

Laura

The Tycoon's Daughter

Book Club Kit



A Novel by
Sara R. Turnquist

About Sara R. Turquist

Sara is a coffee lovin', word slinging, clean Historical Romance author whose super power is converting caffeine into novels. She loves those odd little tidbits of history that are stranger than fiction. That's what inspires her. Well, that and a good love story.



But of all the love stories she knows, hers is her favorite. She lives happily with her own Prince Charming and their gaggle of minions. Three to be exact. They sure know how to distract a writer! But, alas, the stories must be written, even if it must happen in the wee hours of the morning.

Sara is an avid reader and also enjoys reading clean Historical Romances when she's not traveling. Her books range from the Czech lands to the American Wild West and from ancient Egypt to the early 1900s. Some of her titles include *The Lady Bornekova*, *Hope in Cripple Creek*, *The General's Wife*, *Trail of Fears*, and the Convenient Risk Series.

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Q&A With Sara Turnquist

Can you tell us about some research that went into writing about the Casey Jones train accident?

As a native Tennessean, I grew up hearing stories about Casey Jones. He has become somewhat of a folk hero and local legend in this part of the world. I have stopped at The Country Store attached to the museum many, many times. But when I decided to have a book that touched on his story, I made an appointment to meet with the director of the museum. I had some questions, but not many yet. I just wanted to hear about Casey's life and death. So, we talked with the director, whom I named the heroine after, and toured the museum. It was a wonderfully informative experience and raised questions in my mind and expanded my story. The director referenced a biographical book written by a contemporary of Casey Jones who knew the man. And I had to have it. That, too, aided in my research.

Tell us some of the core themes you discuss in this novel. How can your readers relate to these areas in their own lives?

The tension between control vs. trust is central to the story. We all want to have some measure of control over our circumstances, don't we? But as much as we try, we can't truly control much of anything. Enter fear...and in my experience, the opposite of fear in this context is not bravery/courage, but trust. Trusting God's plan and purpose and letting go (or being still) and letting Him guide us and, as Psalm 139 says, "hem us in behind and before."

This novel dives into the topic of women's rights at this time, how does the main character navigate these limited options and rights during this time?

This is set during the Gilded Age. Women's Suffrage was a thing, but the law regarding the vote had not changed. Women during this time were largely a commodity. They had limited rights and limited options. A woman in Laura's position (upper class) would marry or become a companion for a wealthy relative. Again, limited options. This would have been a reality that she understood (even if she didn't like it) and largely accepted about her situation.

Q&A With Sara Turnquist Cont...

How does faith play a role in this story?

Well, we certainly have Laura letting go of her illusion of control and trusting what God is doing in her life. Especially when it comes to Jack. We also see her railing against race issues at the time. Sim Webb, the fireman who was working with Casey at the time of the accident, was a victim of prejudices. His accounting of the accident was disregarded because there were white men (whose jobs were at stake if Sim's account was believed) who offered contrary testimony. I am so glad this is no longer an across-the-board practice. But Laura's faith allows her to see Sim as another person, not just as a man of color.

What inspired the personality traits of your main character, Laura?

Laura's story coming together largely influenced her character. When I plot the story (which, I don't do a ton of plotting), I do a good bit of character development. It's odd, but I have a vague understanding of the basic character - the lie they tell themselves, their core belief, etc. And then I let those things and the character themselves tell me the rest. That sounds weird to a non-writer I'm sure. But it's not that I hear voices, it's a sense I have about the character. Probably something in my subconscious that gives rise to who the character really is.

What was your favorite scene to write in *Laura, The Tycoon's Daughter*?

I always love that first kiss between the hero and heroine. It is moving and validating their feelings. It's quite fun (and interesting) to write it. I experience the scene the way a reader would in this case. I'm all caught up in the emotions coming from the characters.

Q&A With Sara Turnquist Cont...

What was the most challenging scene to write in the book?

Any fight scenes are hard for me. I don't overly enjoy reading them, so when they are in my stories, I keep them brief and have only the most relevant details.

