out of the car because she was not wearing a seat belt. Discuss the importance of wearing a seat belt. Have students create a seat-belt campaign using Mercy as the mascot. Each campaign should have a motto and a poster. As an example, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has an ABC motto:

Air Bag Safety: Buckle Everyone! Children in Back!

Students can work individually or in groups. When they are finished, create a display of all the campaign posters in your classroom or hallway. Invite someone from the local police department (reminiscent of Officer Tomilello) to come see your posters and speak to students regarding safety in general (perhaps discussing bike helmets as well as seat belts).

COMMON CORE CONNECTIONS

RL.1.7: Use illustrations and details in a story to describe its characters, setting, or events.

RL.2.7: Use information gained from the illustrations and words in a print or digital text to demonstrate understanding of its characters, setting, or plot.

RL.3.6: Distinguish their own point of view from that of the narrator or those of the characters.



RI.K-1.2: Identify the main topic and retell key details of a text.



For Consideration

Ask your students to discuss or write answers to the following questions.

Baby Lincoln hid in the back seat of Mr. Watson's car. Is that a safe thing to do?

On page 35, Eugenia Lincoln says, "That is my point exactly. I do think. And apparently, I am the only one around here who does." What does Eugenia mean by this statement?

Mr. Watson pulls out of his driveway very quickly. "Mr. Watson is a forward-looking man. He does not believe in looking back" (page 10). What is the double meaning of this statement?

Should Mr. Watson have been given a ticket? Why or why not?

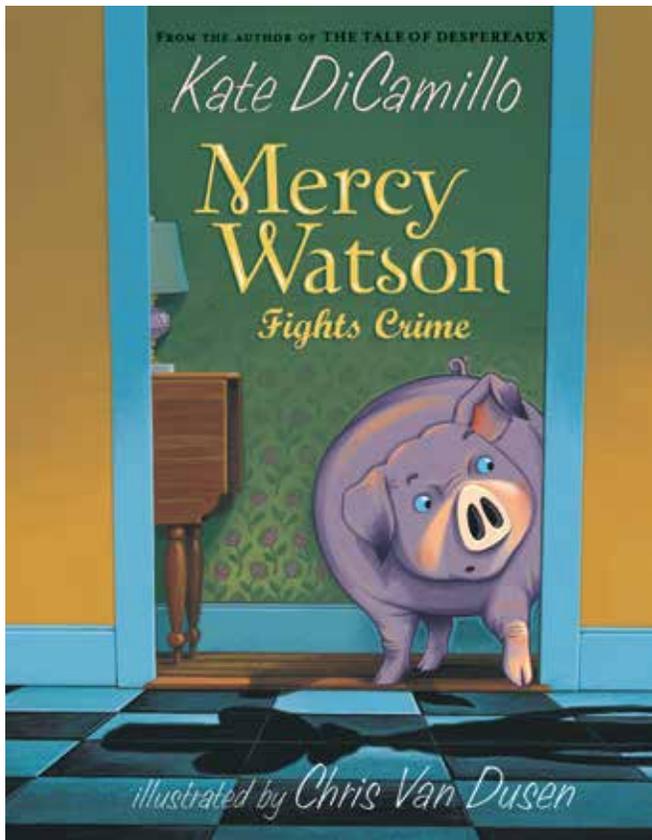
What Happened Next?

Have your students summarize the story by putting these five sentences into proper order.

- _____ Baby Lincoln thinks a little folly wouldn't be a bad thing.
- _____ Mercy leaps onto Mr. Watson's lap.
- _____ A pink convertible speeds past Officer Tomilello.
- _____ Everyone has toast.
- _____ Baby Lincoln applies the brake pedal.



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About the Book

Leroy Ninker is a small man with a big dream: he wants to be a cowboy. But for now he's just a thief. In fact, Leroy is robbing the Watsons' kitchen right this minute! As he drags the toaster across the counter—*screeeeech*—and drops it into his bag—*clannngggg*—little does he know that a certain large pig who loves toast with a great deal of butter is stirring from sleep. Soon a comedy of errors (not to mention the buttery sweets in his pocket) will lead this little man on the wild and raucous rodeo ride he's always dreamed of!



