**Topic:** *Because of Winn Dixie* by Kate DiCamillo

**Discipline:** Reading, Writing

**Grade Level:** Fourth Grade

**Time:** 3 Weeks

**Description of the School and Students:**

This unit is taught in P.S.37 in the Bronx. The classroom size is twenty-five students. Almost all of the students are of African-American or Hispanic backgrounds and lower-class families. All the students in the classroom have English either their first or second language. Most of the students have Spanish as their spoken language at home. The students test scores and reading levels are average, and all students are performing at appropriate math, reading and writing levels. A smart board is present in the classroom and the school has a computer lab easily accessible with enough computers to accommodate all students.
Brainstorming Concept Map: *Because of Winn Dixie*

- Theme
- Thesis
- Empathy
- Dialogue
- Connection to Character
- Characters

*Because of Winn Dixie*
Content Overview:

The summer Opal and her father, the preacher, move to Naomi, Florida, Opal goes into the Winn-Dixie supermarket and comes out with a dog. A big, ugly, suffering dog with a sterling sense of humor. A dog she dubbs Winn-Dixie. Because of Winn-Dixie, the preacher tells Opal ten things about her absent mother, one for each year Opal has been alive. Winn-Dixie is better at making friends than anyone Opal has ever known, and together they meet the local librarian, Miss Franny Block, who once fought off a bear with a copy of War and Peace. They meet Gloria Dump, who is nearly blind but sees with her heart, and Otis, an ex-con who sets the animals in his pet shop loose after hours, then lulls them with his guitar. Opal spends all that sweet summer collecting stories about her new friends, and thinking about her mother. But because of Winn-Dixie or perhaps because she has grown, Opal learns to let go, just a little, and that friendship-and forgiveness-can sneak up on you like a sudden summer storm.

There are many themes that the author demonstrates within the story. The major theme in this story is that Friendship is important. This is shown with Winn-Dixie and Opal. Some other themes in the story include; the importance of Family, all you need is love, sacrifices bring reward, don’t judge a book by it’s cover, growing up is hard, and everyone can use a helping hand. Different characters in the story display each of these different themes.

Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of another. Empathy is shown throughout the book with many of the main characters. Every character has an internal problem that needs to be solved, and needs someone to feel empathy towards them. For example, Opal felt empathy towards Winn-Dixie when she saw he was homeless. She took the dog in and saved him.

Rationale:

This unit is being taught so that the students will develop an understanding about the story Because of Winn Dixie, so they understand how to analyze characters to create connections. It is also being
taught so that they understand how to summarize events in the story to better understand the characters. It is also being taught to teach the children strategies for understanding features of fiction. It will help to build classroom community because the students will all acknowledge that themes and characters throughout the book. Because of the description of the class, students and school, this unit is appropriate for this particular fourth grade classroom.

The activities will be manageable for the students to complete, and the teacher’s assistance will be given to the students whose first language may not necessarily be English. The activities will allow the students to work together in groups, which is especially beneficial for the students who struggle with English, and for the students who are shy and not willing to speak up in front of the whole class but are able to participate with the students in their group. Also students will be allowed to work individually so that children can develop multiple intelligences. This unit will teach the students about a book’s themes, characters and events in a story that will help them in the future. This unit will improve the students’ knowledge on *Because of Winn Dixie*, as well as other content areas because the teacher will assign multiple assignments on this period of history. This unit will mainly be taught through lecture, explanation, activities and group work.

Students will primarily learn about the themes and about empathy within *Because of Winn Dixie*. Students will learn about internal and external conflicts in a character and how they can relate to that character. Students will mainly work in groups but will also work individually so that they can gain a sense of independence. Group work will be assigned as well to ensure the students are able to work together and so that they gain a better understanding of the material being taught. This unit plan reaches multiple standards from the Common Core in ELA and technology, along with fitting with the NYS Standards of Reading and Writing.
Standards

ELA STANDARDS

Standard 1: Students will read, write, listen, and speak for information and understanding.
- As listeners and readers, students will collect data, facts, and ideas; discover relationships, concepts, and generalizations; and use knowledge generated from oral, written, and electronically produced texts. As speakers and writers, they will use oral and written language to acquire, interpret, apply, and transmit information.

Standard 2: Writing. Language for Literary Response and Expression.
- 2. Speaking and writing for literary response involves presenting interpretations, analyses, and reactions to the content and language of a text. Speaking and writing for literary expression involves producing imaginative texts that use language and text structures that are inventive and often multilayered.

Standard 3: Students will read, write, listen, and speak for critical analysis and evaluation.
- As listeners and readers, students will analyze experiences, ideas, information, and issues presented by others using a variety of established criteria. As speakers and writers, they will present, in oral and written language and from a variety of perspectives, their opinions and judgments on experiences, ideas, information and issues.

