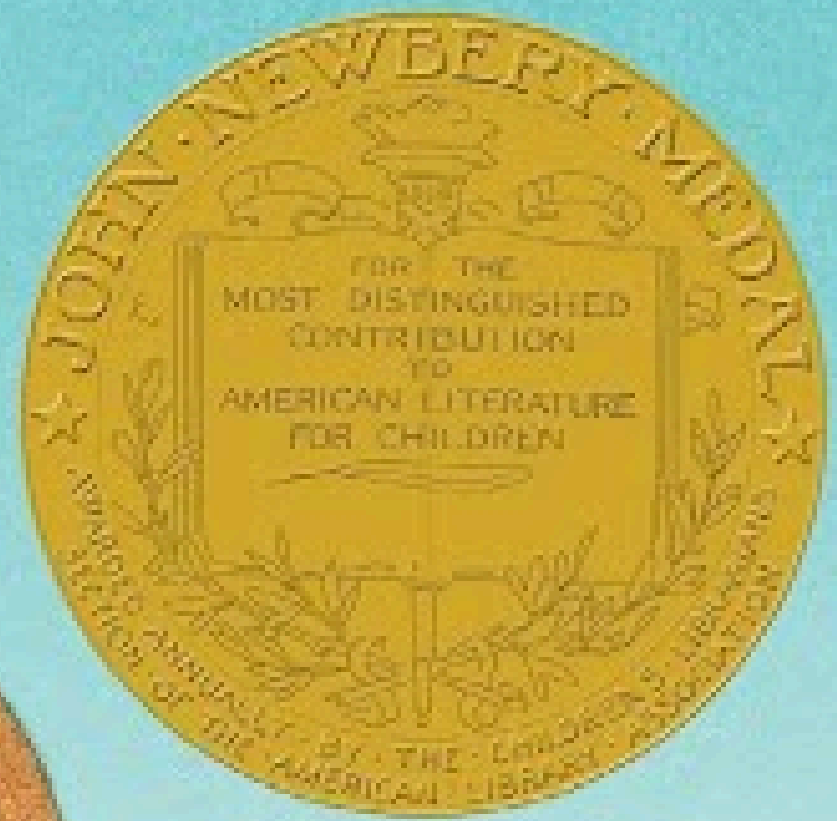
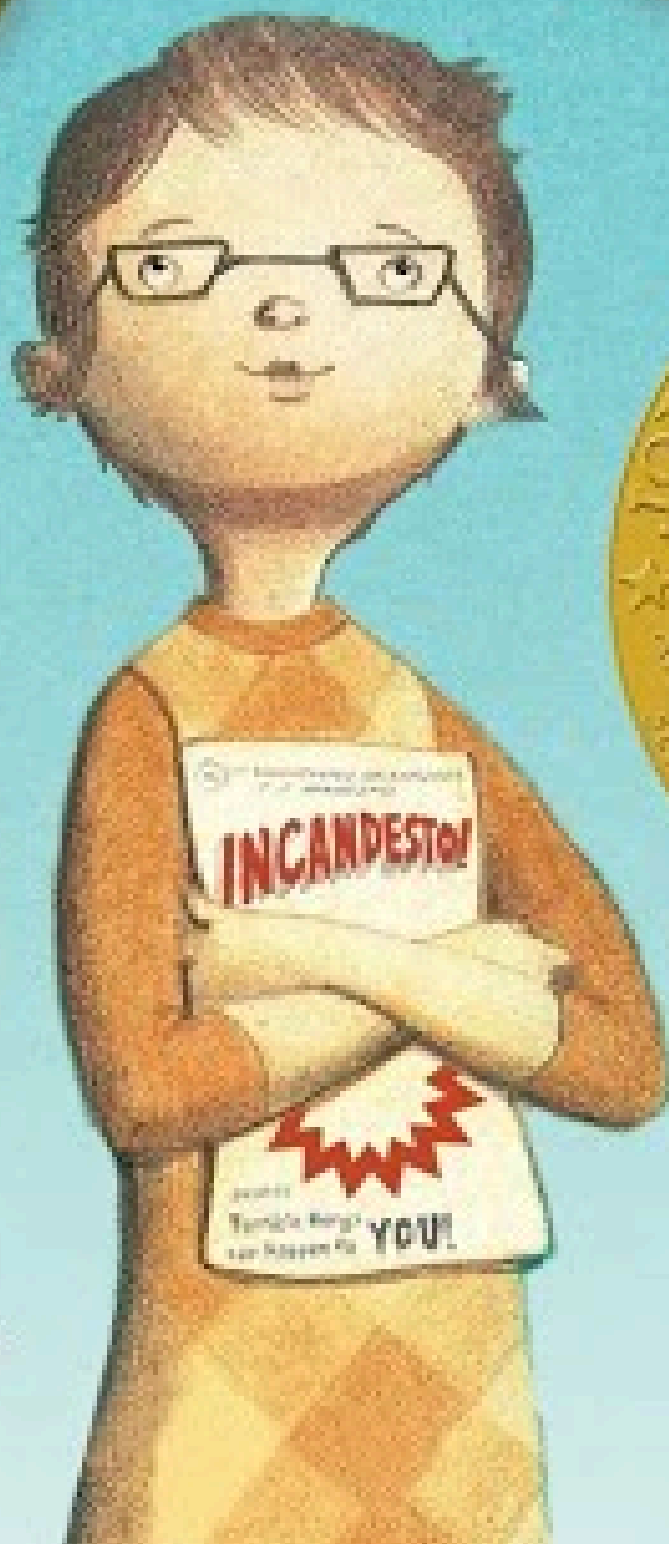



#1 NEW YORK TIMES BEST-SELLING AUTHOR

KATE DICAMILLO

*The Illuminated Adventures*

Flora  
& Willysses



ILLUSTRATED BY  
K.G. CAMPBELL

On the Same Page 2025  
Reader's Guide

# Kate DiCamillo

(March 25, 1964).

