

Literature Circle Questions

Use the questions and activities that follow to get more out of the experience of reading *The Christmas Rat* by Avi.

1. Why aren't Eric's friends able to spend time with him during Christmas vacation?
2. How does Eric spend his vacation before Anje shows up?
3. What is the purpose of Eric's first visit to the storage bay area of his building's basement? What is the purpose of his last visit?
4. How much time elapses from the beginning of the story to the conclusion? How can you tell?
5. Describe Anje's physical appearance when the man appears at Eric's apartment. To what does Eric compare Anje?
6. Contrast Eric's attitude toward rats at the beginning of the book and at the end. What do you think causes the change?
7. What do you think the result would be if Eric tells his parents about his encounters with Anje?
8. Would you describe Anje as "a rat" or "an angel"? What makes you say that?
9. What evidence is there that Eric's parents are concerned about his activities and well-being while he is off from school?
10. At the end of the story, Eric's mother thanks him for fixing the angel for the top of the tree. Who do you think really repaired the angel? Read aloud the sentences that make you say that.
11. Imagine that Pete—Eric's friend—has returned from Florida and spends time with Eric on the day before Christmas. Describe how the plot would change if the two work together to save the rat.
12. If Eric's parents ask him how he got the scratch on his leg, what do you think he would say?
13. Do you think that Eric makes the right decision each time he sneaks out of his apartment to visit the basement alone?
14. Based on your knowledge of Eric's thoughts and feelings, do you think Eric's five-day experience with Anje was positive or negative? Explain.

Note: The following questions are keyed to Bloom's taxonomy as follows: Knowledge: 1-4; Comprehension: 5-6; Application: 7-8; Analysis: 9-10; Synthesis: 11-12; Evaluation: 13-14.

Activities

1. With a partner, dramatize a scene in which Eric encounters Anje. During rehearsal, practice how each character will look and talk to best convey that character's overall personality.
2. *A Christmas Rat* has some suspenseful episodes. Create a poster or book blurb that encourages other students in your class or school to read the book. Be sure to make use of the scary elements to entice others to find out what happens in the story.