

See This Story Grow

**Watch the beginning of *Because of Winn-Dixie*
take shape before your eyes!**

Almost every author writes different drafts, or versions, of a story in order to get it just right. Here you can see exactly how author Kate DiCamillo changes the beginning of her story over the course of five drafts. Read what Ms. DiCamillo has to say about her progress at each stage.

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Kate DiCamillo

FIRST (VERY ROUGH DRAFT)
SPAGHETTI MARCH 13 1997

FINISHED JUNE 22 1997

TWO ONIONS, FOUR GARLIC BULBS SERENDEPITY AND A DOG NAMED WINN DIXIE

my dog's name is winn dixie on account of that is where i found him. he was in the produce department and you know they don't like dogs mixed in with the fruit and vegetables. the produce manager, he was all excited, waving his arms around and chasing winn dixie, screaming, "that dirty dog. who let that dirty dog in here?" which was a good question. because they don't normally let dogs in any part of winn dixie. they think they carry germs. but winn dixie was running around and the produce manager was chasing him and winn dixie thought it was a game. his tongue was hanging out and his tail was wagging and every one in a while he would let out a happy bark. and i happened to come in winn dixie at exactly that minute. it was the same thing my teacher was talking about in school it was serendepity. my daddy had said, "bea, run on up to the winn dixie and get me five onions. and two cloves of garlic." my daddy was fixing to making spaghetti and he likes to spice it up. and i said yes sir. i like to run errands on account of my bike is very, very fast and i'm good at taking instructions and i can remember a long list of things in my head. five onions and two cloves of garlic was a snap for me. so i got up there to winn dixie and i stopped at the front door to check and see if the super ball vending machine had either money or a superball laying in the bottom of it and it didn't. and then i weighed myself. i weighed fifty-two pounds. i am small for my age. people have been saying that ever since i can remember. but i think i am just fine. and then i headed on back to the produce department and that is where i set eyes on winn dixie for the very first time. winn dixie was skidding around the corner of all the fruit displays and wagging his tail so hard he was knocking apples and oranges off the display and they were rolling around in the aisles, along with the tomatoes and green peppers that winn dixie was knocking off. and the produce manager was chasing him and hollering at nobody in particular, help me, help me catch this dirty dog. and then winn dixie sat down, just like that. thump. and the produce manager couldn't stop. he tripped right over winn dixie and went flying through the air. it was something to see. i decided right off i had to have that dog. the produce manager had him cornered and he was hollering and screaming right in winn dixie's face. and winn dixie was just waving his tail and smiling back at the produce manager. he's a real friendly dog. and people were all gathered around looking and pointing. and then all of a sudden, winn dixie was thinking that the game wasn't over and he barked and jumped and tried to put all four of his paws at once on the produce manager and it knocked him down. which is when the produce manager started to cry. it was sad and funny at the same time and winn dixie started licking the man's face and everybody kind of moved on, because it is one thing to see a produce manager get in a fight with a dog and that's the kind of thing it's fun to watch, but it's not any fun at all to watch a produce manager cry. "this is serendepity," i thought to myself. if daddy hadn't wanted to make spaghetti and sent me to get him four onions and two cloves of garlic, i wouldn't have never met winn dixie. "all right," the big winn dixie manager started pushing his way through the crowd, saying, "all right, all right, whose dog is this?" and that was more serendepity, or maybe it was just what my daddy calls my big mouth, but i knew if somebody didn't speak up they would take winn dixie to the pound. "mine sir," i told him. the produce manager looked at me like he wanted to kill me a hundred different ways and the big manager turned on me and said, "what's your name?" "bea," i told him. "bea?" he said. "that's right," i said. "bea buloni." "and you are how old," he said. "i'm ten," i told him. "well," he said, "miss buloni, ten years old is old enough to know that you do not bring dogs into a grocery store." "yes sir," i told him. "he just got off his leash and i was chasing him and he ended up in here somehow."

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First draft

Page 2

Kate DiCamillo, on the First Draft

It's weird to look at this again after so many years. It's kind of like visiting a town that you used to live in when you were a kid: things seem familiar, but strange, too, kind of like a dream. This first draft is how I do all first drafts: single-spaced, capital-free, light on the punctuation and full speed ahead. In a first draft, I concentrate on moving forward and trying not to panic. What amazes me about this particular first draft is how present Opal's voice is. She was there, from the beginning, wanting desperately to tell her story. Of course, I've got her name wrong. I call her Bea in the first draft. At least I got her last name (Buloni) right, and that makes me happy.

