



Story Summary

On slug days Lauren feels slow and slimy. She feels like everyone yells at her, and that she has no friends. Today there is a different bus driver; Dan and Sachi are sitting in Lauren's seat on the bus; and Lauren's teacher interrupts her reading time. It is definitely a slug day. But not every day is like this. On butterfly days Lauren makes her classmates laugh, or goes to get ice cream, or works on a special project with Mom.

Lauren has Autism Spectrum Disorder (an umbrella term that has included Asperger Syndrome since 2013), and she sees the world differently from many people. Sometimes this can be frustrating and makes Lauren want to flip her lid, especially at school where she learns differently from her classmates. But with support and stubbornness and a flair that's all her own, Lauren masters tricks to stay calm, to understand others' feelings, and to let her personality shine. She even manages to find common ground with her sticky, slobbery baby sister. Best of all, it is being different that gives Lauren insight into the insecurities of the new student, Irma.

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 of teaching several amazing students with Autism Spectrum Disorder, and her experience working with them inspired *Slug Days*.

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Keywords:

School, Conflict Resolution, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Family, Emotions, Self Regulation

BISAC Codes

JUV013000 JUVENILE FICTION / Family / General
JUV035000 JUVENILE FICTION / School & Education
JUV039060 JUVENILE FICTION / Social Themes / Friendship
JUV039150 JUVENILE FICTION / Social Themes / Special Needs

Reading Level

Fountas & Pinnell : O | Lexile measure : 650L

BOOK CLUBS

This guide has been developed for use in classroom book clubs/literature circles. Book clubs support and develop the love of reading as well as help students build comprehension and support the development of collaborative learning and critical thinking.

In book clubs students:

- meet in small groups (4–8) to discuss a book they are reading
- take turns assuming a leadership role within the group
- meet regularly and set the pace for their reading
- take ownership for their learning by:
 - selecting the book they will read (usually from a predetermined list provided by the teacher)
 - determine the pace of the reading
 - prepare for and run their discussions.

Prior to beginning with book clubs, teachers:

- take time to develop and nurture whole class discussions about books while modeling the skills and behaviors needed to collaborate and work together as a book club
- provide guidance, modeling, and support
- become familiar with all texts prior to making them available to students

During book club discussions, teachers:

- develop a schedule for book clubs ensuring they provide time for reading and discussion
- provide mini-lessons for any needs that may arise
- monitor through observation and conferring as well as supporting student self-assessment

Key elements:

- Groups meet on a regular basis, with time provided in class to read and discuss their book
- Students use a “reader’s notebook” to write notes, comments, insights, and questions while they read
- Students bring their reader’s notebook to each meeting to support their discussion
- Discussion topics may emerge from the students as they read; however, the teacher provides discussion topics and provocations to help students engage in rich discussions (suggestions are provided in this guide)
- Group meetings are collaborative, with each group developing a set of norms for their group
- The teacher serves as facilitator
- Assessment is grounded in teacher observation, student conversations, and student self-assessment
- Book clubs promote a love of reading

Thinking about Assessment...

This Discussion Guide offers a range of prompts, tasks, and provocations to support Book Club discussions. While using this guide in the classroom, teachers have a number of opportunities to use observation, conversation, and product to assess student thinking and learning. The tasks and prompts offered in this guide are designed to support discussion, sharing, and student thinking while providing an opportunity for students to demonstrate comprehension, extension of thinking, and critical literacy. Assessment can include: self-assessment and peer assessment, conversations with students through teacher/student conferences; group discussions; and products created by the students.

For the teacher and student to have a clear, common understanding of the expectations and criteria to achieve success while reading the novels, educators develop learning goals based on curriculum expectations and share them with the students in language they can understand. Then, together the educator and students co-create criteria to make the path to success visible and clear.

These success criteria are posted in the classroom, are visible to all students, and may be revised and edited based on the learning and understanding of the students.

As the Book Club meetings are collaborative and begin with the groups developing a set of norms for their group, it is suggested that all groups open each meeting with a reflection of the previous discussion. These reflections can highlight what went well during the discussions; what needs to improve in these discussions; and considerations for the current discussion.

Discussion Guide:

This discussion guide will offer a variety of tasks, discussion prompts, and questions to provoke thinking and deepen comprehension before, during, and after reading of the novel. These are suggestions only and it is certainly not necessary to complete the entire list of suggested activities/questions. Educators are encouraged to make choices based on the strengths, needs, and interests of the students.

Highlighted Curriculum Expectations

Ontario Ministry of Education Language Arts Curriculum K–8

Oral Communication

- 2.2 Interactive Strategies
- 2.3 Clarity and Coherence

Reading: Understanding Form and Style

- 2.3 Text Features
- 2.4 Elements of Style

Reading for Meaning

- 1.3 Comprehension Strategies
- 1.4 Demonstrating Understanding
- 1.5 Making Inferences/Interpreting Texts
- 1.6 Extending Understanding
- 1.8 Responding and Evaluating Texts

Reading: Reflecting on Reading Skills and Strategies

- 4.2 Interconnected Skills

Writing

- 2.1 Form

Before Reading

1. Read the back cover and inside cover of the book. Review the cover illustrations/art. What questions do you have about this book prior to beginning to read? Record them in your Reader's Notebook. Invite your teacher to join your book club to help you discuss your questions, particularly those related to ASD.
2. Review the art work/illustrations on the front and back cover of the book. How does the author portray/illustrate both a "slug day" and a "butterfly day"?
3. The following quote appears on the back cover of the book: "Dad says that kids like me, kids with Autism Spectrum Disorder, don't always see the world the same way as everyone else. He says I need some special tricks up my sleeve." As a book club, interview your classroom teacher and ask her to discuss and help you learn more about Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).
4. What predictions can you make? What do you think might happen in this story?
5. On the back cover, the following statement is made: "An extra-special butterfly day might even bring Lauren the thing she wants most in the world." What do you think Lauren might want most in the world? Engage in a "think-pair-share" with a partner. Share your thinking with your group.
6. There is some information about seatbelts in the first part of this book, even before the story opens. Do you think we should have seatbelts on school buses? Why or why not? Why do you think there are no seatbelts on school buses? Discuss this with your group. Invite your teacher to your discussion and ask her for additional information about this.

