

Francine Poulet Meets the Ghost Raccoon

KATE DICAMILLO

illustrated by CHRIS VAN DUSEN

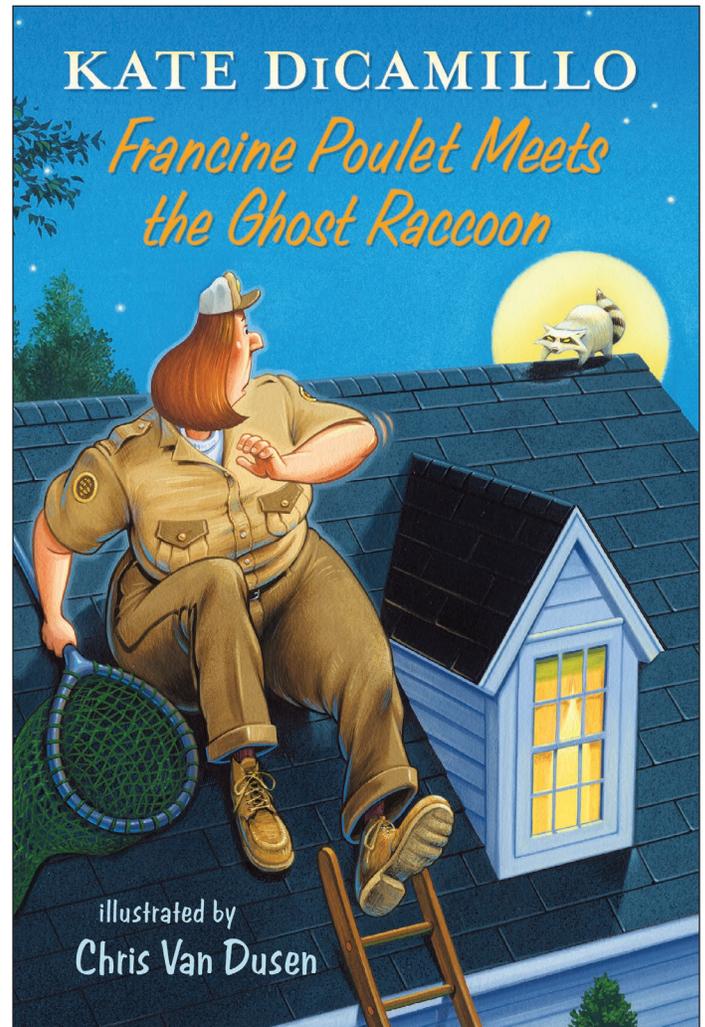


ABOUT THE BOOK

Francine Poulet is the greatest animal control officer in Gizzford County. She hails from a long line of animal control officers. She's battled snakes, outwitted squirrels, and stared down a bear. "The genuine article," Francine's father always called her. She is never scared—until, that is, she's faced with a screaming raccoon that may or may not be a ghost. Maybe Francine isn't cut out to be an animal control officer after all! But the raccoon is still on the loose, and the folks on Deckawoo Drive need Francine back. Can she face her fears, round up the raccoon, and return to the ranks of Animal Control? Join a cast of familiar characters—Frank, Stella, Mrs. Watson, and Mercy the porcine wonder—for some riotous raccoon wrangling on Deckawoo Drive.

ABOUT THE TALES FROM DECKAWOO DRIVE SERIES

For fans of Mercy Watson books who are not quite ready to move on to Kate DiCamillo's middle grade novels, the Tales from Deckawoo Drive series serves as a bridge between the two.



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Common Core Connections

With *Francine Poulet Meets the Ghost Raccoon*, Kate DiCamillo continues her side-splitting chapter-book series, *Tales from Deckawoo Drive*, featuring characters from her *Mercy Watson* books. This teachers' guide, with connections to the Common Core, includes an array of language arts activities, book discussions, vocabulary instruction, and more to accommodate the learning needs of most students in grades 1–3. It's designed to help you encourage students to be careful readers. It is best to allow students to read the entire story before engaging in a detailed study of the work.

Notes throughout the guide link the discussion questions and activities to specific Common Core Language Arts Standards. For more information on specific standards for your grade level, visit the Common Core website at www.corestandards.org.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What traits does Francine possess that help her become the Gizzford County record holder for most animals controlled? How does her family history give her the tools to become a great animal control officer?
2. How does the raccoon spook Francine? How does it make her feel?
3. How does Clement's ghost try to help Francine? Does it work? Why or why not?
4. Why is Mordus Toopher "deeply saddened" when Francine quits her job at the Animal Control Center?
5. Describe the following characters in one sentence: Francine, Tammy Bissinger, Clement Poulet, Mordus Toopher, Stella, and Frank.
6. Why isn't Francine satisfied with her cashier job at Clyde's Bait, Feed, Tackle, and Animal Necessities?
7. After falling off the roof and quitting her job as animal control officer, what finally makes Francine decide to try to catch the raccoon again? Why is this the thing that motivates her?
8. Frank helps Francine regain her confidence by reminding her that she is "the genuine article." What does the phrase "genuine article" mean? In what way is Francine a "genuine article"?
9. How does Francine finally catch the raccoon?
10. Why does Frank want to be Francine's understudy? How has he shown he'd make a successful animal control officer?