Katrina Elizabeth DiCamillo says that important things to know about her are:

*I am short. And loud.*

She was born in Philadelphia on March 25, 1964, to Betty Lee Gouff DiCamillo, a teacher, and Adolph Louis DiCamillo, an orthodontist.



She has one older brother, Curt, who is also a noted author, but in a very different field. Curt is an architectural historian who is a noted authority on British country homes.



Kate's early childhood was full of illness. Chronic pneumonia frequently led to hospitalization. Unable to do much else, she spent a lot of time lost in books which led to her deep love of reading. In hopes of alleviating Kate's physical problems, her mother took the children to live in Clermont, Florida, when Kate was five. The intention was that her father would join them as soon as he could sell his practice. He never did, but visited from time to time. While the couple never divorced, Kate was basically raised in a one parent household.

Kate began her higher education at Rollins College, but she dropped out. She then simultaneously attended the University of Central Florida while working at Walt Disney World, but she dropped out again. She finally graduated from the University of Florida, Gainesville with a BA in English in 1987. She spent the next several years working a variety of entry level jobs such as Circus World, Walt Disney World, at a campground, and at a greenhouse. She said that she thought she was a talented writer and expected it to be quickly recognized so she "sat around for the next seven or eight years."





A friend of hers moved to Minneapolis, Minnesota, and Kate decided to follow. She eventually got a job pulling stock at Bookman's, a book warehouse and distributor, in the children's section, an assignment she was initially disappointed in. Up to this point, she had been writing exclusively for adults and had had a few short stories published. However, while working in the

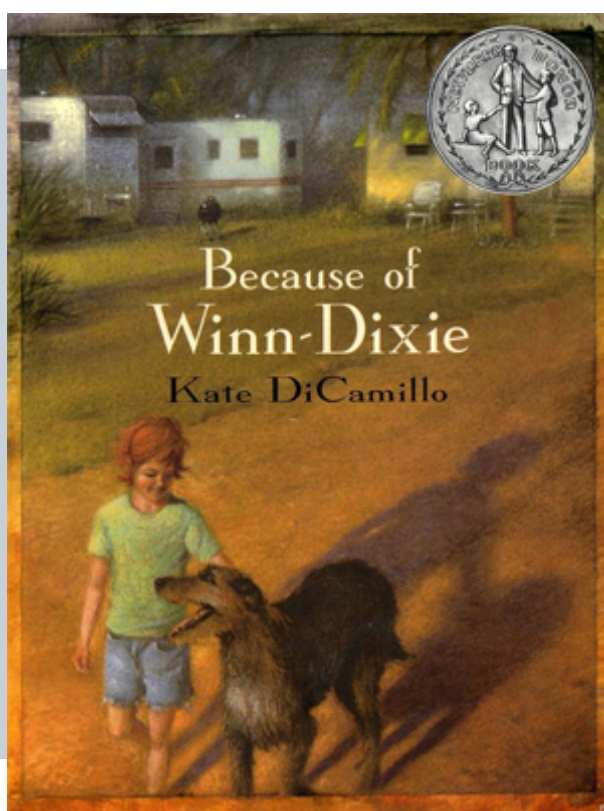


children's section at Bookman's, she came across Christopher Paul Curtis's novel *The Watsons Go to Birmingham-1963* (This book was a Newberry honor book in 1995 and Curtis's next novel *Bud, Not Buddy* won in 1999.) "Watsons" helped Kate see the power that children's literature could have. She began writing regularly, getting up to write before going to the warehouse.

Another Minnesotan, prize-winning author Louise Erdrich, encouraged her to keep going. She did, but didn't have much success. At the beginning of 2000, she had received 473 rejection letters.



One of the stories that she had submitted was prompted by homesickness and annoyance at her apartments no pet policy.



*Because of Winn-Dixie* was concerned with a young girl who adopts a stray dog. She gave a copy of the manuscript to a Candlewick agent at a Bookman's Christmas party who recommended it to one of their editors. Unfortunately, the editor left on maternity leave, and it was lost in a large pile of manuscripts. The editor never returned. When cleaning the office for her replacement, the manuscript was rediscovered and published in 2000 becoming a Newberry honor book.

Flo Davis, wife of the Winn-Dixie supermarket chain's founder, sponsored DiCamillo to visit schools in Florida, broadening awareness of the book which became a critical and financial success. At that point, Kate left Bookman's to write full time.





*Because of Winn-Dixie* was followed by *The Tiger Rising* and then *The Tale of Despereaux* which won DiCamillo her first Newberry Medal in 2004. Her award for *Flora and Ulysses* made her one of six authors who have received the medal twice. (Others include E. L. Konigsburg, Joseph Krumboltz, Elizabeth George Speare, Katherine Paterson, and Lois Lowry.) Numerous others have been published by Candlewick Press who has said that her books were a “cornerstone” of their success.



