

The Tiger Rising

by *Kate DiCamillo*

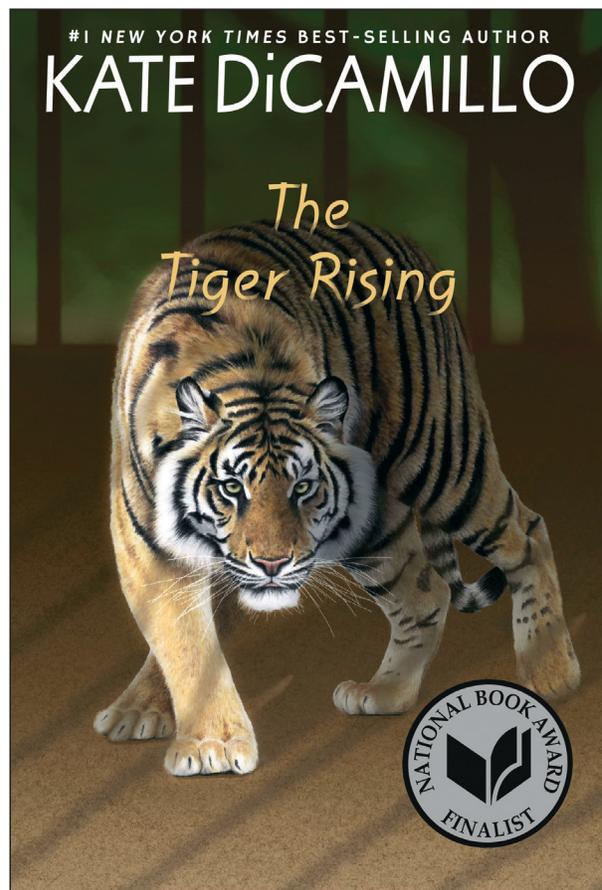
About the Book

Walking through the misty Florida woods one morning, twelve-year-old Rob Horton is stunned to encounter a tiger—a real-life, very large tiger—pacing back and forth in a cage. What's more, on the same extraordinary day, he meets Sistine Bailey, a girl who shows her feelings as readily as Rob hides his. As they learn to trust each other, and ultimately to be friends, Rob and Sistine prove that some things—like memories, and heartache, and tigers—can't be locked up forever.

Common Core Standards

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. This guide 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.



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The following are suggested activities to use with your students to explore *The Tiger Rising's* complex and endearing characters as well as its themes, such as the power of letting go. This is a story that readers are sure to carry with them for years to come.



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Discussion/Writing Prompts

1. Consider and determine the time and place in which the novel is set. Why do you think Kate DiCamillo chose this setting?
2. At the end of the third chapter, Rob says, "He kept the suitcase closed" (page 10). What does he mean by this statement? What does it tell you about Rob?
3. In what way are Rob and Sistine outsiders? What are some impressions Sistine has about her new surroundings? Do you think she should have tried harder to fit in, or do you admire her individuality? Does Rob try to fit in? Support your answer.
4. What do you think about Rob's dad? Is he a good father? Support your opinion with specific examples from the text.
5. Instead of carving the tiger, Rob decides to carve Sistine. Why is this significant?
6. What role does Willie May play in Rob's life and in the story? What do you think brings these characters together? How does their bond strengthen throughout the novel? Why do you think it is so important to Rob that Sistine and Willie May like each other?
7. Willie May has a theory about the rash that develops on Rob's legs. What does she think is the cause? Do you agree with her? Why or why not?
8. What is it about Sistine that makes Rob open up and deal with some of his emotions? Give some examples of what Sistine does to get a response from Rob (even if Rob responds only internally). What do you think about Sistine's actions? Would you like to have a friend like Sistine? Why or why not?
9. How does Sistine react when she sees Rob's carvings for the first time? How is this response similar to or different from the way you may have responded if you saw his sculptures?
10. There are many connections to art in this story. Give some examples. Why do you think art is important to the characters?
11. Why did Rob avoid telling Sistine that his mother died? What was Sistine's response when Rob refused to talk to her about his mom? Do you think Sistine's response was appropriate? Why or why not?
12. Why do you think Rob finds it so difficult to look at the caged tiger?
13. What does Sistine think they must do with the tiger? Do agree with her suggestion? Support your ideas. How does Rob respond? What would you have suggested?
14. What is the importance of Willie May's story about the parakeet her father gave her?

