

Eugenia Lincoln and the Unexpected Package

KATE DICAMILLO

illustrated by CHRIS VAN DUSEN



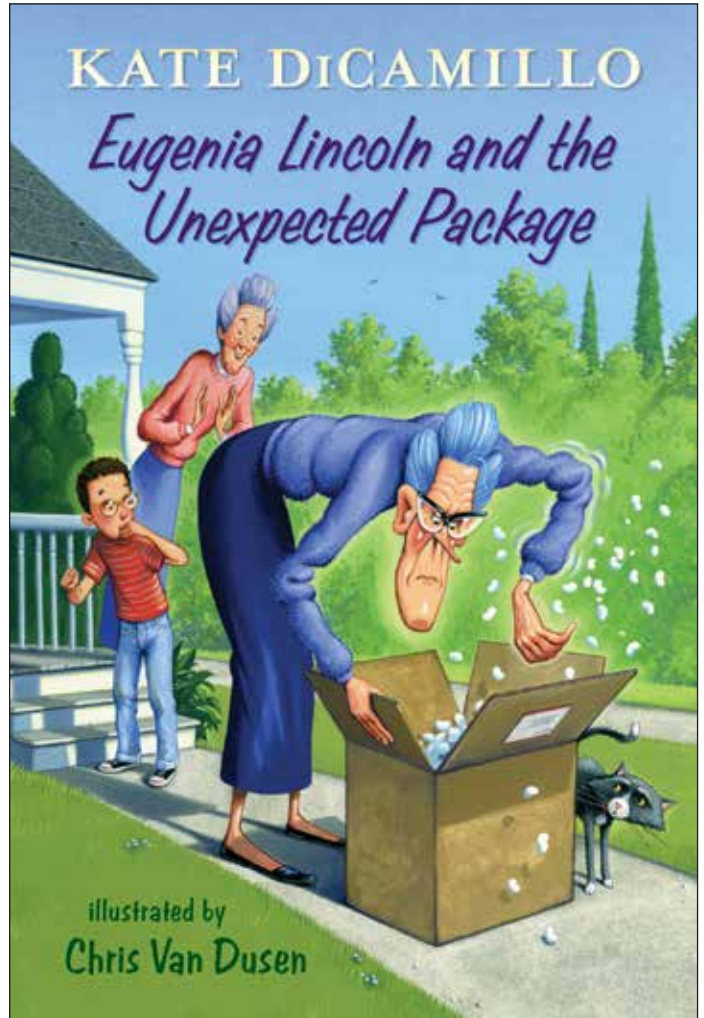
ABOUT THE BOOK

Eugenia Lincoln is a practical person who believes in getting things done. She doesn't have time for frivolity, as opposed to her younger sister, Baby, who loves poetry, geegaws, and all types of whoop-de-whoops. When an unexpected package containing an accordion arrives at her house, Eugenia is determined to have nothing to do with it. But in the course of deciding how to rid herself of it, she makes an alarming discovery. Can a little frivolity be what she has been missing all along?

Common Core Connections

Eugenia Lincoln has met her match in this fourth book in the Mercy Watson spin-off series *Tales from Deckawoo Drive*, written by Kate DiCamillo. *Eugenia Lincoln and the Unexpected Package* showcases the older Lincoln sister in a tale of determination and discovery. 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 the 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.



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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

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.