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Mercy Watson Fights Crime

Kate DiCamillo
illustrated by
Chris Van Dusen



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COMMON CORE CONNECTIONS

SL.K-2.1: Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about grade appropriate topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups.

SL.K-2.1.A: Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., listening to others and taking turns speaking about the topics and texts under discussion).



W.2.3: Write narratives in which they recount a well-elaborated event or short sequence of events, include details to describe actions, thoughts, and feelings, use temporal words to signal event order, and provide a sense of closure.



SL.2.1: Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about grade 2 topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups.

SL.2.1.A: Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., gaining the floor in respectful ways, listening to others with care, speaking one at a time about the topics and texts under discussion).

SL.2.1.B: Build on others' talk in conversations by linking their comments to the remarks of others.

SL.2.1.C: Ask for clarification and further explanation as needed about the topics and texts under discussion.

For Discussion

Have students discuss the following questions in pairs, then gather as a class and have a discussion. Focus on the different ideas that are brought up.

When Baby tells Eugenia that she hears a “Yippie-i-oh” sound outside, Eugenia asks if she had been eating pie before bed again (page 34). Why would Eugenia ask such a question? Do you believe that eating before bed will give you nightmares? Why or why not?

Firemen Ned and Lorenzo comment that their job is an interesting one (page 55). What events occurred that would make them say that?

Everyone except Mercy is quoted in the newspaper regarding Mercy's capture of the thief (pages 67–69). Pretend you are Mercy. What would you say?

Do You Hear Something? Give Me a Clue

“Screeeeeech, went the toaster. . . . Clannngggg, went the toaster” (page 7). The toaster makes noise — a sound Mercy clearly recognizes — when Leroy moves it.

Conduct a lesson on adjectives and onomatopoeia (a word that imitates the sound associated with it). Then pair students up and have them make a list of six things and corresponding adjectives and/or sounds that are clues to what each thing is. Collect the lists and clues, then read the clues aloud and see if classmates can figure out what the things are.

Use this activity as a prelude to a descriptive writing exercise. Ask students to write about a time they heard something and figured out what was happening based only on what they heard.

Help Is on the Way

The fire and police departments are involved in many of the Mercy Watson books. Here are a few safety-awareness activities you can use with the Mercy books:

Ask students how they would call the police or fire department in an emergency.

Discuss when to call and when *not* to call the fire or police departments. Which instances in the Mercy Watson books were appropriate times to call, and which were not?

Invite a local firefighter or police officer to come to the classroom and speak to the children about the role of their department in the community.

As a homework assignment, have students complete an “In Case of an Emergency” form. Information should include address, phone number, emergency contact, and so on.

COMMON CORE CONNECTIONS

RL.1.3: Describe characters, settings, and major events in a story, using key details.

RL.2.7: Use information gained from the illustrations and words in a print or digital text to demonstrate understanding of its characters, setting, or plot.

L.2.5: Demonstrate understanding of word relationships and nuances in word meanings.



Extra! Read All About It!

Mercy's capture of Leroy Ninker makes the front page of the morning newspaper. Various neighbors and witnesses are quoted in the newspaper article. Hold a class discussion about the elements of journalism and how it differs from fiction. If possible, read aloud some simple news-related stories (classroom newspapers can be a good source). Have students practice becoming journalists by writing their own version of "Pet Pig Captures Thief."