CHAPTER ONE

SAD CANNY SOUNDS (?)

Almost everything that happened that summer happened because of Winn Dixie, without him, I wouldn't have much of a story to tell. And the funny thing is that I thought it was going to be a boring summer, the worst summer of all, because my best friend Halie Walked had to spend the summer with her granny in Indiana. But it was the best summer. It was the summer I found Winn Dixie, or Winn Dixie found me. And it was the summer he introduced me to Miss Franny Block and Otis and Gertrude and Gloria Dump. And forgiveness. My name is India B. Buloni and I am ten years old, almost eleven and last summer my daddy, the preacher, sent me to the store for two onions and four green peppers and I came back with a dog.

This is what happened. I happened to enter the Winn Dixie grocery store at exactly the right moment. It was serendepity. I went back to the produce section and everybody was hollering and shouting and the store manager was back there all red-faced, screaming and waving his arms around. "Who let a dog in here?" he kept on shouting. "Who let a dirty dog in here?"

At first I didn't see a dog. There were just a lot of vegetables rolling around on the floor, tomatoes and green peppers and cucumbers. And there was what seemed like a whole army of Winn Dixie employees running around waving their arms just the same way the manager was doing. Buy then the dog came skidding around the corner. He was a big dog. And ugly. And he was having a real good time. His tongue was hanging out and he was wagging his tail. He thought everybody in the Winn Dixie was playing a game with him. I could tell right away that he had a good heart and he didn't mean any harm.

He skidded to a stop and smiled. I had never before seen a dog smile, but that is what he did. He pulled back his lip and showed all his teeth and he wagged his tail even harder. He wagged his tail so hard that he knocked some oranges off a display and they went rolling everywhere and the manager screamed, "Somebody grab that dog!"

And the dog went running over to the manager, wagging his tail and smiling and stood up

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Kate DiCamillo

SECOND DRAFT

Second draft

Page 4

Kate DiCamillo, on the Second Draft

When I start on the second draft of something, I switch from single-spacing to double-spacing. That way, I have room to write comments to myself, and it's easier for other people to read it (although I normally don't share a manuscript until the third draft). I can tell, looking at this second draft, that I'm definitely on the right track, but what is most evident to me here is that I'm making the mistake of "telling" as opposed to "showing." That means, as I struggle to find my way through the story, I explain things too much and it slows the story down. Also, I still don't have Opal's name quite right. And I seem to be hung up on using the word "serendipity" (who knows why?), but I'm definitely making progress.

Fisrt Draft

Kate DiCamillo

THIRD DRAFT FINISHED
AUGUST 28TH

Kate DiCamillo

BECAUSE OF WINN DIXIE

CHAPTER ONE

My name is India Opal Buloni and last summer my daddy, the preacher, sent me to the store for a box of macaroni and cheese and two tomatoes and I came back with a dog. This is what happened. I walked into the produce section of the Winn Dixie grocery store to pick out my two tomatoes and I almost bumped right into the store manager. He was standing there all red-faced, screaming and waving his arms around.

"Who let a dog in here?" he kept on shouting. "Who let a dirty dog in here?"

At first I didn't see a dog. There were just a lot of vegetables rolling around on the floor, tomatoes and onions and green peppers. And there was what seemed like a whole army of Winn Dixie employees running around waving their arms just the same way the manager was doing.

But then the dog came skidding around the corner. He was a big dog. And ugly. And he was having a real good time. His tongue was hanging out and he was wagging his tail. He skidded to a stop and smiled right at me. I had never before seen a dog smile, but that is what he did. He pulled back his lips and showed me all his teeth and wagged his tail even harder. He wagged his tail so hard that he knocked some oranges off a display and they went rolling

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Third draft

Kate DiCamillo, on the Third Draft

Now I've got a title (Because of Winn-Dixie) and also, I put my name and address and telephone number at the top of the first page. This means that I was thinking that the story was working and that I was bracing myself for putting it out into the world — I'm starting to feel like I'm doing something right. And I've finally got Opal's name right, although I don't know exactly how it happened. So much of writing is like walking down a dark hallway with your arms out in front of you. You bump into a lot of things. You pick things up and then put them down. I guess I picked up a couple of names for Opal and put them down and then finally I picked up the right one and thought, "yes, this is it." This draft is almost exactly, word for word, how the chapter opens in the published book.