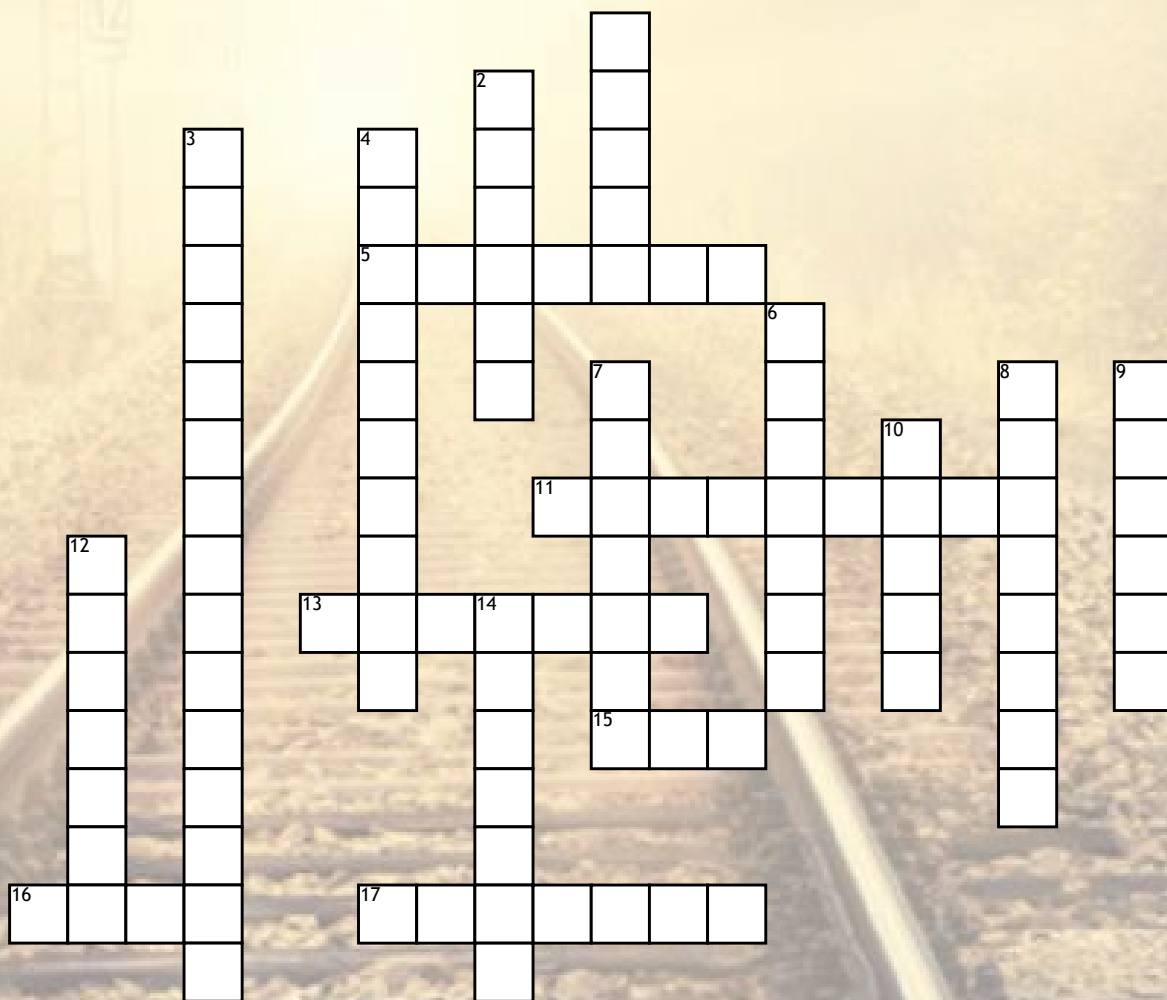
Which character did you enjoy writing the most?

I really enjoyed Micah. He is stuck in a hard place as well. But he has a good-if conflicted-heart. He wants to take care of his sister, whom he adores, and yet he has restraints placed on him by his father and society. Do you ever feel as if you want something, but it is completely blocked from your path by rules and societal pressures? That's Micah.

How does this book compare to your other books?

There was less plotting for this book. The characters really drove the story for me. And this book was no exception. Most of the plotting was ensuring the historical details I wanted/needed were in there. Then there was a very basic thought about the way the story should go. But the characters can and do surprise me along the way in the things they say and do. I feel strongly that this is God partnering with me to write the story. And it is powerful.