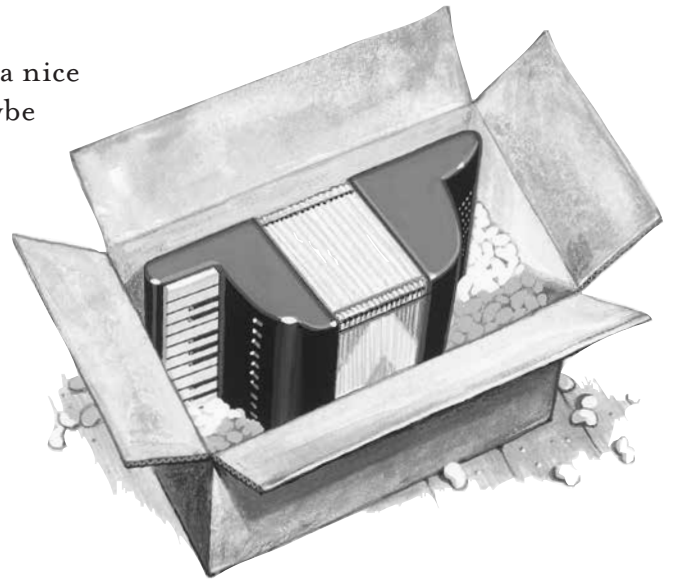


DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Eugenia Lincoln states that she and Baby are “diametrically opposed” (page 2). What does that mean? What examples from the book show how the sisters are complete opposites? Even though they are so different, do they still care about each other? What makes you come to that conclusion?
2. How does Eugenia feel about the arrival of the unexpected package? How does Baby feel about it? Several neighbors offer guesses as to the contents of the package. Do you think their excitement contributes to Eugenia’s opening the box?
3. When Eugenia tries to return the accordion, Gladys from the Blizzintrap Schmocker Company says, “Accordions can enrich your life in unexpected ways. They are doorways to the soul” (page 20). What do you think she means by that? Do you agree with that statement?
4. Eugenia is a sensible person who spends a large portion of her life frustrated. “The world was just so . . . frustrating. It refused to bend. It refused to be reasonable” (page 21). What does Eugenia do to put order to things? Does it help her feel better?
5. Why is Eugenia so opposed to finding out who sent her the accordion? Did you have a prediction as to the identity of the mystery person? Were you correct in your prediction? Did you pick up on any clues provided throughout the story, such as “Sometimes, siblings know best” (page 73)? Why do you think Frank keeps it a secret once he discovers who sent the accordion?
6. What happens to Eugenia when she first depresses the keys on the accordion on page 51? Why is this so unsettling for her?
7. On page 68, Eugenia contemplates destroying the accordion: “Shall I burn it? Bury it? Throw it out to sea?” Why? What changes her mind? What do you think would have happened if she had destroyed the accordion?
8. When Stella announces that Eugenia is able to play a song on the squeeze-box, Gaston exclaims, “We knew it all along. It was written in the stars. She was born to play the accordion” (page 84). Do you think this is true? Are things and events actually written in the stars? What does Gaston really mean by his proclamation?

9. On page 17, Baby tells her sister, “It seems like such a nice accordion. Maybe someone wants you to have it. Maybe there is a reason you received it.” What is the reason Eugenia received the accordion? Do you think Baby is a good sister? Why?

10. Do you think the accordion will transform Eugenia into a more joyful person? Do you think she will still view the world as chaotic, unpredictable, and frustrating?



LANGUAGE ARTS ACTIVITIES

AN ACCORDION TALE

Eugenia Lincoln embarks on a personal journey when the unexpected package arrives on her doorstep. Her plans to get rid of the accordion fail, and instead she ends up revealing something surprising: joy. Discuss the story arc and character transformation of Eugenia Lincoln. Start by asking students to describe Eugenia at the beginning of the story. The discussion will likely elicit answers such as practical, cranky, serious, and no-nonsense. Then ask how Eugenia feels after the accordion arrives (frustrated, annoyed). What about when she plays the instrument for the first time (confused, surprised)? What best describes Eugenia’s mood at the end of the story (happy, joyful)?

Have students transcribe Eugenia’s character development into an accordion book. The book should consist of four pages, each reflecting an area of discussion above (Eugenia at the beginning of the story, after the package arrives, when she first plays the accordion, and at the end of the story). To make the book, students will need an 11 x 17" piece of white paper, an 8½ x 11" piece of card stock, a glue stick, a pencil, and crayons, markers, or colored pencils. Instruct students as follows: Fold the paper in half so the short ends meet. Then fold the top layer back on itself to meet the fold. Flip the paper over and do the same with that layer. This will result in four sections that open out like an accordion. Cut the card stock into two 4¼ x 11" pieces, the same size as each section of folded paper. (Students can measure and cut the card stock to size, or you can prepare it ahead of time.) Then, with the accordion pages closed up, glue one piece of card stock to the front and one to the back as the book’s cover. Once the accordion book is assembled, students can get to work writing and illustrating Eugenia’s character development.

COMMON CORE CONNECTIONS

Reading: Key Ideas and Details

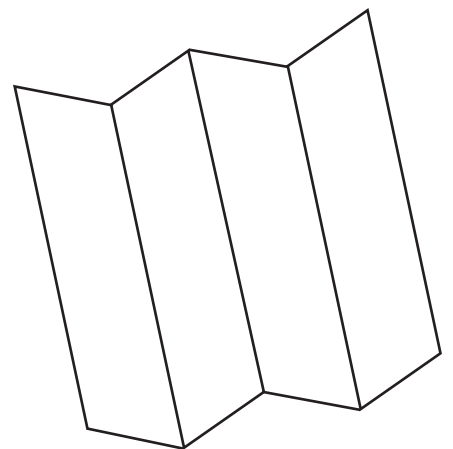
RL.3.3: Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events.

