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# CLEMENTINE

BY

SARA PENNYPACKER

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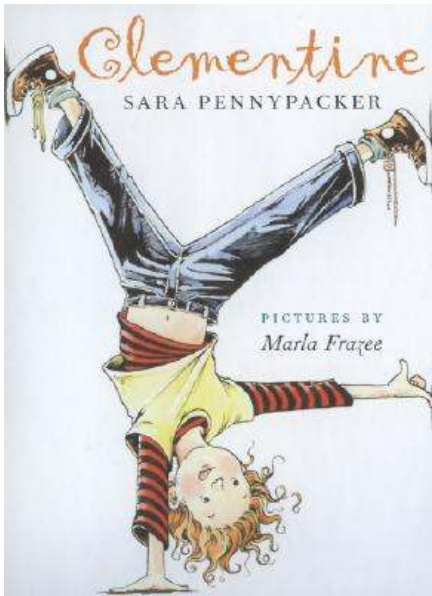
Summary.....	2
About the Author.....	3
Book Reviews.....	4
Discussion Questions.....	7
Author Interview.....	8
Further Reading.....	11





## SUMMARY

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"Clementine covers one week in the life of the precocious third-grader Clementine. At school she 'helps' Margaret, a friend and neighbor, by cutting and coloring her hair. Neither the principal nor the girl's mother are amused, and eventually the two girls stop speaking to each other.

At home Clementine helps her father battle pesky pigeons. Mourning the loss of her cat, she also is convinced her parents are going to trade her in. In the end, hair begins to grow back, friendships are mended, Clementine's parents address her fears and treat her to a big surprise."

From commonsensemedia.org  
<http://www.commonsensemedia.org/book-reviews/Clementine.html>  
accessed April 21, 2008



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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### Sara Pennypacker

"Sara Pennypacker, author of the Clementine books, was a painter before becoming a writer and has two absolutely fabulous children who are grown now. She has written several books, including *Stewart's Cape* and *Stewart Goes to School*, both illustrated by Martin Matje, and *Dumbstruck*. When she was in school, she never had any problem at all paying attention. Okay, fine. That last part was about somebody else. Sara lives on Cape Cod, Massachusetts."

From [hyperionbooksforchildren.com](http://www.hyperionbooksforchildren.com)

<http://www.hyperionbooksforchildren.com/authors/displayAL.asd?id=449&ai=a>

accessed April 14, 2008



## BOOK REVIEWS

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**Booklist Review:** As Clementine says, Spectacularful ideas are always sprouting up in my brain. All the better for readers who like to laugh. Reminiscent of both Ramona and Junie B. Jones, Clementine is an ingenuous third-grader with a talent for trouble and a good heart. Her best friend is her neighbor Margaret, a fourth-grader who experiences both qualities firsthand. After all, plenty of kids may have had their hair chopped off by a helpful friend in an effort to get the glue out, but how many of those friends would think to improve matters by drawing hair *back* on the scalp, forehead, and neck with a Flaming Sunset permanent marker? "It looked beautiful, like a giant tattoo of tangled worms," Clementine observes in the fresh, funny, first-person narrative. Frazee's expressive ink drawings capture every nuance of the characters' emotions, from bemusement to anger to dejection. Sometimes touching and frequently amusing, this engaging chapter book is well suited to reading alone or reading aloud to a roomful of children. -- *Carolyn Phelan* (Reviewed 10-15-2006) (*Booklist*, vol 103, number 4, p55)

**School Library Journal Review: /\* Starred Review \*/ Gr 2-4** Clementine, a not-so-common third grader, knows her way around the principal's office as well as she does the art-supply closet. Daily rituals take on a different view when seen from her eyes. She's constantly being told that she needs to "pay attention," but to her mind she is paying attention and making astute observations. Whether looking out the window during the Pledge of Allegiance at the janitor locked in an embrace with the lunch lady or dealing with a pesky pigeon problem at her apartment building, her concentration is always focused. Clementine goes to great lengths to be friends with fourth-grade neighbor, Margaret, but more times than not, both girls end up in trouble. Humorous scenarios tumble together, blending picturesque dialogue with a fresh perspective as only the unique Clementine can

