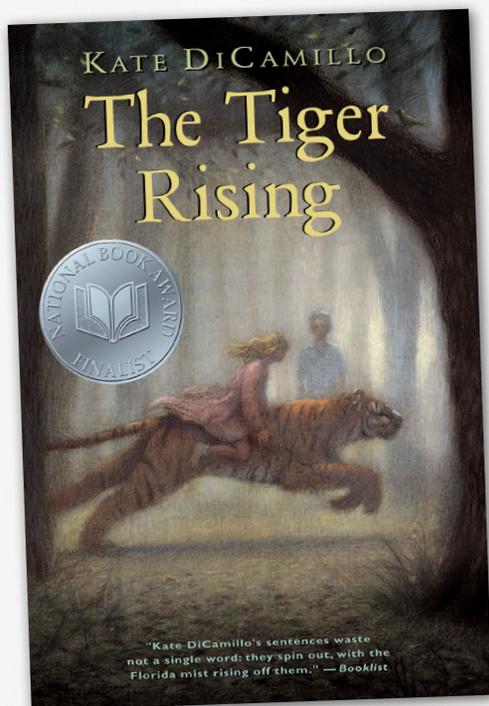


The Tiger Rising

BY KATE DICAMILLO



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“Kate DiCamillo’s sentences waste not a single word: they spin out, with the Florida mist rising off them.”

— *Booklist*

About the Book

In *The Tiger Rising* by Kate DiCamillo, twelve-year-old Rob Horton has recently moved with his father from Jacksonville to a seedy motel in Lister, Florida. Ever since his mother’s death, Rob has shut up his feelings in a big “suitcase” and clamped it down tight. He is determined that nothing will make him cry again — not the bullies who torment him at his new school, not the ugly rash on his legs, and especially not missing his mother, whom he is very skilled at not thinking about.

But then two extraordinary things happen: Rob discovers a real-life tiger, pacing back and forth in a cage near the motel where he lives. On that same day, he meets Sistine Bailey, a feisty, independent-minded girl who lets out her feelings as readily as he holds his in. As Rob and Sistine learn to trust each other and, ultimately, to be friends, they prove that some things — like memories, and heartache, and tigers — can’t be locked up forever.



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Discussion Points

1. The Kentucky Star Motel, where Rob and his father live, has a sign in the shape of Kentucky. How did the motel get its name? Given the location of the story, why is this name odd? What is the significance of the star?
2. Throughout most of the story, how does Rob cope with things he can't change?
3. What makes the Threemonger brothers bully Rob? How does Rob deal with their threats and abuse?
4. Sistine, the new girl in school, was named after the Sistine Chapel. In what ways is she like or different from this famous landmark? What hope does she offer Rob, based on his knowledge of the Sistine Chapel itself?
5. How does whittling help Rob cope with life in Lister? Name some of the objects he whittles. What is their significance?
6. Why is Rob asked to leave school? Do you think the principal's reasons are fair? What is Rob's reaction?
7. Sistine and Rob handle problems and situations in opposite ways. Which way is better?
8. What is the rash on Rob's legs? What do you think the cure for his rash might be? What makes his rash worse? Better?
9. Considering Rob's artistic talent and Sistine's name, what parallel has the author drawn between these two characters?
10. How does owning a tiger make Beauchamp feel? What is the significance of the tiger's cage for Sistine? For Rob?
11. What are some of Rob's feelings that begin to surface with Sistine's help and friendship? How does Sistine help Rob deal with his grief?
12. When Willie May doesn't agree with Rob and Sistine's plans to let the tiger go, does she let them down? Why or why not? When Willie May says, "Sometimes right don't count" (page 99), what does she mean?
13. What happens at the end of the story that allows Rob to "open the suitcase"?
14. What part does the weather play in the story?
15. Name some of the emotions that permeate this story and to whom they are attributed.

Story Extensions

- Discuss some of the symbolic meanings of: the tiger's cage, the tiger, the name of the motel, the weather, Sistine's name in conjunction with Rob, Rob's hobby in conjunction with Sistine.
- Topics related to *The Tiger Rising* that may be interesting to research: circus animals, endangered animals, mistreatment of animals, the Sistine Chapel, the author of the poem that begins "Tiger, tiger, burning bright / In the forests of the night . . ."

These discussion points and story extensions were provided by Kit Vaughan, central cataloguer and acquisitions librarian for Chesterfield County Public Schools, Virginia, and a reviewer for *School Library Journal*.



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