Writing: Text Types and Purposes

W.2.3: Write narratives in which they recount a well-elaborated event or short sequence of events; include details to describe actions, thoughts, and feelings; use temporal words to signal event order; and provide a sense of closure.

Speaking & Listening: Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas

SL.1.5: Add drawings or other visual displays to descriptions when appropriate to clarify ideas, thoughts, and feelings.



COMMON CORE CONNECTIONS

Reading: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

RL.1.7–3.7: Use illustrations and details in a story to describe its characters, setting, or events.

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.



COMMON CORE CONNECTIONS

Reading: Craft and Structure

RI.2.6: Identify the main purpose of a text, including what the author wants to answer, explain, or describe.

Writing: Text Types and Purposes

W.1.2–3.2: Write informative/explanatory texts in which they name a topic, supply some facts about the topic, and provide some sense of closure.



FOR SALE

After Eugenia is told she is unable to return the accordion to the Blizzintrap Schmocker Company, she decides to sell it. She calls the newspaper and places an advertisement in the classified section. Ask students if they have ever seen classified ads. Describe their purpose. Have students locate “for sale” ads in local newspapers or buyers’ guides. (Stay away from the Internet and stick to print materials for this activity.) Discuss the particulars needed to write such an ad (item for sale, description and condition of item, price, contact information, etc.). Then have students choose an item of their own and write a classified ad for it. This activity lends itself to several mini-lessons on vocabulary, descriptive writing, and writing for purpose.



LET ME GIVE YOU MY CARD

Once Eugenia places her advertisement, a very interesting man shows up to inquire about the accordion. Gaston LaTreaux is a man of many talents and has a stack of cards to prove it. Ask the students if they can recall some of the business cards Gaston provides. How would they describe Gaston? Does he help Eugenia? What does Eugenia think of Gaston? If possible, collect a variety of business cards and pass them around the class. Ask the students what is similar about them and what is different.

Have the students each create a business card for a service they would like to promote (skating lessons, reading help, kid chef, and so on). First review the contents of a good business card, using the real cards and Gaston’s (pages 37, 38, 39, 42, 82) as examples. Then cut 8½ x 11" sheets of paper in half and have students design their cards. Display the finished products on a bulletin board titled “Services Offered by [insert teacher’s name]’s Talented Students” or, simply, “Let Me Give You My Card.”

ENCYCLOPEDIA: VOLUME A

Frank is perplexed that Eugenia is not interested in knowing who sent the accordion. He views it as “very mysterious” and admits, “Whenever I want to find out more about something, I look it up in the encyclopedia” (page 29). Explain to the students that before the Internet, research often depended on books like encyclopedias. Ask if they know what an encyclopedia is and if they have ever looked anything up in one. Consider planning a trip to the school library and partnering with the librarian for a research lesson and guidance on how to use an encyclopedia.

Assign a simple encyclopedia research project. Have students work in pairs or small groups and look up “accordion” in an encyclopedia. They should write down four or five things they learn about the instrument. Upon returning to the classroom, invite each group to share their findings. You could also find a video on the Internet of someone playing the accordion. The music teacher could aid in this discussion as well.

THE LANGUAGE OF THE ACCORDION

Much of the joy that the reader gets from both the Mercy Watson books and the Tales from Deckawoo Drive series comes from Kate DiCamillo’s sharp wit and effective use of language. Hold a class discussion about creative writing, metaphors, and personification. Explain that a good writer uses all of these to convey thoughts, feelings, and emotions through both characters and inanimate objects. In this book’s case, it’s the accordion.

Read aloud the following passage from page 27: “She looked up from her list and stared at the accordion. Its white keys were glowing in the late afternoon light coming in through the front door. It looked extremely determined.” Ask the class what Eugenia is referring to when she describes it as looking “determined.” Can an accordion possess such feelings? Why would the author use this language? On page 61, Eugenia refers to the accordion as the “instrument of torture and chaos.” Ask the class why she calls it that. At the end of the story, Eugenia finds happiness from playing the accordion. Have the students write a short paragraph in the style above (using personification or metaphoric language) to describe how Eugenia feels about the accordion at the story’s end. Does she still view it as an instrument of torture and chaos? If not, how would she describe it? Does it still look determined? How might it look in the sunlight now?

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.



COMMON CORE CONNECTIONS

Reading: Craft and Structure

RL.3.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text; distinguish literal from nonliteral language.

