

Blueberry and Jam: Adventures in Maine

Elizabeth Hamilton-Guarino

Irina Prisacaru, Illustrator

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In the charming picture book Blueberry and Jam, animal friends make amazing discoveries across the state and as close as in their own backyards.

In Elizabeth Hamilton-Guarino's edifying picture book *Blueberry and Jam*, cat and mouse best friends explore their home state and come to appreciate its wonders.

A Maine Coon, Blueberry, and his mouse pal Jam have always wanted to be adventurers. They decide to begin their explorations close to home, taking a trip to cities around Maine. From their home in the far south of the state, they travel up the Atlantic coast, visiting idyllic towns. They also hike inland to camp, fish, and climb mountains before touring the capital, Augusta, and returning home.

Less a story than a travelogue that lists Blueberry and Jam's activities and facts about Maine, the book's plot is minimal beyond the duo's travels between places. They walk "the old cobblestone streets, look ... at the old brick buildings, climb ... the Portland Observatory, and [eat] ice cream cones on the wharf before driving up Route 1 to Freeport." They're expressive when it comes to appreciating the sights; they watch butterflies flutter, marvel at rocky islands, and admire a panoramic view of a quaint town. Some facts, such as that the top of Cadillac Mountain is the first place the sun rises in the United States each morning, inspire awe, while others, such as that President George Washington commissioned the Portland Head lighthouse in 1791, are more dry. Still, their discoveries spark interest in exploring beyond the state, emphasizing their curiosity and desire to be open-minded.

In the eye-catching illustrations, the text on Blueberry's shirt is ever-changing; it touts "Peace," "Maine," "Acadia," and "Happiness" at various points throughout the story. The landscape is also honored in lush, lovely ways, via textured ocean waves and granite cliffs, vibrant wildflower and blueberry fields, and breathtaking sunrises and sunsets. But the images of the cat and mouse are often too alike (Blueberry faces away to take photographs of various landscapes, for example), and they become stale as they repeat.

A charming and informative animal travel tale, *Blueberry and Jam* follows a curious duo's explorations.

AIMEE JODOIN (July 15, 2024)

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