COMMON CORE CONNECTIONS

Reading: Key Ideas and Details

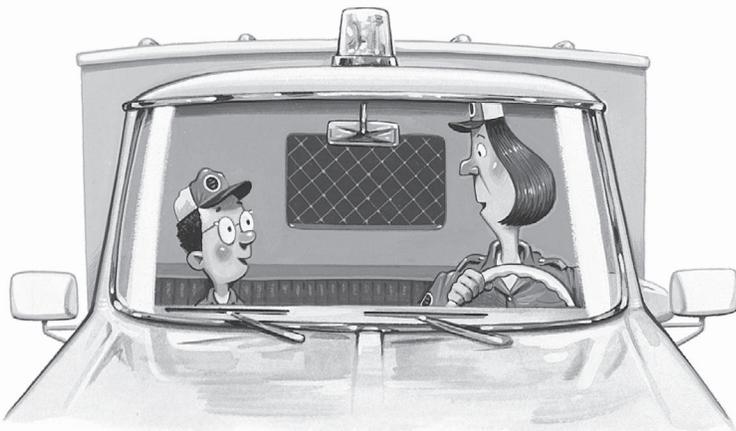
RL.1.1–3.1: Ask and answer questions about key details in a text.

RL.1.2: Retell stories, including key details, and demonstrate understanding of their central message or lesson.

RL.1.3–3.3: Describe characters and major events in a story.

Speaking & Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration

SL.1.1–3.1: Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about grade-specific topics and texts with peers and adults in small and large groups.



LANGUAGE ARTS ACTIVITIES

VOCABULARY

Review this list of vocabulary words found in *Francine Poulet Meets the Ghost Raccoon*. First ask students if they can guess the words' meaning by rereading each word in the context of the story. Then have them use dictionaries to check themselves and/or define the word. Also have them use each word in a sentence of their own. Since there are so many vocabulary words, you may choose to review them over a few class periods and assign some for homework.

- | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| auspices (page 48) | inane (page 83) |
| banshee (page 8) | juncture (page 24) |
| bejeweled (page 50) | metaphorically (coda) |
| bloodcurdling (page 83) | mocking (page 42) |
| bounding (page 26) | pleasantries (page 83) |
| disembodied (page 24) | recede (coda) |
| earnest (coda) | recuperating (page 39) |
| et cetera (page 48) | reinstated (coda) |
| expeditiously (page 2) | skitter (page 67) |
| ferocious (page 47) | tally (page 57) |
| fraud (page 85) | tentative (page 40) |
| gallivanting (page 82) | tormented (page 3) |
| gibbous (page 50) | toupee (page 47) |
| ignoble (page 47) | twitched (page 61) |
| impasse (page 47) | understudy (coda) |

After your students are familiar with the vocabulary list, invite them to choose ten words and include them in their own short stories starring Francine Poulet.

COMMON CORE CONNECTIONS

Reading: Craft and Structure

RL.3.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text.

