



Discussion Questions

Chasing Vermeer by Blue Balliett

Source: Madison Public Library and scholastic.com

1. Imagine you're one of the three characters to receive the mysterious letter. How would you respond to the letter? Would you keep the secret? Explain.
2. Answer a question similar to Ms. Hussey's: What's the most important piece of mail (or email) you've ever received? How did you respond?
3. Ms. Hussey asks the students the question, "What is art?" What do you think art is? Does it have to be tangible? Can anyone create it?
4. Calder and Petra become great observers of patterns in the real world. What patterns do you see? Think about buildings, nature, your schedule, your behavior...
5. Calder has a special box with a Vermeer painting on it. If you had a special box, what would you keep inside it? Why?
6. Petra creates a Halloween costume of the lady in the painting. What's the most creative Halloween costume you can imagine?
7. Calder and Petra create a special ritual of eating a blue M&M every time they take the next step in solving the mystery. What rituals do you have for when you accomplish a task? For example, how do you celebrate a good grade on a test? If you have no special rituals, what could you begin doing?
8. Towards the end of the novel, Calder and Petra get separated while saving the painting. If you were Petra, would you have left Calder on the slide? If you would stay, how would you save the painting? If you would leave, would you have made the same choices as Petra?

9. Throughout the story we see Calder and Petra unable to trust the adults in their lives with the mystery they must solve. Have you ever felt like you needed an adult's help but couldn't get it? How did you solve your problem?
10. In many scenes of the story we see Calder and Petra spending time with an elderly member of their community. Is there an elderly person in your life? What do you do with them and what have you learned from spending time together?
11. There are plans for a movie version of Chasing Vermeer. What scenes from the book are essential and must be included? What elements do you think the studio could save money and time by leaving out?