

Study Guide for The Green Gables Detectives

Liz Austen and her Japanese friend Makiko team up as a pair of hot-shot young detectives. At first, they are challenged by the mock mystery of Green Gables, but they soon become embroiled in a real spine-tingling murder investigation.

Pre-reading suggestions

Locate Prince Edward Island on a map of Canada. Using an enlarged map of the island, such as a road map, locate Charlottetown, Covehead Harbour, Cavendish and Souris. Maps can assist the reader in making sense of the movement from place to place - an important aspect of this story.

Wilson has chosen this setting because of its well-established reputation as a tourist haven. Lucy Maud Montgomery's *Anne Of Green Gables* is so famous that people flock to see the old farmhouse and the surrounding countryside. The *Green Gables Detectives* raises some questions about the exploitation and commercialization of the site. Some discussion about building "tourist traps" could be quite useful prior to reading this mystery.

QUESTIONS

Literal

1. Why was Liz visiting Prince Edward Island?
2. Liz is described by the umpire as a "snollygoster". What does this mean?
3. When the ferry was returning to Souris Harbour, why was the captain depending upon the lighthouse to guide him?
4. What was Liz referring to as "raw cow-juice"?
5. When Liz, Aaron and Makiko were in the car (p. 117), what finally convinced Liz that the driver was not really a Mountie?

Inferential

6. Look up the meaning of the word "simile". When you read the following similes, what do you think Eric Wilson means?
 - a. "..., moving like a couple of snails in molasses..." (p. 6)
 - b. "... pitcher delivered like a bazooka..." (p. 9)
 - c. "... making disgusting throaty noises like a bunch of elephants gargling." (p. 50)
7. Eric Wilson often refers to superstitions in his stories. For example, on page 10, we learn that Liz carries a rabbit foot joined to a four-leaf clover in her pocket. Why would anyone carry

these things? To learn about many different superstitions, look up "superstition" in the index to an encyclopedia, then read up on this fascinating topic. You might learn why:

- a. there should not be three people in a picture (p. 27)
- b. someone would repeat "money, money, money" after seeing a shooting star (p. 32)
- c. actors never whistle in a dressing room (p. 91)
- d. you would toss salt over your left shoulder (p. 92)

Critical

8. The Greenpeace organization is a group of people famous for struggling to protect our environment. How do you feel about people who would bury themselves in the sand to stop advancing bulldozers, or would put themselves in danger by using little rubber Zodiac boats to try to stop huge whaling ships?
9. The "Finnish method" insists that logging companies plant young trees after cutting an area. If a company fails to reforest a cleared area, a large deposit of money is forfeited. What responsibility do you think logging companies have for reforestation programs?

Research

10. Liz refers to travelling "halfway across the country". Approximately how far is it from Winnipeg to Charlottetown? What is the distance from your community to Charlottetown? Do you live closer to Charlottetown or to Winnipeg?
11. Using a dictionary, find meanings for the following:
 - a. knickerbocker trousers
 - b. halitosis
12. Using the road map of the island, try to visualize the routes of the main characters as they move about the island.
13. On p. 19, Makiko shows Liz a copy of *Anne Of Green Gables* translated into Japanese. Can you find out why this story is so important in Japan? What is the "fan club" called "Buttercups"?

ANSWERS

1. (p. 9) The Manitoba All-Stars girls' softball team had been invited to play in a tournament.
2. (p. 51) A person who is shrewd and calculating and doesn't care about the common good.
3. (p. 131) Harry Hoolif had destroyed the radio and radar units on the ferry.
4. (p. 55) milk
5. Liz saw that the car was a Hertz rental car.
6.
 - a. moving very slowly
 - b. the ball is thrown very hard
 - c. a lot of loud noises
7.
 - a. "Three people in a picture brings terrible misfortune."

- b. "I was certain the shooting star meant death for someone."
 - c. "They say it will bring a calamity."
 - d. Liz feels that something horrible will happen if you spill salt but throwing a pinch of salt over the left shoulder will prevent the horrible thing from happening.
8. (p. 65) "...every spring the people here have a clean-up day." Suggestions for local communities will vary.
9. (p. 57) No matter how gloomy things seem to be, one can usually find something good in any situation. Personal answers will vary.
10. The distance is approximately 2400 km. Other answers will vary.
- 11.
- a. loosely fitting short breeches gathered in at the knee.
 - b. bad breath.
12. Check routes on a road map.
13. Answers may be found in standard encyclopedias.