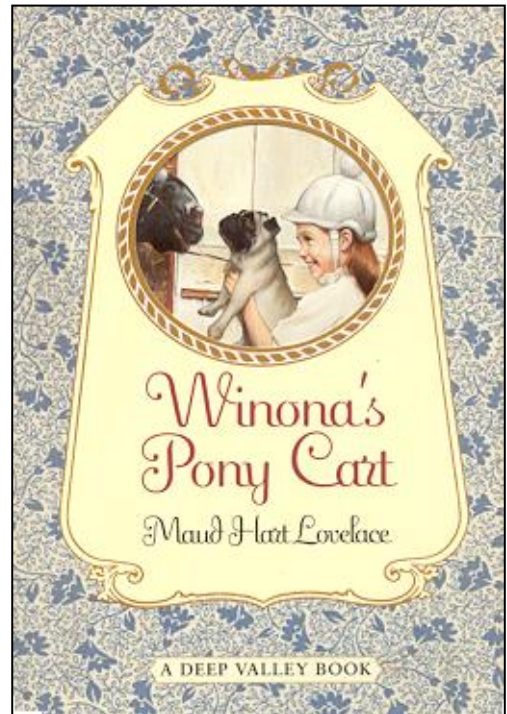


Winona's Pony Cart

By Maud Hart Lovelace

Beginning with the fourth volume of the Betsy-Tacy books (Betsy and Tacy Go Downtown), Winona Root emerges as one of the girls' friends. She is quite a tomboy -- in skirts, of course -- and begins her friendship with the others on a rather adversarial note. As the girls grow older, Winona's playful nature and wicked sense of humor mature and allow her to keep her place in the Crowd secure.

In this book, we get to know the younger Winona better. We see something of her family life and can witness some of the circumstances that help shape the character she becomes later. Winona's Pony Cart is a gentle introduction to the impish tomboy and a revealing peek at what makes her "tick."



Chapter 1.

1. What are pug dogs? See if you can find a picture and some information about them to share with the class.
2. What are some adjectives you would use to describe Winona?
Is "dignified" one of them?
Why does Mrs. Root tell Winona she should be dignified?
3. Compare and contrast Winona with her sisters.
4. Is Winona spoiled? Give reasons for your answer.

Chapter 2.

1. Where is Syria? What can you find out about the country and its people?
2. The Roots have a "hired girl" and a woman to do their laundry.
What can you infer about the family from this?
3. What is the nature of Winona's friendship with Betsy, Ray, Tacy Kelly, and Tib Muller?
4. See what you can find out about Buffalo Bill.
Winona brags about being kissed by him, but should she? What really happened?
5. What do you think Winona will get for her birthday?

Chapter 3.

1. How do Mr. and Mrs. Root differ on the way they would like Winona to behave?
2. You know that Winona is spoiled by her father and is stubborn. What do you think she will do about the pony and about the party invitations?

Chapter 4.

1. How does Dennie "help" Winona with her invitation dilemma?
How does Winona react to his idea?
2. How does Mrs. Root deal with Winona's hints about a pony for her birthday?
What different implications can you draw from her actions?

Chapter 5.

1. Why do you think Maud Hart Lovelace uses the word “dignified” so often in this chapter?
2. Can you recall reading about another accordion-pleated dress?
What details do you remember?
3. Can you think of any sayings that we use that are similar to Marium’s saying “if we live” (page 52)?
4. How does the pony become more and more real to Winona and the other children?
What do you think?
5. Do you believe the pony stories that Ole tells Winona? Why or why not?
6. What does it mean to “borrow trouble” (page 57)?
How would telling someone about the extra children she had invited be “borrowing trouble” for Winona?
7. See if you can find a recording of “Won’t You Come Home Bill Bailey?” to play for the class.
Why do you think Mrs. Root objected to the song?
8. How does Winona convince herself that she will get a pony?
Have you ever done a similar thing?

Chapter 6.

1. What do you notice about how Winona receives the birthday gifts from her guests?
2. What is your impression of Percy?
3. Why are Lottie and Lettie dressed in summery clothes for the party?
What does this tell you about their family?
4. Marium is described as having “something black” around her eyes.
This would be “kohl.” See what you can find about about this early cosmetic.
5. Why does Mrs. Root remove all the place cards from the table?
How does she react to all the extra children?
Have you ever surprised a parent in a similar fashion?
Can you share that experience with the class?
6. What is “baklawa” (page 72)?

Chapter 7.

1. Are you surprised when the pony appears?
Why does Winona feel like crying?
2. How does Jingle react to Percy?
Why do you think he does this?
Does Percy’s response surprise you?
Explain your answer. Does it change your opinion of Percy?
3. How do you feel at the end of this chapter?

Chapter 8.

1. What shocking discovery does Winona make?
2. How is her crying different from other times?
3. Why would the minister’s opinion of Winona’s having a pony to ride be important?
4. What do you think finally changed Mrs. Root’s mind?
5. What are some of Jingles’ bad habits? Have you ever had a pet with bad habits?
Can you tell us about it?
6. Is this a satisfactory ending to the book? Explain.

GENERAL QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS BOOK:

- Compare and contrast the young Winona in this book with the older Winona we meet in the Betsy-Tacy series.
- How would you describe Mrs. Root?
- How would you describe Mr. Root?
- How does “dignity” play an important role in this book?
- Compare and contrast the presents Winona receives from her guests to those you might receive from guests at your birthday party.
- Why does Mr. Root think that Jingles may have had a hard life?
Is that important in choosing a pet? Explain.
- See what you can discover about the comics that Tib offers to draw: “Buster Brown,” “Happy Hooligan,” or “The Katzenjammer Kids.”

WRITING ACTIVITIES:

- Write an alternate ending for the book in which Mrs. Root does NOT change her mind and Winona does NOT get to keep Jingles.
- Write a story about the mouse that appears in the painting of the Deep Valley Sun, the cigar, and the violin.

DRAMA ACTIVITIES:

- With a group, demonstrate one of the games the children played at the party: “Prisoner’s Base,” “London Bridge,” “Go In and Out the Window,” or “Pin the Tail on the Donkey.”
- Prepare a monologue of the thoughts that may have gone through Mrs. Root’s mind as more and more children arrived at the party. You may incorporate some of her actual words as Maud Hart Lovelace wrote them if you wish. Present your monologue to the class.