During Reading

**Please check in with your book club at the suggested points in the novel.

Chapters 1–3

1. While you are reading this book, use sticky notes to jot down what you notice while you read. Record any "wonderings" or questions you have while reading.

Bring these "wonderings" and questions to your book club meeting to discuss with your group.

2. While you are reading, use the sticky notes to record specific reading strategies you used while reading to help you understand the text, such as visualizing, making and confirming predictions, re-reading, etc. Discuss with your group.
3. In chapter one we get to know the main character, Lauren. The story and the illustrations help us to understand her, as well as the other children and adults she interacts with. Create a chart to summarize the characteristics of each of the main characters we encounter in the text. Include: Lauren, Dan, Alyssa, her teacher, her mom, and her dad. Share your notes with your group.
4. How do the illustrations help you to understand Lauren and the other children and adults? Record your thinking in your Reader's Notebook. Give specific examples and discuss with your group.

Chapters 4–6

1. How does Lauren's teacher try to help her? Discuss with your group.
2. How do Lauren's mother and father try to help her? Discuss with your group.
3. What are some of the "tricks" Lauren is using to help her manage her emotions and get along with others? Make a list in your Reader's Notebook. Do you use any of these "tricks" or other "tricks" to help you? Discuss with your group.
4. Lauren's mom and dad do many things to help her. How do your parents, caregivers, or grandparents help you? Write about this in your Reader's Notebook.
5. Lauren knows a great deal about insects and bugs. How do you think she learned so much about them? What does this tell you about Lauren? Discuss with your group.

Chapter 7–10

1. On page 60, Lauren describes how she nearly flips her lid. Can you think of a time when you have flipped your lid? How would you describe it? Record your description in your Reader's Notebook. Share with your book club.
2. On pages 71–74 there is a negative interaction between Dan and Lauren. How do you feel while you read about this interaction? What do you think Dan is feeling? Why do you think he is unkind to Lauren? What would you do if you had been in Dan's situation? Discuss with your group.

Chapter 10–13

1. Why do you think Lauren does not enjoy spending time with her baby sister? Discuss with a partner in your group.
2. As you read about Lauren and her family, discuss all the ways in which you see that they help each other. Record your ideas and share with your group. What are the ways in which your family helps one another? Write about this in your Reader's Notebook.

Chapter 13–17

1. On page 100 we learn that Lauren does not like change. How do we learn that Lauren does not like change? How do you react to change? Write about a time when something changed in your family or school. How did you react to the change? Use your Reader's Notebook to record your thinking.
2. On page 101 Mrs. Patel introduces the class to the new student, Irma. When she introduces her to the class, Mrs. Patel's "eyes stayed fixed on Dan as she talked." Why do you think Mrs. Patel was watching Dan? Discuss with your group.
3. On page 101 Lauren tells us that she does not like Dan. Why do you think Lauren does not like Dan? With a partner, share your thoughts about Dan and reasons why you may like or dislike him. Share your thoughts with the large group.

4. We are learning more and more about Lauren in these final chapters of the book. What else have we learned about her? Revisit your character chart and add to your character list for Lauren. Share with your group.

After Reading

1. What advice would you give to Dan and Alyssa and the other students in Lauren's class to help them better understand and include Lauren? Write your advice in the form of a letter to Lauren's class.
2. How do the illustrations help us understand the story? Choose one page or interesting moment in the book that does not have an illustration and create your own. Share with your group.
3. There are many important moments shared in this story. We see Lauren feeling left out, being misunderstood, finding a new friend, doing something she loves with her mom and dad, etc. Think of an important moment in your life and describe it. Write about it in your Reader's Notebook and share with your group.
4. Why do you think the author wrote this book? Discuss with your group.
5. The book is written from Lauren's point of view. Why do you think the author chose to tell the story from Lauren's point of view? Discuss with your group. How would the story change if it were told from Dan's point of view? Or that of another character in the story?
6. Consider the following statement: "Everyone is different and some people have difficulty with things that are easy for others. What is fair for one is not necessarily fair for all." Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not? Explain your thinking by sharing your ideas and the reasons for your answer with your group.
7. Do you think the children in Lauren's school understand her? Do you think they accept her? Why/why not? Explain your thinking by sharing your ideas/reasons for your answer with a partner and then with your entire group.

8. How has this book helped you to be more understanding of Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD)? Record your ideas in your Reader's Notebook.
9. What do you think the author is trying to teach us? Discuss with your group.
10. Do you think the adults in Lauren's world are patient? Do you think they are understanding? Why/why not? Use evidence from the text and your own ideas to explain your thinking. Record in your Reader's Notebook and then share with your entire group.
11. What did you think about the ending of the story? Discuss with your group.
12. What does Lauren learn about herself when she meets and connects with Irma? Discuss with your group.

