Because of Winn-Dixie: A Play
Adapted by Barry Rust

Gather your friends together and bring the story of Because of Winn-Dixie to life. There are 11 roles in this play, but the same actor can play more than one part. You can even act out all the parts yourself!
Opal doesn’t have any friends in her new hometown. Can a friendly, shaggy dog change all that?

CAST OF CHARACTERS
(in order of appearance)

★ Opal (voice-over): This voice tells the audience what Opal’s thinking

♦ Narrators 1, 2, 3, & 4: The narrators explain the action in the play

Winn-Dixie: A shaggy, friendly dog — the role of Winn-Dixie can be imagined, played by a stuffed animal, or by an actor

♦ Opal: A 10-year-old girl

★ Store Manager: The manager of the Winn-Dixie grocery store

The preacher: Opal’s father

Miss Franny: A librarian in her 60s

Otis: A shy guitar player in his 20s who works in a pet store

Gloria: A blind woman with a creative personality — some people think she's a witch

♦ Big Roles ★ Small Roles
SCENE 1

OPAL (VOICE-OVER)
When we moved to Naomi, it was just the preacher and me, only sometimes it seemed like it was me alone. And then one morning, the preacher sent me to the Winn-Dixie grocery store for a box of macaroni and cheese, some white rice, and two tomatoes.

NARRATOR 1
Suddenly there’s a big commotion in one of the aisles.

NARRATOR 2
A huge dog is running full-speed through the store.

NARRATOR 3
The entire staff of the grocery store is chasing it.

OPAL (VOICE-OVER)
There in the produce section, my whole life changed.

STORE MANAGER
Get that thing out of here!

NARRATOR 4
The dog stops and smiles at Opal. Opal smiles back.

STORE MANAGER
Call the pound!

NARRATOR 1
Opal has a crazy idea.
OPAL
Wait! That’s my dog. Here boy! Come on... Winn-Dixie!

STORE MANAGER
Who names a dog Winn-Dixie?

OPAL
Me! I hope you like your new name, boy. You’re a mess! Let’s get you cleaned up and see what the preacher has to say about you.

SCENE 2

NARRATOR 2
Opal and Winn-Dixie walk home to Opal’s trailer.

OPAL
You’ll see, Winn-Dixie, that my daddy is a good man. But I call him the preacher because he spends so much time preaching or writing sermons that it’s hard for me to think of him as a daddy.

NARRATOR 3
Opal and Winn-Dixie arrive at Opal’s trailer. They find the preacher hunched over an old laptop, composing a sermon.

OPAL
I found a dog and I want to keep him.

THE PREACHER
We can’t keep this dog.
OPAL
But I’d have someone to talk to and wouldn’t have to bother you so much.

NARRATOR 4
The preacher looks hard at Winn-Dixie, who looks right back at him.

THE PREACHER
We can keep him temporarily. Make some signs so folks know you found a dog who needs a home.

NARRATOR 1
Later, Opal talks to Winn-Dixie.

OPAL
Mama left when I was 3. Daddy doesn’t like talking about her. Think I should keep asking him?

NARRATOR 2
Winn-Dixie looks at her, almost nodding.

OPAL
Well, I’ll think about it.

NARRATOR 3
At bedtime, the preacher comes into Opal’s room.
OPAL
Daddy, can you tell me about Mama? I don’t need to know a lot. Just a few things.

THE PREACHER
Opal, it’s time for bed.

SCENE 3

NARRATOR 4
On the street the next day, Winn-Dixie runs up some steps to a building.

OPAL
Hey Winn-Dixie! You can’t go in there! That’s a library!

NARRATOR 1
Opal peers through the window.

OPAL
Winn-Dixie, you wait here.

NARRATOR 2
Opal goes in. Winn-Dixie stands up on his hind legs, looking in.

NARRATOR 3
Miss Franny Block has fallen asleep at her desk. Opal tiptoes by and starts looking at the books.
MISS FRANNY
Aghh! He’s back! The bear!

