

Reading Guide

Room One by Andrew Clements



Discussion Topics

What do the opening pages of the novel tell readers about Ted's daily routine, his town, and his feelings about both? What is different about the morning on which the story begins?

Describe the Red Prairie Learning Center. How is it similar to, or different from, your school? Would you like to go to school in Plattsford? Why or why not?

How does Ted's love of mysteries affect his investigation of the face in the farmhouse window? Was he correct in going to the farmhouse alone?

How have April and her family come to be hiding in the farmhouse? Do you think April is making a good choice to hide there? Explain your answer.

How does being a Boy Scout affect Ted's actions? Given the situation, can Ted act honestly toward everyone -- April, his family, Ruby Cantrell at the E&A Market, Mrs. Mitchell -- at the same time? Have you ever found that keeping a secret for one person required you to behave dishonestly toward another? How did this make you feel? How did you solve your dilemma?

How has Mrs. Mitchell made her small schoolhouse situation work? What are her concerns for the Red Prairie Learning Center's future? How does Mrs. Mitchell's home life affect her concerns? Compare Mrs. Mitchell's situation to Mr. Hammond's outlook for his farm. What similarities or differences do you note?

Why does Ted tell his secret to Mrs. Mitchell? How does she feel about keeping Ted's confidence? What does she do? How does Ted feel about her actions?

What happens when Ted discovers April's family gone from the Anderson farmhouse? What was Deputy Linwood really investigating? What does this confusion suggest about keeping secrets? Where does Ted find April?

What does Ted decide is the best way to help April and her family? To whom does he reach out for help? What effects do his actions have upon his town?

Is Ted ultimately able to help April? How do the efforts of his town ultimately help others? How does this, in turn, help Plattsford?

Describe ways in which your school, religious, or civic groups reach out to others. Have you ever participated in such efforts? How did this make you feel? Why is it important for

communities to offer help to those in need?

Imagine you are Ted as a senior in high school. Looking back, how might you describe your Room One mystery experience? What is the most important thing you learned?

Activities and Research

Write a letter to Ted recommending a mystery novel. Explain why you think he will enjoy the book and whether or not you think he can solve the case before the final page. If desired, share your recommendation with friends or classmates.

Create a class survey about jobs. How many students have jobs? Do students plan to get jobs and at what age? What jobs would they like to try? How many students have daily chores at home? How many receive allowances? Compile the results of your survey into a short report, including graphs or tables.

On a two-columned chart, compare Ted's school to your own. Consider the building, class size, daily routines and other observations. In small groups, research different ways kids are educated, from public schools to homeschooling. Use your research for a classroom debate on the best types of learning settings.

In the character of April, write a series of journal entries describing: how you feel when you spot Ted through the window; why you decide to tell Ted your story; your feelings about losing your dad in the war; your concerns about your mother; your feelings just before leaving Plattsford.

In the character of Mrs. Mitchell, list the pros and cons of keeping Ted's secret. Discuss your list with friends or classmates. Vote to see whether most kids agree or disagree with Mrs. Mitchell's actions. Ask students to explain their votes.

Go online to learn more about the Boy Scouts (www.scouting.org) and/or Girl Scouts (www.girlscouts.org). Then write a short essay describing scouting values and conduct codes, or about other groups or organizations to which you belong that have a strong impact on your behavior.

With friends or classmates, role-play one of the following conversations from the novel: Ted telling April about his plan to help her family; Mrs. Mitchell asking Superintendent Seward not to close Red Prairie Learning Center; Plattsford residents telling television reporters about trying to help April and her family.

Create an imaginary blog for Red Prairie Learning Center. What would you call your blog? Write a series of postings in the character of Ted, Mrs. Mitchell, and other students in the classroom. What links might the group suggest offering? How might Ted's encounter with April affect the content of the blog?