Technology Standards
- 5. Include multimedia components (e.g., graphics, sound) and visual displays in presentations when appropriate to enhance the development of main ideas or themes speaking and listening

Integration
This unit integrates ELA- Reading and Writing. This unit is mainly an ELA unit based on one book. The students’ will be not only reading the book, but understanding the concepts in the story. This unit incorporates technology through the use of a SMART board to display the worksheets, as well as play games involving the book.

Goals:
- Students will understand how to analyze characters to create connections.
- Students will understand to summarize events in the story to better understand the characters.
- Students will understand strategies for understanding features of fiction.
- Students will understand the difference between main and supporting characters.
- Students will understand how to form an opinion.
- Students will understand how a character’s internal traits have an affect on their actions.

**Outcomes:**

- Students will understand that characters develop through the story
- Students will use the characteristics of fiction to build a deeper understanding about a character
- Students will understand a fiction text through the eyes of the main character.
Redefined Brainstorming Concept Map:

**Because Of Winn Dixie**

**Characters**
- Opal
- Amanda
- Dewberry Brothers
- Gloria Dump
- Winn Dixie
- Ms. Franny Block
- Otis

**Thesis**
- How to form a thesis
- Feel for characters
- How thesis relates to characters
- Growing up is hard
- Importance Of Family
- Everyone needs love
- All you need is love
- How the thesis relates to characters

**Theme**
- Importance Of Family
- Sacrifices bring reward
- Don’t judge a book...
- Friendship is Important
- Feel for characters
- How the characters speak
- How the characters interact w/ one another

**Empathy**

**Connection to Character**
- How they relate to the characters

**Dialogue**

**Friendship is Important**
- Everyone can use a helping hand
- Don’t judge a book...
- How the characters speak
- How the characters interact w/ one another

**Opal**

**Gloria Dump**

**Winn Dixie**

**Ms. Franny Block**

**Otis**

**Amanda**

**Dewberry Brothers**
Content Outline:

1. Who are the characters in the story?
   - Opal
   - Otis
   - Winn-Dixie
   - Franny Block
   - Gloria Dump
   - Dewberry Brothers
   - Amanda

2. What are the main themes in the story?
   - Don’t judge a book by it’s cover
   - All You Need is Love
   - Importance of Family
   - Everyone can use a helping hand
   - Sacrifices bring reward
   - Friendship is Important

3. Which theme is demonstrated by Opal and Winn-Dixie and how can you relate?
   - Friendship is Important. Students vary with answers to part II.

4. What is empathy? How is it important to the story?
   - Empathy- feeling an emotion for another person.
   - Every character in the story needs empathy in different ways.
Activities

**Who am I? Worksheet**

For this activity, each table (4 students are at each table) is assigned a main character from the story, *Because of Winn-Dixie*. The students are told to use context clues from the story in order to write down 5 facts about their character they learned from the story. These facts will be used as “clues” to figure out which character they have. The rest of the class will try and figure out which character they have. The students assigned to that character would then reveal their character at the end.

**Character Traits and My Opinion**

For this activity, the students will work independently to write down traits about a character of their choice. They need to write down a trait (definition will be given in class) that they think that character is. They will then write down their own opinion of why they feel that person is the trait that they chose. Two students will be chosen to share what trait they chose for their character and why.

**Technology Activity- Because Of Winn-Dixie Movie**

Students will watch the *Because of Winn-Dixie* movie. Before watching the movie, the teacher will tell the students to find the differences between the movie and the book. They will be given a worksheet to write down differences they see and what was the same in the movie and the book. During the movie, the teacher will give the students the worksheet and tell them to write down differences they see in the movie as they are watching. After the movie, the students will go back to their seats and write down if they liked the movie or book better on the same worksheet. The class will then discuss the students’ answers to the differences.
Resources/Materials:

- Because of Winn-Dixie book by Kate DiCamillo
- Who Am I? Worksheet
- Character traits worksheet
- Because of Winn-Dixie movie worksheet
- #2 Pencils
- Black or blue pens
- Paper
- SMART board
- Writing journal
- Mac Computers

