

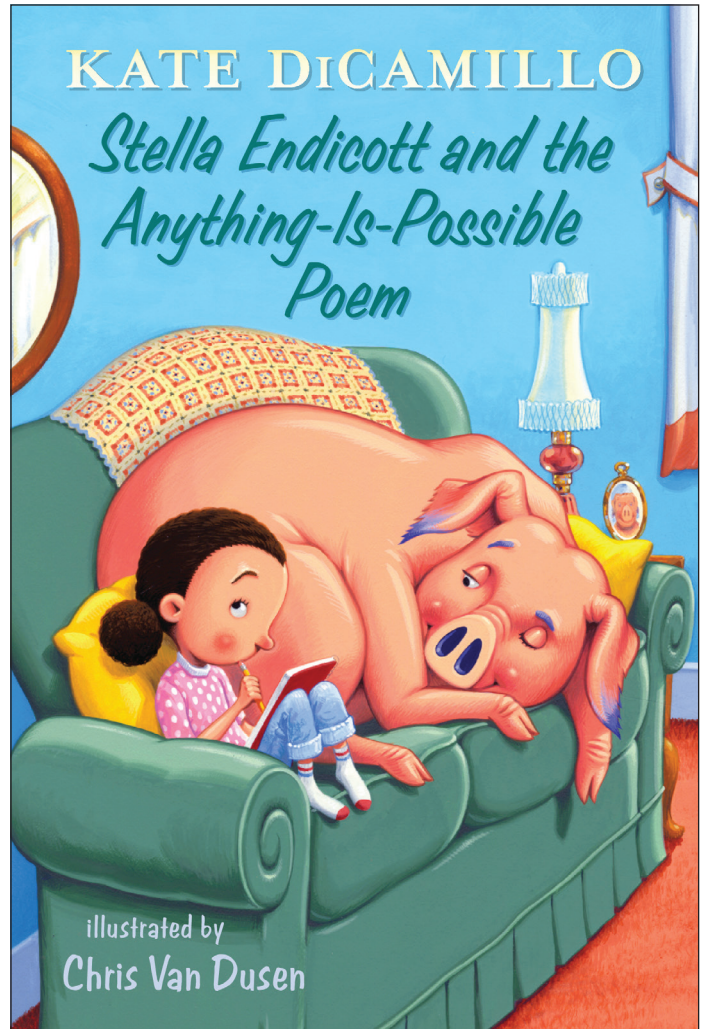
# *Stella Endicott and the Anything-Is-Possible Poem*

KATE DICAMILLO

illustrated by CHRIS VAN DUSEN

## ABOUT THE BOOK

Stella Endicott loves her teacher, Miss Liliana, and she is thrilled when the class is assigned to write a poem. Stella crafts a beautiful poem about Mercy Watson, the pig who lives next door—a poem complete with a metaphor and full of curiosity and courage. But Horace Broom, Stella's irritating classmate, insists that Stella's poem is full of lies and that pigs do not live in houses. When Stella and Horace get into a shouting match in the classroom, Miss Liliana banishes them to the principal's office. The two of them discover that anything really is possible, even friendship!



HC: 978-1-5362-0180-2 • Also available as an e-book



Tales from Deckawoo Drive

## ABOUT THE TALES FROM DECKAWOO DRIVE SERIES

For fans of the 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

An ode to a certain pig kicks off one wild school day in Kate DiCamillo's latest stop on Deckawoo Drive. The humorous *Stella Endicott and the Anything-Is-Possible Poem* is the fifth installment in the Mercy Watson spin-off series, Tales from Deckawoo Drive. 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. Students are called upon to be careful readers without jeopardizing the pleasure they gain from reading. It is best to allow students to read the entire story before engaging in a detailed study of work.

Notes throughout the guide correlate the discussion 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](http://www.corestandards.org).

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### 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 larger groups.



