

Literature Circle Questions

Use these questions and the activities that follow to get more out of the experience of reading *The Westing Game* by Ellen Raskin.

1. Which tenant was chosen by mistake? What was Sam Westing's mistake?
2. Sam Westing turns out to be a man with many different identities. What five different names and identities does he use?
3. At the end of the story, how is Judge Ford able to finally repay her debt to Sam Westing?
4. After the second bomb in Chapter 13, Angela and Theo have a conversation in which they discuss their separate future plans. What did Theo and Angela confide to each other? What do we learn about them here? Why couldn't Angela answer Theo's question?
5. At her bridal shower, why do you think Angela turned the gold box containing the bomb toward herself?
6. Who did the burglar turn out to be, and why do you think he or she stole the jewelry and the clock?
7. Did you feel sorry for any of the characters here? Why? How would you help that character if you could?
8. Turtle, or T. R. Wexler as she came to be called, always kept her secret about Sam Westing, even from her own family, including her husband Theo. Why do you think she kept the secret? What would you do in her shoes? Can you imagine keeping such a secret from the people most important to you?
9. What do the words of the song "America the Beautiful" have to do with the Westing mystery? Do the words to the song help the heirs as they try to solve the puzzle?
10. The Westing heirs are asked two times in the story to give their signatures and titles on a receipt. Compare the original titles of the heirs in Chapter 7 to the titles they give later in Chapter 23. How do the titles change, and what does this show about what each heir is experiencing?
11. Why do you think Sam Westing set up this elaborate "game," and do you think it turned out as he hoped?

12. Most of this book takes place in the apartment building Sunset Towers. How does this location affect the story? Can you imagine this story in another setting? What other kinds of places could a story like this take place?

13. What events or characters here did you find funny? Why do you think Ellen Raskin, the author of this book, included so many humorous details in her mystery?

14. Why do you think Angela waited more than five years to marry Denton Deere? Do you think she made the right decision?

15. As you were reading, which of the heirs did you trust the most? Who did you find the most suspicious? Explain why you judged them as you did.

Note: These questions are keyed to Bloom's Taxonomy as follows: Knowledge: 1-3; Comprehension: 4-6; Application: 7-8; Analysis: 9-10; Synthesis: 11-12; Evaluation: 13-15.

Activities

1. You've been hired to direct and cast the characters for a new movie version of *The Westing Game*. Who would you select for each part, and why? What kind of acting instructions would you give to each person? Explain your decisions using Raskin's characters as your guides.
2. Make "Wanted" posters for the Westing heirs. Illustrate your posters using physical descriptions from the novel, and include information on your poster about what makes each character suspicious.
3. Each of the 16 heirs of Sam Westing has some kind of past connection to him. Using Judge Ford's notes on each heir, create a web with Sam Westing in the center, showing all of the connections between Sam and his heirs. Include as many details as you can, and show the connections between the heirs as well.

Other Books by This Author:

The Mysterious Disappearance of Leon (I Mean Noel), Puffin, 1989.

Figs and Phantoms, Puffin, 1989.