

Name: _____ Table: _____ Period: _____

The Last Lecture Video Questions

The Last Lecture is a memoir, a celebration of life, and a testament to the power of childhood dreams. But it is also, perhaps most of all, a lecture of lessons. The book is filled with all the ideas and observations that Randy Pausch wanted to share with his three young children. “These are the things I won’t get the chance to tell them over the next twenty years,” he said. “I’m trying to put myself in a bottle that will one day wash up on the beach for them.”

1. Randy Pausch describes his cancer as **“an engineering problem.”** How was this a helpful way to look at his illness?
2. He talks about the lecture as a means of expression, and a way to reach his kids: “If I were a painter, I would have painted for them. If I were a musician, I would have composed music. But I am a lecturer. So I lectured.” There are so many ways to communicate. What are your own avenues for self-expression?
3. Randy chose **“Really Achieving Your Childhood Dreams”** as the topic for his lecture. In what ways would this allow him to tell the story of his life, and to enable the dreams of others?
4. Randy decided to begin his talk in a specific way – showing his CT scans, introducing **“the elephant in the room,”** assuring everyone he’s not in denial, and doing push-ups. What made this effective?
5. What were you thinking watching this for the first time via video?
6. Randy said he realized many of his dreams because he had terrific parents. What details from his childhood do you think led to the successes he had later in life?
7. Are there lessons in Randy’s story for people who’ve had less-fulfilling childhoods, or absentee parents? What advice might you give to those who didn’t win “the parent lottery”?
8. In his talk, Randy encouraged parents to allow their children to paint on their bedroom walls. **“As a favor to me,” he said, “let ’em do it. Don’t worry about the home’s resale value.”** The real message he says he was trying to give was this: Find ways to help your kids be creative. Nurture those instincts in them. What would you paint on your bedroom walls if you were given permission to do so? What other creative outlet would you like to pursue, if your parents gave the OK?
9. **“If you can find an opening, you can probably find a way to float through it.”** What’s the lesson to be learned from Randy’s attempts to get onto that **“Vomit Comet”**?
10. ***I Never Made It to the NFL*** Randy talked about ways fundamentals are important off the playing field, too. Randy believed our critics are often the ones saying they still care about us. How in your own life has a critic helped you become a better person?

11. Randy loved using “**head fakes.**” What are some other head fakes that teachers and parents have used?
12. ***The Happiest Place on Earth*** Throughout the lecture, Randy says: “Brick walls are there for a reason. They’re not there to keep us out. The brick walls are there to give us a chance to show how badly we want something.” What are the brick walls you’ve faced in your own life? How did you get over them?
14. ***The Dutch Uncle*** Randy credits his professor Andy van Dam with telling him the tough-love things he needed to hear. What was it about Dr. van Dam’s delivery and message that resonated with Randy? Who in your own life has told you things about yourself that made you reconsider your actions or behavior?
15. ***Pouring Soda in the Backseat*** Throughout the lecture, Randy makes a distinction between “people” and “things.” What did you think of his decision to empty that can of soda in the backseat of his car?
16. ***A Recovering Jerk*** Randy believes the number one goal for educators should be helping students learn how to judge themselves. How crucial do you think this is in the learning process?
17. ***Dream Big*** Randy missed the 1969 moonwalk because he was sent to bed by camp counselors. Have you ever wished adults in your life were less rigid? What advice would you give to adults about helping kids to dream big?
18. ***Start By Sitting Together*** Have you ever had trouble working in groups? How might Randy’s tips help you get along better with others in the future?
19. ***Be the First Penguin*** Randy says that “experience is what you get when you didn’t get what you wanted.” How do you think his First Penguin Award was able to inspire his students?
20. ***The Lost Art of Thank-You Notes*** Do you agree with Randy that handwritten thank-you notes, even in our computer age, can offer a kind of magic? When was the last time you sent a handwritten thank-you?
23. ***All You Have to Do Is Ask*** What would you like to ask for that you haven’t been able to find the courage to articulate? What do you think will happen if you “just ask”?
24. ***Make a Decision: Tigger or Eeyore*** OK. So which one are you? And why? If you’d like to be more of a Tigger, how might you go about that?
25. ***Dreams for My Children*** Randy says parents don’t realize the power of their words: “Depending on a child’s age and sense of self, an offhand comment from Mom or Dad can feel like a shove from a bulldozer.” Have you ever felt that way? (Explain)
26. What are the vital messages to be drawn from the way Randy is saying goodbye to his kids, and from the tangible things he is leaving behind for them?
27. ***Will Come to You The Dreams*** Randy realized that he didn’t give the lecture because he wanted to. He gave it because he “had to.” Are there things inside of you that “need to come out”?