

Discussion Questions

1. How does the separation of chapters by season draw parallels between Dara McAnulty's experience and transformation as a person and naturalist?
2. McAnulty often compares nature and its transformation to magic. Give three examples of how he makes these connections.
3. In *Diary of a Young Naturalist*, McAnulty references the idea of isolation and separating oneself from the general public: "Over the years, a wall of stone and beautiful ivy has grown around me, and only family and wildlife are allowed in" (pg. 137). On page 208, McAnulty writes, "I'm so used to keeping my thoughts locked inside and being in a space where it's only me and my family." How do these comparisons relate to Dara's identity as a naturalist? As a neurodivergent individual?
4. On page 15, in reference to the living and breathing flora and fauna in the natural world McAnulty writes, "They all make sense to me, people just don't." Where else has McAnulty reflected on these feelings, and how has it deepened his relationship with the natural world?
5. How does McAnulty discuss a human's strong relationship with nature in relation to the idea of balance and symmetry?
6. On page 64, McAnulty writes, "Autism makes me feel everything more intensely: I don't have a joy filter." How might his identity and experience relate to his relationship with the natural world?
7. McAnulty mentions several fauna and flora in *Diary of a Young Naturalist*, but he returns to birds several times throughout the book. How does McAnulty describe the significance of birds in his world and the natural world?
8. How does McAnulty describe his relationship with his family and its importance to his foundation?
9. What dangers to the natural world and environment does McAnulty describe in the book? How do these unnatural predators—particularly the unnatural or human-made predators—impact wildlife and humans?
10. On page 158, McAnulty refers to his visit and speech at Dublin's Dead Zoo, and how speaking out empowered him ("I might love punk music and hate conformity and being boxed in, but I never saw myself as a rebel. But maybe I am, and as I stand on a wooden box, the organiser, called Caroline, holds a microphone so I can read my speech. I feel emboldened, outspoken. I feel like it's the first time I've actually said out loud all the many things I'm angry about"). How can readers of *Diary of a Young Naturalist* be more engaged environmental activists in their own communities?

From <https://readinggroupchoices.com/books/diary-of-a-young-naturalist/>

Additional question: Think about Dara, his family, and his interest in nature in relation to community. How does he fit in the community, work within the community, change over the course of the book with community, etc.?