*Minneapolis/St. Paul Magazine* said she was “Minnesota’s most successful writer,” and in 2020, Governor Tim Walz declared March 29, Kate DiCamillo Day.

In 2014, DiCamillo was named National Ambassador for Young People’s Literature, and during the summers of 2015 and 2016, was the summer reading champion for the Collaborative Summer Reading Campaign.

Critics have noted stylistic differences in her novels tailored to suite the story she is telling and the multiple genres they inhabit. However, there are some choices which are constant throughout her works. In an interview with the *Orlando Sentinel* she said that she tries to leave room for the reader to read between the lines, saying that she tries to emulate E. B. White: “He’s using the same words we’re all using. It must be that stripped-away quality, his heart is resting more on each word, and that’s what I’m always trying to do.”



She told the National Endowment for the Arts that she basically wrote “the same story, over and over in many ways.” There are certainly recurring themes in DiCamillo’s novels, absence or loss of a parent, loneliness, homesickness, a child surviving on their own, abandonment, and of course, hope. When writing her children’s books, she doesn’t skirt issues which affect them, doesn’t condescend, and says that she thinks a children’s book should be just “a little bit sad.” This may be why many adults can find so much to relate to in them.

Author Anne Patchett wrote an essay for *The New York Times* in 2020 about her experiences reading DiCamillo’s work as an adult and recommending that



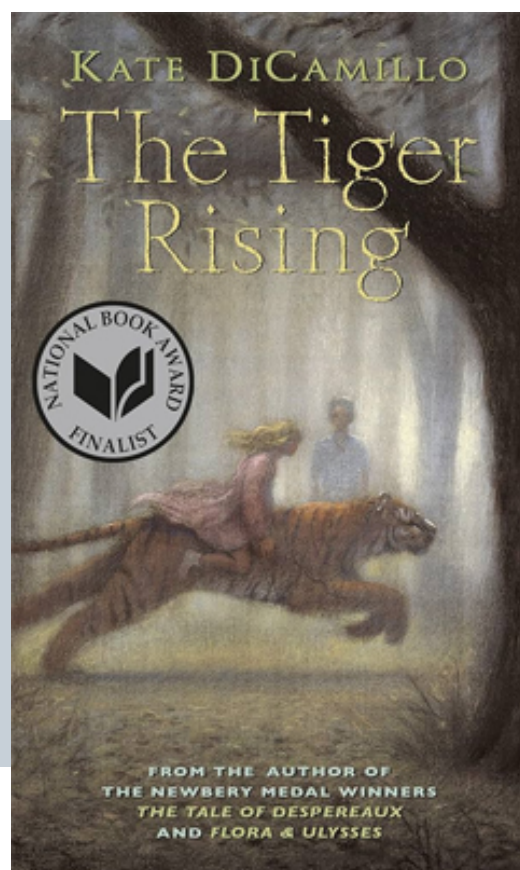


others do it as well. Patchett called her body of work “sui generis” (which translates as “in a class by itself”) and each one extraordinary.

The first words on DiCamillo’s website are:

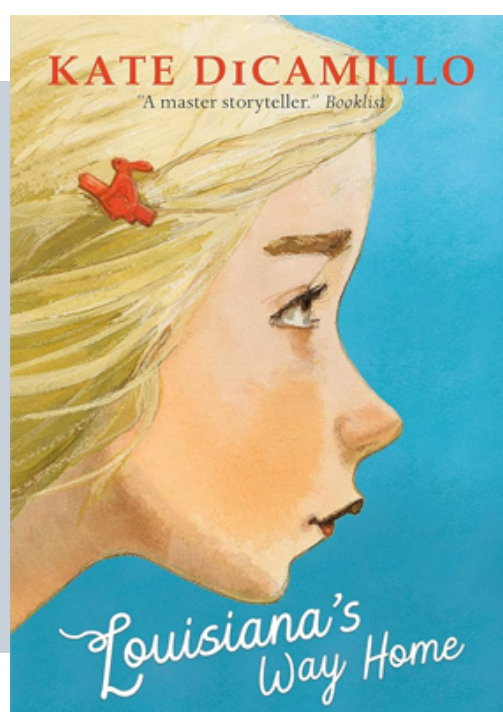
*The world is dark and light is precious. Come closer, dear reader. You must trust me. I am telling you a story.*

