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***Raymie Nightingale* by Kate di Camillo**

Publisher: Walker Books

RRP \$22.99

Kate di Camillo's vivid writing brings a sparkling cast of characters to life in her latest novel. Her insight into the concerns of young people trying to make sense of an adult world is perceptive and humorous.

Three girls meet when they attend baton twirling lessons with the aim of entering a talent contest. The trio come from disparate backgrounds, but have one thing in common - a troubled home-life.

Ten-year-old Raymie is devastated when her father leaves home and runs away with a dental hygienist. Raymie hopes that by winning the talent contest he'll see her photo in the newspaper and return home. Sensitive Louisiana Elefante lives with her grandmother who is always on the run from a mysterious past, while Beverley hides her problems under a tough exterior. The girls come to recognise each other's needs and become unlikely friends.

Di Camillo's development of the girls' personalities is astute. She shows each of the girls dealing with emotional situations beyond their experience and how they attempt to solve their difficulties, often with entertaining results.

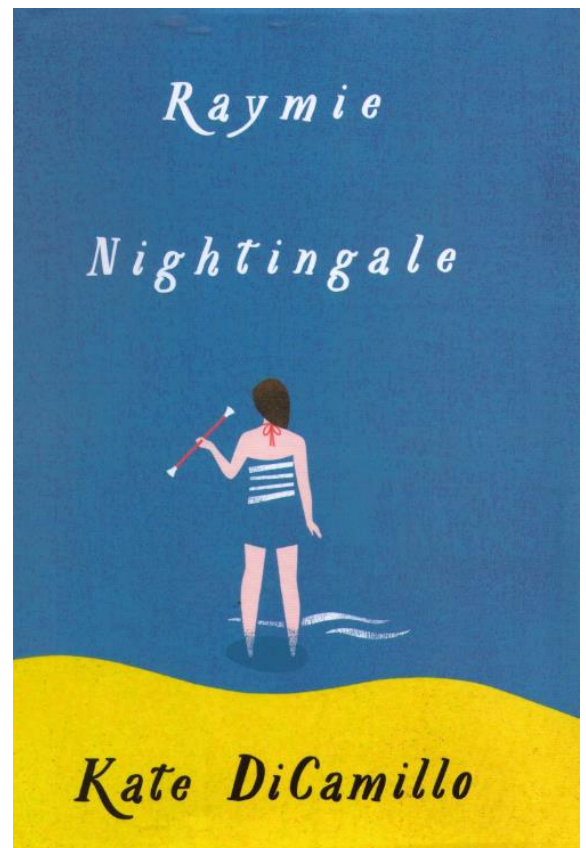
Raymie's internal dialogue is a poignant glimpse of a young girl's thoughts, while the interaction between the friends crackles with wit and lightens the nature of their challenges. Difference, loneliness, loyalty, love, and coming to terms with loss, all feature in the friends' journey.

Published in hardback, this junior novel is an exceptional tale from the award-winning writer.

Author's website:

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**Reviewed by children's book author,
Jean Bennett**



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