

Time Travelling with a Hamster



Ross Welford

DISCUSSION NOTES

These are to encourage teacher / librarian / book club leader/ and student discussion.

1. Thinking about time travel, Al suggests *'the possibilities are endless. Just think of the misery that could be stopped, the accidents prevented, if I had the courage to travel back in time.'* If you were able, what one thing would you change in your own family's history or in history in general?
2. How important is Al's pet hamster Alan Shearer to the story?
3. Because Pye, Al's dad, desperately wants to undo the accident that resulted in a killer piece of metal lodged in his brain, he asks Al to *'use my device - follow the instructions incredibly carefully - and prevent me from having that accident.'* Do you think this is an OK request for a dad to make of his twelve-year-old son? Give reason(s) for your reply.
4. Which character in the novel do you like the least and why?
5. Grandpa Byron says it is *'difficult to understand as to why you would risk everything on this ludicrous adventure of your father's.'* Why is he so against time travelling?
6. On a number of occasions when Al is faced with really dark moments he cries. The idea that boys don't cry still flourishes in some people's minds. What is your view?
7. Despite some lying, break-ins and thefts, plus setting fire to a school, is Al a good role model for young readers? Why do think this?
8. The reader's imagination is completely captured by Al's epic experiences. Discuss the pros and cons of whether the story would transfer well into a film? Which incident, or incidents, would provide the highlights?
9. Do you think Grandpa Byron's advice *'Live life so completely that when death comes to you like a thief in the night, there will be nothing left for him to steal.'* How would you translate this and do you think that this is good advice?
10. What message, if any, do you take from this book?



HarperCollinsChildren'sBooks
presents

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40 CHESTERTON ROAD, CALVERCOT

TASK 1

Visualise the converted cellar under the garage.

- a) Draw a labelled plan of the garage, the concrete stairway, the circular door and the nuclear shelter. *or* b) Artistically draw the bunker in the cellar – created when people thought Russian nuclear bombs were a real threat.



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TASK 2

At each visit to 40 Chesterton Road, Al experiences a wide range of emotional feelings.

With a partner, think carefully about the words in the second column of the chart.

Using any explicit information in the novel (see page references) and your ability to infer and deduce (read between the lines) to help you, select what you think are the mixed feelings Al has during each visit to the nuclear bunker.

If you're unsure of what any of the words mean, use a dictionary to check.

Write your chosen words into the appropriate first column. One has already been done for you.

There are more words than you will need because there is not just one right word for each emotion.

VISITS TO THE OLD CELLAR	AL FEELS:
<p>FIRST VISIT p. 12: First sighting of time machine</p> <p>nervous, disappointed, amazed, uneasy</p>	<p>stressed cautious nervous puzzled amazed terrified sad disappointed</p>
<p>SECOND VISIT p. 128: Finding his dad's plan</p> <p>p. 147: First trial</p>	<p>curious confident wretched bewildered overwhelmed trapped captivated anxious spellbound bereft</p>
<p>THIRD VISIT p. 180: Encounter with Bella and Graham</p>	<p>calm doubtful amazed aghast fearful pressurised vulnerable excited desperate</p>
<p>FOURTH VISIT p. 26: Nowhere else to go</p>	<p>tense apprehensive shaky shocked regretful transfixed</p>



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KEY WORDS

TASK

Working in small groups, choose two cards and tell your group members how they are connected.

AL'S MUM	LEAN GREEN MEAN MACHINE	DEATH	POWER
DROWNING	BULLYING	HAMSTER	MEMORY PALACES
LOSS	FIREWORKS	TIME TRAVEL	GRANDPA BYRON
MIND GAMES	AL'S DAD	LAPTOP	

