

Alayne Kay Christian's Analysis of  
THE TALENTED CLEMENTINE  
by Sara Pennypacker, Disney Hyperion Books 2007

The analysis was done using a digital version of the book, so page numbers might not match the hardcopy.

Notice how, as in picture books, most chapters in this book have three attempts to solve the chapter problem. Though Clementine makes many attempts to solve her chapter problems, on the most basic level she makes three attempts to solve the big story problem. These three attempts lead to the smaller chapter attempts.

### THREE ATTEMPTS

1. Tries juggling and fails.
2. Asks Margaret to teach her a talent. They finally settle on tap dancing.
3. She fails at tap dancing, and decides to make her little brother part of her act.

She fails at putting her little brother in her act and finds herself feeling defeated – darkest moment.

## CHAPTER ONE

Page 1:

Story Hook: I have noticed that teachers get *exciting* confused with *boring* a lot. But when my teacher said, “Class, we have an exciting project to talk about,” I listened anyway.

“Our school is going to raise money for the big spring trip,” he said. “The first and second grades are going to hold a bake sale. The fifth and sixth grades are going to have a car wash. And the third and fourth grades are going to . . . put on a talent show!” Story problem introduced.

All the kids in the room made sounds as if they thought a talent show was exciting news. Except me, because it was N-O-T, not.

Page 3: First action – Clementine asks to go to the principal’s office.

Page 7: Second action – She tells principle – “I don’t have any talents.” Story problem builds and emotional connection made with Clementine.

Page 8: Third action – She tells Margaret’s brother Mitchell she doesn’t have any talents. Mitchell tells her everyone has a talent. He tries to help her find a talent. She tries hopping and fails.

Last lines strengthen reader's emotional connection to Clementine and her problem. Clementine smiles and tells Mitchell, "See? I'm cheered up already!" Then she tells the reader (story is in first person) "But it was just my mouth pretending."

Question left in reader's mind: Will Clementine find a talent?

## CHAPTER TWO

Page 14: Clementine and kids on school bus talking about their talents. Margaret brags she has too many talents.

Page 16: First action – Willy asks Clementine what she's going to do for the talent show. She lies and tells him it's a surprise.

Page 17: Second action – She approaches teacher asking what if a kid doesn't have talent. He tells her everyone has talent. She tries to convince him to cancel the talent show so kids who don't have talent won't be embarrassed. BUT . . .

Page 18: . . .he asks the class who has a talent and they all raise their hands. He says talent show stays the same.

Page 20: Third action – She tells her teacher she might be moving to Egypt. But the teacher doesn't believe her.

Questions left in reader's mind: Will Clementine find a way out of the talent show. If she can't, what will she do – after all, she has no talent.

## CHAPTER THREE

Page 31: First action – Clementine asks Dad if they might be moving. Maybe to Egypt on Friday. But he says no.

Page 32: Second action – She asks him if he's seen any good talents lately – any piazzazy ones. He tells her he saw a woman with a poodle, pocket book, and cup of coffee, and she was talking on her phone – she juggled it all. Juggling is a good talent for Clementine.

Third action – She goes inside and gathers the same things the woman had (except Clementine has a kitten) – of course everything crashes to the floor.

Page 35: She goes back to Dad and asks about more talents. He asks her what's going on. She tells him about the show and how she has no talent. He goes on to tell her all the talents she has. She tells him she can't do those things on stage.

Emotional connection grows. Chapter ends with Clementine still stuck in her conundrum. When she sees that perhaps her dad's empathy might make him sad. She puts on another fake smile and says, "Thanks, Dad! I feel better now!" She hurries inside so he won't see what she's really feeling.

Reader continues to wonder how Clementine is going to overcome her problem.

## CHAPTER FOUR

Page 41: Margaret's teacher comes to Clementine's class and says they will have rehearsals each morning. She tells what all the other kids will be doing for their talent. Clementine worries about not having a talent. **Tension grows and reader worries with Clementine.**

Page 50: On the bus, Margaret brags about her talent. Clementine asks her about her talent.

Page 51: Clementine asks Margaret to teach her one of her talents.

Reader is left wondering if Margaret will be the answer to Clementine's problem. What will Margaret come up with? These questions make the reader want to keep reading.

## CHAPTER FIVE

Margaret goes through her talents with Clementine, trying to find an easy one.

Page 54: First action – They decide she can FAKE tap dance. All she needs is tap shoes. Margaret offers her old shoes BUT

Page 58: Clementine's feet are too big.

Page 59: Second action – Clementine studies the bottoms of the tap shoes. Questions wouldn't it work if she nailed something "tappy" to the bottom of her sneakers? She just needs to make the sound.

Page 60: Third action – Clementine goes to the basement. She takes bottle caps off 24 beer bottles using pliers. She spills beer but her clothes soak it up.

