

Science Storytime with Rubella Wonder!

The Great Smoky Mountain Salamander Ball by Lisa Horstman

Transcript:

Hello little kitties and chickadees! My name is Rubella Wonder and this is Science Storytime, where we read a fun sciencey book, we do a craft, and we learn some cool lessons and we have a blast while doing it! Today's book is called the Great Smoky Mountain Salamander Ball by Lisa Horstman. This is a really cool book about salamanders and if you've never seen a salamander before, it's kind of like a slimy lizard. They like to stay under logs and the leaves where they can stay nice and moist, and the reason they need to stay nice and moist is they actually breathe through their skin! They don't have lungs like you and me so imagine taking a breath, \*inhale, exhale\*

Hmm, it feels good because we have lungs! But salamanders, they don't do the same thing they just breathe through their skin so they don't have to breathe at all, which is pretty crazy when you think about it! But beyond that, salamanders are just really cool really cool animals. They're super common in the Appalachian Mountains in the southeastern United States. Western North Carolina actually has the most salamanders out of anywhere else in the entire world! There's such great variety in just this small area and this book does a great job covering that, especially in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, which, if you've never been there, is a really amazing place full of all sorts of little critters especially salamanders! And especially really cool fireflies that all Flash in sync, which is a really fascinating phenomenon. But we're focusing on salamanders today and so we're gonna give this book a little read, then do a little coloring page and talk about everything. I hope that this book teaches you not only about salamanders but also a little bit about respecting the environment and just being good stewards of the planet! But let's go ahead and get started the Great Smoky Mountain Salamander Ball by Lisa Horstman!

Look at these guys dancing along the bottom here, they're my favorite.

On top of the car roof the camp gear was stacked and into the car with their suitcases packed where both Sara's parents with Sara there too they had places to go they had fun things to do. Sara wriggled and squiggled inside the big car and asked are we there yet because it seemed far. They were Bound for the Smokies, that wonderful spot where hikes speak could be hiked and fish could be caught.

The days went by fast with hiking and swimming and fishing lines cast. Sara learned lots about mountains and trees, like why some trees have needles why some trees have leaves. The mountains and Sara were no longer strangers, she joined the ranks of the Parks Junior Rangers! She'd worked hard and earned a nice shiny badge awarded her to her by Park Ranger Madge. {Here she is getting her little award by Park Ranger Madge she looks like a lovely lady!}

Picking up litter had been quite a chore, hiking was tough though she liked to explore. But she knew of one kid who cheated and lied, he'd bragged about hiking and not even tried. But that isn't all, there was more Sara knew. He's not just a liar but a big bully too! He yanked off the tail of a red little newt before it escaped and hid under a root! {Now that's not good, we shouldn't be ripping off tails off of any salamanders, even though they can grow them back! But they like to keep all of their nutrition and all their fat for the winter in there so don't rip off their tails. It is kind of cool that they grow back but let's be nice to them not make them do that, okay?}

Then came the night Sara just couldn't sleep. Dreams wouldn't come, though she tried counting sheep. Till she heard a strange noise and peeked out from her tent and sneaked through the darkness with no one's consent. {Consent is mandatory!!} Poking through trees she came to a hollow, where she saw teeny footprints and started to follow. CRUNCH! She looked down at a small piece of paper, there in the dark it had almost escaped her!

It seemed to be some fine invitation, of which Sara studied with great fascination! she held it up close to the eyes in her head and started to read it and here's what it said: To salamanders big, To salamanders small, Come one come all to the Salamander Ball! We'll have a big party, yes this much is true, with feasting and dancing and playing games too! {Sounds like a fun party, I want to go!}

Then what she saw, she just couldn't resist, she just had to follow, for there in the mist salamanders busily heeded the call to where now she knew: The Salamander Ball! They all reached a clearing on top of a mountain and someone yelled loudly, "A ball's to be starting!" A small band of crickets had started to play as the dance guests wandered in on a fancy pathway. {Look at the fun Cricket band and all the jars full of fireflies to light it all up!}