NARRATOR 4
She raises her finger and points at Winn-Dixie in the window.

OPAL
That’s no bear. That’s my dog!

MISS FRANNY
You must think I’m a silly old thing, but I had a bad experience with a bear coming into the library a long time ago.

OPAL
A bear came into the library?

MISS FRANNY
It’s a very long story.

OPAL
I like long stories, but can Winn-Dixie come listen too? He gets lonely without me.

NARRATOR 1
Opal goes outside and gets him.

NARRATOR 2
Miss Franny tells the story of the bear who came into the library and stole a book.
MISS FRANNY
I’m the only one left from those days. All my friends are dead and gone.

NARRATOR 3
Winn-Dixie shows all of his teeth.

MISS FRANNY
Well now, that dog is smiling at me.

OPAL
We could all be friends!

MISS FRANNY
That would be grand. Just grand.

SCENE 4

NARRATOR 4
Opal wants to buy Winn-Dixie a collar, so they go inside the local pet store.

NARRATOR 1
Otis, the clerk, is playing his guitar.

NARRATOR 2
The animals are out of their cages. They are quiet, mesmerized by his playing.
NARRATOR 3
Otis sees Opal and stops playing. Suddenly, the animals go wild.

OTIS
Help me!

NARRATOR 4
Otis and Opal try to catch them.

OPAL
There are too many! Play your guitar again!

NARRATOR 1
He does, and they quiet down. Opal puts them back in their cages.

OTIS
Music makes them happy. I take them out because they don’t like being locked up.

OPAL
Do you ever play for people?

OTIS
I used to. But police told me to stop. I didn’t, because playing guitar’s all I love doing. So they took me to jail.

OPAL
But you could play now!
OTIS
They made me promise never to play outside again. Now I only play for the animals.

SCENE 5

NARRATOR 2
Opal is riding her bike. Winn-Dixie is loping along beside her.

NARRATOR 3
He races ahead of her. He hops a gate and goes into the most overgrown jungle of a yard that Opal has ever seen.

NARRATOR 4
Opal’s heard a witch owns the house....

NARRATOR 1
A witch who eats children....

NARRATOR 2
Opal follows Winn-Dixie into the yard and bumps right into a woman.

OPAL
Don’t eat me!

GLORIA
Eat you? Heh, heh, heh.
OPAL
Where’s my dog? Did you eat my dog?

GLORIA
Hardly. But he nearly ate my hand stealing my sandwich.

OPAL
I’m sorry about that. My name’s Opal.

GLORIA
My name’s Gloria Dump. Ha! Ain’t that a terrible last name? Dump.

OPAL
My last name is Buloni. Sometimes the kids at school call me Lunch Meat.

GLORIA
Hah! Pleased to meet you, Lunch Meat. Don’t figure you’d like to join me for lunch.

OPAL
Sure, if Winn-Dixie can come too.

GLORIA
The first thing you should know about me is my eyes ain’t too good, so I got to rely on my heart. Why don’t you tell me about yourself so as I can see you with my heart.

OPAL
Well—the first thing you should know is that I don’t have a mama. Something made her go away, and I don’t know what it was...
NARRATOR 3
Gloria eats her sandwich and Opal goes on talking. And on, and on....

GLORIA
My lord, girl, you sure can talk. I feel like I can see you now.

OPAL
I sure like your garden. Can I come back tomorrow to look at it?

GLORIA
Not much will have changed by then.

OPAL
But I want to see you, too.

SCENE 6

NARRATOR 4
Nobody calls looking for Winn-Dixie. That lost-dog poster starts to fade.

NARRATOR 1
The preacher warms up to him.

NARRATOR 2
One night there’s a thunderstorm. Winn-Dixie is terrified.

NARRATOR 3
He races around the house and knocks the preacher to the ground.
THE PREACHER
Winn-Dixie!

OPAL
I’m sorry, Daddy! I don’t know what’s going on! He doesn’t seem like Winn-Dixie!

