



Argument Writing Response Activity Guided Questions

The debatable issue for this project is:

Cece embraces her deafness as a unique and positive part of herself, so much so that by the end of the book she would not exchange it for normal hearing even if she could.

These guided questions can help students think through argument ideas and begin to gather evidence on the debatable issue. They can also provide organization and coherence to teacher-led and group discussions and close readings of the text. Questions are grouped into four chapter clusters.

Chapters 1 – 5

1. What is the very first sentence of the book, and how might the opening couple of pages be used as evidence for one position or the other on this issue?
2. Before Cece realizes that her illness has made her deaf, list out the bad things and the good things about her new condition. Which changes – bad or good – are the weightier and more important to her?
3. Speak aloud the sentence that the audiologist utters on page 16. Does hearing the sounds of his voice the way that Cece hears it give you a clearer sense of how strange her deafness makes other voices seem to her?
4. What is Cece specifically concerned about, and what does she like about, her new hearing device.
5. “Simple conversations are now so difficult.” This is what Cece tells us on p. 25. But how would you describe the examples of the words that she hears incorrectly?



6. What are the specific ways that Cece learns to communicate effectively, despite her deafness? Does this learning suggest that there is a way in which Cece has to become smarter as a result of her new deafness?
7. What do the images and text on the last two pages of chapter 3 tell us about whether Cece is happier and more comfortable at a school for deaf children?
8. In the first summer in her new home, what does she say is the effect of the other kids' playing the radio? Is the radio a metaphor for her distance from the neighborhood kids?
9. What connection does Cece make between her new Phonic Ear and the popular culture (TV, comics, movies, music) of her time? What leads her to make this connection? What is it about this "special ability" that seems so especially important to a girl Cece's age?
10. Page 46, the end of chapter 4, is very significant for the issue under discussion. Analyze the way that it can support one side or the other, or both, on the issue.
11. What happens to Cece as soon as she becomes friends with Laura?
12. List out the reasons that Cece likes Laura and appreciates being a friend with her, and the reasons that Cece doesn't like Laura and doesn't feel close to her. Which of the items on either list are related to Cece's deafness?

Chapters 6 – 10

13. Cece meets a new friend, Ginny, a girl who recently moved into her neighborhood in North Carolina from Georgia and whose mother has become friends with Cece's mother. Toward the end of chapter 6 Cece blows up at Ginny. Is Cece's deafness a primary reason why their friendship has problems?
14. What does Cece like and dislike about watching TV? Be as specific as you can be. Do you think her TV watching makes her feel more comfortable or less comfortable with her deafness?
15. Describe in detail Cece's response when she sees a deaf character on a TV show get called "deaf." "
16. Despite having some fun, Cece eventually feels uncomfortable enough to leave Ginny's sleepover party, getting picked up late at night by her mother. Would she have had a much better time there if she were not deaf? What's the basis for your answer?
17. Identify the three or four different things that Cece hates about sign language. How does her opposition to signing relate to the debatable issue?



18. Cece and her mother have a fight about sign language in which they each express a very different interpretation of the word “special.” Define how Cece and her mother each define the term, and how the opposing definitions reflect on the debatable issue.

Chapters 10 – 14

19. Cece begins her new friendship with Martha thinking that Martha doesn’t know she is deaf, but then soon learns that Martha knew all along. For which side of the debatable issue does this discovery provide evidence? Why?
20. In the summer between 4th and 5th grade, Cece says that something goes even better for her than meeting “that most glorious superhero of all, the True Friend,” Martha? What is Cece even more excited about than meeting Martha?
21. Martha becomes very upset about her (very small) role in Cece’s accident that injures her eye. Do you think that Martha would have reacted the same way if Cece wasn’t deaf? What makes you think that?
22. What is Cece fearful of when she returns to school and enters the 5th grade?

Chapters 15 – 21

23. What happens when Cece gets eyeglasses? How does it affect her life at school, in particular?
24. When Mr. Potts the P.E. teacher breaks her Phonic Ear microphone, and Cece is facing 4 -6 weeks without it, how does she react?
25. Cece’s experience with Johnnie leads her to cry (again). Does this encounter have anything to do with Cece’s deafness?
26. What seems like the biggest obstacle to a relationship forming between Cece and Mike Miller, and is this obstacle somehow rooted in Cece’s deafness?
27. What enables Cece to overcome the obstacle and first start talking to Mike Miller? How does he respond when she tells him about her Phonic Ear?
28. What “experiment” did Cece and Mike Miller do with the Phonic Ear, and what was the outcome of the experiment? How did other students get involved with it, too, including Martha?
29. Back at school, Cece is able to warn the class when Mrs. Sinkelman is returning from her break, so that her classmates can end their “party” and get back to their seats. Identify the passage on p. 217



that best supports the argumentative claim that Cece discovers the “special powers” that come with her hearing loss, which makes her even closer with her peers than she would otherwise be.

30. It’s fair to say that *El Deafo* is a book with a happy ending, and that Cece ends the book feeling good about her peers and her friendships, particularly with Martha. But Cece also spent much or most of the book either in a “bubble” because of her hearing impairment, or acutely worried about how people were perceiving her due to her disability. What reasons do we have to believe that the upswing she experiences at the end of the text will be permanent for her, if any?