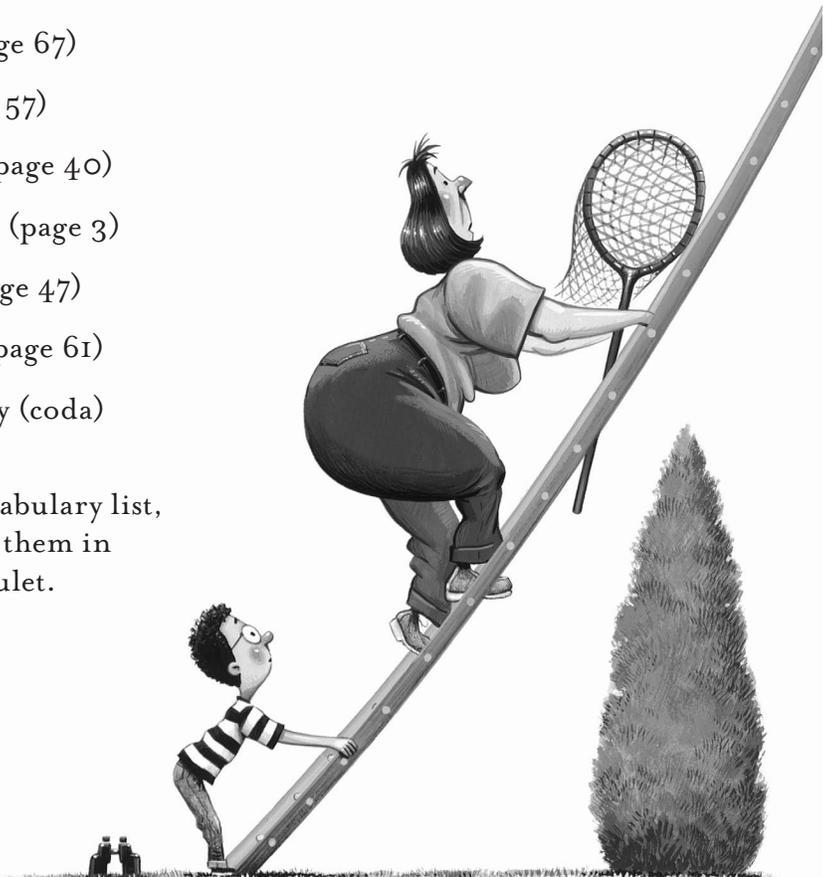
Writing: Text Types and Purposes

W.1.3–3.3: Write narratives in which they recount a well-elaborated event or short sequence of events.

Language: Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

L.1.4–3.4: Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown words and multiple-meaning words based on grade-specific reading and content.

L.2.6: Use words and phrases acquired through conversations, reading and being read to, and responding to texts, including using adjectives and adverbs to describe.



CRITTER CONTROL

As the Gizzford County record holder for most animals controlled, Francine Poulet had to learn a lot about wild animals. Ask your students: How do you think someone becomes an animal control officer? What type of animals do you think the animal control officers in your city or town catch?

Next, have students break into groups and use the school library or computers to research animal control in your city or town. Have them answer questions like: How does someone get to be an animal control officer? What type of animals do animal control officers catch? How do they catch them? What do they do with them after they catch them?

Invite each group to present its findings to the rest of the class.



EXTRA! EXTRA! READ ALL ABOUT IT!

The *Gizzford Gazette* wrote a front-page article about Francine titled “Local Animal Control Officer Takes a Tumble in Great Raccoon Caper.” The article is accompanied by a photo of Francine and reports that she is the “most decorated animal control officer in the history of Gizzford.” It also notes that the raccoon is still at large.

Show your class the front page of your local newspaper. Ask them: What types of stories are front-page-worthy? Why are the most important stories usually on the front page?

Have your students write a front-page story of their own. Ask them to think of something newsworthy, do research on it, write a catchy headline and story, illustrate or find an image to go with the story, and present it all to the class. Then take a class vote on which story is the most front-page-worthy.

COMMON CORE CONNECTIONS

Writing: Research to Build and Present Knowledge

W.1.7–2.7: Participate in shared research and writing projects.

W.3.7: Conduct short research projects that build knowledge about a topic.

W.1.8–2.8: Recall information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer a question.

W.3.8: Recall information from experiences or gather information from print and digital sources; take brief notes on sources and sort evidence into provided categories.

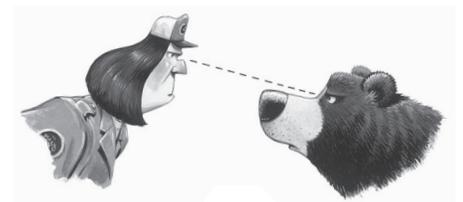
Speaking & Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration

SL.1.1–3.1: Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about grade-specific topics and texts with peers and adults in small and large groups.

Language: Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

L.1.4–3.4: Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown words and multiple-meaning words based on grade-specific reading and content.

L.1.6–2.6: Use words and phrases acquired through conversations, reading and being read to, and responding to texts.



COMMON CORE CONNECTIONS

Writing: Text Types and Purposes

W.1.2–3.2: Write informative/explanatory texts.

Speaking & Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration

SL.1.1–3.1: Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about grade-specific topics and texts with peers and adults in small and large groups.

SCARED SILLY

The “ghost raccoon” tormented many people on Deckawoo Drive by seeming to glow and calling out people’s names. Have your class discuss the following: Have you ever been scared by something, only to find out later that you shouldn’t have been scared by it? What makes a story scary? Have you ever read something scary?

What makes scary stories different from funny stories? Can a story be both scary and funny at the same time?

Have your students write short, scary stories about a ghost haunting your city or town. Instruct them to include real places in your city or town, such as local landmarks, your school, and real street names. Encourage them to make their stories funny as well as scary, and remind them that they can use silly character names, have funny things happen to the characters, or have the ghost turn out not to be a ghost after all.



