



# Penny Draws a Class Trip

## SARA SHEPARD

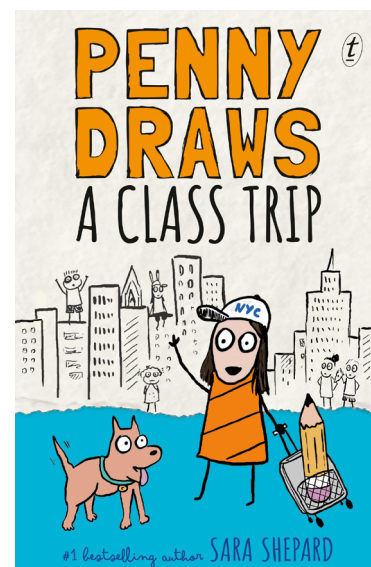
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RECOMMENDED READING AGE: 8+

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### CURRICULUM GUIDE

The following teaching guide has been designed to embrace shared curriculum values. Students are encouraged to communicate their understanding of a text through speaking, listening, reading, writing, viewing and representing.

The learning activities aim to encourage students to think critically, creatively and independently, to reflect on their learning, and connect it to audience, purpose and context. They aim to encompass a range of forms and include a focus on language, literature and literacy. Where appropriate, they include the integration of ICT and life skills.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Credit: Danielle Shields

Sara Shepard is the #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of the *Pretty Little Liars* series, the *Lying Game* series, the *Perfectionists* series, *The Heiresses*, *The Elizas*, *Reputation* and her beloved *Penny Draws* series.

### SYNOPSIS

Penny Lowry is excited. Her class is going to New York City for a 'Weekend of Creativity' with famous author Billy J. Plumberry, where they will create a whole book with characters and a plot and everything! But Penny is also nervous: New York City is a worrisome place, full of aggressive bike couriers and precarious pianos. To make matters worse, Miss Kettle has buddied Penny with Violet Vance. Penny and Violet used to be best friends, but after what happened at the start of the year, Penny's not sure what their friendship status is. What if they have nothing to say to each other?

On the bus, however, Penny and Violet have fun together, and Violet even says she's glad Penny is her buddy. Penny is relieved, and thinks maybe the trip will be okay after all. But when they get to the hotel, Violet doesn't want to go out, and she wants Penny to stay with her. Penny is torn between exploring the city with her new friends Rocco, Maria, Petra and Kristian and staying with Violet. Penny worries that if she goes out, her friendship with Violet will be ruined forever. She suspects something is bothering Violet, but when Penny tries to talk to her about it, Violet avoids the subject.

Meanwhile, Billy J. Plumberry has a few surprises for Penny's class. First, if they try their best in his workshops, he will build BJP Elementary a new library! And second, another school will be joining them for the weekend—Amsterdam Academy. Penny thinks the kids from Amsterdam Academy seem nice, but Violet's friend Riley suspects that Billy J. Plumberry is actually setting up a secret contest between the schools. Only one school will get a new library: the one with the best story. If they want to win the contest, Riley says, they can't be friends with the competition.

The 'Weekend of Creativity' begins, but neither school can come up with a story idea. They spend all their time arguing and spying on each other. When Piper



from Amsterdam Academy accuses Riley of cheating, Riley throws a piece of tiramisu at her, starting a huge food fight between the two schools. Billy J. Plumberry is upset, and Penny feels terrible. They aren't trying their best. Maybe they won't get a new school library, or a book, after all!

While they are walking across the Brooklyn Bridge, Billy J. Plumberry asks Penny and Rocco to take the lead for the last project. Penny thinks she's too anxious to be a leader, but Billy tells her that her worrying makes her thoughtful and sensitive to other people's feelings. Can Penny help her class work together to complete Billy's final challenge? And will Violet finally open up about what's been bothering her so they can enjoy the rest of their time in New York together?

*Penny Draws a Class Trip* is a funny and thoughtful novel that tackles themes such as creativity, anxiety and friendship.

### BEFORE READING

1. *Penny Draws a Class Trip* is the third book in the Penny Draws series. Have you read either of the first two books, *Penny Draws a Best Friend* or *Penny Draws a School Play*? What do you remember about the characters?
2. Have you ever been on a class trip? Where did you go? What kind of activities did you do while you were there?
3. Look at the front cover. What clues does it give you about the story? Where do you think Penny's class might be going on their trip?
4. Look at some photos of places in New York City, like Central Park, the Brooklyn Bridge, Coney Island, and the Museum of Natural History. Which place in New York would you most like to visit? Why?

### WHILE READING

1. Why do you think Violet goes quiet as the bus arrives in New York City?
2. What are the three 'puppets' Billy J. Plumberry introduces to the class at Potato Headquarters? How do you think the puppets are able to move around and talk?
3. 'Then Billy pressed a button on the wall. Suddenly, two doors at the far end of the room swept open. To reveal...this.' (p. 60) What is behind the doors? How do the students from BJP Elementary feel about this surprise?
4. What does Kristian have in common with one of the kids from Amsterdam Academy?
5. Who thinks that Billy J. Plumberry has organised a secret contest between the two schools?

Why? Does Billy actually say the 'Weekend of Creativity' is a competition?