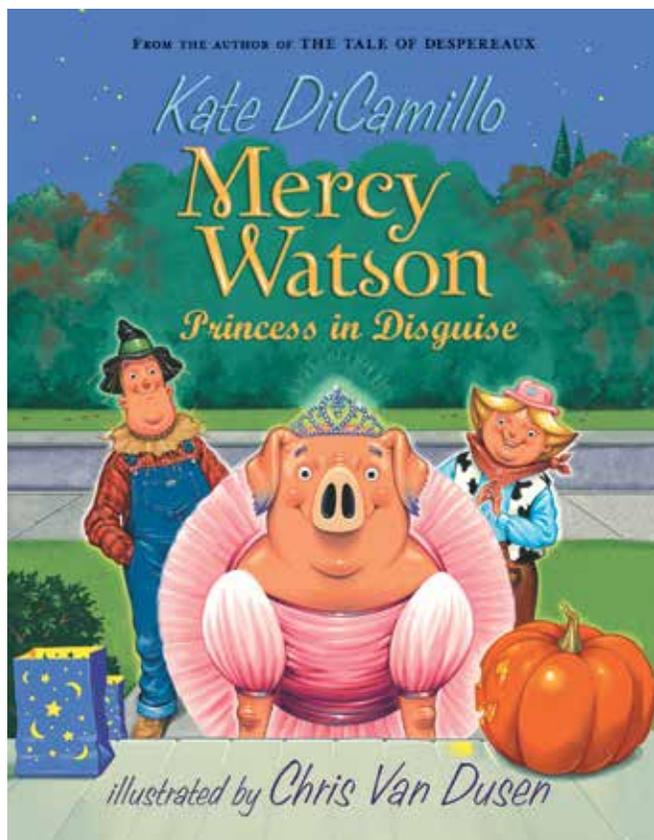
A Pig by Any Other Name

Mercy gets hailed as a porcine wonder. Ask students if they know what *porcine* means. Explain that it is another word for piglike. Have students define the following terms related to the porcine wonder: *swine*, *hog*, *boar*, *sow*, *gilt*, *piglets*. Children can use any reference material they choose (such as a dictionary or library books). Move the discussion to parts of speech, in particular nouns and verbs. Note that *sow* as a noun refers to a pig, but *sow* as a verb means "to plant." Ask students to cite a similar example from *Mercy Watson Fights Crime* (such as *toast*). Challenge students to find further examples in their reading. As an extension, introduce homophones, words that sound the same but are spelled differently.

A Cowboy's Dream

Leroy Ninker is described as "a small man with a big dream" (page 4). He dreams of becoming a cowboy. Ask students about their dreams. What would they like to become? Whom do they idolize, and what steps might they need to take to fulfill their dream?





Mercy Watson

Princess in Disguise

Kate DiCamillo
illustrated by
Chris Van Dusen

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Also available in audio



About the Book

When the Watsons decide to zip their porcine wonder into a formfitting princess dress for Halloween—complete with tiara—they are certain that Mercy will be beautiful beyond compare. Mercy is equally certain she likes the sound of trick-or-treating and can picture piles of buttered toast already. As for the Lincoln Sisters next door, how could they know that their cat would lead them all on a Halloween “parade” of hysterical proportions?



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COMMON CORE CONNECTIONS

SL.3.4: Report on a topic or text, tell a story, or recount an experience with appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details, speaking clearly at an understandable pace.

R.L.3.6: Distinguish their own point of view from that of the narrator or those of the characters.



SL.1.5: Add drawings or other visual displays to descriptions when appropriate to clarify ideas, thoughts, and feelings.



Fact Versus Opinion

Eugenia Lincoln has many opinions. For example: “In my opinion,” said Eugenia, “pigs should not go trick-or-treating. In my opinion, pigs should not pose as princesses” (page 21). As a class, discuss the difference between fact (truths) and opinion (beliefs).

On chart paper, draw a T-table and write the heading FACT on the left and OPINION on the right.

Read the following sentences to the class to determine if they are fact or opinion. Feel free to create additional sentences.

- Pigs like to eat.
- Pigs do not sweat.
- Pigs are clean animals.
- Pigs should not live in houses.
- Pigs should not be kept as pets.
- Pigs ought to be put on a leash.

Write each sentence on the chart under the heading students believe to be correct.

Immerse children in research on pigs to find out whether they put each statement in the proper category. (You might wish to guide them through the search for information as a class, or assign individual research if students are old enough.) Use library books or the Internet. Allow an amount of time appropriate to the age group, then come back together as a class to share results.

If any statements were incorrectly listed, rewrite them in the correct column.

Mercy in Disguise

The Watsons decide to dress Mercy up as a princess for Halloween. Other suggestions for Mercy’s costume were robot, pirate, witch, and pumpkin. Ask students to design a costume for Mercy. Each student can draw either the costume alone or a picture of Mercy wearing the creation. Encourage the students to embody Mercy’s personality and passion for butter, toast, and a good chase. Put on a mock fashion show in the classroom, with each child walking the runway and then describing his or her costume for Mercy. Each student must also explain why he or she made that particular costume choice. Display all the costumes on a class bulletin board entitled “Mercy in Disguise.”

