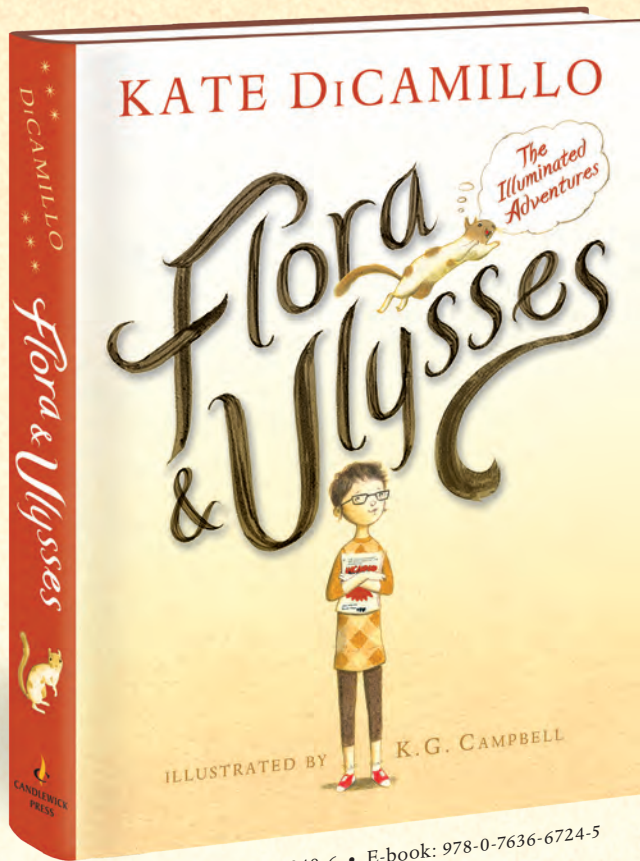


# Flora & Ulysses

*The Illuminated Adventures*



HC: 978-0-7636-6040-6 • E-book: 978-0-7636-6724-5

by **KATE  
DICAMILLO**

illustrated by  
**K. G. CAMPBELL**

## ABOUT THE BOOK

Ten-year-old Flora Belle Buckman and her superhero squirrel, Ulysses, are the stars of this middle-grade adventure novel by the award-winning, best-selling Kate DiCamillo. Incorporating her characteristic rich vocabulary, humor, and heart, the author delves into new territory by weaving comic-book elements into the narrative. Overarching themes of loneliness, hope, and love are key, intermixed with humor—both narrative and visual (with the help of illustrator K. G. Campbell)—that will have readers laughing out loud and cheering the story's unforgettable characters.

Flora is living in a world in which she doesn't allow for the possibility of hope. Her parents are divorced, and comic books are her favorite pastime. Flora feels alone and is prepared for the worst life has to offer when a random act of improbability connects her to Ulysses the squirrel, who becomes her champion. As both Flora and Ulysses begin to vanquish evil, they also help each other to believe, hope, and find love. Kate DiCamillo's humor turns what could be a sad tale into a rip-roaring adventure, complete with lots of laughs and discoveries along the way. Here is a truly enjoyable opportunity to draw readers into a funny, super-heroic, and heart-grabbing tale by a beloved author.



The following activities are written as prompts to use with your students to further explore the connections among the zany characters, the life-changing power of love and belief, and the influence that reading about these subjects can have on readers. This inspiring adventure will be one to add to your list of must-have books for the class.

## COMMON CORE CONNECTIONS

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. It 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](http://www.corestandards.org).

## Classroom Projects and Activities

### RELATIONSHIPS

With your students, create a character map to explore the relationships in the book. Use your blackboard, white board, or a large sheet of paper. Put Flora's name in the center and circle it. Then ask students for names to add to the map. As you write these names around Flora's name, circle each one. Then have students come and draw lines between the characters that interact with each other. So that no characters are forgotten, encourage students to include Donald and Tootie Tickham, the Ulysses 2000X, Phyllis Buckman, George Buckman, William Spiver, Rita the waitress, the chef, Dr. Meescham, Mr. Klaus (the cat), Mary Ann (the lamp), and, of course, Ulysses. Once you have mapped the relationships, look and see who connects with whom. Is there any character who connects with everyone else?

### WRITING PROMPTS

Use these prompts with your students for deeper consideration of the text:

1. Everyone changes in life, and we see many changes in Flora, Ulysses, William Spiver, and George Buckman during this story. Pick two characters and write about the changes they experience during the story. Use examples from the book to demonstrate these changes.
2. Both Flora and William Spiver need a friend. How do you make a friend? What things do you do to become friends? What actions do Flora and William Spiver take? Write a short paragraph about friendship using Flora and William Spiver as your examples.
3. If you were creating a superhero, what animal would you choose? Create your own superhero animal using Ulysses as a guide. You may want to include:
  - a superpower
  - a special name
  - how that character hides his or her superhero self
  - friends
  - enemies
4. Now that you have read the book, if you could give it a new title, what would it be? Write about your title and why you chose it. Use examples from the book to persuade your reader that this is a good choice.