Kate DiCamillo

4th draft -
w/ comments
from JRT

WHISTLING FOR WINN DIXIE

CHAPTER ONE

My name is India Opal Buloni and last summer my daddy, the preacher, sent me grocery shopping. I go shopping all the time because I do not have a mother and the preacher is too distracted to pick out groceries. But what was special about this time was that I went to the store for a box of macaroni and cheese, some white rice and two tomatoes and I came back with a dog.

Great Start

This is what happened. I walked into the produce section of the Winn Dixie grocery store to pick out my two tomatoes and I almost bumped right into the store manager. He was standing there all red-faced, screaming and waving his arms around.

"Who let a dog in here?" he kept on shouting. "Who let a dirty dog in here?"

At first, I didn't see a dog. There were just a lot of vegetables rolling around on the floor, tomatoes and onions and green peppers. And there was what seemed like a whole army of Winn Dixie employees running around waving their arms just the same way the manager was waving his.

And then the dog came skidding around the corner. He was a big dog. And ugly. And he was having a real good time. His tongue was hanging out and he was wagging his tail. He skidded to a stop and smiled right at me. I had never before in my life seen a dog smile, but that is what he did. He pulled back his lips and showed me all his teeth and wagged his tail even harder. He wagged his tail so hard that he knocked some oranges off a display and they

*How big?
What color?
Long hair or
short?*

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Fourth draft

Kate DiCamillo, on the Fourth Draft

This draft is particularly interesting to me. At this point, I was in a writing class and had read the third draft out loud to my fellow students, and this fourth draft incorporates some of their suggestions about how I could make the story better. This explains why the title is different. People were confused by the title *Because of Winn-Dixie*. Most people where I live (Minnesota) had never heard of Winn-Dixie grocery stores, and so I thought if I changed the title to *Whistling for Winn-Dixie* it would make a little more sense because people would connect it with “Dixie” and the South, etc. Also, my classmates felt that I should explain up front why Opal was going to the grocery store rather than her mother going or her father going, and the opening paragraph in this draft tries to explain that. This is how the manuscript looked when I sent it to Candlewick Press (my publisher).

The comments written on this draft are from Jane Resh Thomas, my teacher and my friend (she’s the “JRT” referred to in the sticky note). She was the one conducting that writing workshop.

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BECAUSE OF WINN-DIXIE

CHAPTER ONE

My name is India Opal Buloni and last summer my daddy, the preacher, sent me to the store for a box of macaroni and cheese, some white rice and two tomatoes and I came back with a dog. This is what happened. I walked into the produce section of the Winn-Dixie grocery store to pick out my two tomatoes and I almost bumped right into the store manager. He was standing there all red-faced, screaming and waving his arms around.

"Who let a dog in here?" he kept on shouting. "Who let a dirty dog in here?"

At first, I didn't see a dog. There were just a lot of vegetables rolling around on the floor, tomatoes and onions and green peppers. And there was what seemed like a whole army of Winn-Dixie employees running around waving their arms just the same way the store manager was waving his.

And then the dog came running around the corner. He was a big dog. And ugly. And he looked like he was having a real good time. His tongue was hanging out and he was wagging his tail. He skidded to a stop and smiled right at me. I had never before in my life seen a dog smile, but that is what he did. He pulled back his lips and showed me all his teeth. Then he wagged his tail so hard that he knocked some oranges off a display and they went rolling everywhere, mixing in with the tomatoes and onions and green peppers.

The manager screamed, "Somebody grab that dog!"

The dog went running over to the manager, wagging his tail and smiling. He stood up on his hind legs. You could tell that all he wanted to do was get face to face with the manager and

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Fifth draft

Kate DiCamillo, on the Fifth Draft

This is the draft that I wrote after Candlewick accepted the manuscript (yippee) and my editor (Kara LaReau) had given me her suggestions about how to make the story work. I went back to *Because of Winn-Dixie* as the title, and the wording of the opening sequence is almost exactly as it was in the third draft. Progress is hard to measure in any creative endeavor, I think. It's often a matter of instinct, of feeling your way through what works and what doesn't. The only thing I've found that works is to keep on working and not to expect that you will get it right the first time.