

Warning!
Spoilers
ahead!

Always, Clementine

Discussion Notes

- “Did you know that one hundred minutes have passed since we last spoke?” (p. 3) Clementine has never been away from Rosie before, what is the longest time you’ve spent away from someone you love? How did it make you feel?
- Rosie and Clementine are good friends, but in the real world “Mice and chimpanzees aren’t natural friends”. (p. 24) If you could be best friends with any animal, which would you pick and why?
- In Letter 3 we learn how Clementine and Rosie met. Do you remember the first time you met one of your friends? What did you bond over?
- “Every third afternoon, Felix would plop down at his lab station and write quick letters to his grandma.” (p. 21) Do you write letters or postcards to anyone? Why do you think it is nice to receive and write letters?
 - Discuss whether you think we still need letters when most people have mobile phones.
- “I have been alive for forty-seven days. That’s 1,128 hours. That’s 67,680 minutes. That’s 4,060,000 seconds.” (p. 33) Clementine knows exactly how old she is in days, hours, minutes, and seconds. Can you work out how old you are in days and hours?
- In Letter 6 Clementine sees inside Pop’s house for the first time. It sounds quite comfy and cosy, so why do you think Clementine and Hamlet are scared?
- “The lab didn’t want to study me. They wanted ... to study ... my brain.” (p. 53) Were you surprised when you found this out? How did it make you feel and how do you think it made Clementine feel?
- If Clementine wasn’t a genius, do you think Pops and Gus would have kept her and looked after her?
- In Letter 10 we hear about how Gus keeps getting into trouble and feels very guilty about this. Discuss what you think the best way to deal with guilt is and how you can comfort someone who feels guilty.



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- When Clementine is scared and hiding, she thinks of Rosie. Why do you think this comforts her? What or who would you think of to calm you down when stressed or scared?
 - What do you think the significance is of the author capitalising “Inside” and “Outside”. When would you normally use a capital letter at the start of a word?
 - Clementine picks up chess really quickly, but it would take a human much longer to master chess. What have you worked hard on to become really good at? What hobbies or skills would you like to work on in the future?
 - “I have never – and I mean never – encountered a player like you. Not even in my daydreams. The fact that you are already this good, after two days, is extraordinary.” (p. 129) Pop believes in Clementine. How do you think this helps Clementine to be more confident? Think of the last time someone, a parent, teacher, or friend, said something encouraging to you. How did it make you feel?
 - Clementine doesn’t win every time she plays chess. What do we learn from losing? Would it be good to always win? Discuss.
 - Hamlet and Clementine’s talents are a great reflection of how people can be gifted in different ways. We aren’t all amazing at maths and Latin, but we have other talents that are equally impressive. What are some of your talents? What are some of your classmates’ talents? Remember they don’t have to be related to school.
 - In Letter 25 Clementine learns about Stuart Little and Ratatouille. What is it about mice and rats that make great fictional characters?
 - Once Clementine can play chess she teaches Hamlet. This is a great way to improve your own skills. Why do you think teaching someone else helps you to learn more?
 - “If you’re writing your own story, then you’re telling your own story. You’re not letting anyone else say it for you. Other people have been telling our stories for so long. We’re like pawns in a game. And we have always deserved more.” (p. 238)
- In real life animals cannot speak for themselves, we have to speak for them. How can we best tell their story?



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Activity Ideas

Create your own storyboard

Lots of passages in Always, Clementine are very cinematic, especially the scene in Letter 39 where Clementine is being chased through the supermarket. Design your own storyboard for this scene or any other scene that you think would look great on screen, using the descriptions in the book to visualise the action. Draw 6 boxes on a page with space around them to add notes and fill these in with your different scenes.

Write a letter to the lab

After Pop's Hobbies airs on TV lots of people write letters to the lab asking them to release the other animals. Write your own letter to the lab to persuade them to give Rosie and the other animals their freedom. Remember to use persuasive language and think about what devices would help to win the lab over to your way of thinking.

Animal talents

Clementine has an extraordinary talent for playing chess, and in real life there are lots of animals that are very intelligent and talented. Split into groups and pick one of the animals below to research. Find out what skills they have and how they use them in their own habitats. Present your research to the rest of the class and discuss which animal talents surprised you and why.

- Ravens
- Chimpanzees
- Elephants
- Dolphins
- Pigs
- Octopuses

We hope you enjoyed reading Always,
Clementine! Please share your thoughts and
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#AlwaysClementine



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