Laura, The Tycoon's Daughter



Across

- 5. The fireman whose account of the accident was dismissed?
- 11. Laura's parents want to arrange a marriage between her and ?
- 13. Laura's Hometown
- 15. A game where kids chase each other
- 16. Deep Affection

- 17. Laura's favorite part of circus

Down

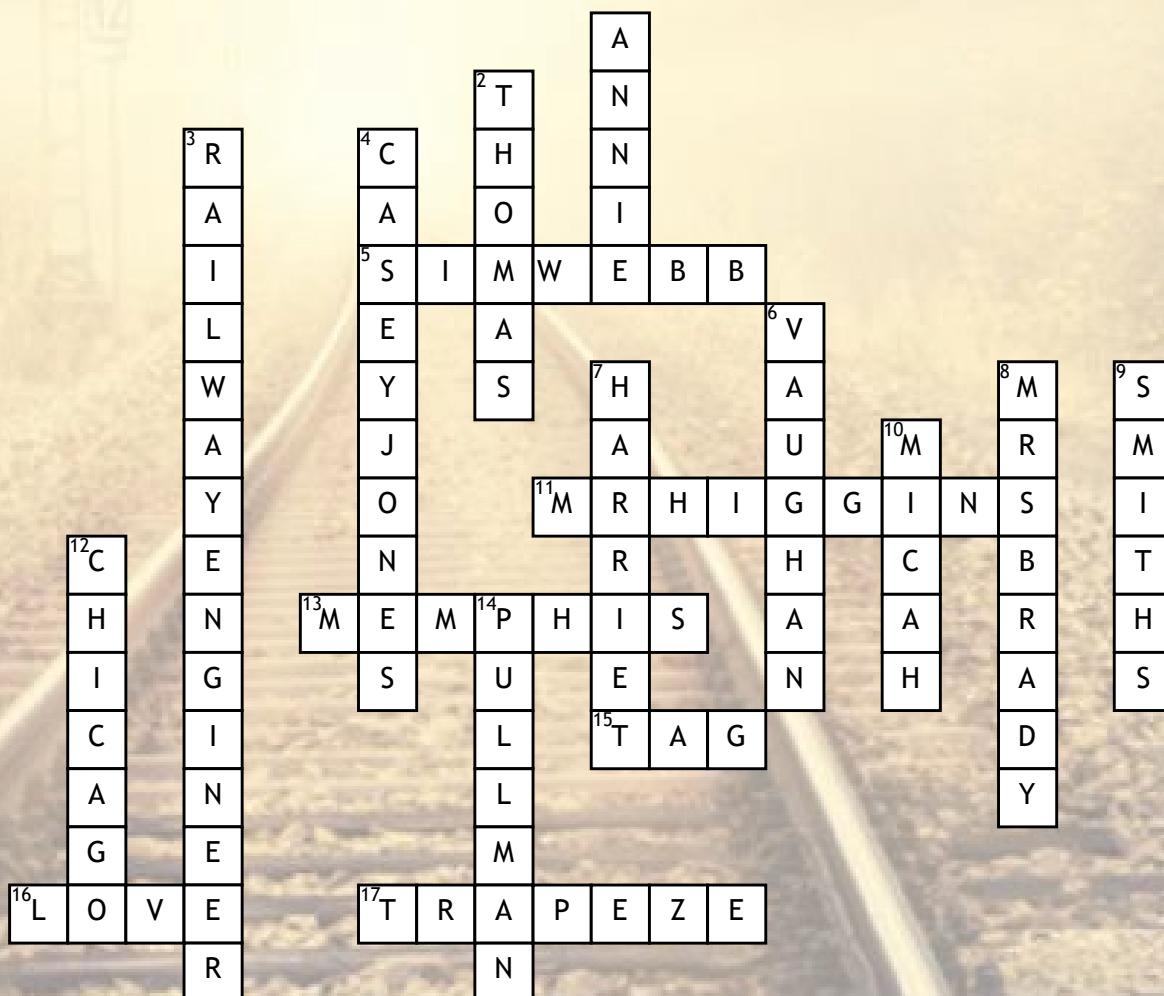
- 1. Jack's Sister
- 2. Brother sent to retrieve Laura
- 3. Jack's Profession
- 4. Engineer who died in crash
- 6. Town of fatal train accident

- 7. Hattie is a common nickname for which name?

