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"Always, Clementine" Lesson Plan Guide

by Carlie Sorosiak

Unit Overview

Duration: 2-3 weeks

Grade Level: 3-5

Subject Integration: ELA, Science, Social Studies, Character Education

Essential Question: How can we use our unique talents and abilities to make a positive difference in the world?

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Analyze character development and motivation in epistolary fiction
- Examine themes of friendship, advocacy, and social responsibility
- Understand different narrative formats (letters) and their purposes
- Make connections between literature and real-world issues
- Explore ethical questions around animal welfare and scientific research
- Express understanding through multiple formats (writing, discussion, creative projects)
- Identify and celebrate personal talents and consider their positive applications

Standards Alignment

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.3:** Describe characters, settings, and events using details from the text
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.5:** Explain major differences in the points of view of characters
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.2:** Determine theme and summarize the text
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.3:** Write narratives using effective technique and descriptive details
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.4.1:** Engage effectively in collaborative discussions

WEEK 1: Introduction and Early Letters

Day 1: Book Introduction and Letter Format

Objective: Introduce epistolary format and build anticipation

Materials: Sample friendly letters, chart paper, book cover

Opening (10 minutes)

- Display various types of letters (friendly, business, thank-you)
- Quick discussion: "When might someone write letters instead of texting or calling?"



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Main Activity (30 minutes)

1. **Letter Format Exploration** (15 minutes)
 - Review parts of a friendly letter
 - Discuss why letters might be special for maintaining friendships
 - Predict: Why might a mouse write letters?
2. **Book Introduction** (15 minutes)
 - Read book summary and examine cover
 - Introduce vocabulary: laboratory, brilliant, advocate, captivity, freedom
 - Create prediction chart: "What will Clementine discover about freedom?"

Closing (5 minutes)

- Partner share: One prediction about Clementine's journey
- Assign reading: First 2-3 letters

Assessment: Letter format understanding, prediction quality

Day 2: Meeting Clementine

Objective: Analyze protagonist's unique perspective and situation

Materials: Character trait web, perspective-taking worksheet

Opening (10 minutes)

- Think-pair-share: "What surprised you about Clementine's voice in her letters?"

Main Activity (30 minutes)

1. **Character Analysis** (20 minutes)
 - Create character web for Clementine
 - Focus on: What makes her special? What are her challenges? What does she want?
 - Compare lab life vs. freedom through Clementine's descriptions
2. **Perspective Discussion** (10 minutes)
 - How does Clementine see the world differently than humans might?
 - What advantages does her small size give her? What challenges?
 - Introduction to the concept of advocacy through small actions

Closing (5 minutes)

- Exit ticket: "What would you most want to tell Clementine if you could write her a letter?"

Homework: Read next set of letters

Assessment: Character analysis accuracy, understanding of unique perspective



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Day 3: Freedom and New Discoveries

Objective: Explore themes of freedom and belonging

Materials: Freedom comparison chart, setting analysis worksheet

Opening (5 minutes)

- Quick poll: "What does freedom mean to you?"

Main Activity (35 minutes)

1. Freedom Exploration (20 minutes)

- Compare Clementine's life in the lab vs. with Gus and Pop
- Create T-chart: "What Clementine gains/What she misses"
- Discuss: Is complete freedom always better? Why or why not?

2. New Relationships (15 minutes)

- Analyze how Gus and Pop treat Clementine
- Identify what makes them good friends/mentors
- Track how these relationships help Clementine grow

Closing (5 minutes)

- Gallery walk of freedom comparison charts
- Preview next reading assignment

Assessment: Comparison chart thoughtfulness, relationship analysis

Days 4-5: Building Understanding

Objective: Track character development and friendship themes

Materials: Letter response journals, discussion role cards

Structure for Each Day:

- **Opening** (10 min): Letter journal sharing—students write responses to Clementine's letters
- **Main Activity** (25 min): Literature circles focusing on friendship between Clementine and Rosie
- **Closing** (10 min): Whole group discussion of key insights

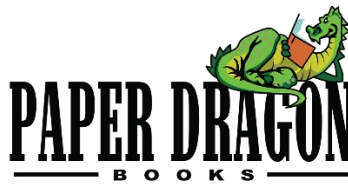
Reading Assignments: Continue through middle portion of book **Assessment:** Journal entry quality, literature circle participation

WEEK 2: Chess, Advocacy, and Purpose

Day 6: Learning Chess and Strategic Thinking

Objective: Analyze the symbolism and importance of chess in the story

Materials: Chess basics handout, strategy thinking worksheet



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Opening (10 minutes)

- Brief introduction to chess basics (show pieces, explain objective)
- Discuss: "Why might Pop choose to teach Clementine chess?"