COMMON CORE CONNECTIONS

RL.1.3: Describe characters, settings, and major events in a story, using key details.



RF.K-3.3: Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words.



What a Character!

The characters in the Mercy Watson books are unique and funny. To keep Mercy “hanging around” your classroom and in your students’ minds, use this mobile-making project. Each student will need:

- a hanger
- 4 two-foot lengths of yarn
- 4 oak-tag circles, 5 to 6 inches in diameter, with one hole punched in each

On the front of each circle, students should write the name of one character from the Mercy Watson books and draw a picture of him or her. On the back of the circle, they should write two facts about the character.

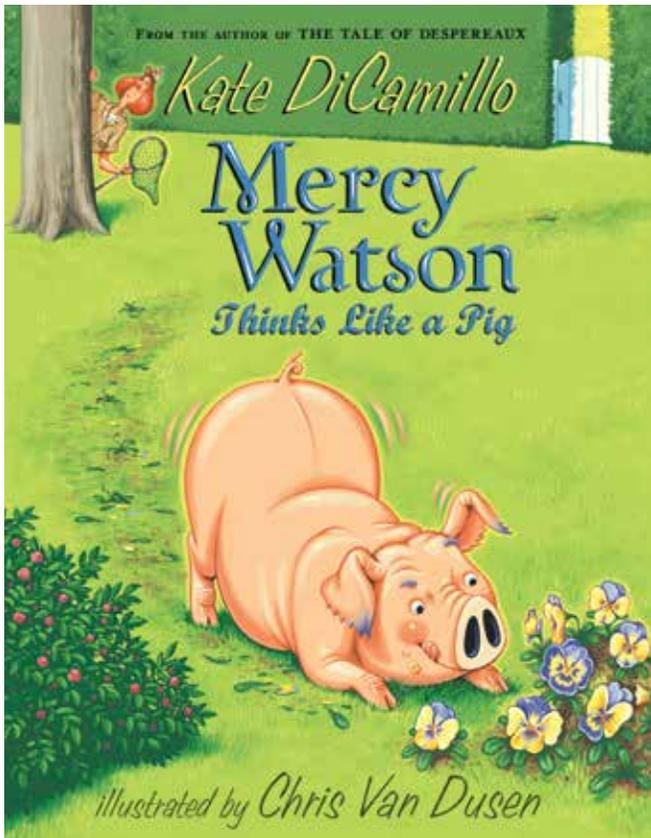
When all the circles are completed, students should tie one end of each string to a circle (through the punched hole) and the other to their hanger. Hang the mobiles throughout the classroom.

All in the Word Family

Use the words *pig* and *toast* in this delightful story to springboard into various spelling and phonics lessons. Begin with the word family *-ig*. Write *ig* several times on different pieces of small sentence strips and insert them into a pocket chart. (If a pocket chart is unavailable, use chart paper or a chalkboard.) Ask students for words that rhyme with *pig* and have them volunteer to write the beginning consonant on the sentence strip to complete the word (such as *big*, *fig*, or *wig*). Then let children create their own *-ig* family booklets. In marker, write *ig* on a piece of oak tag, measuring approximately 5½ x 8½ inches (one for each child). Cut out small pieces of white paper, about 4 x 2 inches. Stack eight pieces onto each piece of oak tag, staple at the top, and distribute to each student. Have students write the beginning consonants on each piece of white paper. When each piece of paper is flipped, it makes a different *-ig* word. This is a wonderful phonetic awareness activity as it incorporates oral segmentation and oral blending. It is also a great introduction to spelling and handwriting. Students can also learn the sound *oa* in the CVVC (consonant – vowel – vowel – consonant) pattern of *toas* in the word *toast* by repeating the same activity, for example *coat*, *boat*, *oat*, *roast*, and *boast*.



