

The Tiger Rising by Kate DiCamillo

Subjects: Tigers—Juvenile fiction; Animals—Treatment—Juvenile fiction; Wood-carving—Juvenile fiction; Friendship—Juvenile fiction; Florida—Juvenile fiction

Book Lists: Florida, Grade 6

Props: Tiger, keys



Rob and his father left Jacksonville. They had been happy there but then Rob's mother died and they couldn't bear to stay there any longer. They moved out into the Florida countryside to the Kentucky Star Motel where they had one of the rooms and Rob's father was the maintenance man.

That's where Rob found the tiger, (*Bring out tiger*) a real tiger. Rob had been just wandering in the woods behind the motel, sort of hoping he'd get lost or maybe eaten by a bear, anything so he wouldn't have to go back to school. And then, there was the tiger right in front of him in a cage of chain link fence, bars and wood with three big locks on the door and the tiger pacing (*Pace*) back and forth, back and forth. It had been raining and there was fog on the ground. It seemed like the tiger was a trick of Rob's imagination and would vanish if Rob looked away or blinked. (*Put tiger down*) That's what Rob thought about as he waited for the school bus under the Kentucky Star sign. He didn't think about the itchy rash all over his legs that just wouldn't go away or his mother who they never talked about or Norman and Billy Threemonger who were waiting on the bus to beat him up. They were the only three on the bus until they got all the way into town. The driver just looked straight ahead, whistled and didn't care what was happening in the back of the bus. Rob hadn't figured out a way to get them to stop messing with him, hitting him, knocking him over, kicking him.

But this morning the bus stopped half way into town, halfway through Rob's torture, and a blond girl in a

lacy pink dress got on. Nobody wore lacy pink dresses to Middle School and Billy told her so. Norman and Billy made fun of her name which was Sistine, after the chapel in Italy. They badgered her the rest of the way to school and left Rob alone at least for that morning.

After school as soon as he could, Rob ran back into the woods to see if the tiger was really there. (*Bring out tiger, pace*) He found the tiger pacing back and forth, back and forth. Rob hated to see him caged like that but there was no way he could get those locks open and he explained that to the tiger. But he wished he could help him. (*Put tiger down*)

Back at the motel, Mr. Beauchamps, who owned the place, drove up in his jeep and called to Rob to get in so they could see something. Rob knew right away that they were going to see the tiger but he acted surprised. Mr. Beauchamps showed him a small door at the bottom of the cage and a small key to open the door (*Show keys*) and throw in meat. He said he'd pay Rob to feed the tiger twice a day. And then he gave Rob the keys, the keys on a ring, the keys to the food door and the keys to the three big locks that opened the cage. (*Put keys in pocket*)

Sistine often went with Rob to feed the tiger and they both thought about the keys, thought about the keys in Rob's pocket, thought about what they could do with those keys, opening up the locks, letting the tiger go. (*Hold up book*) *The Tiger Rising* by Kate DiCamillo.