



HC: 978-0-8234-3389-6 • Ages 8–12 • E-book available

## CLAYTON STONE, AT YOUR SERVICE

by Ena Jones



Twelve-year-old Clayton Stone is shocked when a top-secret government organization recruits him as a decoy in a kidnapping sting. Instantly, he gets drawn into the dangerous world of covert operations in the Washington, D.C., area. Clayton's new life is full of excitement, with elaborate disguises and classified debriefings, but soon enough the real danger begins.

“There are plenty of cool gadgets and action-packed predicaments to keep middle-grade readers entertained”\* in *Clayton Stone, At Your Service*. This hilarious debut novel is packed with humor and hijinks. Just right for reluctant readers, the book offers a thrilling plot and nonstop humor, and the spy theme will draw in fans of the Alex Rider series. See our Discussion Starters for lots of interesting discussion ideas.

“What really makes this take on the kid-turned-spy story special is that it has a heart. At its core, this is a story about family. For Clayton, this means both the family he was born into and also his family of teammates. Clayton’s endearing senses of loyalty to and responsibility for both family and friends is the undercurrent that gives this story depth and sets it apart from the rest.” —*Kirkus Reviews*\*

### DISCUSSION STARTERS

- ❖ **Opening Sentences**—What grabs you about the opening of this book? What has the author written that makes you want to read more? How does the opening of this book compare with other books you have read? As you read, are you forming a picture of Clayton Stone in your mind? Can you describe him?
- ❖ **Suspense**—Look carefully at the way the author ends each chapter. How do these chapter endings make you want to read more? Discuss the concept of *suspense* in stories with your class. Have you read (or seen) events or situations in other books (or movies) that gave you the feeling of suspense? Describe them.
- ❖ **Responsibility/Obligation**—Throughout the book, Clayton has to decide whether his actions will be helpful to himself, his lacrosse team, his grandma or the Special Service. Describe situations in your own life where you were torn between your responsibilities or obligations to different people. How did you decide what to do? What was the most important to you? Why?

- ❖ **Risk**—Clayton says, “Risk is everywhere” (p. 31). What does this phrase mean to you? How much would you be willing to risk for your family, your team or your country?
- ❖ **Friendship**—Clayton’s friendship with Toby is very important to him. This friendship is tested many times throughout the story. Do you agree with Clayton’s actions regarding Toby? Describe a situation you’ve been in where you had to betray a friend for a seemingly greater reason. How did you handle it? How did you rekindle the friendship?
- ❖ **Secrets**—Clayton had to keep many secrets during the five days in which the story takes place. Have you ever had to keep secrets? How did it make you feel, and how did you handle it?
- ❖ **Ethics**—Do you feel it was ethical for the Special Service to use a twelve-year-old kid to solve the kidnapping case? Should they have allowed a kid to be put in such dangerous situations? Why or why not?
- ❖ **Sports**—Clayton felt that his experiences with his lacrosse team prepared him for his work with the Special Service as well as for life. Explain why you agree or disagree with the idea that sports can prepare you for other activities in your life. Describe your own experiences.
- ❖ **Family**—At the end of the story, Clayton realizes that his team is like a family and that Captain Thompson seems like a father to him. What is your definition of family? Describe people that you consider to be family, even though they are not related to you by blood.

The above questions can be discussed as a whole class, in small groups or used as prompts for writing: **CCSS L.3-5.1-3; W.3-5.1; SL.3-5.1; RL.3-5.3.**

## CLASSROOM EXTENSIONS

### Language Arts

**Similes and Metaphors**—*Be sure students are aware of both of these literary techniques, which the author uses throughout the book.* As you read, keep two lists—one for similes and one for metaphors. You can share these with your class or each other. Practice creating your own similes and metaphors. **CCSS L.3-5.5**

### Vocabulary

Students may be unfamiliar with some of the terms used in the story: *geriatric* (p.33), *jurisdiction* (p.43), *micromanagement* (p.10), *parameters* (p.7), *paranoid* (p.8), *protocol* (p.81), *Richter scale* (p.17), *sporadically* (p.14) and possibly others. They should be encouraged to search print or online dictionaries to define these words for better understanding of the story. **CCSS L.3-5.4**

Prepared by Sandy Schuckett, school library consultant



### About the Author

**Ena Jones** wrote for local family magazines until she began reading books aloud to her young children. After rediscovering her love of children’s literature, her writing took a new path. *Clayton Stone, At Your Service* is her first novel. She lives with her family in North Carolina.