

Study Guide for the Kootenay Kidnapper

The strange disappearance of two children changes Tom's mountain holiday into a dangerous search for a kidnapper. Tom learns some valuable lessons about trusting friends and being cautious of strangers. Lonely ghost towns and cold, dark caves provide exciting settings for this electrifying mystery.

Pre-reading Activities

Using the index to The Atlas Of Canada, or a road map of British Columbia, locate the city of Nelson. This is the city in southeastern B.C. where this story begins. For an interesting article about this fascinating city, locate the Fall 1989 edition of Beautiful British Columbia Magazine. Most school and public libraries have back issues. This article mentions the importance of the early mines and railways in the Nelson area.

The Kootenay Kidnapper discusses the concerns, that many people share, about children talking to strangers and hitchhiking. Before reading the book we recommend a discussion of these safety issues.

For students interested in caves, this story offers some insights into what it is like to do some "spelunking".

QUESTIONS

Literal

1. Why was Tom on holiday in the Nelson area?
2. What is the meaning of the Indian word "Kootenay"?
3. After the kidnapper had lured the children to his car, how did he keep them from escaping?
4. On page 51, Tom startled Tattoo by shouting, "Look! Someone's hiding up there." What had he seen, and why did Tom have to force a smile when Tattoo said, "Good trick, Tom. You had me fooled."?

Inferential

5. When Tom finally found Tippi in the darkness of the cave, she was hesitant to come with him. Why?
6. Why was Tom so concerned when Brandi got into the big white car that had stopped to pick her up?
7. When Kendall Steele tried to get Tom to take some pills to make him feel better, Tom only pretended to swallow them. Why?

Critical

8. When Tom was asked by a woman and man for directions to city hall, he would not approach them, but called out an answer to them. How do you feel about Tom's actions?
9. Tom played a trick by putting a special sugar cube into the Maestro's coffee. The man did not like this kind of practical joke, and said, "My heart's too weak for such a shock." What are some of the dangers of playing practical jokes on people?
10. When Tattoo was driving very fast and recklessly after he had been drinking, Tom asked him to slow down, then said, "Please stop, Tattoo. Let me out." How did Tom finally convince Tattoo to stop? What would you say or do if you were in a car that was being driven recklessly?
11. Question 10 refers to one dangerous situation in which self-protection is necessary. What are some ways young people can protect themselves from becoming involved in other dangerous situations? What defenses are available if something serious does arise?

Research

12. Using a dictionary or encyclopedia, look up the following words. This will help you to understand more about the cold, dark world of the Cody Caves: (1) spelunker, (2) stalactite, (3) stalagmite.
13. Using an atlas, or a road map of British Columbia, look up the following places in the index. Try to trace the route driven from Nelson to Kaslo, then down to Creston and back to Nelson. Watch for the place where you would need to take a ferry across the lake.
 - Kootenay Lake
 - Slocan Lake
 - New Denver
 - Sandon
 - Kaslo
 - Retallack
 - Ainsworth
 - Balfour
 - Crawford Bay
 - Nelson
 - Salmo
 - Creston

ANSWERS

1. (p. 16) Tom was with Dietmar, whose uncle, Theolonius P. Judd (Maestro) had flown the boys from Winnipeg as his guests.
2. (p. 18) "Kootenay" means "water people".
3. (p. 27) "He gave them doped pop, or capsules he called pep pills, which were actually knock-out drops".
4. (p. 51) Tom thought he had seen someone, but it was just an old curtain moving in the window. He tried to make Tattoo think that he hadn't been scared.
5. (p. 93) She was afraid to go anywhere with another stranger.

6. (p. 76) Brandi was hitchhiking and had accepted a ride with a stranger. Tom was afraid that Brandi's life was in danger.
7. (p. 85) Tom had suddenly realized that Kendall was the person he had seen earlier, disguised as a security guard in the mall, then again, choking Simon in the woods.
8. Answers will vary.
9. (p. 47) The sugar cube had a plastic maggot in it, which floated in the coffee. Opinions about practical jokes will vary.
10. (p. 78) Tom attempted to make himself vomit. Students will have other suggestions.
11. Answers will vary.
12. spelunker: a person who explores caves; stalactite: an icicle-shaped deposit of minerals hanging from the roof of a cave; stalagmite: an icicle-shaped deposit of minerals building up on the floor of a cave
13. Check the route with a road map.