RI.3.6: Distinguish their own point of view from that of the author of a text.

Writing: Text Types and Purposes

W.2.3: Write narratives in which they recount a well-elaborated event or short sequence of events; include details to describe actions, thoughts, and feelings; use temporal words to signal event order; and provide a sense of closure.

Language: Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

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



COMMON CORE CONNECTIONS

Reading: Craft and Structure

RI.1.6: Distinguish between information provided by pictures or other illustrations and information provided by the words in a text.

Writing: Research to Build and Present Knowledge

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



COMMON CORE CONNECTIONS

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.

DECKAWOO DRIVE

The inhabitants of Deckawoo Drive include Baby and Eugenia Lincoln, the Watsons, and Frank and Stella. On pages 6–7, the addresses of each are listed. Discuss street maps and review map markings (legends, direction, street names, buildings, symbols, and so on). Challenge students to create a neighborhood map to include houses 50, 52, and 54 Deckawoo Drive, a post office (where Frederick may work), the tree that Stella was thinking in, and other creative, miscellaneous things one might find in a neighborhood (park, market, school). Have them label each building. Students can be creative with their drawings; for example, they might draw a pig outside the Watsons' house. Students could even draw the route that Eugenia was taking when thinking of destroying the accordion.

Ask the students to write word problems or questions to accompany the map. For example, who lives east of Eugenia and Baby Lincoln? If Mercy were to escape to find toast with a great deal of butter on it at the market, how many blocks would she have to walk? Naturally, the questions on each child's map would be unique.



VOCABULARY

Review the list of vocabulary words below. Ask students if they can guess each word's meaning by rereading it in context in the book. Then have them either use a dictionary to check the definition or define the word themselves. Have students use each word in a sentence of their own. You may wish to make this a homework assignment.

auditory (page 69)

disarray (page 59)

frivolity (page 1)

grim (page 41)

inadvertently (page 18)

malevolent (page 26)

obtuse (page 40)

possessive (page 4)

proprietor (page 83)

pursuit (page 41)

vague (page 72)

woefully (page 2)



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* and *The Tale of Despereaux*, both of which won the Newbery Medal. She was the National Ambassador for Young People's Literature for 2014–2015. She lives in Minneapolis.

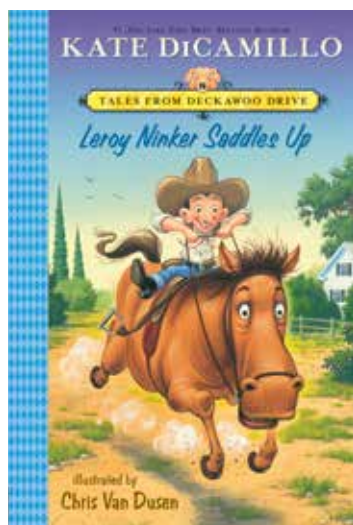


ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Chris Van Dusen is the author-illustrator of *Randy Riley's Really Big Hit*, *The Circus Ship*, *King Hugo's Huge Ego*, and *Hattie & Hudson*, and the illustrator of *President Taft Is Stuck in the Bath* and all six books about Mercy Watson. He lives in Maine.

Teachers' guide written by Karen Cardillo,
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Don't Miss the Rest of the Series!

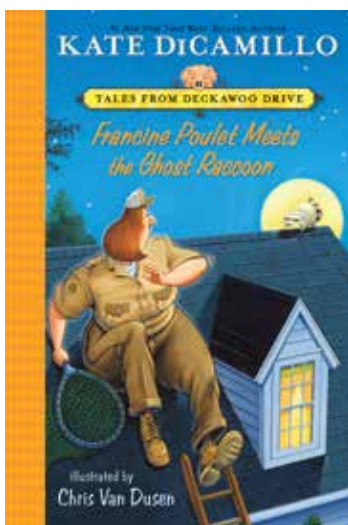


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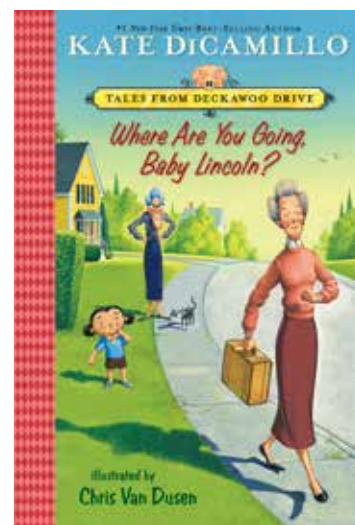


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