COMMON CORE CONNECTIONS

Writing: Text Types and Purposes

W.1.3–3.3: Write narratives in which they recount a well-elaborated event or short sequence of events.

Speaking & Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration

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A NICE PLACE FOR A VISIT

Gizzford County seems like a very nice place to visit (aside from the apparent ghost raccoon harassing its residents). Ask your students to recall some specific things they remember about Gizzford County.

Next, ask your students what makes your city or town special, and what tourists should see and do when they visit. Then have them compare and contrast your city or town with Gizzford County.

Ask questions like: How are your city or town and Gizzford County different? How are they the same? How are the people similar? How do they differ? How does the wildlife in your city or town compare with Gizzford County’s?

Then have your students create an advertisement for the *Gizzford Gazette* that entices the residents of Gizzford County to visit your city or town.



COMMON CORE CONNECTIONS

Writing: Text Types and Purposes

W.1.2–3.2: Write informative/explanatory texts.

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PANIC PATROL

When Francine first came face-to-face with the raccoon on Mrs. Bissinger's roof, she panicked and fell off. Explain to your class that when people panic, they sometimes do things that they wouldn't normally do. Talk to your class about how panic is a certain kind of fear. Ask your students if they have ever felt panicked. What made them panic? How did they react? What made them feel better?



Ask your class to work together to come up with a list of things that could make a person panic. List students' responses on the board. Then, discuss ways to overcome each panic-inducing thing. For homework, ask students to write a journal entry about how they can try to calm down the next time they panic.

COMMON CORE CONNECTIONS

Speaking & Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration

SL.1.1–3.1: Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about grade-specific topics and texts with peers and adults in small and large groups.

Language: Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

L.1.6–3.6: Use words and phrases acquired through conversations, reading and being read to, and responding to texts.

SOLID SIMILES

Throughout the book, Francine is described as “solid as a refrigerator.” Explain to your students that this description is a simile and that a simile is a figure of speech that compares two things using the words *as* or *like*.

Ask your class to work together to come up with similes for these other characters in *Francine Poulet Meets the Ghost Raccoon*:

Tammy Bissinger, Clement Poulet, Mordus Toopher, Stella, Frank, and the Lincoln sisters. Write the similes the students come up with on the board.

For homework, ask your students to write similes describing five people they know.



COMMON CORE CONNECTIONS

Speaking & Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration

SL.1.1–3.1: Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about grade-specific topics and texts with peers and adults in small and large groups.

Language: Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

L.1.5–2.5: Demonstrate understanding of word relationships and nuances in word meanings.

L.3.5: Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships and nuances in word meanings.

TROPHY CASE

With forty-seven trophies to her name, Francine Poulet is the most decorated animal control officer in the county. Ask your students the following questions: When do people receive trophies? Do you know anyone who has ever won a trophy? What did he or she do to win it? Have you ever received a trophy? If so, what for?

Then have each student create a trophy for the residents of Deckawoo Drive to present to Francine for catching the “ghost raccoon” that was plaguing their street. Provide construction paper, markers, glue, glitter, and scissors for them to use to cut out and decorate their trophies.

Once the trophies are decorated, ask your students to write down five words that explain why Francine deserves this trophy. Then have them choose their favorites of the words they came up with and engrave (OK, write) them on their trophies.



COMMON CORE CONNECTIONS

Reading: Craft and Structure

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kate DiCamillo, the author of six books about Mercy Watson, is the beloved and renowned author of many books for young readers, including *Flora & Ulysses: The Illuminated Adventures* and *The Tale of Despereaux*, both of which won the Newbery Medal. In 2014 she was named the National Ambassador for Young People’s Literature. She lives in Minneapolis.

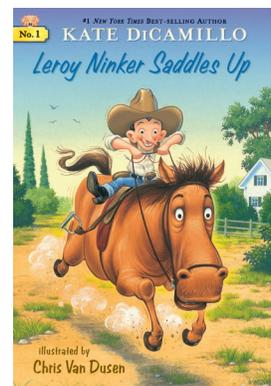
ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Chris Van Dusen is the author-illustrator of *The Circus Ship* and *King Hugo’s Huge Ego* and the illustrator of all six books about Mercy Watson. He lives in Maine.



Visit www.mercywatson.com to learn more about the neighborhood of Deckawoo Drive, including its star, porcine wonder Mercy Watson, and the books all about her for younger readers. There is also a letter from Kate DiCamillo, information about her and illustrator Chris Van Dusen, teachers’ guides, and more!

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Teachers’ guide written by
Mary Kate Doman, Children’s &
Young Adult Book Consultant