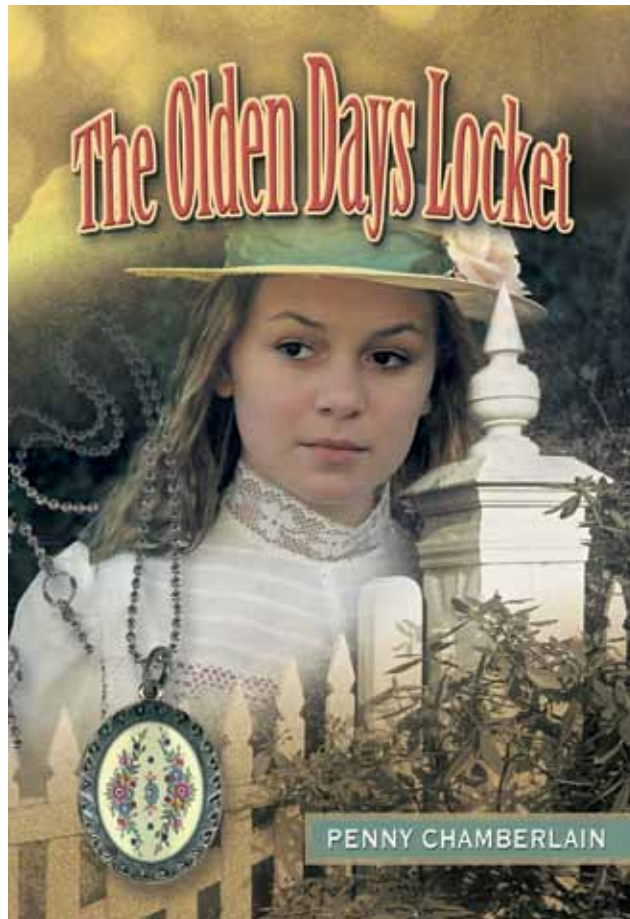


Teachers' Guide



The Olden Days Locket

Penny Chamberlain

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Story Synopsis

After moving to Victoria, BC twelve-year-old Jess feels she doesn't fit in anywhere. Preferring books and history to shopping and gossip, Jess is often teased by some of her classmates and feels left out of the fun at school. Even at home, a renovation means she is living out of boxes and unable to settle in to her new room. A field trip to the historical Point Ellice House changes everything, as Jess immediately feels an inexplicable connection to the house.

A summer spent volunteering at the mansion helps Jess find her place in modern-day Victoria as well as plunging her straight into an olden days mystery; one that has something to do with the tragic Point Ellice Bridge disaster of 1896—the worst streetcar accident in North American history. As Jess becomes more and more immersed in the life of Rose, a girl who lived through the bridge disaster, she learns more about Point Ellice House—and finding her place—than she ever bargained for.

As You Read

Think about the differences between living in Victoria in the 1890s and Victoria in the 2000s—how are the challenges Rose and Jess face similar, and how are they different?

Questions for Discussion

1. Does Rose have to 'grow up' faster than Jess? If yes, why? Which of the two is more independent? In what ways?
2. Some of the most important people in Rose's life aren't the people we might typically identify as being the most central to a young girl's life (ie. Mrs. Scott, Aunt Ellen, and Mrs. Cameron, vs. her parents). How do these characters help Rose grow up without a mother, and later, as an orphan?
3. Rose loses her father and has only her aunt to turn to for help. Do families today look out for each other in the same way that they seem to have done in the late 1890s? How so? If you think families have changed in this regard, describe how things are different.
4. What does Rose's relationship with Mrs. Cameron teach us?
5. Which time period do you think was 'better' to live in? Why?

Connecting Literature and Life

1. Rose is given a very specific set of rules for living in the O'Reilly's house, including only going in certain areas, using certain doors, and being extremely quiet. Can you think of any situations now where children have to follow the same sorts of rules?
2. Is there still a distinction between rich and poor families today? What responsibilities, if any, do families with more money have to families with less money?

Writing Practice: The terrible streetcar accident of 1896 really did happen in the city of Victoria, affecting hundreds of families. Research a similar disaster in your area's history (bridge collapse, plane crash, train derailment, etc.) and write a diary entry from the point of view of one of the survivors of the day. Remember to describe what happened (what did you hear, see, smell, feel?), and what you experienced emotionally (scared, happy to be alive, shocked, etc).

4. Jess's ability to go into the life of Rose is a key part of the story. Clearly, she believes in the ghost of Rose. Do you believe in ghosts? Have you ever had an experience with a ghost? Are there any stories that have been passed down through your family that make you believe (or not believe) in ghosts?

5. Rose's Aunt Ellen worries about making a living for herself and her niece, and seems to see her options as being either a seamstress or a parlourmaid. Research life in Canada in the 1890s, and make a list of other jobs a woman such as Ellen could have had. What are some pros and cons of each?

