



Blackberry Juice

Sara Cassidy

Illustrated by Helen Flook

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About the Book

After moving into their new home, a keeling-over farmhouse in the country, nine-year-old Cyrus and his brother, Rudy, have trouble adjusting to all the changes. The fresh-from-the-farm egg yolks are blindingly yellow. The eccentric girl next door has a very unusual sense of style. And Rumpley, a donkey they inherited with the farmhouse, doesn't even know how to bray. Nothing about the country feels warm or familiar. But when Cyrus is stranded one evening by the tide, he finds his lifeline in an unlikely companion.

Blackberry Juice is the sequel to *Not For Sale*.

About the Author

Blackberry Juice is Sara Cassidy's eighth novel for children. She has been a tree planter, a journalist, a college instructor, and a human rights witness. She lives in Victoria, B.C. with three children.

About the Writing

In Sara's previous novel, *Not For Sale*, brothers Cyrus and Rudy try to stop their family from moving. Despite their best efforts, that novel ends with the family hitting the road, headed to their new house. Sara wanted to see how the city boys adjusted to their new life in the country. "I have a lot of affection for Cyrus and Rudy," Cassidy says. "They are thoughtful and fun and, while very different, have a strong relationship, just like my two sons. It is as though they live in a parallel world, or in a parallel heart of mine, and I want to make sure they are well. I've already written a third novel about them, that will be out in 2017."

Teaching Ideas—Curriculum Connections***Prereading Ideas***

- Do you have animals in your life? Do you take care of them? Do they comfort you? Would you say they are your “friends”?
- Have you ever moved? What was it like getting to your new home? Did you like it? Did you feel like you belonged?
- What does it mean to belong in a place?
- What is the difference between life in the city and the country?
- What is a tidal pool? How is it formed? Who lives in a tidal pool?
- Cyrus is upset about moving to a new house. What are reasons that people might not like moving?

Classroom Discussion Questions

1. How are Cyrus and Rudy alike? How are they different?
2. How would you compare Rudy and Cyrus's family to the family next door?
3. Why do you think Frances wears the same color every day?
4. Was it right to take Helen from the ocean? See **Resources** below for a video to help with discussion.
5. Cyrus feels driven to look after the donkey, Rumpley. Why do you think that is?
6. What are some of the things that connect Cyrus to his new home?

Suggested Activities

- Find synonyms for five words from the novel without using a thesaurus, then by using a thesaurus. Now, can you find an antonym (the opposite) for each of the words?
- Draw a tidal pool and include the animals that you might find in it.
- Write a creation myth that features a donkey. Look up some facts about donkeys and use at least three in your creation myth. See the **Resources** below for help.
- Make a list of things and/or people that would help you feel at home in a new place. Draw them.
- Tide pool experiment: <http://buggyandbuddy.com/tide-pool-science-experiment-kids>.
- If you live near the ocean, go to the beach and visit the tide pools. Sketch what you see.

Websites of Interest

Canadian Donkey and Mule Association: www.donkeyandmule.com

www.thesaurus.com

PBS Exploring Tide Pools:

www.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/lsp07.sci.life.oate.tidepools/exploring-tidepools

Tide Pools Revealed—Royal British Columbia Museum.

(The museum scientist is collecting specimens for the artificial tidal pool in the museum—a great conversation starter about place, belonging, environmental disruption.): www.youtube.com/watch?v=rEu32-LJobA&ab_channel=RoyalBCMuseum

Other Books by the Author from Orca Book Publishers

Not For Sale

Seeing Orange

Reviews

“Humorous, short, and hard to put down. Newly independent or reluctant readers looking for a good laugh or who are dealing with moving will appreciate this light-hearted, warm tale.” —*School Library Journal*

“Flook’s cartoon illustrations enhance the simple, amusing text that is peopled with warm, engaging characters...and a gently nuanced animal relationship. Short chapters and a limited vocabulary make this a fine choice for emerging readers. A summertime visit to the countryside with people who are fun to share time with. What could be better?” —*Kirkus Reviews*

Not For Sale

“From the intriguing opening sentence (“Ancient potatoes lurk in our bedroom closets”) to the feel-good conclusion, this very brief effort appealingly captures a small slice of very funny family life. In between are tolerant, loving parents, an admirable relationship between brothers, a bizarre but humorous cat, numerous rib-tickling, full-page illustrations, and some quirky problem-solving...A warmhearted romp that might even work for older reluctant readers.” —*Kirkus Reviews*

“Winsome black-and-white illustrations succeed in evoking the playfulness of young narrator Cyrus, whose struggle with the upheaval in his universe is handled with humor and real feeling. Cheerful and full of insight, the latest entry in the Orca Echoes series for reluctant readers is a real winner.” —*Booklist*

“Short chapters and punchy characters make this selection a natural choice for readers moving to longer chapter books.” —*School Library Journal*