First a hellbender marched in with great zest with plans to win big in the ugly contest! Then came a pygmy the smallest, so small he took a high place and make him look tall! The zigzag salamanders all zigzagged in time to the beat of a drummer while standing in line. Behind them the red cheeks swayed to the band admiring their blushes to see whose was most grand. The mud salamander had bathed just for the occasion and found a dance partner without much persuasion. On went the dancing, they all kept time well. They roomba'ed and cha-cha'ed and polka'ed pell-mell! They moved up the mountain in pack after pack, now there were so many that Sara lost track! So many colors and so many sizes, so many talents all hoping for prizes! {I like the how to Roomba directions over here, look at them all dancing! I love dancing, I don't know about you. But I love roombaing and cha-chaing and dancing pell-mell it's the most fun! Maybe we can do that a little bit later!} Laughing and watching from her hiding spot, Sara saw weird things until she got caught! Oh no! Two alert newts called out, "It's a spy!!" Sara stopped laughing and tried not to cry. Everyone froze, this was not a good thing! The Salamander Ball was a top secret

fling! They circled around her and grumbled and glared. They all moved in closer and Sara got scared. {Oh no! What are they gonna do to her??}

"What do what to do now?" yelled a voice above all, "No human has been to our Salamander Ball! It's ruined for sure, forget having more! The Ball would be crowded with humans galore!" Sara was sorry she'd spoiled their fun, and just when their party had barely begun! But then someone called amid the uproar, "Let's make this girl an ambassador!" {I wonder what that'll mean!}

"What's that?" they all muttered, craning their heads, and then up came Simon, blushing bright red. He was a true leader, somewhat of a brain, they all start to listen as he began to explain: "Ambassadors help us to see wrong from right! They help keep the peace instead of a fight. She'd be the one to teach the human race to respect salamanders and our Smoky Mountain place!" They all stared at Sara, and what could she do? Ambassador she'd be, and a diplomat too. So now it was time for some grand lecturing on the two golden rules of salamandering. {There's Simon on top of the pile teaching her the rules and the pile of all the different kinds of salamanders. I wish I could be an ambassador for the salamanders!}

"Rule number one," began Simon right off, "Put back that salamander before you take off! His home's in the Smokies, not home with you! He's happiest here where the weather is right too. And Rule Number Two should never be broken, one to be remembered long after I've spoken! The Great Smoky Mountains have been home since creation, so please treat them kindly when you're here on vacation! {So, what are the two rules of salamandering? Number One: put that salamander back before you take off, and Number Two: treat the mountains kindly when you're there on vacation! I think those are two pretty good rules!}

They gave her a ribbon that made her proud-hearted. The music began and the party restarted. A race for the fastest began with a shout and a prize for best spots was then given out! Nearby in a clump of trees, a scary movie was shown, of a salamander chased by a boy just half grown! The kid was just curious and needed to know, if a tail gets yanked off will another one grow? {So, it's the boy that tore off the tail earlier! And we learned that salamander tails do grow back, but not soon enough that you'll be able to see it when you do it, so don't rip off the tails! Just leave them be! Remember the rule number one is to put them back, and rule number two is to be kind! So being kind to the salamanders is a great way to follow both of those!}

The trumpets blasted, a pageant took place to decide which contestant was fairest to face. Not to be missed was a fine diving show, making all in the crowd shout "Magnifico!!" The party went onward throughout the dark night, and Sara fought sleep but try as she might, her eyes soon grew heavy, she dropped off to sleep and went off to Dreamland without counting sheep. {Look at the little diving contest, look at these two in the water cheering them on. I love this one of just the big crowd of salamanders and everyone being so supportive!}

Just think if this story had happened to you. Was it simply a dream, or was it all true? Well, Sara grew up and now she's a ranger. She protects salamanders from possible danger! So maybe she dreamed it, but then maybe not! What matters the most is what she was taught! And maybe, just maybe, if you make your request, she'll tell you about that salamander fest! And if Sara likes you, she'll show you the badge awarded to her by Park Ranger Madge. And look very closely there's a little bit more: a little ribbon attached that reads "Ambassador!" {And there's a good view of the badge, and there's grown-up Sara as a park ranger!}

And that's the end of our story, but here's a fun page of all of the different kinds of salamanders that are found in the park and illustrated in this book. There's just so much variety in the colors and the patterns and even the sizes! Do you see one on here that you really like? Do you have a favorite? I really like the three-line salamander. I like that they have the three lines on their back and then all the little spots on the side. But the marbled salamander is pretty cool too! But I like all these salamanders and I hope that you guys learned a little bit about salamanders and appreciate them a little bit more! And so now we're going to move on to the activity!

