

It's Raining Cupcakes
by Lisa Schroeder

About the book:

Twelve-year-old Isabel dreams of seeing the world but she's never left Oregon. When her best friend, Sophie, tells her of a baking contest whose winners travel to New York City, she eagerly enters despite concerns about her mother, who is opening a cupcake bakery. Includes cupcake recipes!

About the author:

Lisa Schroeder is a native Oregonian, which means her childhood summers were spent camping, fishing, reading books, and playing in the sun, when it finally came out. These days, Lisa spends her summers, and every other part of the year, sharing all the wonderful things Oregon has to offer with her husband and two sons. Besides *It's Raining Cupcakes* she is also the author of three verse novels for young adults published by Simon Pulse - *I Heart You, You Haunt Me*, an ALA 2009 Quick Pick for Reluctant Readers, *Far From You*, a Texas Tayshas selection, and *Chasing Brooklyn*.

Author Interview:

1. Can you describe how this story about Isabel was mixed together?

I came up with the idea for the book when I was driving home on a gloomy day and I had this strong desire to write about something happy. I started brainstorming topics that would make people smile at just the mention of a word. When cupcakes came to mind, I thought, what fun it would be to write a book set in or around a cupcake shop! When I started writing, the character of Isabel came to me as a girl who enjoyed baking and dreamed of traveling. Sometimes I have to work at developing my characters, but Isabel came to me just like that, and since I had similar interests and dreams at her age, she was easy to write.

2. What ingredients about writing do you like the best? What makes you pucker?

I really love playing around in the first draft. I especially love it when I get lost in the story and the words come easily to me. Plotting the book is probably the hardest part of writing a book for me. If I can get it right the first time, great, but if I don't, and I have to fix it in revisions, it can be really hard! Of course, revisions are necessary to make the book sparkle and shine, but revisions seem more like work to me, whereas writing the first draft is like playing in a sandbox and just having fun.

3. Did you use this book as an excuse to bake? How much fun was it to come up with the cupcake recipes?

I love to bake, and although it was fun coming up with the recipes, it was also kind of difficult. I had to try a few different ones before I finally got it right. My editor was the one who suggested coming up with some cupcake recipes so after kids read the book, they could make cupcakes if they were suddenly hungry for them. It's also fun for book clubs to have a recipe they can make and serve the day they are discussing the book!

Pre-reading:

What are your favorite things to do with your mom? Would it still be fun if you turned it into a business?

Discussion questions:

1. After reading chapter one, list everything you already know about Isabel and her family. What does she want?
2. Describe how Isabel's life has changed since her mom began pursuing her dream. Make a list of what's good and bad about it. How would you feel in Isabel's shoes?
3. How is Isabel trying to earn some money for the summer? What does she want to use it for? Is babysitting a good way to make money or not? Like Isabel, do you feel stuck where you live or do you feel like you belong?
4. How does Sophie change Isabel's summer in a New York minute? What kind of contest would you consider entering?
5. Why is Isabel upset when her mom insists she make a cupcake recipe for the contest entry? Describe Isabel's relationship with her mom.
6. Explain what mistake Isabel made while babysitting Lucas and Logan. What consequences does she face because of this one error? Do you think the boys' mom acted fairly or not? Why?
7. Why haven't Isabel and her parents traveled anywhere? Do you, like Isabel, want to travel too? Where would you go?
8. Why does Isabel end up on the fire escape? Would you rather face your dad or the sidewalk?
9. Why must Isabel choose between her own happiness and her mom's? What does she decide to do about the contest?
10. What is Beatrice's Brownies? Why will her mom take this so hard? How do they handle it?
11. What type of advice does Grandma dispense? What do you think she would think of Isabel's decision about the contest?
12. How are things between Isabel and Sophie after spending most of the summer apart? Why can it sometimes be difficult for Isabel to be friends with Sophie? Do all friendships face these struggles?

13. Do you think Sophie was being a good friend to Isabel or not? What about the other way around? Why? Can a best friend still irritate you? How would you handle it?
14. Do you think Isabel needs distance from her small town in Oregon or her tumultuous relationship with her mom? Predict how they will get along in five years.
15. What do Lana and Isabel do together? How does this help mend things with Sophie?
16. What does Isabel figure out about the cupcake shop? How can this lesson about appreciating the treasure apply to your own story?
17. What surprises does Isabel create for her mom? Is it worth the effort?
18. How was Isabel rewarded by all her hard work creating the perfect recipe? What surprise does she find out about the contest?
19. How does Isabel change over the book? How does a reader get to know a character? Of all the characters in the book which ones did you like the best?
20. What chapter in the book was your favorite? Which relationship reminded you of one of your own?

Projects:

Reading:

Because good readers always make predictions as they read, stop at the end of each chapter of *It's Raining Cupcakes* and use a sticky note to create a prediction about what you think will happen next in the story. Also, add a note as to what clues made you believe this.

Writing:

Write a letter from one character to another at an important part of the story. Share with a friend who has also read the book and have them answer as that character.

-or-

Write a scene between two characters that either did not make it into the story (but could have) or one that could happen after the story closes. Be inspired by Lisa Schroeder's style!

Art:

Create a mural (on large butcher paper or even a cheap white flat sheet) that you would put in your very own shop. Or, create a finger-painting masterpiece just for fun.

Music:

Can you write a jingle or tune for an advertisement for the opening of Caroline's shop, It's Raining Cupcakes?

-or-

Find a song that you think would work for the soundtrack of the movie. Which scene would you pick to play it behind? Why? Create a playlist that should be running at the cupcake shop.

Math:

Find your favorite recipe for a dessert and add up the price of all the ingredients to create a batch. Then, figure out how much you would have to sell each item for to make a profit. Make and share the desserts if you can!

-or-

Plan a trip to a fantastic location like New York City. Research at least three places or things you'd like to do when you got there. How much would it cost to fly? Drive? Create a pamphlet describing all the fantastic possibilities for your trip!

Business:

Design your own business. What would you sell? What would you name your shop or service? How much would you charge? What would be your color theme? Would you deliver? How much money would it cost to get it started? Where would it be located? Design a storefront with a shoebox!

[Tracie Vaughn Zimmer](#), a children's author and literacy specialist, created this guide. Visit her website to find hundreds of others like this one!