

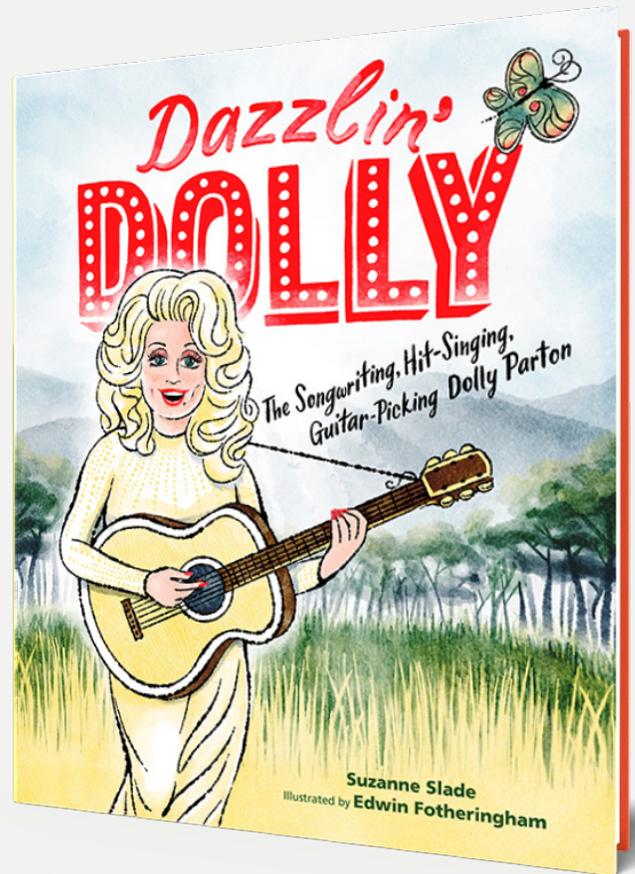
DISCUSSION GUIDE

DAZZLIN' DOLLY: THE SONGWRITING, HIT-SINGING, GUITAR-PICKING DOLLY PARTON

Written by Suzanne Slade
Illustrated by Edwin Fotheringham

\$18.99 US / \$24.99 CAN
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40 pages | 9 x 11

Grades: 2-5
Ages: 7-10



ABOUT THE BOOK

Before Dolly Parton was an international singing sensation, she was a little girl from a one-room cabin in Tennessee with a heart full of music. From an early age, she crafted songs and sang for her family, her church, and even the animals near her family’s home. But when Dolly gets the chance to perform on the radio, the stage fright bully pays Dolly a visit and Dolly has to muster her courage to be able to do what she loves best.

In this heartwarming story about one of America’s most beloved artists, author Suzanne Slade shows how Dolly’s determination, talent, and positive attitude helped her realize her dream of becoming a performing star. Edwin Fotheringham’s joyful illustrations depict Dolly’s love for music throughout her younger years. Students will be inspired by Dolly’s dream—and by how hard she worked to make her dream a reality. As Dolly says, “If you’re gonna make a dream come true, you gotta work it. You can’t just sit around.”

“Suzanne Slade weaves an engaging account of Dolly Parton’s music-filled childhood in the Tennessee mountains, her first appearance on the Grand Ole Opry as a thirteen-year-old, and her move to Nashville after high school. Beautifully illustrated by Edwin Fotheringham, this charming book will inspire young readers to nurture and follow their own dreams, just as Dolly did.”

—LYDIA HAMESSLEY,
professor of music at Hamilton College and author of
Unlikely Angel: The Songs of Dolly Parton

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH

1. On the day Dolly Parton was born, what was the weather like? What time of year do you think it is? Where was Dolly’s family home?
2. Dolly’s family was poor. How did Dolly’s family pay the doctor who delivered her? Look at the picture of the inside of their cabin. How can you tell it’s chilly in their home? What did Dolly’s parents use to try to keep the drafts out of the house?
3. Where did Dolly first begin singing in public? What was her dream?
4. What were the names of some of Dolly’s brothers and sisters? How many Parton siblings were there? What kind of toys did Dolly and her brothers and sisters have? Describe Dolly’s doll.
5. Dolly “knew how to take next-to-nothin’ and create a special-somethin.” What did Dolly use to create her first musical instrument?
6. When Dolly sang on her front porch into her “tin can microphone,” who—and what—was in the audience?
7. Dolly’s Uncle Bill drove her to Knoxville to perform live on the radio. What “bully” tried to stop Dolly from singing? How did Dolly stand up to the bully? What did Dolly do when the crowd demanded an encore?
8. Dolly and her uncle asked a lot of singers to give up their slots at the Grand Ole Opry so she could perform there. Finally, someone said yes. Who introduced Dolly before she came on stage? How old was Dolly when she first performed at that famous venue?



9. How did Dolly overcome her stage fright at the Grand Ole Opry? Who did she imagine she was singing for?
10. How did Dolly change her appearance to match that of a singing star? Dolly's parents couldn't stop her from performing on the weekends, but what did they insist Dolly do during the week?
11. How did Dolly get her first one-record deal? How did radio stations respond to her record at first? Then what happened?
12. When Dolly graduated from high school, who was there from her family? What did Dolly share about her future plans? How did the audience respond? How did that reaction make Dolly feel?
13. Where did Dolly go the morning after graduation? What did she bring with her?