6. Penny's class are given a choice of places to explore on their first night in New York City, including Times Square, Fifth Avenue, and Grand Central Terminal. Where would you choose to go if you were in New York?
7. Penny wants to explore the city with her friends, but Violet wants to stay at the hotel. If you were in Penny's shoes, what would you do? Why?
8. Kristian has a list of 'real New York stuff'. (p. 74) What are some of the things on his list? What do you think he means by 'real'?
9. Penny says she is 'not an adventurous eater', (p. 126) but she tries lots of new foods in New York and likes them. Have you ever been unsure about a food, but tried it anyway? What happened? What is the most memorable food you've ever eaten?
10. Who started the food fight in the chapter called 'Flying Tiramisu'?
11. What qualities does Billy see in Penny that he thinks would make her a good group leader?
12. What is Billy's last challenge for the two schools?
13. Why does Billy bring the schools to the Museum of Natural History on their last night in New York? What does he say the museum is full of?
14. Is it really Penny's fault when Violet goes missing at the museum? Why does Penny feel like she is responsible?
15. What helps Penny remain calm when she and Violet are left alone in the museum?
16. What do you think Riley learns about being nice?

### AFTER READING

#### CHARACTER

1. Penny compares Violet to Telly, Juice Box's tortoise. In what ways are they similar?
2. 'Steve...wanted the puppets to like him? I was so confused. I thought he hated them!' (p. 137) What is going on between Miss Kettle's puppet, Steve, and Billy's puppets? What other characters in this story behave in confusing ways?
3. What kind of character is Riley? Write down three adjectives to describe her?

#### STYLE AND STRUCTURE

1. *Penny Draws a Class Trip* is written as a series of letters from Penny to her dog, Cosmo. Why do you think the author, Sara Shepard, chose to structure the book this way? Who would you write letters to if you were away from home?



2. Sara Shepard writes in the Acknowledgments that this novel is a 'love letter' to the time she lived in New York. She used her experiences of the city to add details to the story, like billboards and food. Write a 'love letter' to the place you live now, or to a place you have lived. What details can you include?
3. Penny uses drawings to illustrate her experiences, and also to describe the things she's anxious about, like aggressive bike couriers and falling pianos. Create a drawing of something that worries you. Try exaggerating your drawing to make it funnier, like Penny does. Does drawing your worry change how you feel about it?

## THEMES

### Friendship

1. Penny and Violet used to be best friends, but after what happened at the start of the year their friendship is uncertain. Can you still be friends with someone after they do 'mean stuff'? (p. 13) What would it take to repair a friendship that has been broken?
2. Penny has trouble understanding how Violet is feeling on their class trip. Her Feelings Teacher, Mrs. Hines, suggests putting herself in Violet's shoes. Have you heard this expression before? What do you think it means? How can you put yourself in someone else's shoes?
3. Penny's friends give her lots of advice about dealing with Violet, such as leaving if she's being mean, or talking about rollercoasters if there's an awkward silence. (p. 20) What advice would you give Penny in this situation?
4. Why do the kids from BJP Elementary and Amsterdam Academy fight? What is stopping them from being friends?

### Anxiety

1. 'Mrs. Hines, my Feelings Teacher, always says my worries are better let out than held in. Kind of like burps.' (p. 18) What happens if you keep your worries in? What are some helpful ways you can let your feelings out?
2. Penny is worried about things that might happen on her class trip, like pianos falling on her head. (p. 5) Do you think any of her worries are realistic? What is her biggest worry about the trip?
3. 'Maybe I needed to talk to someone. Then I remembered: Mrs. Hines told me that if I felt overwhelmed on the trip, I could always give her a call.' (p. 115) Who do you talk to when you feel overwhelmed or anxious?
4. 'He [Billy] made it sound like worrying is a good thing.' (p. 140) What are the benefits of being a

'worrier'? How does Penny's worry help her on her class trip?

5. 'It was almost like my worrying made her feel more normal'. (p. 194) How do you think sharing their worries with each other helps Penny and Violet?

### Creativity

1. The students from BJP Elementary are in New York for a 'Weekend of Creativity'. What does it mean to be creative? In what ways are Penny and her friends creative? In what ways are you creative?
2. Penny's class runs out of time when they are making their character puppet. What stopped them from choosing an idea? Were their ideas really bad? Why did they think they were?
3. What do you think Petra means when she says 'We should trust our creativity'? (p. 150)
4. Writers and artists often get ideas from the world around them. Make a list of things from your world that would be interesting to write about or draw. They could be things you see at home, on the way to school, or even at the supermarket.

### RESPONDING

1. Create an itinerary for your own class trip. Where will you go? How many days will you be away? What places will you visit? What foods will you eat?
2. Petra creates a haiku about the pizza party on page 64. Try writing a haiku about something you've done recently.
3. Create your own story using Billy's 'Weekend of Creativity' workshops. First, create a character based on something you see around you—you could even make it into a puppet! Second, go for a walk to 'find your character's way' and create the plot of your story. Finally, create a billboard to advertise your story to the world.
4. Create a 'Food Passport' like Rocco and his dad, and draw pictures of the different foods you would like to try from around the world. You could stamp the ones you've already tried!
5. Look at a map of New York City. See if you can find all the places Penny visits in the story. Create your own map of a place you've been or would like to go. Make sure you include pictures of the most interesting landmarks.