NARRATOR 4
The preacher gets up and sits Opal down with him on the couch.

THE PREACHER
The storm won’t last long and when it’s over the real Winn-Dixie will come back.

OPAL
We get lots of storms in the summer.

THE PREACHER
We’ll have to make sure he doesn’t get out during one. He might run away. We have to make sure to keep him safe.

SCENE 7

NARRATOR 1
Opal and Winn-Dixie spend the days together. They visit Miss Franny and Gloria...

NARRATOR 2
…and Otis at the pet store.
NARRATOR 3
But Opal still feels lonely.

OPAL (VOICE-OVER)
I kept thinking about Mama. Thinking about her was the same as the hole you keep feeling with your tongue after you’ve lost a tooth. My mind kept going to that empty spot, the spot where I felt she should be.

NARRATOR 4
One night, she and the preacher talk.

OPAL
Daddy, do you think about Mama a lot?

THE PREACHER
I do, Opal.

OPAL
Why did she leave?

THE PREACHER
I don’t even understand it. We were happy, for what seemed like a long time. But then she started drinking….

OPAL
Did she drink because I was bad? Is it my fault that she left?

THE PREACHER
Don’t you ever say that. Hear me?
NARRATOR 1
The preacher goes to his room.

NARRATOR 2
The next day, Opal tells Gloria about her talk with the preacher.

GLORIA
He’s hurting.

OPAL
Everybody’s hurting. It makes me sad. I want to help, but I don’t know what do about it. Actually... I do know! We need to have a party, right here in your yard! And we have to invite everyone we know.

NARRATOR 3
Gloria makes invitations. Opal asks the preacher if he wants to come.

THE PREACHER
I can’t, Opal. I have a lot of work to do.

SCENE 8

NARRATOR 4
Gloria and Opal turn Gloria’s overgrown yard into a candle-lit fairyland.

NARRATOR 1
As guests arrive, Winn-Dixie stands in the middle of everybody, wagging his tail.
NARRATOR 2
But then there’s a rumble of thunder. Suddenly, rain pours down.

GLORIA
Save the sandwiches!

NARRATOR 3
Everyone runs inside.

MISS FRANNY
Is everyone OK?

OPAL
I think so. Wait! Where’s Winn-Dixie? He’s scared of thunderstorms, and I let him get away.

NARRATOR 4
She starts to cry. She runs outside.

GLORIA
Opal, get out of the rain!

NARRATOR 1
Opal hops on her bike and rides through the rain to her trailer, where she finds the preacher.

OPAL
Is Winn-Dixie here? He ran away because of the thunder.
THE PREACHER
I'll help look.

NARRATOR 2
Everyone searches for Winn-Dixie.

THE PREACHER
We’ve searched for hours, Opal. There’s only so much looking we can do.

OPAL
You’re going to give up. You always do. I bet you didn’t even go out looking for my mama when she left.

THE PREACHER
I couldn’t stop her. I tried. I tried.

NARRATOR 3
The preacher starts to cry.

THE PREACHER
Losing Winn-Dixie upsets me as much as it does you. I love that dog.

OPAL
I know it, Daddy.

NARRATOR 4
Holding hands, they walk together back to Gloria’s house to be with their friends.

NARRATOR 1
Otis starts playing his guitar.
NARRATOR 2
There is a soft sound, like howling.

OPAL
Winn-Dixie?

NARRATOR 3
She runs and opens the front door.
NARRATOR 4
Winn-Dixie is standing there.

NARRATOR 1
Everyone cheers. The preacher leads a song. Otis plays along.

OPAL (VOICE-OVER)
Mama, I know you may never come back. But my heart’s not empty anymore. It’s full all the way up. I’ve got all sorts of friends. I’ve got Winn-Dixie. And most of all, I’ve got my daddy.

Adapted from the Twentieth Century Fox film in association with Walden Media, screenplay by Joan Singleton, based on the Candlewick novel by Kate DiCamillo.