- 8. Boarding House Owner
- 9. Couple who were boarding at house with Jack and Laura
- 10. Laura's Confidant
- 12. Largest city in Illinois
- 14. Jack's Company

Laura, The Tycoon's Daughter

Answer Key



Across

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Laura, The Tycoon's Daughter

1. IPMSEHM

2. LLPNUAM

3. SIM BBWE

4. VUGAANH

5. YAWARLI OCOYTN

6. ALWIARY AOECMNR

7. GCOHCAI

8. EAYSC EJSON

9. MLAYSU

10. JKAC SNTATROEP

11. URLAA ONLILNMITG

12. RHAUEDGT

13. EENRGINE

14. AMERFIN

15. ELAUSM

Laura, The Tycoon's Daughter

Answer Key

1. IPMSEHM Memphis
2. LLPNUAM Pullman
3. SIM BBWE Sim Webb
4. VUGAANH Vaughan
5. YAWARLI OCOYTN Railway Tycoon
6. ALWIARY AOECMNR Railway Romance
7. GCOHCAI Chicago
8. EAYSC EJSON Casey Jones
9. MLAYSU Asylum
10. JKAC SNTATROEP Jack Patterson
11. URLAA ONLILNMITG Laura Millington
12. RHAUEDGT Daughter
13. EENRGINE Engineer
14. AMERFIN Fireman
15. ELAUSM Samuel

Discussion Questions

Read these questions in your book club and talk about your answers.

- Who was your favorite character? Least favorite?
- What was your favorite part of the story?
- Were there any character struggles you identified with?
- What do you think the theme of the book is?
- There is a tension in Laura—between trying to control her life as much as possible and releasing her future hope to God. Is this a challenge you have experienced?
- Did anything in the story surprise you?
- What feelings did the book evoke as you read it?
- Were there any parts you struggled with?
- Sara writes a "marriage" of historical romance and historical fiction—a fictional story woven around historical events. What do you think of this blend? Was she successful?
- If you were making a movie about *Laura, The Tycoon's Daughter*, who would you cast for the characters?

Dear Reader

When I started dreaming up this series, the Tennessee folk hero Casey Jones was at the forefront of my mind. I knew I wanted to feature his heroic, yet fatal crash. The songs and stories about him are legendary...perhaps more so in Tennessee than anywhere else. The Casey Jones Home & Railroad Museum certainly keeps his memory alive through all that they do.

It was this history that I wanted to honor. I did not know initially how much or how little of a role Casey Jones would play. I did want to honor his sacrifice and open the eyes of my readers to the kind of man he was. But, as usual, I am hesitant to breathe life into historical figures on the page (for sensitivity reasons). That is perhaps why his role in the story is not what it might have been.

During the dinner party scene, the woman that distracted Jack was, in fact, an homage to Casey's sister, Emma Jones. She would later that year (in May 1896) drown in a tragic steamboat accident.

The songs about Casey indeed increased his fame and general awareness of the accident. You can find several versions if you search "The Ballad of Casey Jones." My particular favorite is the one featuring Johnny Cash.

Warmly,

Sara

A rustic wooden table with various food items and utensils. In the top right, there's a burlap bag with a blue and white checkered cloth and some green basil leaves. A silver fork and a knife with a black handle are placed vertically. A small white square dish contains a salad of white cheese, red and green olives, and herbs. A lemon half is next to it. In the bottom right, there's a plate with green salad and a wooden spoon. Some bread is scattered on the table.

Laura

The Tycoon's Daughter

Book Club Menu



Biscuits Mrs. Brady Should Have Made

- 2 ½ cups all-purpose flour
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- 2 teaspoons granulated sugar
- ¾ teaspoon salt
- ½ cup unsalted butter
- 1 cup whole milk (or buttermilk (or ½ cup of each))
- milk, buttermilk, cream or melted butter (optional, for brushing on biscuit tops)

Directions

- Place butter in the freezer for at least 20 minutes.
- Preheat oven to 425° F with a rack in the upper third of the oven. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
- In a large bowl, combine the flour, baking powder, sugar and salt. Whisk together until well combined.
- Grate the frozen butter using a box grater. Add the butter to the bowl and use a fork to mix it into the dry ingredients.
- Pour the 1 cup milk or buttermilk into the bowl and use a fork to stir until the dough comes together. It is ok if there are a few bits of flour not yet incorporated, but if the dough seems very dry and is not coming together add 1 to 2 tablespoons more milk or buttermilk.
- Turn the dough out onto a lightly floured work surface. Pat the dough into a 1½-inch thick rectangle. Fold the dough in half on top of itself and pat it down into another 1½-inch thick rectangle. Repeat the folding process 4 to 6 times. Then press the dough down into a 1-inch thick rectangle.
- Use a biscuit cutter (mine measures 2 ¼-inches) to cut out the biscuits, pressing it straight down into the dough without twisting. Once you've cut out as many biscuits as you can, gather the scraps and pat the dough out to 1-inch thickness a second and third time to finish cutting out all of the biscuits. Place them on the prepared baking sheet.
- If desired, brush the biscuit tops with milk, buttermilk, cream or melted butter. Bake for 13 to 16 minutes, until the tops are lightly golden brown

