



Penguin Days

Written by Sara Leach

Illustrated by Rebecca Bender

Pages: 100

Interest level: Gr. 1-4

ISBN: 978-1-77278-053-6

At a family wedding in North Dakota, Lauren finds her own unique ways of dealing with the challenges of scratchy flower girl dresses, rambunctious cousins, and cows on the loose.

Lauren has Autism Spectrum Disorder, and she sees the world a little differently from other kids. What makes her comfortable are her routines and her coping mechanisms for her anxiety, which can get out of control in no time. It's a challenge to meet new family members, share the flower-girl role, and follow impossible directions about going down aisles slowly-but-not-like-a-sloth. Is it any surprise that Lauren flips her lid more than once? But while having an extended family seems like a lot of trouble at first, she's about to learn just how much they can care for one another.

In *Penguin Days*, two award winners revisit second-grader Lauren from the acclaimed *Slug Days* with equal humor and empathy. Drawing on her experience teaching children with ASD, Sara Leach creates an energetic character who stomps eloquently off the page. And Rebecca Bender's delightful black-and-white illustrations show in Lauren's fraught situations and facial expressions all the love and assertiveness that could possibly dwell together in one unique little person.

About the author

Sara Leach hails from Whistler, BC, where she loves to ski, hike and bike. Her middle grade novel *Count Me In* won the Red Cedar Book Award for 2012/13. In addition to being a children's author, she is also an elementary school teacher-librarian. She has had the privilege to teach several amazing students with Autism Spectrum Disorder, and drew on her experience while writing *Penguin Days*.

Discussion Questions

- Lauren often doesn't understand jokes and sayings, like being told she's priceless and thinking her aunt wants to sell her. At other times, she says things that adults think are hilarious, when she was being serious. Have you ever experienced either of these situations? How did it make you feel?
- What do you think of Lauren's cousins? Are they good friends to her? Are their reactions to her reasonable? Kind? Helpful? Give reasons for your answers.
- Twice in the story adults say things to the cousins that Lauren can't hear (pp. 66 and 95). What can you infer that the adults are saying?

Curriculum Connections

Language Arts: *Big ideas - Everyone has a unique story to share.*

Write about a time when you have gone to a new place. What did it look like? Smell like? Feel like? Taste like? Sound like?

Science: *Big ideas - Living things are diverse, can be grouped, and interact in their ecosystems.*

Lauren knows a lot of facts about penguins. Research one species of penguin. Where does it live? What does it eat? What is interesting about it? How is it the same and different from the penguins your classmates studied?

Resources

<http://www.autismspeaks.ca/about-autism/what-is-autism/>

<https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/animals/hubs/birds/>

<http://www.penguinworld.com/types/>

www.saraleach.com

www.rebeccabender.com

www.pajamapress.ca