

Study Guide for The Prairie Dog Conspiracy

The bold, broad-daylight kidnapping of Tom's classmate Dianne prompts an intensive search for the victim and her captors. In his bid to rescue his friend, the 11-year-old amateur detective Tom confronts many unsavoury characters. As the plot unravels, some unlikely suspects are revealed; but in the end, despite several scrapes with death, Tom and his friend are united.

Pre-reading suggestions

On a map of Canada, locate Winnipeg, Manitoba. Try to find a street map that shows details of downtown Winnipeg.

QUESTIONS

Literal

1. Why did Tom keep a poster display of Canada's most wanted criminals?
2. Tom had a reason for wanting to investigate the abandoned house. What was his reason?
3. Where were Tom and Liz's parents vacationing?

Inferential

4. There is mention of a museum of paleontology in Drumheller, Alberta. What would you expect to see in this museum?
5. What did Rex mean when he said to Tom, "I've got an itchy trigger-finger"?
6. In the abandoned house, one man said to the other, "After you've memorized the plans, destroy them." Why did he say this?

Critical

7. "I have to finish my homework first. It's a rule in our house." What do you think of a rule that puts homework ahead of TV?
8. "Dianne smiled at the person inside ... 'A ride would be great, thanks.'" Would he have approached this van? Why? Why not?
9. Suggest how life in a small northern community like Muskeg would be different than life in a big city like Winnipeg.

Research

10. APB is a common acronym used by the police. What does it mean? How did you find out?

11. The Prairie Dog Central is an old, restored steam engine which is used as a tourist attraction in Winnipeg. Prepare a report on present tourist attractions in your community, or suggest how something could be made into a tourist attraction

ANSWERS

1. "Tom memorized their scars and tattoos and shifty eyes, knowing that eventually he'd spot one of these desperados on the street. Then there would be an arrest, and he would be famous."
2. Tom had seen a light in the attic the night before.
3. Tom's parents were in Mexico.
4. Fossils and dinosaur bones.
5. An "itchy" trigger-finger could pull the trigger at any time, very easily.
6. If the plan was left lying around somewhere, someone else could look at it and figure out what the men were up to.
7. Answers will vary.
8. Answers will vary, but some references to taking rides with strangers will likely be included.
9. Answers will vary.
10. All Points Bulletin.
11. Answers will vary.