<https://kristineskitchenblog.com/biscuit-recipe>



Pullman Dining Car Chicken Salad

- 3/4 cup mayonnaise
- 1/4 cup plain Greek yogurt
- 1/4 cup chopped pecans
- 1/4 teaspoon onion powder
- 1/4 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper
- 4 cups (about 2 pounds) cooked, chopped chicken breast (homemade seasoned and baked, or rotisserie)
- 3/4 cup small diced Granny Smith apple
- 1/3 cup dried cranberries
- 1 1/2 teaspoons dijon mustard

Directions

- In a large bowl, whisk together the mayo, yogurt, mustard, onion powder, salt, and pepper. Taste and adjust seasoning, if necessary.
- Make sure your chicken is completely cool. Chop it up and add it to the bowl.
- Gently fold in the apple, cranberries, and pecans.
- Eat as is or place on dinner rolls, sliced croissants, or on top of sliced tomato and lettuce.

<https://bellyfull.net/chicken-salad-sandwich/#wprm-recipe-container-24454>



Millington Mansion Breakfast Casserole

- 21 pound Sausage
- 6 Eggs
- 2 cups Milk
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon pepper
- 1/2 package Frozen Hashbrowns 15oz
- 2 cups Cheddar Cheese shredded – I like cheddar but you can use your favorite

Directions

- Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.
- Crumble sausage into a skillet on the stove and brown completely. Remove from heat.
- 1 pound Sausage
- In a large bowl, mix eggs and milk together and whisk well.
- 6 Eggs, 2 cups Milk
- Add salt and pepper to this mixture and stir. - 1 teaspoon salt, 1/2 teaspoon pepper
- To a 9×13 dish, add frozen hashbrowns, sausage, and cheese – stir together in the dish
- 1/2 package Frozen Hashbrowns, 2 cups Cheddar Cheese
- Pour the egg/milk mixture into the dish.
- Bake at 350 degrees for 45 minutes – covered with foil. Remove the foil and bake for about 10-15 minutes more until the dish is bubbly and cheese is melted.

<https://www.allthingsmamma.com/easy-breakfast-casserole/#wprm-recipe-container-32489>



Circus Caramel Popcorn

- 8 cups popped popcorn
- 1 cup unsalted butter
- 1 1/2 cups brown sugar
- 1/3 cup corn syrup
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 teaspoon salt, plus additional if desired
- 1 teaspoon baking soda

Directions

- Preheat oven to 225F. Line 2 large baking sheets with silicone baking mat. (If you only have one silicone mat, you can line the second baking mat with parchment paper - a silicone baking mat has the best baking results for this recipe.)
- Use an air popper to pop your popcorn to avoid adding extra oil to the recipe.
- Spread popped popcorn evenly across one sheet, then set aside.
- In a saucepan over medium heat, combine the butter, brown sugar, and corn syrup.
- Whisk the mixture constantly until butter has melted and brown sugar has dissolved, about 3-5 minutes.
- While continuing to whisk, add the vanilla, salt and baking soda into the caramel. The baking soda will cause some bubbling.
- Remove saucepan from heat once the caramel has thickened and takes on a lighter, fluffier texture, about 1-2 minutes.
- Pour caramel over popcorn and (working quickly) use a spatula to toss popcorn to coat fully.
- Place caramel popcorn in the oven and bake for 3 or 4 15-minute intervals, for a total of 45-60 minutes.
- At each 15 minute interval, remove the baking sheet from the oven, toss popcorn to coat completely and break up any clumps. At the 45 minute mark, gauge if the popcorn is sticky and well-coated.
- Transfer the baked caramel popcorn to the second baking sheet to cool. Use a spatula to break up any lumps.
- If you want a salted caramel popcorn, be sure to sprinkle on a bit of coarse salt now.
- Store in an airtight container once cool.

<https://sugarspiceandglitter.com/homemade-caramel-popcorn/>

Thank you so much for reading
Laura, The Tycoon's Daughter.

Would you like for Sara to visit
your book club? She can visit
in person or virtually. If you
are interested please
contact her at
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