15. Describe Mr. Beauchamp. What was your reaction to this character? Why do you think you responded in this way? Why does this story need this character?
16. Why does Rob like Sistine so much? Reread chapter 24 to help you answer this question.
17. Do you think Willie May believes Rob and Sistine when they tell her about the tiger? Support your answer with details from the text. Later, what is Willie May's reason for not releasing the tiger? What does she say is the only thing they can do for the tiger? Do you agree?
18. What is the significance of the title, *The Tiger Rising*? When do we first see a reference to the title? Who says it? What do you think it means?
19. Describe how Rob and Sistine release the tiger. What does the tiger do? Do Rob and Sistine question whether they made the right decision? Prove your answer.
20. Describe the tiger's funeral. What is the importance of this scene in the story? What does Willie May contribute to the ceremony, and what does her action symbolize?
21. Some people might say that this is a story about two kids who rescue a tiger. Do you think there is more to it? What do you think the story is really about? Support your claim with ideas you had while reading the text.

Writing about Reading: Developing Theories about Characters

Kate DiCamillo is a master at creating real, interesting characters who surprise us and provoke us to think deeply about who they are and why they are that way. Have your students create a theory about one character in *The Tiger Rising*. Instruct them to avoid generalizing and to locate evidence in the story to support their idea, citing several examples from the text. If the character is angry, for example, or timid, is he or she this way all the time, or only under certain circumstances? Below are some thinking prompts you may use with your students for this exercise.

- _____ is _____ because _____.
- First, Rob/Sistine is _____ because _____. Then later, he's/she's _____ because _____.
- Sometimes Rob/Sistine is _____. For example, _____. But other times, he/she is _____. For example, _____. This makes me think _____.
- In the beginning, Rob/Sistine was _____, but as the story continues, I think Rob/Sistine could be changing because _____. I started to notice the change when Rob/Sistine did or said _____. By the end, Rob/Sistine changed. I know this because _____.

- A minor character in the book is _____, and one way he/she is important to the story is _____. For example, _____. Another example is _____.
- At first I thought Rob/Sistine was _____, but as I get to know him/her more, I'm coming to think that deep down, he's/she's really _____. I know this because _____.

These Thinking Prompts were put together by Lucy Calkins, Kathleen Tolan, and Cory Gillette. More on creating theories about characters may be found in the *Units of Study for Teaching Reading, Grades 3–5: Following Characters into Meaning: Building Theories, Gathering Evidence* by Lucy Calkins and Kathleen Tolan (Heinemann, 2010).

Interpreting Symbols

Often there are objects and actions that pop up many times in a book. These objects and actions compel readers to think about what they mean in the story as well as what they mean in their own lives and world. Below is a list of objects in *The Tiger Rising* that you can use with your students to encourage this type of thinking. In referring to the objects, ask students questions such as: How is this object more than what it is? Why is it significant? What does it mean to a certain character? To you? To others? What is the author trying to tell us through this object?

- Kentucky Star Motel sign
- Sistine's name
- The caged tiger
- Sistine's pink dress
- Rob's figurines
- Rob's medicine for his legs
- The suitcase

Art Extension

1. Interpreting Symbols: Ask students to choose two or three symbols from the story. Invite them to illustrate the symbols in color and to write an explanation, poem, or song to suggest the importance of the object.
2. Rob carves small figurines. He generally chooses to create objects that are important to him. Ask students to use modeling clay to create three or four objects that are important to them. Have them create a small display that includes an index card explaining what they created. Plan a gallery walk so that students can admire one another's work.
3. Ask students to create their own book covers for *The Tiger Rising*. Invite them to draw, paint, use collage, or choose another medium to design their cover.

Writing Activities

1. Research-Based Persuasive Essay: Ask students to write an essay on the topic of whether private citizens should be able to own wild animals such as tigers, apes, and other species as pets. Students should find or be presented with articles, video clips, and excerpts from books that focus on this issue. After students have taken notes on both sides of the topic, they should use them to make a claim and support their claim in an essay.
2. Pro and Con Essay: Ask students to compose a pro/con paper presenting the possible positive and negative outcomes of Rob's telling an adult about the caged tiger, using evidence and examples from the text to support their thoughts.
3. Poetry: Have students read and discuss *The Tiger* by William Blake. Invite them to write an original poem that captures the heart of the story told in *The Tiger Rising* using *The Tiger's* rhyme scheme, figurative language, and poetic devices as inspiration.