## List of Works



### **Novels**

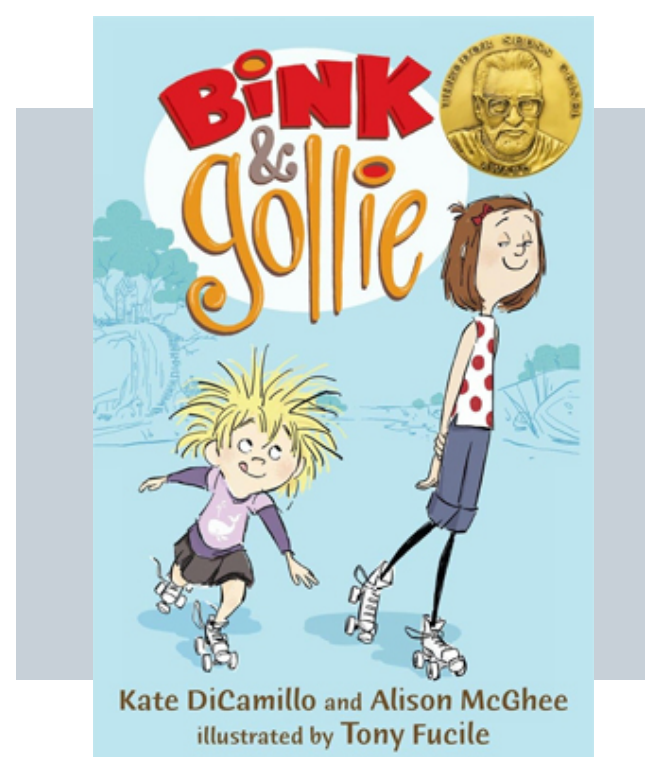
- Because of Winn-Dixie* 2000
- The Tiger Rising* 2001
- The Tale of Despereaux* 2003
- The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane* 2006
- The Magician’s Elephant* 2009
- Flora & Ulysses: The Illuminated Adventures* 2013
- Raymie Nightingale* 2016
- Louisiana’s Way Home* 2018
- Beverly, Right Here* 2019
- The Beatryce Prophecy* 2021
- The Puppets of Spelhorst* 2023
- Ferris* 2024
- The Hotel Balzaar* 2024



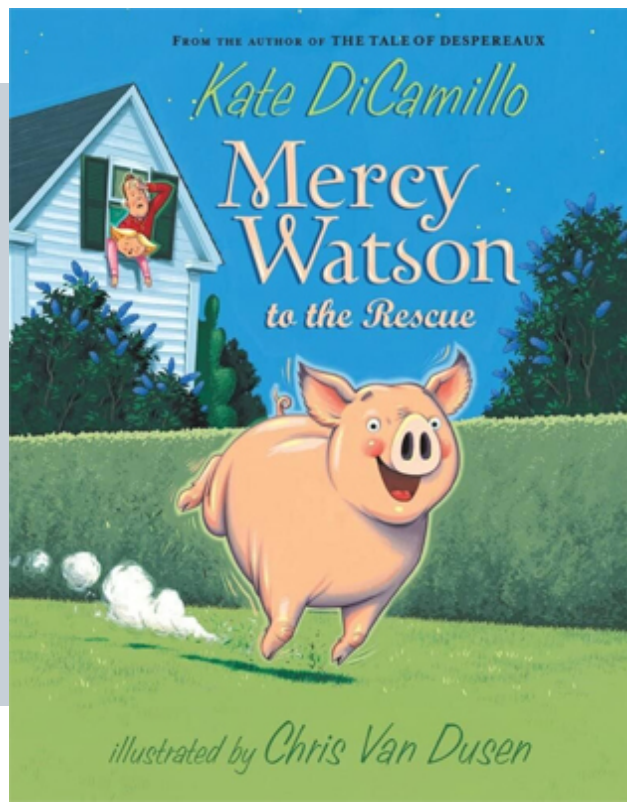
### **Early Reader Chapter Books**

Bink & Gollie series illus. Tony Fucile

- Bink & Gollie*
- Bink & Gollie: Two for One*
- Bink & Gollie: Best Friends Forever*





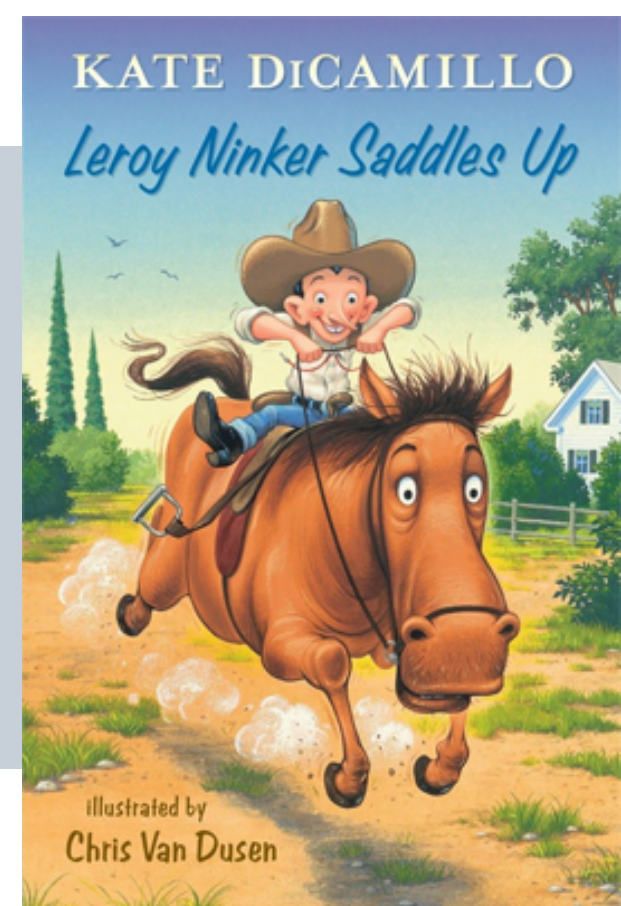


Mercy Watson series illus. Chris Van Dusen

- Mercy Watson to the Rescue*
- Mercy Watson Goes for a Ride*
- Mercy Watson Fights Crime*
- Mercy Watson: Princess in Disguise*
- Mercy Watson Thinks Like a Pig*
- Mercy Watson: Something Wonky This Way Comes*
- A Very Mercy Christmas*
- Mercy Watson is Missing!*

