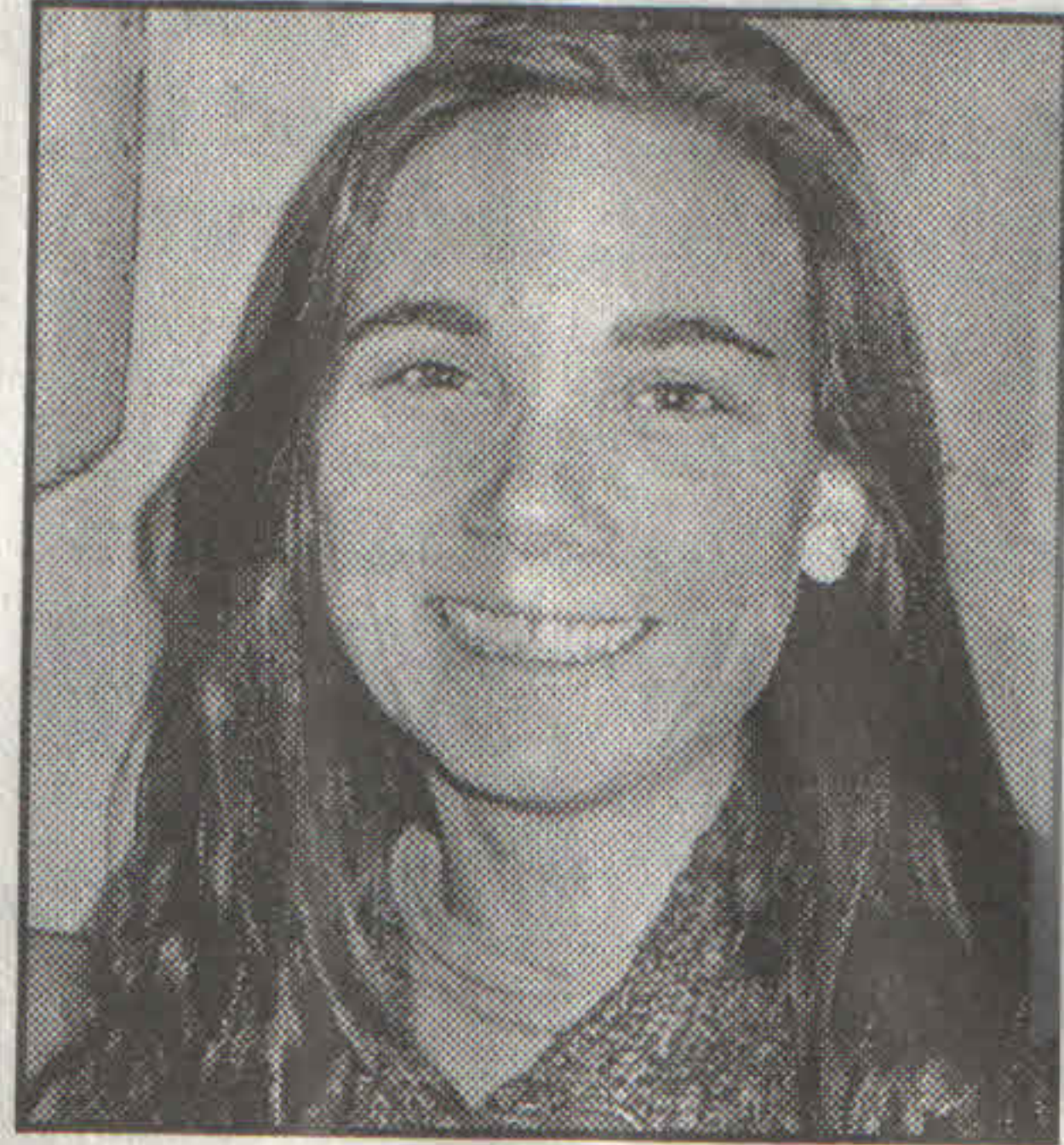
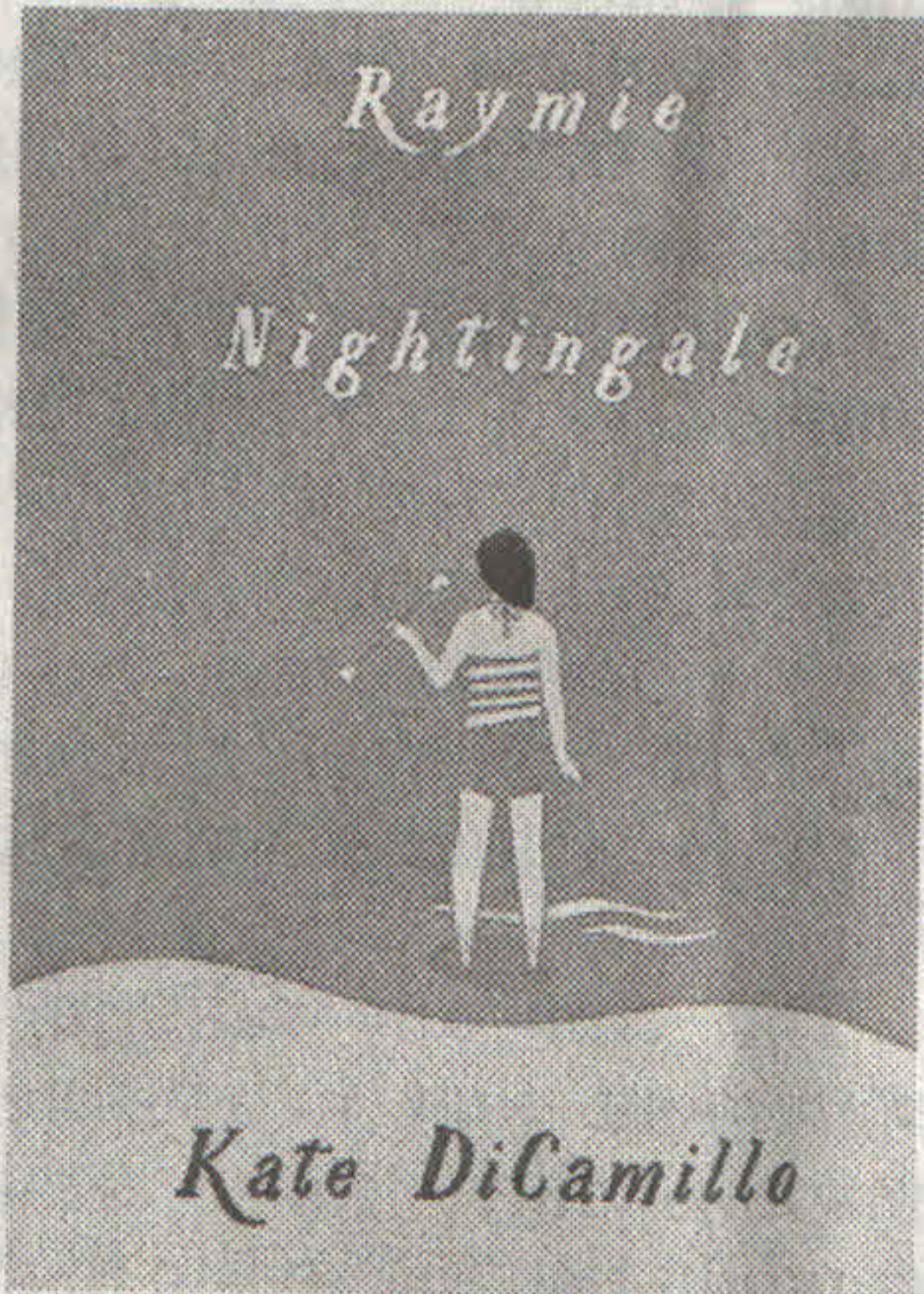