1. Describe Stella and Horace Broom's relationship. How did it change from the beginning of the story to the end? How did Stella go from finding Horace "very, very annoying" (page 6) to writing "Horace Burton Broom and I are friends" (page 85)?
2. Stella told her brother that she didn't need assistance, she needed a metaphor (page 13), and then left for the Watsons' house. Why do you think Stella went to visit Mercy?
3. What were Horace and Stella fighting about? How did it start? Do you think it was a matter of differing opinions or of stubbornness? How would you feel if someone called you a liar?
4. Why does Miss Liliana send Stella and Horace to the principal? Why does Horace say "Everything is ruined" (page 31)?
5. Does Horace's reaction to getting sent to Mr. Tinwiddie match Stella's? How does his dread compare to her bravery? What two words does she draw upon for support?
6. Do you agree with Stella that they should face their fate with curiosity and courage? Why? In the same situation, would you be more like Stella or Horace?
7. What does Mr. Murphy mean when he asks, "Who let you chickens out of the coop?" (page 34)? Why do you think he refers to the students as chickens?
8. Why did Stella go after Horace when he fled the principal's office? What does that say about the kind of person Stella is? If you were in Stella's place, would you have tried to help him?
9. How does Stella deal with being locked in the supply closet? How would you describe Horace's behavior? How does Stella calm Horace during his panic attack?
10. Do you think that getting locked in the supply closet contributed to Stella and Horace's newfound friendship? Explain using examples from the story to support your theory.
11. At the beginning of the story, Miss Liliana told her class that she believes in "listening closely and speaking softly and singing loudly" as well as "examining mysteries" (page 5). What does Miss Liliana mean by this statement? Do you share her beliefs?
12. How does Mr. Murphy use the organization of his supply closet to teach Stella and Horace about life? Do you agree with his view? Why does he say that "the rules are the rules. There is a pattern. You follow the pattern" (page 41)? Stella interjects by adding that anything is possible, which could cause a break in the pattern. Mr. Murphy states, "There's patterns and there's surprises, and that's good. It makes things interesting" (page 42). What is the significance of this statement in terms of the story?

## LANGUAGE ARTS ACTIVITIES

### COMMON CORE CONNECTIONS

#### Reading: Craft and Structure

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

#### 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 contents.

### COMMON CORE CONNECTIONS

#### Reading: Craft and Structure

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

#### Language: Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

L.2.4: Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade-level reading and content, choosing flexibly from an array of strategies.

a. Use sentence-level context as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.

### WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

Kate DiCamillo has mastered the art of providing witty, contextual language arts lessons while still keeping her young audience entertained. In *Stella Endicott and the Anything-Is-Possible Poem*, she integrates vocabulary lessons throughout the text. In fact, she has very cleverly incorporated six words and their definitions within the dialogue between characters (*metaphorically* page 9, *infraction* page 51, *absconder* page 54, *entombed* page 60, *ignoble* page 63, and *literal* page 64). Begin by writing these words large enough for the class to see. Tell them you are going to test their memory. Read aloud the definition from the page referenced above without saying the actual word. Ask the students if they can remember which word is being defined. After several guesses, reread the entire passage from the book. Discuss the author's style of writing. Ask them if they like having the definition of the word within the story and how many already knew what those words meant before it was explained. Draw attention to the two words from the list that have opposite meanings (*metaphorical* and *literal*). This exercise is a prelude to subsequent activities in this guide—those focusing on vocabulary, metaphors, and antonyms—so you will want to keep the words *literal* and *metaphor*, along with their definitions, posted in the classroom for the students to reference.

### VOCABULARY

Review this list of vocabulary words from *Stella Endicott and the Anything-Is-Possible Poem*. These words are not defined in the book, so ask students if they can guess the meanings by rereading each word in the context of the story. Then have them use dictionaries to check themselves and/or define the word. Have students use each word in a sentence. You may wish to assign a few words per night for homework or have students create personal dictionaries with the words because they will need it for the next activity.

|                       |                         |                      |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|
| dwelling (page 51)    | inadvertently (page 81) | pursed (page 24)     |
| endeavor (page 12)    | incapable (page 54)     | smug (page 9)        |
| gist (page 36)        | irritated (page 3)      | undeniably (page 73) |
| illuminated (page 37) | mournful (page 16)      | vanquishes (page 4)  |
| improbable (page 82)  | occasionally (coda)     |                      |





## COMMON CORE CONNECTIONS

### Language and Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

L.2.4 Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade-level reading and content, choosing flexibly from an array of strategies.

