



Penelope Windpipes: Learns the Power of Staying Calm

Heather S. Lonczak

Claudia Varjotie, Illustrator

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Penelope Windpipes contains an important life lesson on the benefits of children controlling their tempers.

In Heather S. Lonczak's *Penelope Windpipes*, a young girl discovers how different life can be when approached from a calm perspective.

Penelope lives with her parents and her brother Miles in a peace-loving neighborhood. The trouble is: Penelope is one loud kid! Her nickname, Windpipes, is well-earned, as at the slightest provocation, Penelope will let loose a gargantuan screech, much to her neighbors' chagrin. Penelope doesn't always cry, though: there are times when she's able to play with others or help out around the house, if such times are overshadowed by her fits of temper.

All her fussing leaves Penelope as quite the lonely girl, even among her own family. It's not that she wants to drive people away, and Penelope is generally a good girl, she just can't seem to control her emotions. Penelope's attitude begins to change after a particularly bad sore throat renders her speechless. Within this involuntary silence, Penelope is given the chance to observe her surroundings free of loud outbursts and tears, and she realizes what she's been missing out on.

With its important life lesson on the benefits of controlling your temper, *Penelope Windpipes* is an effective educational vehicle. Not only does the story show the benefits of keeping a cool head, it also acknowledges that there will be bad days, too, when staying calm seems almost hopeless. Sometimes accidents happen, it assures its audience, but that doesn't mean that it's impossible to get back on track.

While Penelope's emotions are the primary cause of her ostracization, her brother is, at times, nasty to her, sparking hostility between the two. The unfortunate casualty of Penelope's tantrums is her negative reputation among the neighbors and other children, leaving her devoid of companionship.

Filled with colorful descriptions of Penelope's outbursts as "blood-curdling," "brain-splitting," and "mind-numbing," the text's constructions may be difficult for younger audiences to understand, while words like laryngitis, uncharacteristically, contentedly, and vocal cords will require adult explanations and will serve as opportunities to expand children's vocabularies.

Cartoonish illustrations exaggerate the characters' anatomies: they have overlarge heads and rail-thin necks. Other aspects of the world are depicted as semirealistic. The majority of the drawings are rounded or have rounded edges, complementing the fact that the book's subject matter can be difficult to approach; the soft, pleasant shapes of the illustrations create an embracing feeling of understanding and acceptance of Penelope, despite her undesirable behavior.

Penelope Windpipes is a provocative picture book about cultivating self-control which suggests that anger causes children to miss out on much.

IAN DAILEY (March 26, 2020)

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