



Clara Poole and the Long Way Round

by Taylor Tyng

ABOUT THE BOOK

When an unintended flight over Michigan in her class science project—a lawn chair held aloft by balloons—brings her instant celebrity, Clara Poole is invited to be the spokesperson for a round-the-world adventure race.

When her overprotective father refuses, Clara forges his signature in a moment of defiance and runs away to Paris to take her place in the skies. Partnered with a veteran aeronaut who wants

nothing to do with her, Clara faces down ten treacherous stages in a race around the world—capturing flags in the perilous mountains of Nepal; being a guest of honor at a maybe-wedding in the Sahara; flying through rings of fire in Hong Kong—all while learning the ropes alongside a colorful cast of international competitors.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- The title of the first chapter is “The Accident That Started Everything.” What is the accident? How does Clara come to fly a lawn chair over Western Michigan?
- Explain the difference between famous and infamous. How does Clara’s lawn chair flight make her famous and infamous? Why doesn’t Clara like being labeled as a celebrity?
- Discuss Clara’s relationship with her father. What type of girl does he want Clara to be? Discuss why Oliver Poole wants to move to Chicago. How does Clara react to this notion? What causes him to change his mind?
- Explain why Oliver Poole is described as “risk-averse.” Chart moments in the novel that he lives up to this description. At what point does he change? Later in the novel, Landon Sway tells Clara that she treats her father like he’s dead. Which passages support Landon’s assessment?

- Clara is considered a daredevil. Are daredevils born that way or is it an acquired behavior? When does Clara display daredevil traits? How does this characteristic come in handy during the balloon race? Which other characters in the novel might be considered daredevils?
- Who is Harold Habberdish? What is the purpose of the World Organization of Balloon Aeronauts (WOOBA)? Why is it so important to Mr. Habberdish to celebrate WOOBA's one-hundredth air race with something special? What is Clara's role as the Face of the Race?
- The balloon race is described as "designed to thrill," but Mr. Habberdish changes the description to "action-packed." Explain why "designed to thrill" sounds more dangerous than "action-packed." How is the race both "designed to thrill" and "action-packed"?
- Discuss the most thrilling moments in the race. Barnaby Bixley describes Clara's adventure as a "wild ride." Is this an adequate description of Clara's race?
- Oliver Poole is against his daughter's involvement with the race. Contrast his view of the race with that of Grandma Sue. Clara leaves a note and goes to Paris to join the race. At what point does she have second thoughts about the journey ahead of her?
- Throughout the novel, Clara experiences fear. When are her most fearful times? What causes her to want to leave the race and go home? Why is going home impossible?
- What does Mr. Bixley's broken compass symbolize? The instrument is inscribed *Always Follow True North*. How is Clara confused by the inscription? At what point does she understand the message and why the compass was given to her? How does Mr. Bixley understand Clara's need to find True North in her life?
- What does Clara's scarf symbolize? Discuss the symbolism of the windmill at Bitter Bend Farm. At the end of the novel, Landon Sway gives Clara an origami dove. What does the dove symbolize?
- Clara is the copilot for Greta Gildersleeve. What is significant about Greta's involvement in the race? Why does Clara find Ms. Gildersleeve intriguing? Is Greta correct when she calls Godfrey Sway a cheater? What is the relationship between Greta and Godfrey?
- Who is Landon? Cite evidence that Godfrey Sway tries to turn Clara against Greta. Explain how Greta and Clara take Sway down. How does learning the truth about Godfrey Sway set Landon free?
- Explain what Guy Gerard means by, "There's no glory without danger, folks, and no danger without glory" (p. 120). Discuss the danger that Clara faces as she and Ms. Gildersleeve run their race. Describe the glory that they receive at the end of the race.

Guide created by Pat Scales, retired school librarian and independent consultant, Greenville, South Carolina.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Taylor Tyng has worked as a designer, animator, film editor, and software CEO. He finds endless joy in writing for middle-grade readers, who are no longer children but not quite adults. He lives in an antique farmhouse in Massachusetts with his family.