Plot

1. In the book, the light seen by the spot where the bridge collapsed turned out to be Rose sleepwalking, looking for her locket. Often, myths and legends are ways of explaining things we don't otherwise understand. Recount one other legend you know that serves this purpose.

2. Which time period do you think is more central to the novel? What are two ways in which the author keeps them connected throughout the story?

3. What purpose does the subplot revolving around Jess' room renovation serve in the novel?

4. Are there ghost stories associated with your town or city? If your school or classroom were haunted, what kind of ghost would be involved? What mystery would the ghost need your help to solve?

Writing Practice

1. Both Rose and Jess are left with positive second chances at the end of the novel. While we have some idea of what happened to Rose, we have little idea of what happens to Jess after she knocks on her new neighbour's door. Choose one of the girls and write a short chapter that takes place approximately one year after the end of the book and lets the readers know how and what they are doing.

2. Find an important event from the 1890s that occurred in your town and write a short newspaper article about the scene. Remember to answer the most important questions in journalism: who, what, when, where, why, and how (did the event happen)?

Character

1. Pick three characters who changed the most through the novel (Rose and Jess can each count as a separate character). Talk about how and why they changed. Then pick one character that didn't change much and discuss what stayed the same.
2. What is the purpose of having a character such as Francis in the novel?
3. Other than Rose/Jess, who is the most important character in the novel? Why?
4. Who is the kindest character in the novel? Why?
5. Is Jess a more confident person at the end of the story? What do you think helped her come out of her shell?
6. How are Jess and Rose alike in how they deal with the inequality in their lives? For Jess, it may be how her schoolmates treat her; for Rose, how she is different from the O'Reilly family, or to the other servants at Point Ellice House.
7. How do you think Jess's ability to communicate with ghosts has caused her trouble in life? Does it make her less able to communicate with her classmates?

Questions for Discussion

1. *The Olden Days Locket* is written in the third person subjective point of view with Jess and Rose as the main point of view characters. What are some of the challenges associated with writing in the third person? Pick a scene that highlights this challenge and re-write it in a different point of view (such as first person, third person objective, third person omniscient, or second-person), overcoming the challenges you have identified with the current point of view.
2. One problem with people telling a story is that they often tell only the 'partial' truth. That means they tell the story truthfully from their point of view, but might leave out some important facts or exaggerate to make a point in their favour. When might Jess or Rose be doing this? Why?

Writing Practice: Rose speaks quite differently when she is talking to the O'Reilly's compared to when she is speaking with a character such as Sing. Write a short scene where Rose is dining with the O'Reilly's and describing the events of the day, making sure to use the same polite, formal style that she would in that situation. Then, rewrite the scene as if she is having a meal with Sing, changing the setting, tone, and dialogue as appropriate.

Setting

1. Point Ellice House is central to the book, and many of its rooms and outdoor areas are described in great detail. Find a photo or photos of the house and its gardens and identify three areas in which events of the book take place.
2. The shifting of time is very important in the novel, and the same location is often described twice; once in its present form and once in its 1896 manner. Pick three such places and describe how they have changed between 1896 and the present day.
3. Pick a location in your community that would work well for a novel such as *The Olden Days Locket* and explain why you feel it would be suitable.

Style

1. How would you describe Penny Chamberlain's writing style?
2. What kinds of techniques does the author use to:
 - Bring her characters to life?
 - Describe the setting?
 - Explore the underlying themes of the book?
3. Do you think *The Olden Days Locket* is essentially a ghost story, or is it a historical tale with spooky overtones?

Theme:

1. *Society will never be a truly level playing field.* Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Support your argument with examples from the novel.
2. What is the most important lesson that either Rose or Jess learns in the novel? Explain your choice.
3. What do the relationships between Rose and Sing and Rose and the rag boy teach us about Rose's character?

History: Victoria, British Columbia

Pretend you write for the human interest section of a magazine or newspaper and write a short fictional interview with one of these historical figures, trying to keep their answers as historically accurate as possible.

1. Emily Carr
2. Sir Matthew Baillie Begbie (The Hanging Judge)
3. Sir Francis Rattenbury
4. Dr. Helmcken
5. Robert Dunsmuir

Changing Times

1. After the bridge collapse, people looked to place blame, suggesting that the bridge wasn't maintained properly, or that the tram was overloaded. Today, when a similar tragedy occurs, people also look to find answers about 'what happened?' In today's society, sometimes people sue the company or government they feel is at fault for the accident. Do you think this is fair or justified? If not, what would you like to see happen differently?

2. Set up a debate and present arguments for or against one of these statements:

- Governments or large corporations should be in charge of individual safety, and sued or similarly punished if they don't follow through.
- People should take responsibility for their actions and not get themselves into dangerous situations (such as not boarding a tram that looks very, very full).

About the Author:

Penny Chamberlain loves old houses, especially ones with ghosts. She lives in a house which is almost one hundred years old, and was a member of the Friends of Point Ellice House. The Friends took on a project to restore the dining room of Point Ellice House to its former grandeur at the turn of the century.