offer. When the protagonist pleads to skip school because of a self-inflicted haircut fiasco, she tries to convince her mom that she must have caught arthritis from old Mrs. Jacobi or has possibly come down with the "heartbreak of sore irises." Frazee's engaging pen-and-ink drawings capture the energy and fresh-faced expressions of the irrepressible heroine. And even though she confesses that "I do not think fathers should be comedians," her parents are portrayed as being fairly cool. A delightful addition to any beginning chapter-book collection. *Cheryl Ashton, Amherst Public Library, OH --Cheryl Ashton (Reviewed October 1, 2006) (School Library Journal, vol 52, issue 10, p123)*

**Publishers Weekly Review: /\* Starred Review \*/** "I have had not so good of a week," begins the irrepressible narrator of this winning caper. Pennypacker (*Stuart's Cape*) then takes readers straight through that week, making clear that Clementine has an unfailing nose for trouble and a comical way with words. The eight-year-old proclaims herself lucky because "spectacular ideas are always springing up in my brain." One of these ideas concerns her fourth-grade friend and neighbor Margaret getting glue in her hair, and Clementine's attempt to help; together they cut off nearly all of Margaret's long locks. Further strategies involve the use of permanent markers and Clementine undergoing a sympathy coif. Frazee's black-and-white illustrations of the close-cropped gals captures the mixed emotions of their shared fate. Her portraits of the heroine's three-year-old brother, "who didn't get stuck with a fruit name," and whom Clementine calls by various vegetable names, including "Spinach," "Lima Bean" and "Pea Pod," may remind readers of the charming star of Frazee's *Walk On!* Along with the humorous bits, Pennypacker seamlessly weaves into the narrative common third-grade themes, such as Clementine comparing Margaret's neatly dressed banker mother with her own overalls-clad artist mother, and envying Margaret her kitten from the litter of Clementine's own lately deceased cat, Polka Dottie. Luckily, Clementine ends her week on an up note. Fans of Judy Moody will welcome this portrait of another funny, independent third-grader. Ages 7-10. (Sept.) --Staff (Reviewed August 7, 2006) (*Publishers Weekly*, vol 253, issue 31, p59)

**Kirkus Reviews /\* Starred Review \*/** Maybe it was because third-grader Clementine was a little bit angry with her best friend Margaret that things got out of hand with the scissors and the permanent markers and the hair. Or maybe she really was just trying to help. In short chapters, set in the city apartment building her father manages or the school where she has some tough days, Clementine relates the

events of the trying week she discovered she was the difficult child in her family and thought she was about to be given away. Middle-grade readers will sympathize with Clementine's conflicted feelings about her friend and her family, and laugh out loud at her impulsive antics, narrated in a fresh first-person voice and illustrated with plenty of humor. Just like her family they will cheer when she comes up with a way to end The Great Pigeon War as well as the temporary rift with her friend. Energetic and imaginative, Clementine is gifted with understanding and patient parents. Give this to readers of Cleary and Blume and cross your fingers for more. (Fiction. 7-10) (*Kirkus Reviews*, July 15, 2006)

From Novelist

<http://web.ebscohost.com/novelist/detail?vid=3&hid=21&sid=6f55ba3f-70e1-4499-9f51-315317b08f53%40sessionmgr9#TypeGender>

accessed April 14, 2008



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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1. If you could have a food name, what would it be?
2. Clementine has a hard time paying attention to the right things. Where does your mind wander to when your teacher calls on you?
3. Clementine cut off Margaret's hair to help her feel better. Have you ever done something you thought was helping someone, only to get in trouble?
4. Clementine's friend, Margaret, talks about being "the easy one" in her family. Is there an easy or hard child in your family?
5. Have you ever had a "black hole" under your bed like Clementine? If you cleaned that spot, what were some surprising things you found?
6. Did you like the ending of this book?
7. What have you read that is similar to *Clementine*?