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



## COMMON CORE CONNECTIONS

### Language and Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

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

### Writing: Production and Distribution of Writing

W.1.5–3.5: With guidance and support from adults, focus on a topic, respond to questions and suggestions from peers, and add details to strengthen writing as needed.

## A NEAT OR SLOPPY SUPPLY CLOSET?

Mr. Murphy keeps his supply closet very neat and orderly. Everything has a place because “you don’t just throw things in here willy-nilly” (page 39). Ask students what the opposite of orderly is (e.g., random, chaotic, sloppy). Discuss the definition of *antonym*. Use the following example: *Sloppy* is an antonym of *neat*. Refer back to the definitions of *metaphorical* and *literal* that are posted in the classroom. Brainstorm other antonyms with the class.

In *Stella Endicott and the Anything-Is-Possible Poem*, there is only one supply closet. For this activity, students will create two supply closets. Supply Closet Number One will contain some of the vocabulary words from the previous section, while Supply Closet Number Two will contain their antonyms.

Distribute two sheets of 8½" x 11" lined writing paper, one 12" x 18" sheet of colored construction paper, and pencils, crayons, markers, etc. Have the students fold the construction paper in half so there is a seam down the center (at 9"). Title the left side “Supply Closet Number One” and the right “Supply Closet Number Two.”

Have students write these five words on one sheet of lined paper: *illuminated*, *mournful*, *occasionally*, *pursed*, and *vanquish*. Next to each word, they should write the definition (from the previous activity) or draw a picture to convey the meaning. Then have them work in pairs to look up or brainstorm an antonym for each word. The antonyms should be written on the second sheet of lined paper along with definitions or illustrations, listed in the same order as the vocabulary words on the first page.

Attach the lined paper with the vocabulary words to Supply Closet Number One and the lined paper with the antonyms to Supply Closet Number Two on the construction paper with glue, staples, or tape. As an extension activity, use a different group of vocabulary words: *improbable*, *inadvertently*, *incapable*, and *undeniably*. Explain the meaning of the prefixes *in-*, *im-*, and *un-* and how adding them to a word actually changes the meaning, turning it into its antonym.

## ALLITERATIVELY SPEAKING

Stella is enamored with middle names. She asks her teacher Miss Liliana what her middle name is on page 2, then asks Horace when they are trapped in the supply closet on page 76. Stella’s middle name is Suzanne. Horace’s middle name is Burton, making his full name Horace Burton Broom. Ask students if they know what *alliteration* means. Explain that it is when adjacent words begin with the same sound, as in Stella Suzanne or Burton Broom. Have students create alliterative phrases using their own names. Model it first by using Stella as an example (e.g., Stella is sitting still on the sofa in silence). Together as a class, create one for Horace (e.g., Horace is hauling heavy hippos by the hundreds). The sillier, the better! Challenge your students to use at least five alliterative words in their sentence. Then have them draw a picture representing their alliteration. They can share their sentences out loud and display their pictures around the classroom or on a bulletin board.

## 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.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: Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas

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.

SL.3.4: Report on a topic or text, tell a story, or recount an experience with appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details, speaking clearly at an understandable pace.

## COMMON CORE CONNECTIONS

### Language: Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

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

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

### 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.

## FUTURE ASTRONOMERS

Horace wants to be an astronaut and is excited to see a glow-in-the-dark solar system painted on the ceiling of the supply closet. Horace is able to name each planet in correct order (page 71). Ask your students if they can recall the name of each planet in our solar system.

Review the order of the planets by drawing a simple solar system on chart paper, labeling each planet. Divide the class into eight groups and assign each group a planet to research. Talk to the school librarian beforehand to get assistance in locating materials for the students to do their research. They can use the Internet or even an old-fashioned encyclopedia. Each group must gather five facts about their assigned planet and be prepared to present their findings to the rest of the class. They can create a model or illustration or find pictures to share as well.



