



Diary of a Young Naturalist

Dara McAnulty

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Diary of a Young Naturalist covers a transformative year in Dara McAnulty's life, following his move to a new home, school, and wilderness haunts in Eastern Ireland.

McAnulty is a perceptive, introspective narrator whose descriptions of seasonal changes in the natural landscape are crystalline. His autism turbocharges his angst, and his intense reflections about the differences he feels in and out of his natural world refuge are self-aware. He proves best able to "uncoil" when he is outdoors, away from the sensory barrage of traffic, bright lights, and other human clatter. Throughout his book, he focuses on birds, insects, and other wildlife; his "brain camera" enables him to recall huge swathes in minute detail.

Imbued with poetry, Irish literature, and lore, the text is eloquent as it relates stories about place names and their connections to saints and mythical figures; it combines scientific observations with lovely language and imagery. It runs from spring, whose "newness is always tender," through autumn, where McAnulty's "sapling stage" ends, and his self-confidence grows; he finds outlets for his passion, and camaraderie as he works with research scientists, students, and conservation activists. Winter rounds out the text with its special beauty in the "absence of abundance," revealing the contours of the land and trees and the "fragility of the air."

Despite his discomfort with the spotlight, and his preference for hanging out in the woods, Dara McAnulty's talent, and outrage about environmental apathy, have made him a prominent, inspiring environmental voice. *Diary of a Young Naturalist* is an exquisite text that encourages harnessing one's love for animals, plants, and local environments into actions to protect them.

RACHEL JAGARESKI (May / June 2021)

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