Page 62: She super glues the caps to the bottom of her sneakers, and it sounds like she is tap dancing. BUT when she gets on the elevator, Margaret's parents are on the elevator and smell the beer. "We need to pay a visit to your parents."

The tension is rising. And now we are seeing some troublesome consequences to Clementine's desperate act. Our emotional connection is building. Not only do we feel sorry for her and worried she may never find a talent, but we are also worried that she is going to be in big trouble with her parents.

Questions left in reader's mind: Will she get in trouble? Will she be punished? How will she get tap shoes? Will tap dancing be her talent?

## CHAPTER SIX

Page 66: Dad tries to get caps off. No luck.

Mom and Dad argue over who will take her shoe shopping. She explains why shoe shopping is an issue. Dad bribes Mom with dinner and money for a pair of shoes for herself. Mom gets special shoes with dragonflies that are high heels. Clementine wants them, but she ends up with sneakers. The first pair she tries on after trying on 50 other pairs.

There is plenty happening in this chapter that I don't offer. However, notice how it takes a little breather from Clementine's efforts. Sometimes, it doesn't hurt to give your reader a little break from action. Just be sure it is still engaging, still serves to move the story forward, and connects to the chapter that came before and the one that comes after. Make sure you don't take a detour that causes your reader to lose interest.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

Page 82: First action – There is a substitute teacher. This gives Clementine an idea. She asks to go to the principal's office. She tells the principal that she will be sending a substitute to the talent show. BUT the principal tells her there are no substitute students.

Page 84: Second action – Takes bottle cap tap sneakers to Margaret's apartment. She agrees to teach her an easy routine. But Margaret wants to be her boss. After lots of debate, Clementine agrees because she doesn't want to be the only one without a talent. Margaret can be the boss, but only for today.

Third action – The bottle caps are slippery on the wooden floor. Clementine skids into Margaret's dressing table. At first Margaret tells Clementine that she's hopeless. But she is empathetic (which is a theme in this story) and says she'll keep thinking about what talent Clementine might be good at. **Tension grows – emotional connection grows. Poor Clementine. Is she hopeless? Will she ever find a talent?**

Fourth action – She is by Dad – about to tell him that his daughter is a failure at tap dancing when little bro grabs clippers and cries when taken away.

Page 90: Clementine dances around with Ivy coming out of her clothes. "Help! I swallowed some ivy seeds." Little bro laughs and forgets what upset him. Dad says, "Nobody else in the world can make your brother laugh like that."

Clementine starts thinking about her brother being part of her talent like Joey and his dog.

Question left in reader's mind: What does she plan to do with her brother and a leash. How will she use him in the talent show?

## CHAPTER EIGHT

Page 95: Talking with her parents about the talent show. They haven't seen the tap routine yet. She informs them that's not what she's doing anymore. What she's doing is a surprise.

First action – Practices routine with little bro. She acts like Elvis, and bro laughs.

Second action – She puts a leash around bro's overall straps. Bro acts like dog. "My act is called Elvis and the Laughing Dog."

Page 100: Third action – She has to tell Dad to bring bro to the show, and he tells her bro can't be in show. She gets in the car to go to talent show with no talent. **DARKEST MOMENT.**

Tension super high. No talent! Oh no. Poor Clementine. Reader's emotional connection stronger.

First action – Clementine tries to hide from principal and teachers at talent show. Principal sees her – "Clementine, I don't seem to have you listed."

Second action – Clementine whispers in teacher's ear that she doesn't have a talent. Teacher says, "What do you mean you don't have one?"

Kids hear her and tease her. She's embarrassed. Teacher tells her to come sit by her.

Third action – When Clementine sits by teacher she starts noticing things that are going wrong or need to be done, so she starts giving direction and helping the teacher and principal in the process. But she's feeling bad because she doesn't have a talent like all the other kids.

Teacher has to leave because of an emergency and principal is alone. Principal informs Clementine that she is her new assistant. Clementine is worried that she can't do it. But she decides to do as told and sit in the director's chair. **This is a nearly undetectable inner climax. Clementine has made a choice/decision.**

## CHAPTER NINE

CLIMAX (Clementine reacts or takes action to the decision to be assistant director)

Page 115: Clementine keeps kids in line and keeps the show going with her direction.

Page 118: Margaret freezes on stage. Clementine is empathetic, so in the background making motions so that Margaret knows what to say.

Clementine's worried feeling goes away. Instead, she feels proud. Principal surprises Clementine when the curtain goes down and play is over, announcing they couldn't have done it without their talented director, Clementine! [When her worried feeling goes away, the reader feels a sense of satisfaction – the tension is way down now.](#)

She is the star bowing in the spotlight. [Reader revels in Clementine's success – they have a wonderful emotional high.](#)

## **CHAPTER TEN**

[END](#)

Page 129: Parents surprise Clementine by including her when they go out for their special dinner at a fancy restaurant. Mom lets her wear the dragonfly shoes.