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Mercy Watson

Thinks Like a Pig

Kate DiCamillo
illustrated by
Chris Van Dusen

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About the Book

Mercy's appetite has got her into trouble again. When Eugenia Lincoln's pansies go missing, Animal Control Officer Francine Poulet arrives on the scene. But as she soon discovers, not just anyone can think like a pig. Especially when that pig is porcine wonder Mercy Watson!



CANDLEWICK PRESS



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COMMON CORE CONNECTIONS

RL.2.6: Acknowledge differences in the points of view of characters, including by speaking in a different voice for each character when reading dialogue aloud.

SL.2.2: Recount or describe key ideas or details from a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media.



RL.1.3: Describe characters, settings, and major events in a story, using key details.



RL.2.5: Describe the overall structure of a story, including describing how the beginning introduces the story and the ending concludes the action.

SL.2.2: Recount or describe key ideas or details from a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media.

Think Like a Pig

Francine Poulet tries to think like a pig in order to capture Mercy. Put yourself in Mercy's hooves and think like a pig. The Mercy books are written in the third person—but what if they were written from Mercy's perspective?

As a group, retell *Mercy Watson Thinks Like a Pig* from Mercy's point of view instead of the narrator's. Start off by reading a page or two of the book to students, then ask a volunteer to retell that part of the story using Mercy's voice. Proceed this way through the rest of the book.

This should be an activity in oral retelling rather than a written exercise. Children may even enjoy trying on their theatrical wings by acting out the different parts in the story as they retell.

What a Character!

The characters in the Mercy Watson books are unique and funny. Begin a character study by copying the blank table below onto large chart paper.

Character name	What does he/she like?	What does he/she do?	Favorite scene involving this character

Fill in the chart as a class, listing characters in the first column. Students can refer to any of the books in the Mercy Watson series to help complete the character study.

Extension: Ask each student to imagine a new character for a Mercy Watson story. Then they can create character studies for their new characters by copying the chart heading and filling in responses on a sheet of notebook paper.

Hanging on the Plot Line

This exercise is a fun way to introduce or review the concept of plot with your students. Each Mercy Watson book is structured along a similar plot line: Mercy follows the scent of butter; gets into mischief in the process, and ends up indirectly saving the day.

Preparation: Hang a clothesline in the classroom. The line should be long enough to accommodate thirty-five 5 x 7 index cards (to be hung with clothespins; see below)

Read *Mercy Watson Thinks Like a Pig* to students. Ask the class to recall four or five main story points. As each is suggested, write a sentence or phrase describing each



COMMON CORE CONNECTIONS

SL.3.1: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 3 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

SL.3.1.A: Come to discussions prepared, having read or studied required material; explicitly draw on that preparation and other information known about the topic to explore ideas under discussion.

SL.3.1.B: Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g. gaining the floor in respectful ways, listening to others with care, speaking one at a time about the topics and texts under discussion.)

SL.3.1.C: Ask questions to check understanding of information presented, stay on topic, and link their comments to the remarks of others.

SL.3.1.D: Explain their own ideas and understanding in light of the discussion.

story point on a separate 5 x 7 index card. Then ask student volunteers to place the cards in order, and attach them to the clothesline using spring-type clothespins.

Next, break the class into five groups—one for each of the other Mercy Watson books in the series. Assign a book to each group and ask students to repeat the exercise of writing and/or illustrating the main plot points from their title, placing the cards in order, and hanging them on the “plot line.”