## METAPHORICAL POETRY

Miss Liliana gives her class a homework assignment “to write a poem with a metaphor in it” (page 9). Ask the students if they remember what a metaphor is. Refer to the word *metaphorical* that you still have posted from the first activity and review the definition. Kate DiCamillo provides a multitude of examples of metaphor throughout the story. Review some of them with the class.

*Horace Broom is an overblown balloon.* (page 10)

*Outside, leaves are ballerinas, dancing to the ground.* (page 21)

*My heart is a rock that someone just threw into a cold lake.* (page 45)

*Today is a bouquet of dead flowers in brown water.* (page 48)

*Horace Broom’s hand is a hermit crab without its shell.* (page 65)

Ask students how the author is comparing one thing to another in each of these examples. Why might Horace’s hand be compared to a shell-less hermit crab or a leaf to a ballerina? Why is Stella calling her heart a rock? Discuss how metaphors use imagery and imagination—all without using the words *like* or *as*.

Next challenge your students to create a two-line poem that includes one metaphor. The topic will be a planet of their choice. In the coda, Stella refers to Venus as “beautiful and bright. It’s a heart humming in the night.” Use Stella’s statement about Venus as a model for how to create a metaphorical planet-based poem. Guide students to the facts acquired from their group research projects to use for inspiration. Students may wish to work in pairs. Allow time to share their metaphorical poetry.

## 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.

### Writing: Text Types and Purpose

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

### Language: Vocabulary and Acquisition and Use

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



## COMMON CORE CONNECTIONS

### Reading: Key Ideas and Details

RL.3.3: Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events.

### 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.

## I LOVE: GETTING TO KNOW YOU

Stella and Horace’s relationship shifts once they get locked in the supply closet. Horace professes his love for the planets. In turn, Stella confesses one of her loves: metaphors. This exchange goes back and forth for a while, and they discover they both love maps and mornings (pages 73–75). Ask your students if they have ever made a friend by sharing similar interests. Does a friend have to share all your interests, or is it more fun when they can teach you about new subjects or hobbies? Explain that the conversation between Stella and Horace is one way in which people get to know one another.

Distribute a handout or plain pieces of 8½" x 11" paper. Have students complete the sentence “I love \_\_\_\_.” Then have them ask a fellow classmate what they like. The student will fill in the missing blanks to complete the sentence “\_\_\_\_ loves \_\_\_\_.” Both sentences will be on the same sheet of paper. The student can draw a picture of the two of them and what they love. Encourage students to share with the rest of the class. They may learn something new about a classmate.

## ANYTHING CAN HAPPEN

Stella questions Mr. Murphy’s life philosophy, whereby the rules are the rules and they follow a set pattern. Stella asks, “Don’t you think that anything can happen?” (page 41). Mr. Murphy basically states that patterns and surprises keep things interesting. Write his statement for the class to see. Ask the students to explain that declaration. Stella adopts the motto “Anything can happen” because Baby Lincoln, her story-writing neighbor, claims that it’s “the whole point of stories” (page 4).

Using that as a springboard, have the students rewrite a part of the story with a different Anything Can Happen outcome. For example, maybe Horace didn’t run out of the principal’s office and Stella and Horace met with Mr. Tinwiddie after all. What would have happened? Mr. Tinwiddie’s sign said TOUGHEST SHERIFF IN TOWN. Do you think he really was the toughest sheriff in town? Or maybe the glow-in-the-dark solar system wasn’t what Horace found in the supply closet. Maybe something else was in there to calm him down. Or maybe it wasn’t the supply closet they got trapped in, but an empty classroom or the teachers’ lounge. Have students write their Anything Can Happen piece while keeping in mind Stella’s and Horace’s interests and character traits: the outcome can be different, but the characters need to remain true to the story. As an added challenge, encourage students to attempt using at least two of the vocabulary words (from the previous activities) and incorporate the definitions through dialogue in the same manner as Kate DiCamillo did in *Stella Endicott and the Anything-Is-Possible Poem*.