Main Activity (30 minutes)

1. **Chess as Metaphor** (20 minutes)
 - Explore how chess requires planning ahead and considering consequences
 - Connect to Clementine's growth: How does chess help her think about her choices?
 - Discuss Pop's role as mentor and what he's really teaching Clementine
2. **Strategic Thinking Application** (10 minutes)
 - Students practice thinking ahead using simple scenarios
 - Connect to real-life decision making
 - How might strategic thinking help with advocacy?

Closing (5 minutes)

- Share one way chess might help someone become a better problem-solver

Assessment: Understanding of chess symbolism, connection to character growth

Day 7: Advocacy and Using Talents for Good

Objective: Explore themes of social responsibility and advocacy

Materials: Advocacy examples chart, talent inventory worksheet

Opening (10 minutes)

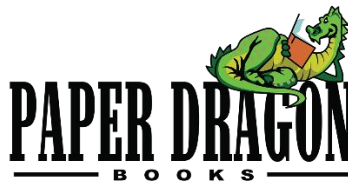
- Brainstorm: "Ways people advocate for causes they care about"
- Share examples appropriate for children (recycling campaigns, helping at animal shelters, etc.)

Main Activity (30 minutes)

1. **Clementine as Advocate** (15 minutes)
 - Track how Clementine begins to think about helping other lab animals
 - Discuss: How can someone small make a big difference?
 - Identify specific actions Clementine takes or considers
2. **Personal Talent Inventory** (15 minutes)
 - Students identify their own special talents or interests
 - Brainstorm positive ways to use these talents
 - Connect to Clementine's journey of discovering her purpose

Closing (5 minutes)

- Partner share: One talent and one way it could help others



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Homework: Think of one small action that could make a positive difference

Assessment: Understanding of advocacy concepts, thoughtful talent reflection

Day 8: Friendship Across Distance

Objective: Analyze the relationship between Clementine and Rosie

Materials: Friendship analysis worksheet, letter-writing supplies

Opening (5 minutes)

- Quick discussion: "How do Clementine's letters help both her and Rosie?"

Main Activity (35 minutes)

1. Friendship Analysis (20 minutes)

- Examine how Clementine and Rosie support each other through letters
- Identify specific examples of care, encouragement, and loyalty
- Discuss how sharing experiences strengthens friendship

2. Letter Writing Practice (15 minutes)

- Students write encouraging letters to fictional characters in challenging situations
- Focus on showing care, sharing experiences, and offering support
- Optional: Write letters to real friends or family members

Closing (5 minutes)

- Share one thing that makes Clementine and Rosie's friendship special

Assessment: Friendship analysis depth, letter-writing empathy and support

Days 9-10: Character Growth and Resolution

Objective: Track Clementine's development and story resolution

Follow similar structure with focus on:

- How Clementine's understanding of her purpose evolves
- The resolution of her relationship with both worlds (freedom and concern for those in captivity)
- Preparation for story conclusion and final projects

WEEK 3: Resolution and Application

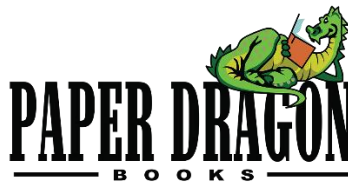
Day 11: Story Conclusion and Character Transformation

Objective: Analyze story resolution and character growth

Materials: Before/after character chart, theme analysis worksheet

Opening (10 minutes)

- Complete final reading



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- Initial reactions: "What did you think of the ending?"

Main Activity (30 minutes)

1. **Character Transformation** (15 minutes)
 - Complete before/after analysis of Clementine
 - Identify key moments that changed her perspective
 - Discuss: What has Clementine learned about using her talents?
2. **Theme Discussion** (15 minutes)
 - Identify major themes with text evidence
 - Focus on: friendship, advocacy, using talents for good, finding purpose
 - Connect themes to students' own lives and potential

Closing (5 minutes)

- Quick-write: "What's the most important lesson Clementine learned?"

Assessment: Character analysis accuracy, theme identification with evidence

Day 12: Creative Response Projects

Objective: Demonstrate understanding through creative expression

Materials: Various art supplies, project guideline sheets

Project Options:

1. **Letter Exchange:** Write a series of letters between Clementine and Rosie about a new adventure
2. **Advocacy Campaign:** Create posters or presentations about a cause Clementine might support
3. **Chess Lessons:** Design a guide teaching others how chess relates to life skills
4. **Alternative Perspective:** Retell part of the story from Gus's or Pop's point of view
5. **Sequel Planning:** Design Clementine's next mission to help animals or solve problems

Structure:

- **Opening** (10 min): Project explanation and choice
- **Work Time** (30 min): Individual or partner project development
- **Closing** (5 min): Progress sharing and peer feedback

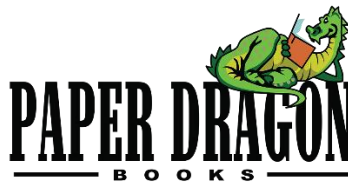
Assessment: Project creativity, connection to themes, effort and planning