Evaluation/Assessment

The evaluation for this unit is an individual writing assignment. Each of the students will write a well-developed, 4-paragraph essay. This assessment will be completed in school as well as at home. The students will be given the opportunity to work on it during writing workshop in class, and receive help from their parents at home. If the child does not have help at home, the teacher will provide time after school to help the child write their paragraphs. The essay will include an introduction, two body paragraphs and a conclusion. This essay will be written on the topic of empathy and the children will discuss which character they felt empathy for in the story. This assignment will be written on loose-leaf, then typed up in class with support from the teacher. The first paragraph will state which character they felt empathy for, and restate the question given. The second paragraph will discuss what events in the story made them feel empathy for the character. This paragraph will include straight facts about empathetic situations about the character in the story. The third paragraph will discuss why they felt empathy for this character; this will be their own opinion. The fourth paragraph is summing up the first paragraph. Children will restate the first paragraph in different words. The duration of this assignment will be one week.
Grade/Subject Area: 4th Grade ELA

Type of Setting: General Education Classroom

Date of Lesson: March 21, 2012

PURPOSE:

• What is characterization?
• What do you remember in the story about Opal’s mother?

VOCABULARY:

• Characterization - a description of the character through words.

SKILLS:

• Identifying characterization in the story
• Utilizing the story and explanations of the characters
• Defining characterization.

OBJECTIVES:

• Student will demonstrate his or her ability to identify characterization in the story.
• Student will demonstrate his or her ability to utilize the story and the characters.
• Student will demonstrate his or her ability to define characterization through examples.

STANDARDS:

NCTE/IRA NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

1. Students read a wide range of print and nonprint texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.

2. Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience.

3. Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).

PRE-ASSESSMENT:

• Students have been previously assessed and mastered the concept of the story, Because Of Winn Dixie.
LESSON PRESENTATION:

Set induction:
- Teacher will tell the students to summarize *Because of Winn-Dixie* in whole-group discussion. Teacher will invite students to share the reasons that they think the title *Because of Winn-Dixie* is appropriate for the book.

Procedure:
- Once the important plot points and details have been established, ask students to name the characters of the story, and record their responses on the board or chart paper.
- Pose the question: "What are some of the ways the author describes the characters in this story so the readers can get to know them?" While student answers will vary, they should mention the list of ten things about Opal's mother.
- Revisit the section in the book where the list of ten things about Opal's mother can be found, or share the handout that contains the list.
- Provide time for students to discuss the kinds of things that are included on the list that the preacher shares with Opal.
- Pass out copies of Three Elements of Characterization or display an overhead transparency of the information. Discuss the elements with the class.
- Looking again at the list of ten things about Opal's mother, ask students to identify the elements of characterization that correspond to the items on the list about Opal's mother:
  - how the character looks (physical description)
  - how a character acts
  - how other characters in the story react to this character
- After the discussion of Opal's mother, have the students find the list of ten things about Winn-Dixie that Opal makes during the storm or share the handout of the list.
- This time, in pairs or small groups, have the students identify the elements of characterization that correspond to the items on the list

Closure:
- Teacher will provide time for the pairs or small groups to share their findings.

Materials:
- *Because of Winn-Dixie* by Kate DiCamillo
- Three Elements of Characterization worksheet
- #2 Pencils
- Chart Paper

Follow-up activity:
- For homework, teacher asks the students to go home and write five facts about another character to see if they understand the concept.

Lesson adapted from:
http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/characters-because-winn-dixie-866.html?tab=1#tab
Three elements of characterization
• How a character looks (physical description)
• How a character acts
• How other characters in the story react to this character

What does the character look like?

How does the character act?

How do other characters in the story react to this character?
Grade/Subject Area: 4th Grade ELA

Type of Setting: General Education Classroom

Date of Lesson: March 21, 2012

PURPOSE:

• What is a diorama?
• What is your favorite theme in the book?

VOCABULARY:

• Diorama - A model representing a scene with three-dimensional figures.

SKILLS:

• Identifying a diorama and a theme in the book.
• Utilizing the story and explanations of a theme.
• Defining diorama.

OBJECTIVES:

• Student will demonstrate his or her ability to identify a diorama and a theme in the book.
• Student will demonstrate his or her ability to utilize the story and the explanations of a theme.
• Student will demonstrate his or her ability to define diorama and give examples.

STANDARDS:

Using the New York State Learning Standard for the Arts, fourth grade students will:

• Understand and use the elements of art to create independent artwork which expresses their ideas artistically.
• Acquire the artistic skills needed to visually express and communicate their personal experience.

PRE-ASSESSMENT:

• Students have been previously assessed and mastered the concept of the story, *Because Of Winn Dixie* and what a diorama is.
LESSON PRESENTATION:

*Set induction:*
- Invite students to use shoe boxes and art supplies such as pipe cleaners, fabrics, colored paper, toothpicks, beads, feathers, etc., to create three-dimensional dioramas that reflect some aspect of *Because of Winn-Dixie.*
- Students may want to re-create a favorite incident from the book or create a three-dimensional scene that represents a dominant theme or relationship in the novel.
- Encourage students to present their dioramas to the class and to explain the meaning and importance of the objects that they use to create it.