## COMMON CORE CONNECTIONS

### Writing Texts 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.

## SIGN OF THE TIMES

Mr. Tinwiddie has a sign on his door that reads MR. J. TINWIDDIE TOUGHEST SHERIFF IN TOWN. “It was not the kind of sign that cheered a person up, necessarily” (page 52). Read that sentence aloud and ask the class how it relates to the sign. Would a sign like that intimidate you if you saw it on a principal’s door? Ask the students to think about their own principal. Think about all the nice things that the principal does for the school and its students and staff. Brainstorm various signs/sayings that students might like to see on their principal’s door. Have each student think of a motto and share it with the class, then have the class vote on their favorite and turn it into an actual sign to give to your principal. Have each student decorate and sign it.



Teachers’ guide written by Karen Cardillo, freelance writer and educational consultant



Photo by Catherine Smith Photography

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kate DiCamillo is the beloved author of many books for young readers, including the Mercy Watson and Deckawoo Drive series. Her books *Flora & Ulysses* and *The Tale of Despereaux* both received Newbery Medals. A former National Ambassador for Young People’s Literature, she lives in Minneapolis.



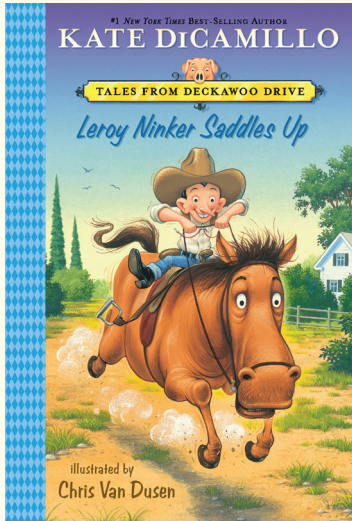
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## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

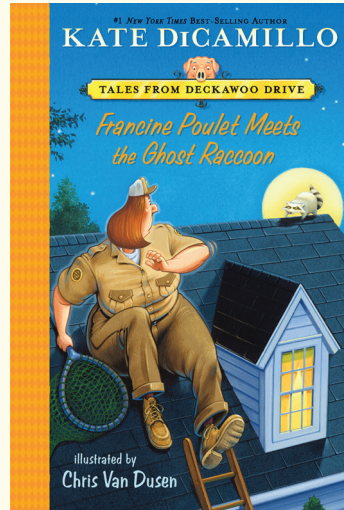
Chris Van Dusen is the author-illustrator of many books for young readers, including *The Circus Ship* and *Hattie & Hudson*, and the illustrator of the Mercy Watson and Deckawoo Drive series. He lives in Maine.

  
**Tales from Deckawoo Drive**

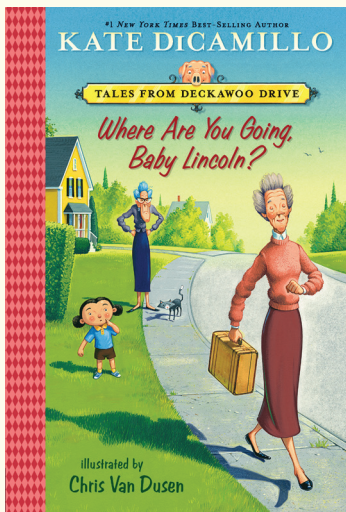
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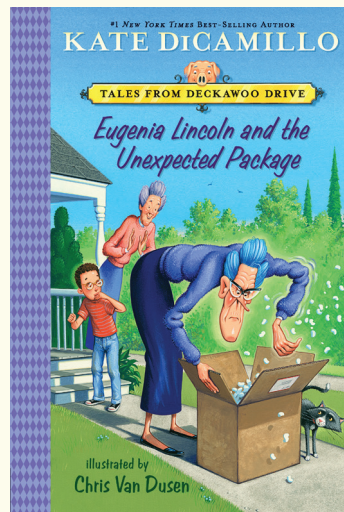
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Visit [www.mercywatson.com](http://www.mercywatson.com) to learn more about the neighborhood of Deckawoo Drive, including its star, porcine wonder Mercy Watson, and the books all about her for younger readers. There is also a letter from Kate DiCamillo,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