So, we just finished reading the Great Smoky Mountain Salamander Ball and I have a couple questions! First of all, they have a HUGE salamander party and they have a huge talent show that's a part of that, so some of the talents include the hellbender trying to win the ugly contest, the pygmy salamanders being the smallest, the red cheeks trying to have the most gorgeous face {which I think we know is taken!!} But what do you think your talent would be? I think mine, besides looking gorgeous, is dancing because I just love dancing! And as a matter of fact, yeah! Jazz hands! I mean, I think I would win, but show me a couple of your moves! Maybe we'll have to have a dance off to see who actually wins! I think, yeah! You guys are roombaing and cha-chaing and pretty pell-mell! I think you're doing a pretty good job.

But I think otherwise, what other like contests do you think you'd win at the Salamander Ball? What do you think makes you unique that no one else can do, or that you do best? Because the whole point of this book is that everyone has a really unique beautiful talent or a little skill that they do better than anybody else! That's their contribution to the world and that's what they should be celebrated for! So, I want you to think about what makes YOU special and what YOU bring to the world and what YOU would do best in at a big old talent show party!!

I also think that this book has does a great job of talking about how to be good to the environment, as well as accepting others for all the beautiful things that they bring. So I think we can apply those to being good people! First of all, for accepting and embracing each other's unique skills and talents and What Makes Us special, but also to just be Good to the Planet and to be good to salamanders and all living things! This book, as well as having that little guide to all the salamanders in the back right here, has a couple of rules for responsible salamandering. So the first one is don't hold salamanders for more than

one minute or put them in your pocket, because their skin will dry out and then they can't breathe. Because remember, salamanders don't have lungs like you and me they breathe through their skin! Isn't that kind of crazy? So we can breathe, but they can't do that so, make sure that you keep them nice and moist and don't handle them too much, also things that are on your skin could get on their skin and block up their skin and then they can't breathe, so be careful with them! Rule number two is, after looking at a salamander, don't put it back under the rock or the log where you found it because you might squish it if you just put it right back. Instead, just put it back on the ground near where you found it and it'll find its way back home. Most salamanders only have a home range of about like three feet. It's a pretty small area that they're familiar with, so if you move them too far away from that that's like me picking you up and putting you on the other side of the planet! And you don't know how to get back there, so make sure you put them pretty close to where you found them so they're able to find their way back home. And lastly, don't take salamanders that you find in the park home with you! Everything in a national park is protected and should stay right where you found it. And that's just good advice when you're in the woods, don't take anything except for photographs and don't leave anything don't leave any trash, just leave Footprints! And really be sure to be careful and respect where you're at because the forest is fully alive and full of amazing things and we should do our part to protect and respect them.

Now for the last bit of our Science Storytime, I am going to share with you a fun little coloring page! So it's some fun little salamanders that you're able to color at your own leisure. This is one that a friend of mine did I think they did a fantastic job! But here's the blank page that you're able to do, and I will post these on THEMInSTEM.com, and there will be a link in the description here, and then you're able to print it out and color it in yourself! I think coloring is a super fun thing. I tried to include all the different kinds of salamanders, so here is that maybe a red cheek, and here's one with little speckles on them, and a good little spotted one. So you can color these according to different kinds of salamanders, or just do whatever you want with them! Because all salamanders are valid and they're all really cool looking so use your imagination! Use a bunch of color, use some glitter, and make your salamanders really pop and sparkle! I'll try to also post the guide in the back of this to the different kinds of salamanders so you can use any of those for inspiration, but also let your imagination run wild! Use the internet to look up different kinds of salamanders, because there's a whole big variety out there and they all deserve love and respect and attention.

I hope you learned a little bit about salamanders today! I hope that you are going to be looking out for the next time you're in the woods, maybe you and your parents can plan a little Smoky Mountain vacation see them in person! But just remember to be careful with them and enjoy them because they're fascinating beautiful little creatures just like you! Thank you for joining me for Science Storytime my name is Rubella Wonder, and I hope you see me for next Science Storytime but in the meantime, you better work, you better learn, and, most importantly. you better Wonder! I'll see you next time!