CLOSURE:
- Teacher will create a diorama party where the children can bring in snacks and display their dioramas to the rest of the class. This will give the children an opportunity to explain their diorama to their classmates.

MATERIALS:
- *Because of Winn-Dixie* by Kate DiCamillo
- Shoe boxes
- #2 Pencils
- Pens
- Markers
- Fabric
- Pipe Cleaners
- Colored paper
- Toothpicks
- Beads
- Feathers

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY:
- For homework, teacher asks the students to go home and explain their diorama to their families.
Diorama – Because Of Winn Dixie

- Your task is to choose ONE theme and ONE character from the story, *Because of Winn-Dixie* and create a diorama of the theme and character using:
  - A shoebox, markers, pencils, colored paper and any other materials to make your diorama.
  - Be creative as you can be!
  - You will have one week to do this, and we will then have a class party of presenting our dioramas to your classmates.
Grade/Subject Area: 4\textsuperscript{th} Grade ELA

Type of Setting: General Education Classroom

Date of Lesson: March 21, 2012

PURPOSE:

- What is a narrative writing?
- What do we know about Opal’s mother in the story?

VOCABULARY:

- Narrative writing- writing a story, true or fictional.

SKILLS:

- Identifying narrative writing.
- Utilizing the story and the character explanations
- Defining narrative writing and writing their own letter.

OBJECTIVES:

- Student will demonstrate his or her ability to identify narrative writing.
- Student will demonstrate his or her ability to utilize the story and the character explanations.
- Student will demonstrate his or her ability to define narrative writing and write their own story.

STANDARDS:

\textbf{Standard 1:} Students will read, write, listen, and speak for information and understanding. As listeners and readers, students will collect data, facts, and ideas; discover relationships, concepts, and generalizations; and use knowledge generated from oral, written, and electronically produced texts. As speakers and writers, they will use oral and written language to acquire, interpret, apply, and transmit information.

\textbf{Standard 4:} Students will read, write, listen, and speak for social interaction. Students will use oral and written language for effective social communication with a wide variety of people. As readers and listeners, they will use the social communications of others to enrich their understanding of people and their views.

PRE-ASSESSMENT:

- Students have been previously assessed and mastered the concept of the story, \textit{Because Of Winn Dixie} and what narrative writing is.
LESSON PRESENTATION:

Set induction:
- Bring students to the rug and hand out a worksheet to every student.
- Explain the topic of narrative writing and the definition of what it is.
- Tell the students they are going to write a story in the perspective of Opal.
- Teacher will tell students to write a letter to your mother telling her everything that has happened over the summer because of Winn-Dixie.
- Teacher will tell students to go back to their desks and work independently.

CLOSURE:
- Two students will share their stories about Opal and her mother.

MATERIALS:
- *Because of Winn-Dixie* by Kate DiCamillo
- Looseleaf paper
- Perspective worksheet

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY:
- Each student will write a paragraph and exchange with their partner to finish the paragraph off. This will give students the opportunity to work in partners and interact.
Because of Winn-Dixie – Narrative Writing

You are instructed to write a passage from the perspective of Opal. You will write a story to her mother explaining everything that has happened over the summer because of Winn-Dixie.

Use details from the story to help you!!
Who Am I?

Directions: Write 5 clues to describe the character your group was assigned. After you write the clues, answer the question, Who Am I? Then draw a picture of your character below.

Clue 1

Clue 2

Clue 3

Clue 4

Clue 5

Who Am I?

[Blank area for drawing]
Character Traits and My Opinion

My character is described as (list character traits):

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Based on these character traits, I feel that ___________________ is ________________.

_________________________ (Character name)  ________________ (Insert Trait)

I feel this way because
Because of Winn-Dixie Similarities and Differences

Book and Movie

I liked the __________________________ better because:

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Empathy and *Because of Winn-Dixie*

Your task is to write a well-developed four-paragraph essay on empathy. You will write about one character in *Because of Winn-Dixie* and why you felt empathy for this character.

- The first paragraph will state which character you felt empathy for, and restate the question given.
- The second paragraph will discuss what events in the story made you feel empathy for the character. This paragraph will include straight facts about empathetic situations about the character in the story.
- The third paragraph will discuss why you felt empathy for this character; this will be your own opinion.
- The fourth paragraph is summing up the first paragraph. You will restate the first paragraph in different words.

You will have one week to complete this essay.
You will be able to work in class and at home on this assignment.
Rubric:

Check off which level the student performed at for each task given.

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