Tales from Deckawoo Drive series, illus. Chris Van Dusen

- Leroy Ninker Saddles Up*
- Francine Poulet Meets the Ghost Raccoon*
- Where Are You Going, Baby Lincoln?*
- Eugenia Lincoln and the Unexpected Package*
- Stella Endicott and the Anything-Is-Possible Poem*
- Franklin Endicott and the Third Key*



Orris and Timble series, illus. Carmen Mok

- Orris and Timble: The Beginning*



## Picture Books

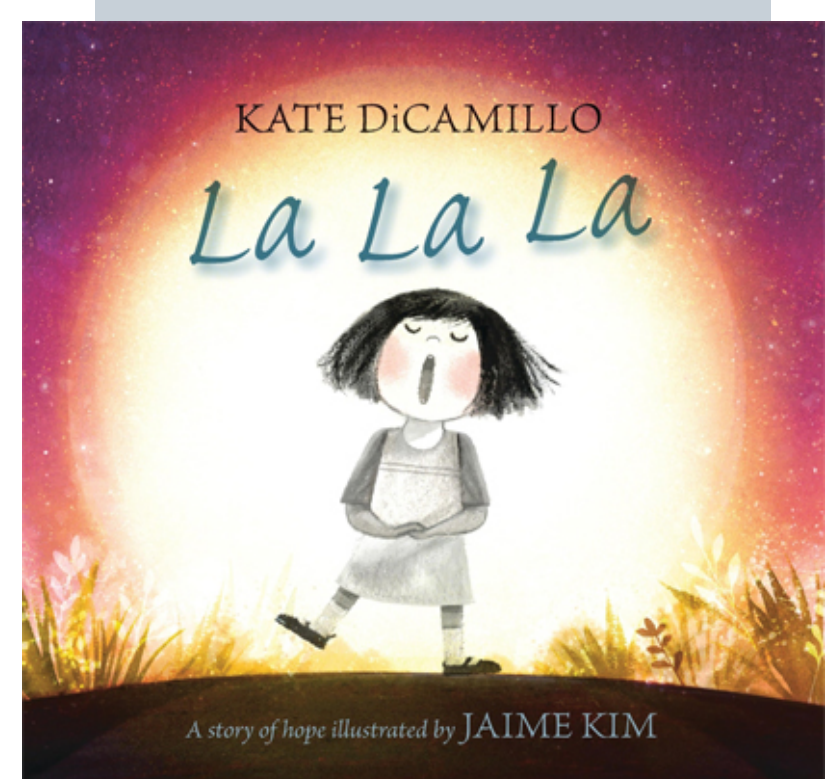
*Great Joy*, illus. by Bagram Ibatoulline

*Louise, the Adventures of a Chicken*,

illus. by Harry Bliss

*A Piglet Named Mercy*, illus. by Chris Van Dusen

*La, La, La*, illus. by Jaime Kim



## Short Stories

"Your Question for Author Here"

"The Third Floor Bedroom"

"The Castle of Rose Tellin"



# Adaptations

## Films

*Because of Winn-Dixie* 2005

*The Tale of Despereaux* 2008

*Flora & Ulysses: The Illuminated Adventures* 2021

*The Tiger Rising* 2022

*The Magician's Elephant* 2023



## Stage Plays

*Flora and Ulysses*

*The Magician's Elephant*

*The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane*

## Opera

*The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane*





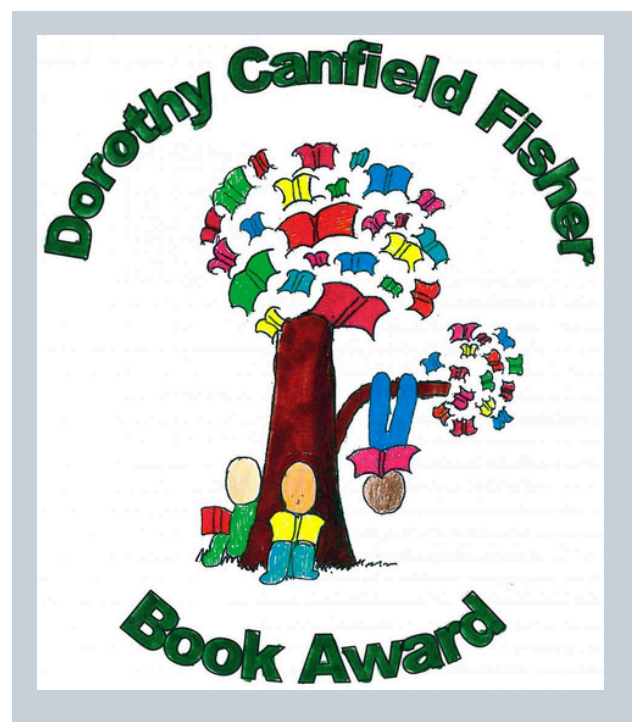
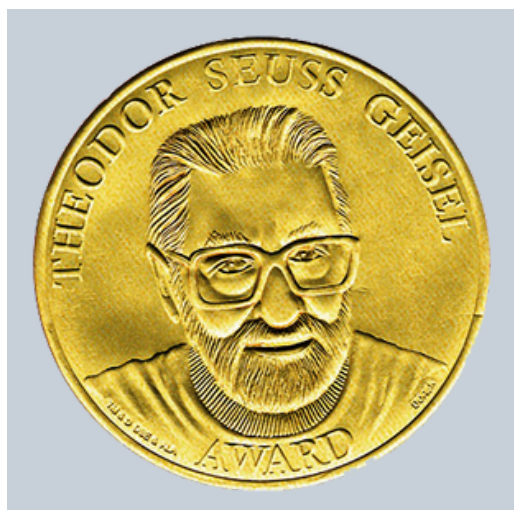
## Awards