The Great Pig Debate

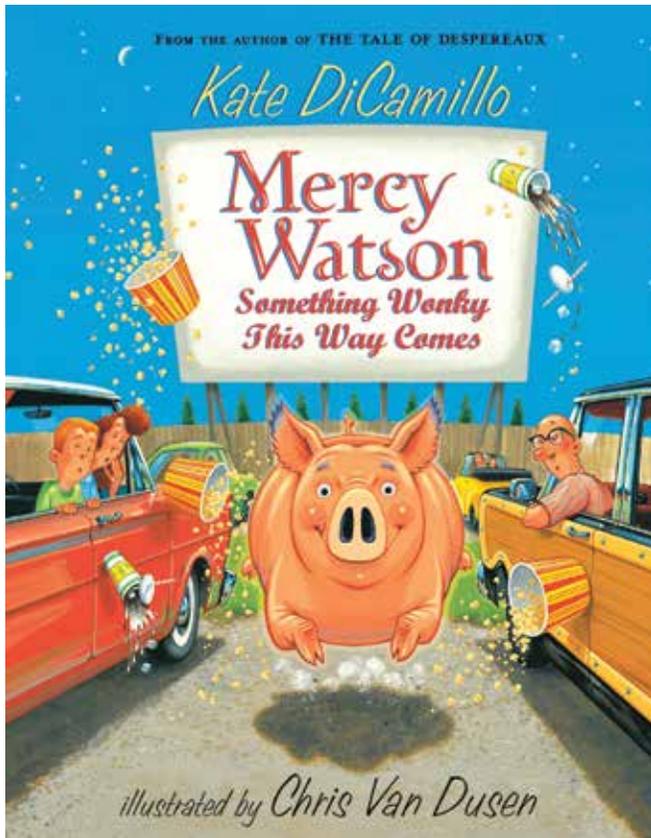
Children love to argue, so here's an activity to channel those argumentative muscles into effective debating skills.

Pose the following question to the class: Which makes a better pet, a pig or a dog? Divide the students into small groups and assign each group one side of the dispute. Ask each group to write at least five reasons defending their position.

Finally, stage a class debate. Have each group take turns sharing their reasons in front of the rest of the class. Continue until every group has had their turn.



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About the Book

Some may find it wonky to take a pig to the movies. But not Mr. and Mrs. Watson, who think the title of the film, *When Pigs Fly*, is inspirational. And not their beloved Mercy, who is inspired by the fact that the drive-in proudly serves real butter on its Bottomless Bucket of popcorn. So when they pull up in their convertible, Mercy lifts her snout and becomes a pig on a mission—for what is more heavenly than being hot on the trail of a true butter smell?



Mercy Watson

Something Wonky This Way Comes

Kate DiCamillo

illustrated by

Chris Van Dusen



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COMMON CORE CONNECTIONS

L.3.5: Demonstrate understanding of word relationships and nuances in word meanings.

L.3.5.A: Distinguish the literal and nonliteral meanings of words and phrases in context.

L.3.5.B: Identify real-life connections between words and their use.

L.3.5.C: Distinguish shades of meaning among related words that describe states of mind or degrees of certainty.



W.2.5: With guidance and support from adults and peers, focus on a topic and strengthen writing as needed by revising and editing.

W.2.6: With guidance and support from adults, use a variety of digital tools to produce and publish writing, including in collaboration with peers.

When Pigs Fly: Figures of Speech

In *Mercy Watson: Something Wonky This Way Comes*, Eugenia tries to explain that the expression “When pigs fly” is a figure of speech (page 8).

Talk with students about figures of speech— words used in an unusual way in order to produce a different meaning.

Ask your students:

- Can pigs really fly?
- What does the expression mean?
- Which is more fun to say and read: “That will never happen” or “When pigs fly”?

Review a list of popular figures of speech and discuss their meanings. Here are a few:

Hit the road

Weights a ton

Stay on your toes

Dying of hunger

Over the hill

The pen is mightier than the

Dog tired

Fish out of water

sword.

Extension:

Invite students to choose a figure of speech and illustrate it as if the words meant what they usually do (e.g., an exhausted dog or a fish on dry land).

The Next Adventure

Ask students to imagine that they are the author of one more book in the *Mercy Watson* series. Invite students to imagine where *Mercy* and her friends might go. A toaster factory? A bakery? The moon?

As a class, brainstorm major events of the story. What trouble will *Mercy* get into? Which characters will be involved? How will it end?

If desired, write the story on pink or pig-shaped paper and bind it as a class book, or have each student write and illustrate his or her own *Mercy Watson* story.

Students will no doubt enjoy exercising their creativity in this culmination of the *Mercy Watson* adventures!



COMMON CORE CONNECTIONS

SL.1.5: Add drawings or other visual displays to descriptions when appropriate to clarify ideas, thoughts, and feelings.

W.1.5: With guidance and support from adults, focus on a topic, respond to questions and suggestions from peers, and add details to strengthen writing as needed.



RF.1.2: Demonstrate understanding of spoken words, syllables, and sounds (phonemes).

