

# Study Guide for Escape from Big Muddy

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Sixty-year-old Liz Austen flashes back to her youth to tell the story of a holiday with her Aunt Melody. The two were to spend a few peaceful days at Benbow Farm, a farm vacation site near Moosomin, Saskatchewan. It was anything but quiet, as the travellers encountered theft, kidnapping, international smuggling, even murder, as feuding bikers invaded Saskatchewan. Liz and her new friend Marie face great danger as they try to unravel this intriguing mystery.

## Pre-reading suggestions

Locate a road map of Saskatchewan. Use the map index to find Moosomin, then Wawota. As you read the story, follow the map to trace the winding trail Liz and her aunt take to Big Muddy. To find out more about Moose Jaw, and its network of tunnels, check out the web site at <http://tunnelsofmoosejaw.com>.

## QUESTIONS

### Literal

1. What is Liz Austen's full name?
2. The town name Wawota has very special meaning for prairie people. What does it mean?
3. Name three kinds of prairie wildlife which Liz sees in her travels.

### Inferential

4. Eric Wilson uses the "flashback" technique to start this story. Explain what a "flashback" is?
5. Why would Aunt Melody examine the tires on the Manana Banana?
6. Smollett said that the police chief was "on the take". What does that mean?

### Critical

7. Eric Wilson feels we owe a debt to the early pioneers. Explain why you agree or disagree.
8. Give your opinion of "computer democracy". Could such a system work, and how might it affect your life and the lives of others?
9. This story is a retelling of Treasure Island. Select your personal favorite story from the past and describe how you would retell it as a modern story.

## Research

10. Learn the history of Louis Riel and the Metis people. Give your opinion of what happened during Riel's lifetime.
11. Explain the ways that Eric Wilson took aspects of Treasure Island and used them in Escape from Big Muddy (for example, The Admiral Benbow Inn became Benbow Farm).
12. Edward Beaupre was the tallest Canadian of all time, over 8 feet (250 cm). Check the most recent Guinness Book of Records to find out who is recorded as the tallest person in the world. Try a web search for "tallest man".
13. The RCMP is proud of its great march west in 1874. Learn all you can about this famous event. Check your local library for a book on the history of the RCMP.

## ANSWERS

1. Elizabeth Kean Austen (p. 1)
2. Wawota means "deep snow". (p. 11)
3. In her travels, Liz sees hawks, coyotes, hummingbirds, crows and gophers.
4. Liz goes back in time to tell about something that happened earlier in her lifetime.
5. Melody thought that the Manana Banana was a pretty rickety looking vehicle. She wanted to see that the tires looked safe. (p. 51)
6. The chief was receiving payments (bribes) then ignoring certain illegal activities.
7. Answers will vary.
8. Answers will vary.
9. Answers will vary.
10. Answers will vary.
11. Answers will vary.
12. Answers will vary.
13. Answers will vary.