# AUTHOR INTERVIEW

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## **The Fruits of Her Labor**

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**Author Sara Pennypacker channels third grade in 'The Talented Clementine'**

*By Rick Margolis -- School Library Journal, 4/1/2007*

**I heard that your greatest ambition as a child was to play shortstop for the Boston Red Sox.**

I haven't actually given that up. I had a real narcissistic conviction that I was meant to be discovered. I used to try to play ball as close to the road as I could, so that scouts going by would see me.

**You were a serious watercolor painter. Why did you give it up?**

After a while, I came to a realization that I needed the world of visual art more than the world of visual art needed me. That was a profound turning point, about 10 years ago.

**What led you to write children's books?**

That year I was homeschooling my children and I was spending a lot of time in libraries reading children's books. On the one hand, I was moved by how much fabulous writing and art there was. My *higher* self was thinking, "I would love to do this." Then there was my *less-than-higher* self, which was looking at some of the lousy stuff out there. My lower self said, "Eh, you could do *that*."

**Clementine is a fearless eight-year-old who often messes up. What was your inspiration?**

I'm attracted to stories about things that strike me as unfair—and I just have to write something to correct that unfairness. For

*Clementine*, it was about my two kids. I had a son like her. If we were diagnosing Clementine, I'm sure some letters would come out that I really don't want to put on her. I don't ever want to be the one who comes out and says, "Here's an ADHD kid." But I did see a lot about my own son that really didn't seem fair. This was a kid who was *always* paying attention—and was always being told to pay attention.

**What else is autobiographical in *Clementine* and *The Talented Clementine*? Did you ever have a kitten named Moisturizer?**

We had one named Polka Dottie. Moisturizer was a friend of my son's idea. My kids said, "The best names are in the bathroom"—and they were *right*. When I started to name the kittens in the first book, I went to CVS and cruised the aisles and said the names of products out loud. You'd be surprised what a beautiful word *mascara* is. Absolutely everything in *Clementine* was something that my children said. I rolled the two of them into one character. So it's not really fair to say I wrote the book, as my son and daughter are always pointing out.

**Clementine has often been compared to another plucky, impetuous heroine—Beverly Cleary's *Ramona*. What's your take on that?**

Of course, it's a compliment. When I look at the two characters I don't think they're that similar. But what is really similar is that *Ramona* is really a book about a functional family, and *Clementine* is really a book about a functional family, seen through the eyes of one third-grade girl who is having some difficulties. The point of my books is really about the kindness of the family. That's where I think *Ramona* and *Clementine* have their strongest similarities.

**When you talk to kids in schools, what are they curious about?**

They always try to find out Clementine's brother's real name.

**We should probably explain that in the first two books, her brother is never referred to by his actual name.**

Clementine calls him a different vegetable name every day. But the little secret is that you can tell how she feels about him by which vegetable name she chooses. If she's really had it with him, he's broccoli or turnips. But when she's feeling tender toward him—and she really, of course, loves him—he's pea pod.

### **Do you plan to reveal his name?**

No. Actually, it's up to Clementine. There's a story coming that might be the fourth book in the series, if we do it. You know, her brother is allergic to peanuts, and he will have an episode—and will go into the hospital. Clementine may, at that point, call him by his real name.

From [schoollibraryjournal.com](http://www.schoollibraryjournal.com)  
<http://www.schoollibraryjournal.com/article/CA6430169.html?q=fruits+of+her+labor>  
accessed April 21, 2008



If You Like...

*CLEMENTINE*

by Sara Pennypacker,

*You might like the following books, too!!*

*OTHERWISE KNOWN AS SHEILA THE GREAT* by Judy Blume

*RAMONA THE PEST* by Beverly Cleary

*ANNABEL THE ACTRESS, STARRING IN HOUND OF THE BARKERVILLES*  
by Ellen Conford

*AMBER BROWN IS NOT A CRAYON* by Paula Danziger

*ELISA MICHAELS BIGGER AND BETTER* by Johanna Hurwitz

*PIPPY LONGSTOCKING* by Astrid Lindgren

*JUDY MOODY* by Megan McDonald

*THE TALENTED CLEMENTINE* by Sara Pennypacker

*STUART'S CAPE* by Sara Pennypacker

*JUNIE B. JONES* by Barbara Park