TIPS FOR STUDENTS:

- Write an introduction
- State your opinion or claim
- Give reasons and evidence
- Organize your writing
- Acknowledge counterclaims
- Use transition words
- Write a conclusion

Research

- Neon: Neon has been used in signs for advertising products, places, and so on for many years. The Kentucky Star Motel's neon sign is important in the story. Have students write a report about what neon is and how it is used, drawing on resources found in the library or websites that you recommend. Invite them to create a slide show to present their findings.
- The Sistine Chapel: Sistine is named after the Sistine Chapel. Have students record four interesting facts about this site, using resources found in the library or websites that you recommend.

Act It Out

Have students work as partners to improvise conversations between the characters in *The Tiger Rising*. Ask students to find engaging transactions in the text and use them as springboards to consider the way the characters might think and respond. For example, in chapter 14, Sistine tells Rob that they have to save the tiger. Invite students to act out this scene with an awareness of tone, body language, and other character traits. Ask them to consider what Rob may be thinking internally and to find a way to bring that to the surface in their improvisation. Find other scenes that lend themselves to students' acting out conversations or monologues. Encourage class discussion about the characters' transactions and discuss the way this activity allows students to gain a better understanding of the characters.

Vocabulary

Ask students to find five or six words in *The Tiger Rising* that are unfamiliar to them. Instruct them to record the sentence each word is in and to use context clues to surmise what the word means. Ask them to consult a dictionary or online source to find the word's various definitions and record the one that is most relevant to the way the word is used in the story. Have students write an original sentence using the word.

Many activities found in this guide are inspired by the work of the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project and community, as well as lessons presented in the *Units of Study for Teaching Reading, Grades 3–5* by Lucy Calkins and Kathleen Tolan (Heinemann, 2010).

About author KATE DiCAMILLO

The theme of hope and belief amid impossible circumstances is a common thread in much of Kate DiCamillo's writing. In her instant #1 *New York Times* bestseller *The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane*, a haughty china rabbit undergoes a profound transformation after finding himself facedown on the ocean floor—lost, and waiting to be found. *The Tale of Despereaux*, a Newbery Medal-winning novel that inspired an animated adventure from Universal Pictures, stars a tiny mouse with exceptionally large ears who is driven by love to become an unlikely hero. And *The Magician's Elephant*, an acclaimed and exquisitely paced fable, dares to ask the question, What if?

Kate DiCamillo's own journey is something of a dream come true. After moving to Minnesota from Florida in her twenties, homesickness and a bitter winter helped inspire *Because of Winn-Dixie*—her first published novel, which, remarkably, became a runaway bestseller and snapped up a Newbery Honor. "After the Newbery committee called me, I spent the whole day walking into walls," she says. "I was stunned. And very, very happy."

Her second novel, *The Tiger Rising*, went on to become a National Book Award Finalist. Since then, the master storyteller has written for a wide range of ages, including two comical early-chapter-book series. One stars Mercy Watson, a "porcine wonder" with an obsession for buttered toast; the other—cowritten with Alison McGhee—celebrates the short and tall of a marvelous friendship between the characters Bink and Gollie. She is also the author of a luminous holiday picture book, *Great Joy*.

In 2014, Kate DiCamillo's novel *Flora & Ulysses: The Illuminated Adventures*, an instant *New York Times* bestseller, became her second book to be awarded the Newbery Medal. A laugh-out-loud story filled with eccentric, endearing characters, it features an exciting new format—a novel interspersed with comic-style graphic sequences and full-page illustrations, all rendered in black and white by up-and-coming artist K. G. Campbell.

Kate DiCamillo, the newly named National Ambassador for Young People's Literature for 2014–2015, says about stories, "When we read together, we connect. Together, we see the world. Together, we see one another." Born in Philadelphia, the author lives in Minneapolis, where she faithfully writes two pages a day, five days a week.

Guide written by Trent DeBerry, a fifth-grade teacher at Heathcote Elementary School in Scarsdale, New York. Trent's class book clubs are featured on the DVD *A Guide to the Reading Workshop*, which is part of *Units of Study for Teaching Reading: A Curriculum for the Reading Workshop, Grades 3–5*.



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