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## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Here are Kate's answers to a few questions she is asked all the time:

Q: Is *Because of Winn-Dixie* a true story and are you India Opal Buloni?

A: *Because of Winn-Dixie* is fiction . . . which means I made the whole thing up. Alas, I am *not* India Opal Buloni. Opal is a better person than I am.

Q: Where did you get the idea for *Because of Winn-Dixie*?

A: I wrote *Because of Winn-Dixie* during the worst winter on record in Minnesota. I was cold and lonely and homesick for Florida (where I grew up). I couldn't afford to go home, but I could write a book that took me there.

Also, it was the first time in my life that I had been without a dog. I was living in an apartment where no dogs were allowed, but there weren't any rules about *imaginary* dogs. So I made a dog up, the best dog I could think of: a smelly, friendly, big old mutt

Q: Where do all those strange names come from in your books?

A: I don't know. Making up names is the only part of writing that is easy for me. I love strange names and I love making them up. Also, I grew up in the south, and there are a lot of delightfully quirky names down there.

Q: Do you have a dog? Is his name Winn-Dixie?

A: Yes. But her name is Ramona. In honor of the inimitable Ramona Quimby.



Q: Is it true that *Because of Winn-Dixie* has been made into a movie?

A: It's true! (And I still can't quite believe it). The movie was released in February of 2005. [Click here for more about the movie.](#)

Q: Are you going to write a sequel to *Because of Winn-Dixie*?

A:

I have no plans to write a sequel to *Because of Winn-Dixie*. I feel that I left Opal in a good place, a place where she is happy and loved. If she feels like she needs another book, I trust that she will let me know.



photo: Amy Gibbons

Q: What was it like to win the Newbery award for *The Tale of Despereaux*?

A: It was the most amazing, unbelievable, wonderful, fantastic, extraordinary thing. Truthfully, I still can't believe it. I cried for days. And when I think about it now, it still makes me feel weepy.

Q: Does that mean there's going to be another book about Despereaux?

A: I'm not planning on writing another Despereaux book, but who knows? Anything is possible. And if the mouse comes and sits on my shoulder and whispers another story in my ear, I will certainly write it down.

Q: Why are there so many "missing mothers" in your books?

A: The answer is complicated and I don't fully understand it myself. All I can say is that I don't do it on purpose. It just kind of happens. I think that my subconscious is dealing with my own issues of growing up in a single-parent home (my parents were separated and I grew up with my mother and without my father).

Q: Where do you get your ideas?

A: Every writer in the world gets asked the question. And the answer is so obvious! We get our ideas from listening and looking and eavesdropping and imagining. Stories are everywhere. All you have to do is pay attention.