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# Who Is Oprah Winfrey?



by Barbara Kramer

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by Barbara Kramer  
illustrated by Dede Putra

Penguin Workshop

For Callie and Kinsey—BK

To my big sis—DP

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## Who Is Oprah Winfrey?

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As a young girl in the 1950s, Oprah Winfrey loved to tell stories. She lived outside the town of Kosciusko (say: kah-zee-ESS-ko) in central Mississippi on her grandparents' farm. No other children lived nearby, so the farm animals became Oprah's friends. She named the pigs and chickens and told them stories.

Some of her tales were made up. Others came from the Bible. Oprah's grandmother Hattie Mae Lee used the Bible to teach Oprah to read at an early age. Oprah was smart and memorized Bible verses easily. She soon began reciting them at her church.

The first time Oprah stood at the front of the church to recite Bible verses was on Easter Sunday in 1957. She was only three years old. She wore a dress her grandmother had made and the shiny shoes she saved for Sundays. The rest of the week she went barefoot. "Jesus rose on Easter Day, hallelujah, hallelujah," Oprah announced. She did not sound nervous at all.

"That child sure can talk," church members said. Some called her gifted. Oprah didn't understand that word, but she thought it meant she was special. She loved the attention and continued to recite Bible verses at her church on Sundays.

As she got older, she spoke at other churches. She recited longer passages from the Bible. Sometimes she recited poems or sermons written by famous ministers.



Oprah's talent for speaking led to a very successful television career. For twenty-five years, *The Oprah Winfrey Show* was one of the most-watched talk shows in the United States. Today, Oprah is one of the richest, most powerful

women in the world. She says it all began when she was three years old, reciting Bible verses at the front of her church.