

## **From the Author's Desk:**

*Hello Parents, Teachers, and Home Schoolers! Thank you for sharing "Nugget" with your readers. I hope this discussion guide will help them reflect on the story and enjoy it on a deeper level. It's one of my favorite historical novels because it's also a mystery and is set in my adopted state of Idaho. I've added a recipe, a few random activities, and personal tidbits that might be fun for them.*

*My very best,  
Kristi*

**Nugget: The Wildest, Most Heartbreakin'est Mining Camp in the West** -- *"As told by the Kidd sisters in 1867, Josie and Clementine, on the occasions of murder and romance, tragedy and redemption, not necessarily in that order, but their true account, to the best of their recollection:"*

**About this book:** Sixteen-year-old Clementine Kidd dreams of becoming a doctor. But her hopes are complicated by the lawlessness of a mining town in 1866 Idaho Territory, prejudice against the Chinese, and the affections of handsome Boone Reno. When tragedy strikes, a chain of desperate events is unleashed. What must Clementine risk to save her family and follow her dreams?

This is second in my trilogy about the American Gold Rush, for readers ages 10 up.  
ISBN 9781505905793

## **Discussion ideas:**

### **<> Part I [Chapters 1-13]**

1. What is a posse? Why does Clementine say "a posse in the middle of the night meant only one thing: more trouble?"
2. Clementine reflects on her childhood in Miner's Creek, California: "Chinamen dare not raise a hand or voice against a white man, else they be punished...they earn their wages in silence." What does she mean?
3. Why do Ma and Clementine believe it is so important for Josie to "take to books" and start reading? What is the importance today, to be well-read?
4. Why does Pa ridicule Clementine's desire to become a doctor? Do you have a dream or a hope that you worry someone will make fun of?

### **<> Part II [Chapters 14-16]**

1. Why is it so important to Pa that Clementine find a husband?
2. If you lived during mining camp days, which of the many occupations in town would you chose, and why?
3. Why is Tall Sing's solitude so important to him? What kind of solitude or quiet do you enjoy?

<> **Part III** [Chapters 27-39]

1. When Whiskey Nose brings gifts of food to Ma two weeks before Christmas, he says, "My motto is to 'give now,' 'cause who knows what'll happen tomorrow." What is something you could give to a friend, neighbor, or teacher without it being a special occasion?

<> **Part IV** [Chapters 40-52]

1. Why is Clementine so surprised to hear Tall Sing reading aloud from Charles Dickens' novel, *Great Expectations*? How is that title symbolic of her dream to become a doctor?

2. Tall Sing's message to Josie, "The river brings life not death," represents many things in this story. What does it mean to you?

**Activity suggestions:**

<> **Write** -- These can be a brief paragraph or several pages:

1. Tell of something beautiful you've seen in nature.
2. Describe your favorite or the most interesting animal in the story.
3. Where is your favorite place to read or daydream?

<> **Draw**

1. A map of the various businesses along Main Street in Nugget
2. One of the characters or animals in the story
3. A stagecoach

<> **Make**

1. Diorama of Main Street
2. Log cabin library

<> **Cook**

**Tall Sing's Garden Vegetable Soup**

This nourishing meal will serve six hungry friends.

Ingredients:

- 4 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 cups chopped onion
- 2 tablespoons finely minced garlic
- 2 cups carrots, chopped into rounds (about 2 medium)
- 2 cups diced potatoes
- 2 cups fresh green beans, broken or cut into short pieces
- 2 quarts chicken or vegetable broth
- 4 cups peeled and chopped tomatoes
- 2 ears corn, kernels removed
- 1/4 cup packed, chopped fresh parsley leaves
- 1/2 teaspoon pepper
- salt

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Heat the oil in large, heavy-bottomed pot over medium-low heat. Once hot, add the onions, garlic, and a pinch of salt. Simmer until they begin to soften, about 7 to 8 minutes. Add the carrots, potatoes, and green beans and continue to cook for 4 to 5 more minutes, stirring occasionally.

Add the stock, increase the heat to high, and bring to a simmer. Now add the tomatoes, corn kernels, and pepper. Reduce the heat to low, cover, and cook until you can poke the veggies with a fork, about 25 to 30 minutes. Remove from heat and add the parsley and lemon juice. Season and salt to taste.

I think this soup is delicious with some crispy, buttered toast!

◁> **Read** -- my further adventures about the American gold rush:

1. [Seeds of Hope: The Gold Rush Diary of Susanna Fairchild, 1849](#) [Miner's Creek, California] ISBN 9781515323228
2. [Madam Mustache and the Boys of Bodie](#) [Bodie, California, 1878] ISBN 9780986152207

**Behind the scenes of this story:**

◁> Jesse Blue appears in two of my Dear America adventures: [Across the Wide and Lonesome Prairie: The Oregon Trail Diary of Hattie Campbell, 1847](#), and [Seeds of Hope: The Gold Rush Diary of Susanna Fairchild, 1849](#). I wanted to bring closure to his terrible deeds in *Seeds of Hope*, so in *Nugget* I gave him a chance to redeem himself.

◁> The town of Nugget is based on the real mining camp, Idaho City, near Boise. When I learned this wild place had had a tiny library, I was excited to weave it into Clementine's story. It reflects my passion for literacy and the importance of free libraries in a community.

**A secret about the author:**

◁> During the winter while I was writing *Nugget* I drove from Boise to Sun Valley, to visit my mother during her ski week. Despite the snow and icy temperatures, a large pond in front of the Lodge was kept warm enough for waterfowl to swim and roost. One night after dinner, Mom and I zipped into our down coats with wool hats, scarves, and gloves to walk under the full moon. It was freezing! At the pond we were enchanted to watch two sleeping swans, drifting together in a slow circle, just inches apart. Their long white necks were tucked under a wing behind them. It was so beautiful and peaceful, I just had to write the scene into Clementine's story.

◁> In 2010 this historical novel won the Idaho Choice for the National book Festival in Washington, D.C., sponsored by the Library of Congress, under the title *My Darlin' Clementine*. The 2015 edition is enhanced with illustrations by my son, Cody Ruty.

**Contact:** I would love to hear about your discussion. Just click the Contact button on my website, [kristianagregory.com](http://kristianagregory.com), and I'll answer you!