

Study Guide for The Case of the Golden Boy

The kidnapping of a classmate provides a real live case for the young amateur sleuth, Tom Austen. In his efforts to find the culprits and save Dianne Dorchester, Tom gets himself into some serious predicaments. Tom and Dietmar must leap for their lives, then Tom finds himself held prisoner, in grave danger, and escapes only by keeping his wits about him.

Pre-reading suggestions

Read "A Note from Eric Wilson" at the beginning of the book. Find out what an "artifact" is. Discuss what it means for a writer to "evolve".

Find the meaning of the words, "kidnap", "ransom" and "blackmail".

QUESTIONS

Literal

1. Why was the school principal, Mr. Nicholson, given the nickname "Bones"?
2. Tom had a good reason to want to investigate the empty old house on Borebank Street. What was his reason?
3. What was Tom's favourite Hardy Boys mystery?
4. How did Tom stop the train when he was trying to escape his abductors?
5. How did Tom establish a "skid factor"?
6. Why did Red use the nickname "Jumbo" for the car driver?
7. Why did "Jumbo" not want to be a client of Red's brother?
8. In what season of the year does this story take place? How is the season important to the outcome of the story?
9. Why did the police suspect Tom of breaking into the old vacant house on Borebank Street?
10. When Tom first described the van to the police, what part of the description did he leave out? How does this affect the outcome of the story?

Inferential

11. "Tom figured she had a good chance of getting through the kidnapping safely." What qualities might help a kidnap victim survive?
12. What are the circumstances which led to Tom "Squeezing back tears" as he left the principal's office? How would you have handled this if you were the principal?

Critical

13. Mr. Stones gave out Honor Roll awards for special accomplishments. If you were in his class, would Mr. Stones have you on his Honor Roll? Why?
14. Have you ever made up a nickname for someone? Was it meant to flatter, or to tease? How does name-calling affect people?
15. Tom's main reasons for wanting to be a detective seem to be so that he will get his picture in the paper and people will see him as some sort of "hero". Are these things important? If you were trying to rescue someone, would you be worried about the person or about how the papers would write up your heroism?

Research

16. When Tom was "watching the land change from flat fields to bush and rock", where were they driving? Look at a "physical" map of Canada and see if you can spot where the prairies meet the Canadian Shield.
17. In 1950, Winnipeg suffered a devastating flood. Use a fact book on Winnipeg or Manitoba, or one of the Canadian encyclopedias, to prepare a report on this period in Winnipeg's history.

ANSWERS

1. "The principal's arms and legs were very long, so he was secretly called ""Bones""." (p. 21)
2. Tom had seen movement in the attic the day before. (p. 1)
3. The Twisted Claw. (p. 6)
4. "...He grabbed the emergency cord and pulled hard." (p. 58)
5. Tom liked to slide along the road to see how slippery it was. (p. 10)
6. The driver is described as "chubby" and "fat". (pp. 61-62)
7. Red said that his brother was an undertaker. (p. 62)
8. Spring. (p. 2) Flood helped catch criminals. (p. 89)
9. He had a reputation for previous shenanigans. (p. 7)
10. He left out the colour. (p. 22) Tom later said that Mr. Stones knew that the van was brown, even though it had not been revealed at the police interview. (p. 92)
11. Answers will vary.
12. The principal had removed Tom from his responsibility as a school patrol for leaving his post. (p. 25)
13. Answers will vary
14. Answers will vary
15. Answers will vary
16. Teacher may wish to check research projects.
17. Teacher may wish to check research projects.