

Study Guide for Vancouver Nightmare

While enjoying a holiday with his grandparents in Vancouver, amateur detective Tom Austen learns of the death of a young police officer and tries to link the death to an illicit drug operation. The investigation leads Tom through the roughest parts of the city and into some very dangerous situations.

Pre-reading suggestions

Locate a large street map of Vancouver and mount it on a conspicuous bulletin board. As the reading progresses, have students locate and mark as many places as they can find. Example:

1. Maple Tree Square
2. Gastown
3. Blood Alley Square
4. Victory Square
5. Oppenheimer park
6. Shanghai Alley
7. Bayshore Inn
8. Stanley park - zoo
9. Stanley Park - lighthouse
10. Lions Gate Bridge
11. Skid Road
12. Pier A-3
13. Water Street
14. Pender Street
15. Chinatown
16. Carrall Street
17. Railway yards
18. Lost Lagoon

Discuss various aspects of the illicit drug trade. Students will have opinions on "pushers" and users".

QUESTIONS

Literal

1. What did Gramps say about prison life?
2. Explain why Tom's face was scarlet when he was introduced to Inspector Mort.
3. Why was the man in the bus depot "standing there in his underwear" when the police arrived?
4. Tom referred to Spider as "the wolf-boy". Why?

5. Why did Tom consider working with Spider?
6. What did Angel do with her bowl of soup?
7. Why was Tom unable to open the bathroom door?
8. What excuses did Tom give Spider for carrying money in his shoe?
9. Why did Harrison use moisture-proof packages?
10. How did Harrison manage to get "inside information" from the police?

Inferential

11. Why did Tom compare Inspector Mort to the polar bear?
12. What do you think Spider meant when he told Tom that he could teach him "survival tricks"?
13. "Tom felt like a traitor as he forced himself to laugh." Why did Tom feel like a traitor?
14. After Harrison was arrested, he said to Tom, "When Spider warned us that you were a threat, I laughed at him." Why do you think that Harrison did not see Tom as a serious threat to the drug operation?

Critical

15. How do you think the author feels about people like Spider who sell drugs, and people like Angel who use drugs? Give your own feelings.
16. Eric Wilson lived in the Skid Road area while researching Vancouver Nightmare. Do you think this was wise? Would you have done the same thing?

Research

17. Find out all you can about wax museums. How are the wax models made? What kind of people are displayed? Why is there usually a Chamber of Horrors?
18. Prepare a short report on drugs, telling what physical and mental effects they have on people, and explain how drugs affect our society.

ANSWERS

1. Gramps thought prison life was very grim and boring. (p. 10)
2. Tom had thought Inspector Mort was a criminal. (p. 11)
3. The man in the bus depot had been mugged, and the criminals even took his clothes. (p. 23)
4. Tom referred to Spider as "the wolf-boy" because his high cheekbones gave him the appearance of a wolf. (p. 38)
5. Tom considered working for Spider so he could find out who was responsible for smuggling drugs into Vancouver. (p. 41)
6. Angel warmed her hands over the steam from the soup. (p. 56)
7. Tom couldn't open the bathroom door because it hit against the man who was sleeping on the floor. (p. 57)
8. Tom said he carried money in his shoe because he couldn't afford a wallet and he had holes in his pockets. (p. 69)

9. The moisture-proof packages were necessary because the drugs were transported inside the fuel tank of Harrison's motorcycle. (pp. 89,92)
10. Harrison got inside information by talking at the Police Club to officers who were his friends. (p. 93)
11. Answers will vary
12. Answers will vary
13. Answers will vary
14. Answers will vary
15. Answers will vary
16. Answers will vary
17. Answers will vary
18. Answers will vary

www.ericwilson.com