Based on

Because of Winn-Dixie
By Kate DiCamillo

About the Book:
Ten-year-old India Opal Buloni (known as Opal) and her preacher father have just moved to a new town in Florida. This is where Opal connects with a mangy-looking stray dog that she decides to name Winn-Dixie. It is through her eyes and heart that we are introduced to a community of interesting characters that would otherwise be shunned or mocked. Throughout the story, Opal discovers things about herself and learns facts about the mother who abandoned her before she even got to know her. And she attributes all the turn of events to befriending a scruffy dog. Yes, it’s all because of Winn-Dixie.

Set the Stage:
Use the following to get the students ready to read:

- Ask the students if they have ever judged someone right away by what they saw on the outside, by the clothes they wore, how their hair was kept, by the food they ate, or how they got themselves to school? How many of you judge someone by the stories you hear about them from other people? This is a book about a girl named Opal who discovers some things about herself and, more importantly, she discovers some things about the people around her. And it’s all because of a dog named Winn-Dixie.

Review:
After reading the book, discuss the following:

- How does Winn-Dixie get his name?
- Opal, who is 10, is living in a trailer park with her father that is for adults only (no children). How is it that she can live there?
- Where is Opal’s mother?
- Opal’s first name is actually India. How did she get that name?
- When Miss Fanny, the librarian, sees Winn-Dixie outside the library window, what goes through her head?
- What happened to Amanda Wilkinson’s younger brother, Carson?
- What do the Dewberry brothers think about Gloria Dump?
Student Activity (found on the last page of this PDF):
Students will write five things about themselves (not physical descriptions) and fellow students will try to guess who that person is. This will not only help develop self-esteem but should also be presented as a vehicle to help students understand that there is more to a person than meets the eye. Students might also discover things they have in common.

Related Activities:
To extend students’ enjoyment of the book, try these:

• What's the Meaning of This?: Because of Winn-Dixie presents several interesting (and possibly new) vocabulary words and phrases. Have students write the definitions of the following: pathological, lozenge, melancholy, missionary, constellations.

• Being Civil: There are two references to the Civil War in Because of Winn-Dixie. One is the reading of Gone With the Wind and the other is the story of Miss Fanny's great-grandfather. Listed are some important places during the Civil War. Ask students about what happened at these places and to name one important person who was there at the time.

1. Fort Sumter in Charleston, South Carolina
2. Gettysburg, Pennsylvania
3. Antietam, Maryland
4. Vicksburg, Mississippi
5. Appomattox Court House in Virginia
6. Durham Station, North Carolina

• A Cause for Winn-Dixie: Have the class (or school) run a collection drive for a local animal shelter. Collect old towels and blankets for bedding. Collect pet food. Find out what else the shelter might need. Approach local businesses for extra help.

• Getting-to-Know-You Party: Have a Winn-Dixie party with the following refreshments:

1. Egg Salad Sandwiches (cut into triangles; crusts removed; frilly toothpicks in each)
2. Pickles (just like Otis brought)
3. Dump Punch (orange juice, grapefruit juice, and seltzer or club soda)
4. Lozenges (can be horehound drops or jelly beans and see who can guess the flavors)

Decorate with a theme. Dog pictures would work because the theme in the story was dogs (according to Sweetie Pie). Or, make it a pet theme and students can bring in photos of their pets, a favorite animal, a photo of themselves with an animal.

Use pink, yellow, and orange streamers.

Put battery-operated votive candles into paper bags.
It’s Not All About Me
Based on Because of Winn-Dixie by Kate DiCamillo

Since the age of three, Opal has missed her mother because she walked out on her and her father. Opal convinced her father to tell her just 10 things about her mother so she could have something to hold on to. But while Opal was holding onto these 10 attributes of a person she hardly knew, she was discovering a whole community of people that she wanted to know as well. Her biggest discovery was realizing that you had to go deeper than first impressions and you couldn’t rely on idle gossip to really know someone.

Directions: Have the students write five things about themselves; things that are unseen and not physical descriptions. Encourage them to list favorite hobbies, books, movies, sports, or pets. What do they like to do for fun, where do they like to go on vacation, what talents do they have? Read them aloud and have the class try to guess who each list is describing.

Here are some examples about characters in the book:

**Five Things About Opal’s Mother**
1. She is funny
2. Has red hair and freckles
3. Can run fast
4. Likes to plant things
5. Can’t cook

**Five Things About Winn-Dixie**
1. Has a pathological fear of storms
2. Likes to smile using all his teeth
3. Runs fast
4. Snores
5. Can catch mice (and not hurt them)

Talk about how important it is to get to know someone before you make assumptions about them. Talk about how it takes a variety of people with all different skills and interests to make a community.

Taking the time to find out what makes other people who they are gives you the freedom to become the person you want to be.

Talk about some of the characters in the book and how they are seen by others:
- Gloria Dump
- Amanda Wilkinson
- Otis
- Miss Fanny Block (librarian)
- The Dewberry Brothers
- Winn-Dixie