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One + One = Blue

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Basil Feeney is the biggest loser in the seventh grade. Gram has home-schooled him until this year when Basil comes to public school hoping to find some friends. Unfortunately, he finds himself sitting by himself in the lunchroom until the day he walks in to find a girl sitting in his spot. Tenzie’s talking annoys him until she says something about having a weird thing with numbers and colors—Basil has a weird thing with numbers and colors too and he learns about synesthesia. Complications come when Basil’s mother Carly, an aspiring actress, comes home. Basil always imagined his mom coming to reclaim him, but he can’t quite trust Carly—while Tenzie, feeling overlooked at home, adores her. Carly abruptly leaves after a near-accident she causes and the two kids decide to go after her. When they find Carly, she starts to take them home, but changes her mind and abandons them at a library. Basil calls Gram to come get them and they settle back into their contented life.

Auch creates interesting characters with realistic problems to work through. The main characters are likeable and realistic. The story is told through Basil in first person narrative as he deals with growing up under the care of his grandmother, having a mother reappear after several years away, having no friends, and then having a friend like Tenzie—talkative, opinionated, and a bit pushy. Gram’s strong role as caretaker and constant in Basil’s life help him as he deals with the challenges in his life. The book is well written, well-paced, engaging, and ends in a mostly positive way—just like life. One+One=Blue may be of particular interest to tweens and teens who live with a grandparent or who have a learning disability, especially those with synesthesia.