

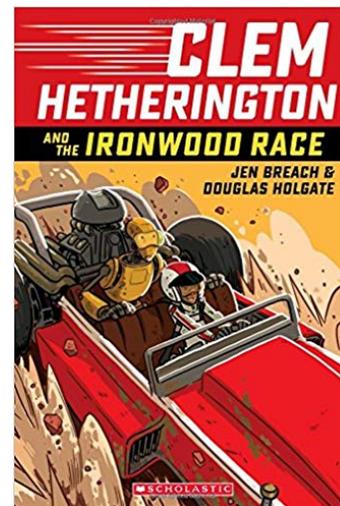


Kids Book Club Kit | Darien Library

Clem Hetherington and the Ironwood Race by Jen Breach and Douglas Holgate

Recommended for grades 4 to 6

Summary: Clementine Hetherington and her robot brother, Digory, have run away from the orphanage they've been living in since their parents died. Clem and Dig want to follow in their famous archaeologist mother's footsteps, but no one will take them seriously. Their chance arrives when a man from their past saves Digory's life, and to repay the debt they enter a multiday rally race...to recover stolen artifacts! Clem and Dig hope to win so they can give the artifacts to a museum, but their opponents want to sell them on the black market. The Ironwood Race has no rules, and Clem and Dig might be in over their heads!



Discussion Questions:

1. Were you surprised by the fact that Clem is actually Clementine?
2. Talk about the relationship between Clem and Digory. What do you think about the imagined future where robots and humans can be siblings?
3. Think about Clem's choice to enter the race to save her brother's life. Did she make the right choice? What choice would you have made?
4. The mechanic isn't surprised when Clem and Dig can't pay for their car repairs, saying "Not many people can [pay] these days." In many science fiction books, authors imagine a future where life is better and there is less suffering. What do you think about an imagined future where life is worse?
5. On page 194, Kilburn talks about right and wrong, and says, "The world doesn't care about moral absolutes. The gray areas were made for people like us." This is part of how he justifies his work selling artifacts on the black market, and the violence he reveals at the end of the book. Clem seems to disagree with him, but at the end of the book she decides to keep an artifact to sell on the black market to enter more races. Does she really disagree with him? Do you?

Further Resources:

Kirkus Review: <https://dar.to/2XioZ3c>

Munsell Soil Charts: <https://dar.to/2Xc88Pv>

Activities

Design your own car for the Ironwood race. Imagine what kind of defensive/offensive features it might need to survive the race!