## VOCABULARY

The following sentences from *Flora and Ulysses: The Illuminated Adventures* are each missing a key vocabulary word. At the bottom of the activity is a list of the missing words. Find the word that fits the sentence. Then on the back or on a separate piece of paper, write a new sentence using that word or give the definition of the word.

1. Who can say what astonishments are hidden inside the most \_\_\_\_\_ being? (page 19)
2. "A \_\_\_\_\_ is someone with special powers, and he uses those powers to fight the forces of darkness and evil." (page 33)
3. "I've come to check and see if what I think happened yesterday actually happened, or if I'm the victim of an extended \_\_\_\_\_." (page 48)
4. "I prefer to be called William Spiver. It distinguishes me from the \_\_\_\_\_ of Williams in the world." (page 54)
5. "Wait a minute," said William Spiver. "Are you \_\_\_\_\_ that the squirrel typed those words?" (page 60)
6. Holy \_\_\_\_\_ occurrences! (page 75)
7. "Don't worry," said Flora. "You're a superhero. This \_\_\_\_\_ will be stopped!" (page 77)
8. "I'm engaging in \_\_\_\_\_. It *seems* as if the glasses have been glued to my head." (page 81)
9. The whole of the Giant Do-Nut became \_\_\_\_\_ calm. (page 105)
10. *The Criminal Element* said that sometimes it was wise to put criminals on the defensive by making "\_\_\_\_\_ or blatantly untrue comments." (page 106)

### WORDS TO MATCH

hallucination	malfeasance	mundane	preternaturally	superhero
hyperbole	multiplicity	positing	slanderous	unanticipated



## ART

Have students create their own comic-book superheroes. Ask them to tell the superhero's story with both words and pictures, using word bubbles as in a comic strip. After the comic strips are created, share them and discuss the process of this kind of writing.

Ask your students:

1. How hard is it to write in such limited space?
2. How do the words and pictures work together?
3. Did you choose to use color or black and white?
4. Was this hard to do or easy?

For each question, be sure to ask students to explain why.

## POETRY

One of Ulysses's special powers is being able to write poetry, and poetry is found throughout *Flora and Ulysses*. Ulysses's first poem is on page 65, and on page 232 he writes the epilogue. Read Ulysses's poems aloud, then ask your students: What does Ulysses communicate in his poetry? How is communicating with poetry different from communicating with prose? Using your library as a resource, have students investigate different styles of poetry. Then invite them to write their own poetry. Challenge them to try to write a poem as if they were Ulysses.

This guide was prepared by JoAnn Jonas, MLS, librarian, reviewer, writer, and youth services specialist. She also prepared a discussion guide, with more ideas for the classroom, which is available at [www.candlewick.com](http://www.candlewick.com).

## PHILOSOPHY

Pascal's Wager, introduced on page 129, will probably be a new concept to young readers. When it comes to Common Core reading and writing requirements, introducing logical thinking is of special interest.

Dr. Meescham says, "Cynics are people who are afraid to believe." She explains Pascal's Wager simply, by saying, "There was everything to gain by believing, and nothing to lose. . . . What do I lose if I choose to believe? Nothing!"

Have each student make a chart, labeling one column *Flora* and the other *Dr. Meescham*. Ask the class to compare and contrast the outlook of Flora (a self-proclaimed cynic) and Dr. Meescham (a believer) by listing the behaviors these characters exhibit that reflect their attitudes. After students finish the chart, have them write a paragraph explaining which character they think they are more like and why.



### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**KATE DICAMILLO** is the author of many beloved books for young readers, including *The Tale of Despereaux*, which received a Newbery Medal; *Because of Winn-Dixie*, which received a Newbery Honor; *The Miraculous Journey of Edward*

*Tulane*, which won a *Boston Globe-Horn Book* Award; and the best-selling *Mercy Watson* series.



### ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

**K. G. CAMPBELL** is the winner of an Ezra Jack Keats New Illustrator Honor for *Lester's Dreadful Sweaters*, which was also awarded the Golden Kite Picture Book Illustration Award. He was born in Kenya but raised in Scotland, where

he graduated from the University of Edinburgh. Campbell's love of art originally led him to study art history and explore interior design before he began illustrating children's books.