<b>Award</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Work</b>	
Josette Frank Award	2000	<i>Because of Winn-Dixie</i>	Won
Newbery Medal	2000	<i>Because of Winn-Dixie</i>	Honor
Dorothy Canfield Fisher Children's Book Award	2002	<i>Because of Winn-Dixie</i>	Won
National Book Award for Young People's Literature	2001	<i>The Tiger Rising</i>	Finalist
Mark Twain Award	2003	<i>Because of Winn-Dixie</i>	Won
Newbery Medal	2004	<i>The Tale of Despereaux</i>	Won
Dorothy Canfield Fisher Children's Book Award	2005	<i>The Tale of Despereaux</i>	Won
Boston Globe-Horn Book Award: Fiction and Poetry	2006	<i>The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane</i>	Won
Parents' Choice Award	2006	<i>The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane</i>	Won
Quill Awards	2006	<i>The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane</i>	Finalist
Geisel Award	2006	<i>Mercy Watson Goes for a Ride</i>	Honor
Geisel Award	2010	<i>Bink &amp; Gollie</i>	Won
National Book Award for Young People's Literature	2013	<i>Flora &amp; Ulysses</i>	Long List



# Awards

Award	Year	Work	
Newbery Medal	2014	<i>Flora &amp; Ulysses</i>	Won
National Book Award for Young People's Literature	2013	<i>Raymie Nightingale</i>	Finalist
Regina Medal	2019	Cumulative Works	Won





## K.G. Campbell

Keith G. Campbell was born in 1966 in Kenya but spent his formative years in Scotland. He graduated from the University of Edinburgh with a master's degree in art history and worked in the field of interior design. All the while, he was pulled toward his lifelong passion of writing and illustrating stories.



His first book, *Lester's Dreadful Sweaters* won the 2013 Golden Kite Award from the international group Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators and also took the Ezra Jack Keats Award for a new illustrator.

He now works full time as an author and illustrator in California.

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In 2013, he gave an interview with the website "Good Reads With Ronna" about his work on *Flora and Ulysses*.

So obviously the first thing that you do is read the manuscript. You try and get a feel for the characters which isn't difficult for Kate because her characters are so three dimensional, quirky and hilarious. You have to be really careful to see if there's any physical descriptions in there. And you go from there.

Being an LA local, what I tend to do is a little casting. I go in search of the perfect Flora or the perfect Phyllis or whoever it is. But unlike a casting director, I can select from anyone who's ever lived. They can be fictional. Then that sort of gives me a feeling how they're going to react physically, expressions and all that stuff. And then I do the sketches based on that. In this case, because Kate is Kate, they (the sketches) went to her. Often, the author has very little input in the illustrations. But Kate had something to say. Some characters were modified from my original sketches. Now they are what they are so that's perfect.





*GRWR: Who was the most difficult character to draw or create?*

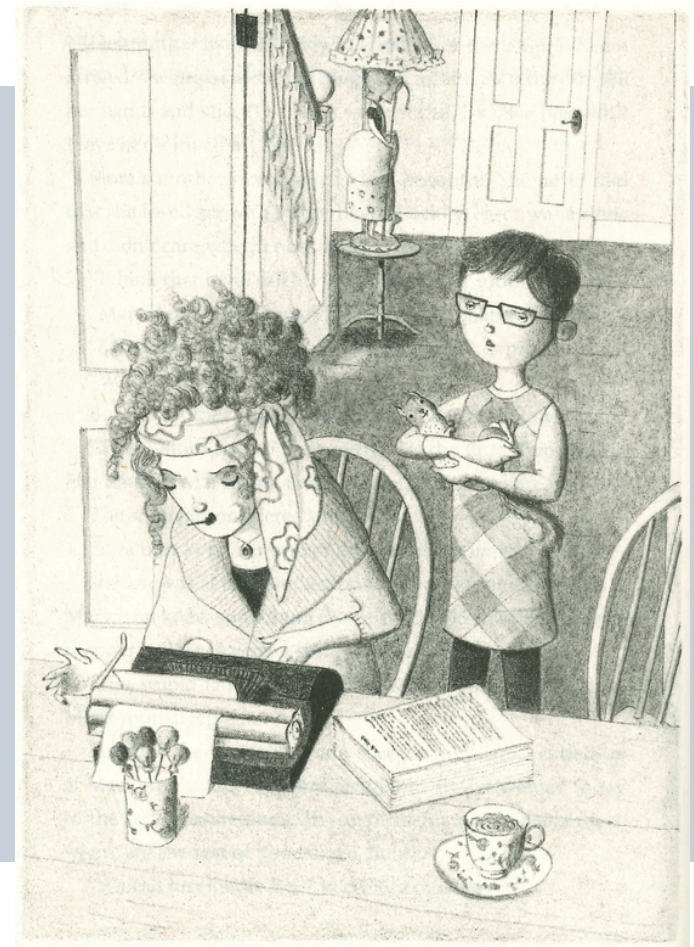
I think the most difficult was probably Ulysses himself. Ulysses is a squirrel and everybody else is a human being and human beings are much larger than squirrels. Getting the amount of character that we wanted to into Ulysses when his scale was so small, that was the most difficult part.