Day 13: Letter Writing and Real-World Connections

Objective: Apply letter-writing skills to real advocacy

Materials: Letter templates, information about local animal shelters or advocacy organizations

Opening (5 minutes)



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- Review proper letter format and persuasive writing techniques

Main Activity (35 minutes)

1. Advocacy Letter Writing (25 minutes)

- Students choose a cause they care about (animal welfare, environmental protection, community service, etc.)
- Write letters to local organizations offering help or asking how kids can get involved
- Alternative: Write thank-you letters to people who help animals or other causes

2. Sharing and Feedback (10 minutes)

- Partner review of letters for clarity and kindness
- Discuss: How does taking action feel different from just thinking about problems?

Closing (5 minutes)

- Discuss plans for actually sending letters (with parent permission)

Assessment: Letter quality, connection to advocacy themes, appropriate tone

Day 14: Project Presentations and Unit Reflection

Objective: Share learning and reflect on personal applications

Materials: Presentation rubric, reflection prompts

Opening (5 minutes)

- Presentation guidelines and supportive audience expectations

Main Activity (35 minutes)

- Student project presentations (3-4 minutes each)
- Audience provides positive feedback focusing on creativity and connection to themes

Closing (5 minutes)

- Unit reflection: "How might you use your own talents to make a positive difference?"
- Discussion of real-world applications and next steps

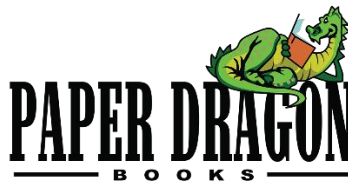
Assessment: Presentation quality, unit reflection thoughtfulness

Assessment Rubric

Reading Comprehension (25%)

- **Exceeds:** Demonstrates deep understanding of both plot and character development
- **Meets:** Shows solid comprehension with adequate text support
- **Approaching:** Basic understanding with some evidence
- **Below:** Limited comprehension evident

Theme Analysis (25%)



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- **Exceeds:** Identifies multiple themes and makes meaningful personal connections
- **Meets:** Recognizes main themes with some analysis
- **Approaching:** Identifies basic themes
- **Below:** Minimal theme recognition

Character Understanding (25%)

- **Exceeds:** Insightful analysis of character motivation, growth, and relationships
- **Meets:** Clear understanding of character development
- **Approaching:** Basic character recognition
- **Below:** Limited character analysis

Application and Engagement (25%)

- **Exceeds:** Makes thoughtful connections to real-world advocacy and personal responsibility
- **Meets:** Shows some application of themes to personal life
- **Approaching:** Limited connection to real-world applications
- **Below:** Minimal engagement with deeper meanings

Differentiation Strategies

For Struggling Readers:

- Audio support for challenging sections
- Graphic organizers for tracking character development
- Partner reading opportunities
- Letter templates with sentence starters

For Advanced Readers:

- Research projects on animal welfare or ethics in science
- Independent reading of related advocacy literature
- Leadership roles in literature discussions
- Extended writing projects exploring multiple perspectives

For English Language Learners:

- Visual supports for vocabulary and concepts
- Native language discussion opportunities when possible
- Collaborative letter-writing activities
- Cultural connections to different forms of advocacy

For Students with Different Learning Needs:

- Multiple project format options (visual, verbal, kinesthetic)
- Flexible grouping for discussions



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- Extra processing time for complex ethical questions
- Choice in how to demonstrate understanding

Materials List

- Class set of "Always, Clementine"
- Letter-writing supplies (paper, envelopes, stamps)
- Basic chess set for demonstration
- Chart paper and markers
- Art supplies for projects
- Examples of advocacy materials appropriate for children

Extension Activities

Home Connections:

- Family discussions about using talents to help others
- Letter-writing practice with distant relatives
- Research family members who have advocated for causes
- Chess learning with family members

Community Service:

- Class visit to local animal shelter (if appropriate)
- Letter-writing campaign to thank community helpers
- Small fundraiser for animal welfare organization
- Presentation to younger classes about kindness to animals

Cross-Curricular Connections

Science:

- Age-appropriate discussion of how scientific research helps develop medicines
- Study of animal behavior and intelligence
- Introduction to ethics in science
- Exploration of animal adaptation and survival

Social Studies:

- Study of famous advocates and how they created change
- Discussion of how individuals can influence their communities
- Exploration of different forms of communication throughout history
- Understanding of rights and responsibilities

Character Education:

- Development of empathy and compassion



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- Understanding of personal responsibility
- Recognition of individual talents and their positive applications
- Practice in standing up for beliefs respectfully

Technology Integration:

- Research advocacy organizations online
- Create digital presentations about causes students care about
- Use technology to connect with other classrooms discussing similar themes
- Digital storytelling projects from different character perspectives