RF.1.2.A: Distinguish long from short vowel sounds in spoken single-syllable words.

RF.1.2.B: Orally produce single-syllable words by blending sounds (phonemes), including consonant blends.

RF.1.2.C: Isolate and pronounce initial, medial vowel, and final sounds (phonemes), in spoken single-syllable words.

RF.1.2.D: Segment spoken single-syllable words into their complete sequence of individual sounds (phonemes).

A Toasty Tale

It's no secret that Mercy loves to eat—or that her favorite food is hot buttered toast. In honor of Mercy, create a class book in the shape of a stack of toast.

Preparation:

- On a piece of 8½ x 11 paper, draw an outline of a piece of toast. Make two copies. On one, write *Mercy Watson's favorite food is hot buttered toast. What's yours?* This will be page 1 of your book. On the other copy, write the sentence starter *My favorite foods are . . .* Make a copy of the sentence-starter page for each student.
- Make two covers by cutting toast shapes from oak tag or beige construction paper. Write or print the title *A Toasty Tale* on the front cover.

Distribute one sentence-starter page to each student. Ask each student to cut out the piece of toast, complete the sentence, and illustrate his or her sheet. When students are finished, bind all the student pages between the covers using heavy-duty staples or a hole punch and loose rings. Your book will look like a stack of deliciously topped toast to savor in the reading area.

P is for Pig, Porcine Wonder, and Popcorn

Leroy Ninker sells Bottomless Buckets of popcorn at the drive-in. Begin a letter-study by brainstorming some *P*-words. Then have each student draw a large *P* on a piece of oak tag or construction paper and decorate it with as many *P* words as they can think of. For an extra pinch of *P*, use purple or pink markers!



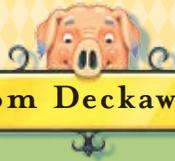
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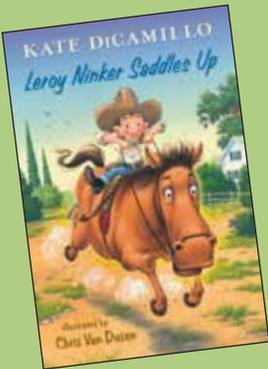
KATE DiCAMILLO is the beloved and renowned author of many books for young readers, including *Flora & Ulysses: The Illuminated Adventures* and *The Tale of Despereaux*, both of which won Newbery Medals. In 2014 she was named the National Ambassador for Young People’s Literature. She lives in Minneapolis.



CHRIS VAN DUSEN is the author-illustrator of *If I Built a Car*, an E. B. White Read Aloud Award winner, as well as *King Hugo’s Huge Ego*, *The Circus Ship*, and *Randy Riley’s Really Big Hit*. He lives in Maine.



Tales from Deckawoo Drive



The hijinks continue on Deckawoo Drive in *Leroy Ninker Saddles Up*, the first in the spin-off series Tales from Deckawoo Drive, starring favorite characters from the Mercy Watson books!

Leroy Ninker has a hat, a lasso, and boots. What he doesn’t have is a horse—until he meets Maybelline, that is, and then it’s love at first sight. Maybelline loves spaghetti and sweet nothings, and she loves Leroy, too. But when Leroy forgets the third and final rule of caring for Maybelline, disaster ensues. Can Leroy wrestle fate to the ground, rescue the horse of his heart, and lasso loneliness for good? Join Leroy, Maybelline, and a cast of familiar characters—Stella, Frank, Mrs. Watson, and everyone’s favorite porcine wonder, Mercy—for some hilarious and heartfelt horsing around on Deckawoo Drive.

- ★ “Kate DiCamillo and Chris Van Dusen strike gold again with this charming addition to the Mercy Watson story-verse” — *Shelf Awareness* (starred review)
- ★ “DiCamillo effortlessly slips back into the comfortable rhythms of Mercy’s world, infusing every chapter with subdued wit, warmth, and heart.” — *Publishers Weekly* (starred review)

And don’t miss the second Tales from Deckawoo Drive adventure, *Francine Poulet Meets the Ghost Raccoon*, coming in Fall 2015!

Visit www.MercyWatson.com for excerpts, downloadables, games, and activities.



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