*GRWR: Who was the easiest to draw?*

Phyllis.

*GRWR: I love the look of Phyllis. I feel like I've met her before.*

I wanted someone with a crazy, curly hairstyle, girlie, melodramatic. And I actually had a person in mind for Phyllis. She was inspired by a Broadway actress. Phyllis is like my original sketch. Some changed a bit, some changed a lot. But not Phyllis.



*GRWR: What medium do you work in?*

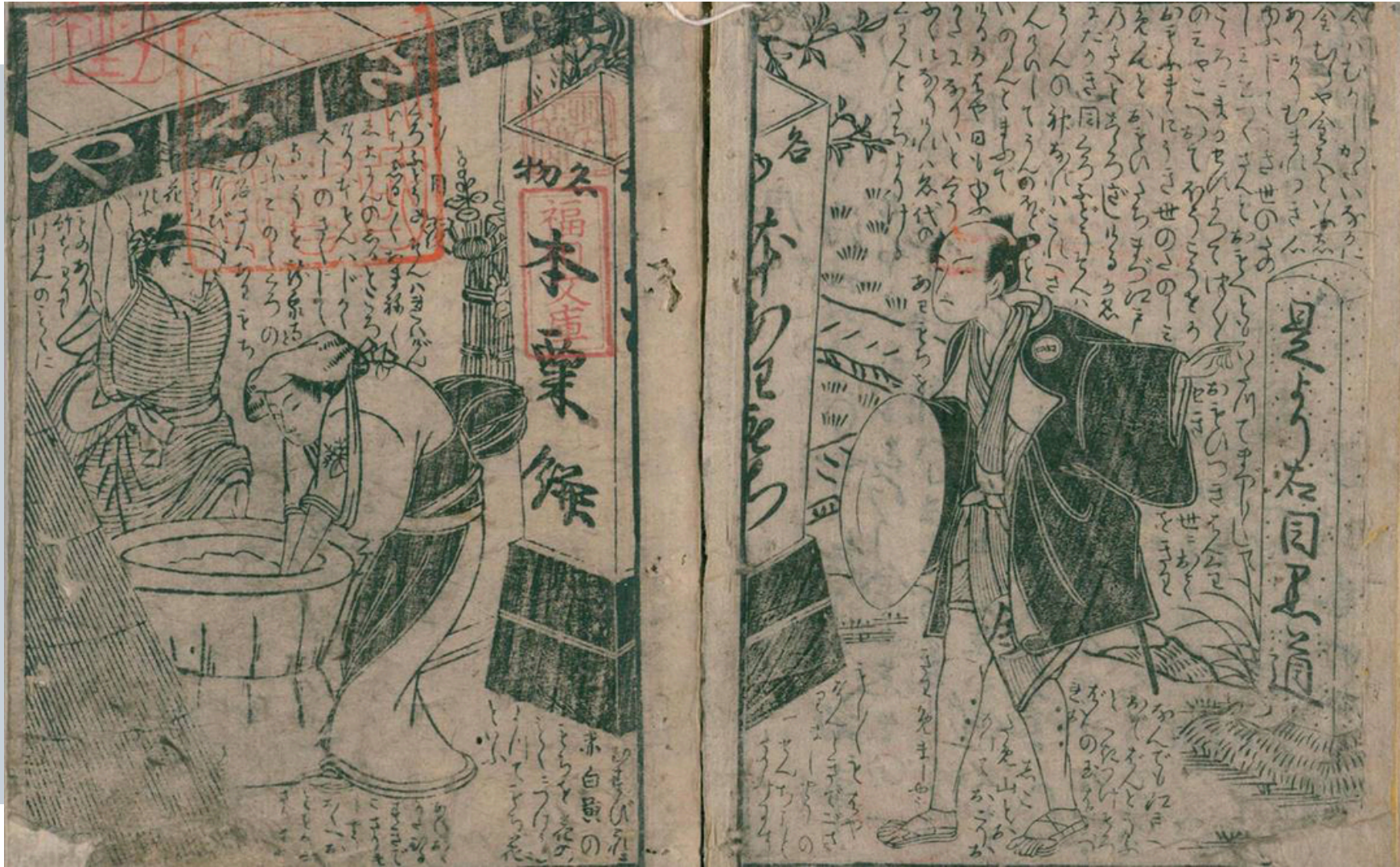
I usually work in water color and colored pencils combined but Flora & Ulysses was executed entirely with colored pencils, no water colors.

*GRWR: You've lived in Kenya, Scotland and California. Is one locale particularly more inspiring for you as an artist?*

Yeah, I would say Scotland, probably. The weather and the atmosphere make it a less attractive place to live, but it's definitely a very romantic setting. And it makes for a good location for the kind of gothic stories that I like. Not that Scotland was the setting for either Lester or Ulysses. It wasn't. But in my future writing I think some of it will be set there.