Penny was born in Nanaimo, BC, became a physiotherapist, and is now the coordinator of a rehabilitation department at a hospital in Victoria. She is married to arts journalist Adrian Chamberlain, with whom she has a daughter, Katie. *The Olden Days Locket* is Penny's first novel.

Also by Penny Chamberlain

Chasing the Moon

Coming in 2011: *Shack Island Summer*

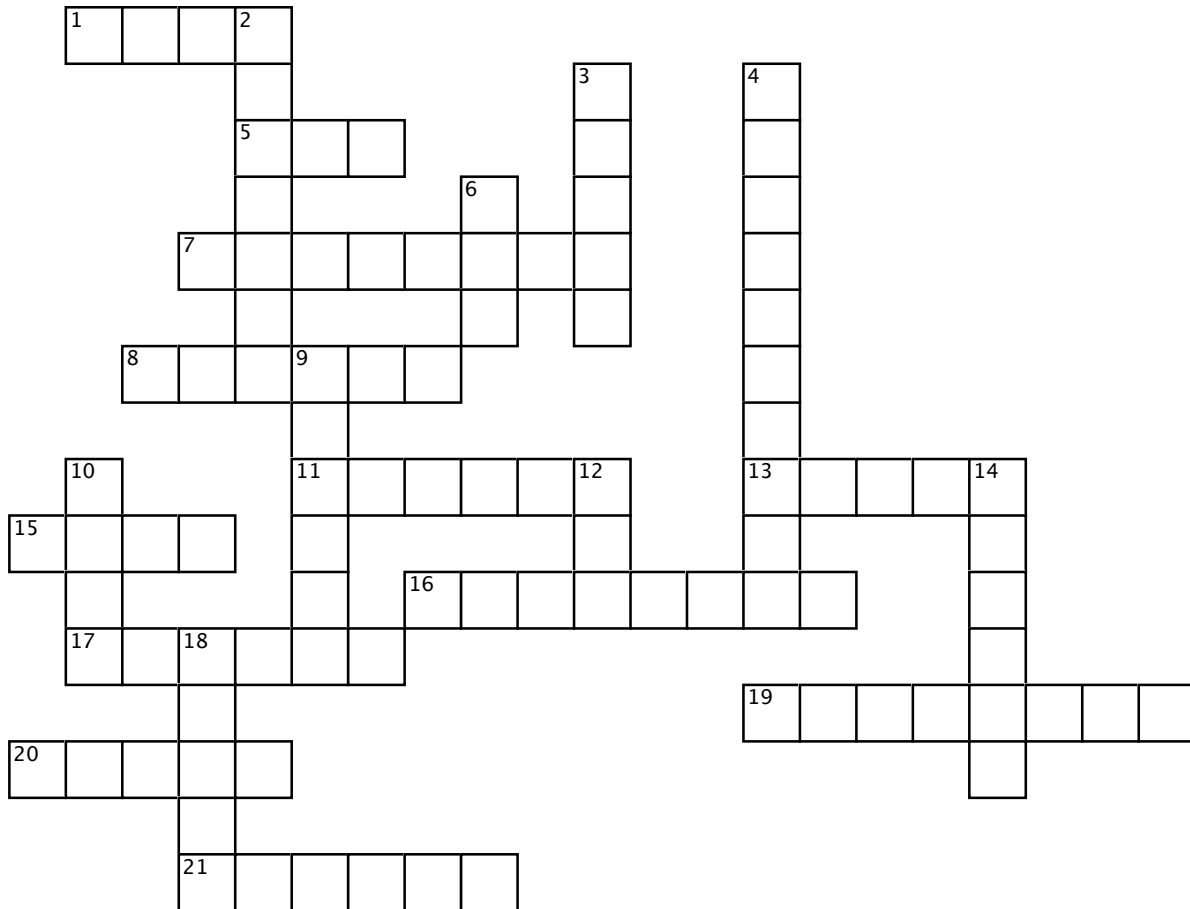
Websites

- www.sononis.com
- www.pointellicehouse.ca
- www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com

Just for Fun:

Crossword puzzle:

Olden Days Locket



Across

1. Leftover food scraps were put in this for the pigs: ____ pail
5. Colour of the light seen at night under the bridge
7. Where Rose's aunt lived before the accident: ____ house
8. Old-fashioned public transportation: ____ car
11. A necklace pendant that opens
13. The white piano keys are made from:
15. What you serve at a birthday party
16. The place where Point Ellice House is now: ____ Street
17. What the Chinese jewellery box had: a secret
19. The city where Jess and Rose live
20. A personal book for writing in
21. The mean gardener: Mr. ____

Down

2. Where the O'Reilly family keeps the piano
3. Jess often crosses the ____ Waterway
4. After getting hit by a basketball, Jess wonders if she has a
6. The animal that ran through the birthday party
9. Point _____ House
10. A house servant
12. An afternoon party
14. The colour of rose in the painting by Miss Kathleen
18. What Rose wore to protect her skirt from food stains