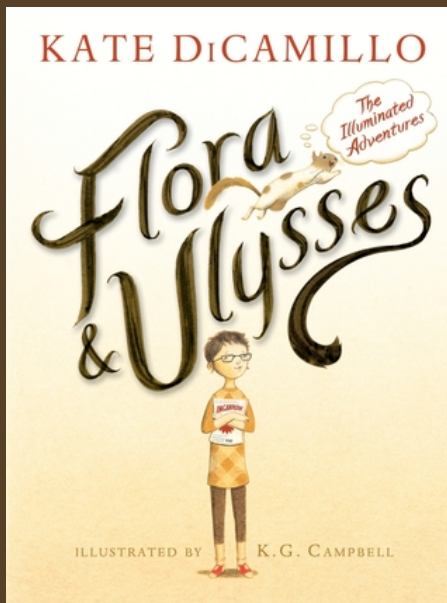


Flora and Ulysses Reading Guide



Questions and Ideas for Consideration

Genre: This story fits into several different genres of children's literature. How does it change your perspective to see in one of these genres?

Illuminated Adventures: How do the illustrations and graphic novel sections contribute to the meaning and messages of the text?

Ideologies: What ideologies are presented in this story? How do they compare to others we've read this semester?

Do Not Hope, Rather Observe: What lessons has Flora learned in her life, and how do these hold merit (but sometimes also limitations)?

Divorce: In what ways does this story comment on divorce, and how are parents separating or remarrying portrayed positively/negatively in the text?

Words: How does the story comment on poetry, words, and the value of language? In what ways (like *Fortunately, the Milk*) is it a story about stories?

Friendship: Consider Flora's relationship with William Spiver. What is unique about their friendship, and what do they share? What do you make of William Spiver's temporary blindness? What do they teach each other?

Heroism: How does this story define what it means to be a hero or a villain? How do these discussions of comics contribute to the text and the meanings it puts forth?

Daybook Possibilities

- Kate DiCamillo is a well-known award-winning author of children's books. Research some of her other works and consider what kinds of topics she broaches. Why do you think she is so popular?
- How might you use or teach *Flora and Ulysses* in your classroom? Brainstorm some lesson plan ideas, and research the common core standards to see how this book might fit into curriculum objectives. What activities might you design?
- Visit Kate DiCamillo's website and report what you discover: <http://www.katedicamillo.com/>.
- Check out other Newbery award winners by visiting the American Library Association website at <http://www.ala.org/>. What kinds of factors go into the prizing of these books, and how do they differ over the last several decades?
- Add an additional illustration to the text or translate a portion into graphic novel form.
- Read Kate DiCamillo's Newbery acceptance speech (uploaded on blackboard) and comment.
- Keep a running list of words in the story that fascinate you (like Ulysses does in writing poetry). Write your own poetry using one or more of these.

Suggested Critical Reading

"We are not the Cleavers": Images of Nontraditional Families in Children's Literature" by Suzanne Bunkers

"Prizing Children's Literature: The Case of Newbery Gold Cover" by Kenneth B. Kidd

"An Advocate, a Defender, an Intimate": Kristeva's Imaginary Father in Fictional Girl-Animal Relationships" by Jennifer Marchant

These articles can be located via the library's website. Please also check out Kate DiCamillo's Newbery acceptance speech on blackboard.

Background and Context

Using mixed media (including excerpts of graphic novels), *Flora and Ulysses* speaks to issues of divorce, loneliness, friendship, and hope while offering children a fantastical tale of a squirrel superhero-poet and the comic-loving cynic, Flora, who believes in him. Kate DiCamillo won the Newbery award for *Flora & Ulysses: The Illuminated Adventures* in 2014, having also won the same award for the *Tale of Despereaux* ten years earlier. The text is illustrated by K.G. Campbell.