# A Brief History of Comic Books and Superheroes

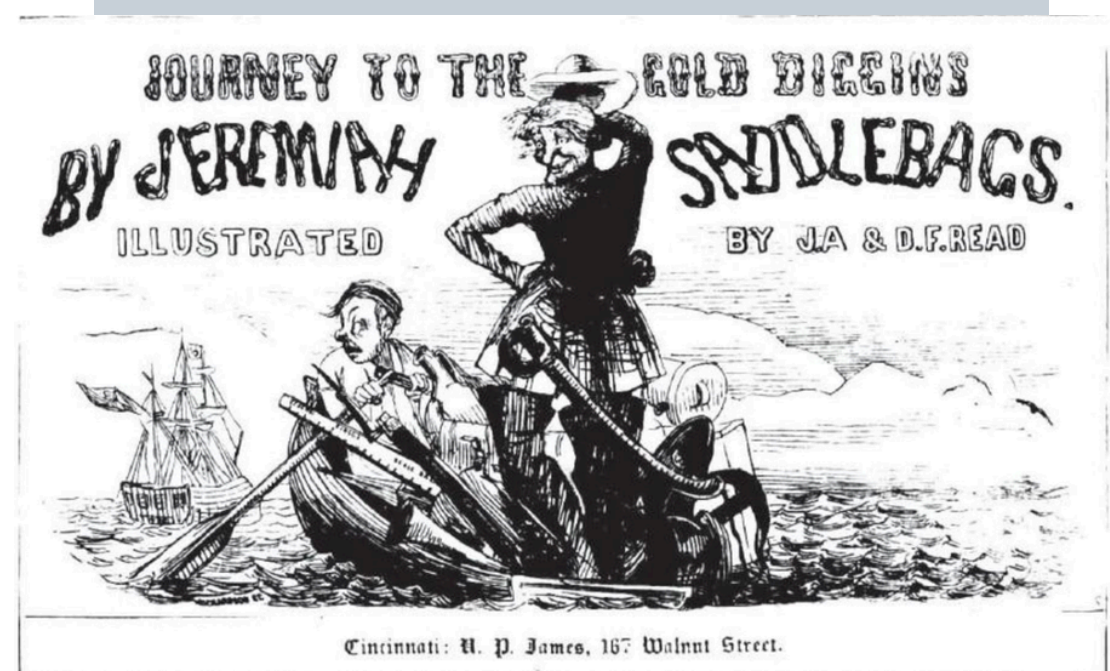


The first known book telling a story largely in pictures was published in Japan in 1755. Koikawa Harumachi's *Kinkin sensei eiga no yume* which is usually translated as *Master Flash Gold's Splendiferous Dream* told a classic tale of Noh drama with one large picture per page.



The United States had their first comic book nearly a century later in 1840 with Rodolphe Topffer's *The Adventures of Mr. Obadiah Oldbuck*. Topffer was Swiss and had published comics in Europe since 1827. Some might argue whether the translation for American readers really counts.

However, there was no doubt about the purely American *Journey to the Gold Diggins*.





There's some disagreement about the first superheroes as well. Some argue that The Phantom published in 1936 deserves the honor. Others

counter that while The Phantom was certainly heroic, he had no real super human powers, and therefore, the title should go to Superman first published in 1938.



Animals didn't take too long to join the superhero club. Mighty Mouse (Here I come to save the day!) appeared in 1942 followed by other favorites such as Speedy Gonzalez, Atom Ant, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, etc., etc.

Superhero plants are a bit harder to come by, but let's not forget Groot or Swamp Thing!





## Questions for Discussion

1. Why do you think there are some sections that are written out like a novel, some as straightforward illustrations, and some as comic panels? What effect does this have? How would the experience of reading the book be different without the comic sections or as all comics?
2. Consider the three comics that Flora reads: *The Illuminated Adventures of the Amazing Incandesto!*; *Terrible Things Can Happen to You!*; and *The Criminal Element*. Why do these comics appeal to Flora? How does she use them to make sense of the world?
3. How does Flora's world view differ from her mother's, a romance novelist? Does reading create a world view or does a person's reading preference come from how they experience the world?
4. Flora is regularly called a "natural-born cynic." What does this mean, and do you think that it is an apt description of Flora? Does she remain a cynic at the end of the book? What, if anything, makes you feel cynical at times?
5. We hear the promise "I will always turn back toward you" many times throughout the story. What do you think it means?
6. What do the words "Do not hope, instead, observe." mean to Flora?
7. How are Flora and William Spiver the same? How are they different?
8. William Spiver claims that he is "suffering from a temporary blindness induced by trauma." Do you believe that he is actually blind? What caused the temporary blindness? What circumstances allowed him to recover?
9. What's in a name? This book includes funny names, literary names, rhyming names, and superhero names. What, if anything, can a name tell us about a character?
10. How is Flora's relationship with her father different from the relationship she has with her mother? Do you relate better (or share more in common) with one parent or sibling over another?
11. What's the significance of the giant squid painting? What do Dr. Meecham's stories tell you about her?
12. Why do you think Flora's father introduces himself so frequently?
13. 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?
14. Why did William Spiver stand up for Flora's mom? What happened to him?
15. Flora may not be a superhero, but she does some very heroic things. Give some examples.





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