The Village
School's
**Children's Book
of the Month**



Book reviewed by
Shannon Johnson,
2nd & 3rd grade teacher

'Raymie Nightingale'

By Kate DiCamillo

Sometimes unexpected summer friendships make a big difference in a child's life. This is the case for Raymie, who becomes a member of an unlikely trio of girls during the summer of 1975. Set in a small town in Florida, the three girls, dubbed the Rancheros, help each other solve problems and forge a strong bond.

"Raymie Nightingale" is the latest book by Kate DiCamillo. Reminiscent of her first novel, "Because of Winn Dixie," it deals with the topic of loss and new friends. The main character, Raymie, is trying to make sense of her life and the world around her. It's a well-written page-turner with intriguing characters and a plot that draws the reader in.

Raymie decides to take baton-twirling lessons at the champion baton twirler Ida Lee's house where she meets Louisiana and Beverly. She feels a strong need to learn how to twirl a baton so that she can enter and win The Little Miss Central Florida Tire Contest. The problem is that they never seem to get much twirling accomplished and Raymie wonders if she'll ever learn to twirl. She wants to enter the contest in hopes that she'll win it, and then her father will see her picture in the paper and come back to live with her.

Beverly is a snarky, lock-picking 'thief' whose aim is to sabotage The Little Miss Central Florida Contest, which she tells Raymie and Louisiana right from the start. Louisiana is a quirky, loving girl who lives with her eccentric grandmother and they are always 'on the run' from Marsha Jean (who never appears in the story), so that she doesn't have to go live in the county home. Raymie is dealing with the loss of her father, trying to figure out why he left and how to get him back. She bonds with the two girls and learns important life lessons as they get into some tricky situations together.

Kate DiCamillo once again has children facing some tough life lessons, but as in other books, interlaces the serious subject with doses of humor. Raymie is a likable main character, whose inner dialogue helps the readers get a sense of some of the people around her town and those who have influenced her. From Mrs. Borokowski, the neighbor who has Raymie cut her toenails, to Mr. Staphopoulos who gives her life-saving lessons and tells her to be a problem solver, we see how those influences shape her decision-making as she tries to figure out how to help herself and her newfound friends.

This is DiCamillo's best book since "Because of Winn Dixie." The characters are easy to relate to and the quick chapters make for a fast read. It's a great read for ages 9 and over.