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

1. Mandolin. Encore. Tussled. Fickle. Do you know what these words mean? Use clues from the story to help you figure out their definitions.
2. Dolly was invited to perform on a live television program where "small-town Dolly earned big-city money." How much money was Dolly earning per show? How do you think Dolly felt about earning that money?
3. A simile is a figure of speech that makes a comparison between two things that are not alike. Here are two similes from the book: "til she squashed that stage fright like a pesky June bug" and "parking themselves in music studios, like possums in a garbage can." How do these similes help you to understand what the author is trying to say? Why do you think authors use similes?



4. Dolly Parton wrote and recorded a song in 1974 called "Love is Like a Butterfly," and that title is a simile, too. In the book, there are butterflies following Dolly around on several pages. What do you think those butterflies symbolize in this story?
5. "At her granddaddy's church, she sang soulful hymns with tambourines shakin' and people shoutin'." The author drops the g's" at the end of several of the words in the story. Why do you think the author does this? How would you say those words if you were reading the story out loud?

6. The author uses words and phrases that are part of the *vernacular* of East Tennessee where Dolly grew up. Vernacular is a big word that means using a language or dialect native to a region or country. Here are some parts of the story written where the author is using language to make you feel like you're in Dolly's neck of the woods:

“Sure as pokeberry blooms in summer . . .”

“ . . . she was tickled three shades of pink.”

“ . . . her powerful voice knocked his socks clean off.”

“ . . . her mama and daddy listening on their radio back in the holler.”

Can you figure out what those colorful phrases mean? How do you think these words add to the story of Dolly?

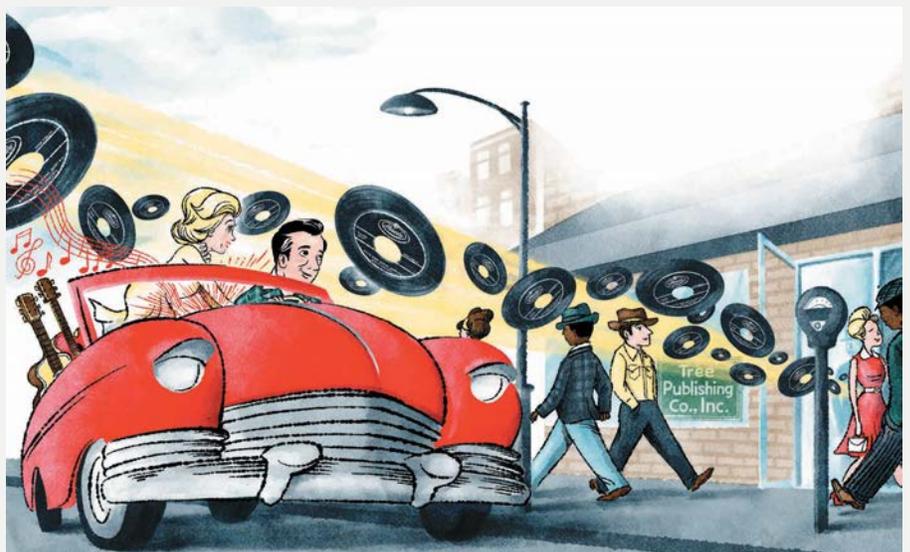
7. Look at the pictures in this book. How is the sound of music illustrated in this story?

8. In the “More about Dolly” section at the end of the book, the author explains that while Dolly is famous for her singing and songwriting, she's also a successful businesswoman and an incredible philanthropist. What are some of Dolly's other achievements? Look up the word *philanthropist*. Do you think Dolly is a philanthropist? Why?

EXTRA CREDIT

1. In the book, the author describes how Dolly Parton turned sounds in the world around her into music: “When geese soared overhead, she snapped her fingers to their honkin' beat, and performed a goose-honkin' song . . . and when Mama snapped beans, Dolly pounded a pot with a spoon and belted out her bean-snappin' tune.” This ability to hear music in the world around her started at an early age, and Parton kept right on hearing it. In one of her most popular songs, “9 to 5,” she used her fingernails to recreate the sound of fingers hitting typewriter keys. Listen to “9 to 5” and see if you can hear Dolly's nails making music in that song.

2. Dolly Parton has written hundreds of songs, starred in movies, and won countless awards. But one of her most amazing contributions is something you may not know about. As a child she loved to read but did not have the gift of books in her home. She believes strongly in the importance of providing children with their own books, so she founded Imagination



Library in 1995. The organization, now one of the largest literacy programs in the world, has donated over 180 million books! As Dolly says, “If you’re lucky and fortunate enough to be in a position to help, you should help.” For more information about Dolly and Imagination Library, watch the 2020 documentary, *The Library that Dolly Built*.

3. The Grand Ole Opry was founded as a radio show in 1925 in Nashville, Tennessee. Dolly Parton first sang there in 1959—over 60 years ago! So many talented musicians have performed at the Grand Ole Opry, from Johnny Cash, Loretta Lynn, and Patsy Cline to Keith Urban, Kelsea Ballerini, and Carrie Underwood. If you had a chance to visit the Grand Ole Opry, what musician would you like to see perform? Why?

READING LIST

Coat of Many Colors by Dolly Parton

Frankie Liked to Sing by John Seven

I Am a Rainbow by Dolly Parton

The Music in George’s Head: George Gershwin Creates “Rhapsody in Blue” by Suzanne Slade

A Voice Named Aretha by Katheryn Russell-Brown