Anticipation Guide for *The Westing Game*

True of False? What do you think Ellen Raskin’s mystery is about? After completing each question, be prepared to defend your answers in a group.

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**Anticipation Guide for The Westing Game**

**True or False Answer Sheet**

1. The tenants of Sunset Towers were specifically chosen to live there.
   * The answer is true. At the very beginning of the novel, we are informed that each tenant was handpicked to live at Sunset Towers. This establishes a mysterious plot because we want to know why each specific person was chosen to live there.

2. All the tenants love eating at Shin Hoo’s Chinese Restaurant.
   * As the students read the text, they will discover many of Mr. Hoo’s attempts to attract business to his restaurant on the top floor of Sunset Towers. However, he fails miserably attracting virtually no one’s business. The answer is false.

3. One of the tenants murdered Sam Westing.
   * This question remains unanswered until the end of the book. The entire mystery revolves around the tenants trying to find who killed Sam Westing. Students will be surprised to discover that none of the tenants “killed” Westing, but that he in fact had four different identities.

4. Turtle is Grace Wexler’s pet.
   * Although Grace Wexler is not too fond of Turtle, it is not because she is her pet. Turtle is one of her two daughters. The answer is false.

5. It is okay to commit a crime if you are trying to protect someone.
   * This is a moral question asking the students to decide whether it is okay in certain circumstances to commit crimes. In the text, Turtle bombs the elevator in an attempt to conceal that her “perfect” sister Angela is the real bomber. This question does not have a universal answer.

6. Stealing things is okay as long as it helps you win the game.
   * This is a moral question asking students to examine what they feel is right or wrong. It pertains to several characters, namely those trying to steal clues. Mrs. Hoo is also named as a thief in the novel, although her motives are slightly different and seemingly innocent. Answers may vary.

7. We should depend on outward appearances when choosing our friends.
   * This is a moral question asking students to decide how they feel about judging other people. In the book, certain people become friends because they are placed on a team together. If they had not been forced to work together, they would have never given each other a chance.

8. Boys are better at solving mysteries than girls.
   * False! The story will reveal futile attempts to solve the Westing Game by both girls and boys. A girl wins the game, but the author never implies that she wins because she is a girl. If Turtle’s character had been a boy, he would have been just as likely to win the game.

9. A bomber used bombs to help narrow the competition.
   * False. Angela uses bombs because of her unhappy life and marriage engagement. She was tired of being seen as perfect, so she did something that was far from perfect. Turtle was also a bomber, but only to cover for her sister.

10. It is wise to keep secrets from others when personal gain is involved.
    * This is a moral question that will allow the students to examine what behavior they think is right and what behavior is wrong. As they read the novel, they will be

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introduced to characters that hide information from each other because they want to win the game and get all of the money for themselves. There is no definite right or wrong answer to this question.

11. All the tenants personally knew Sam Westing.
   *As the students read the book, they will discover how all of the tenants at Sunset Towers were connected to Sam Westing. There is a connection between most of the characters whether they knew Westing or not. However, technically the answer is false because one person was a “mistake.”

12. It is important to accept other people even when they are different from yourself.
   *This is another moral question causing the students to evaluate what they believe. In the book, we see many characters matched up together who would not normally associate with each other because of differences in race, economic status, abilities, disabilities, etc.

13. All criminals are bad people.
   *The answer to this question again depends on the student. Raskin shows us several characters in her book that commit crimes, but that do not seem like bad people. Mrs. Hoo is a thief, yet she seems like such an innocent person. Angela and Turtle are bombers, yet they also seem good. Mr. Wexler is a bookie that makes money illegally, yet he does not seem like a bad person either. This is another issue addressed in the book allowing teachers to demonstrate what good morals are.
Teacher’s Anticipation Guide
The Westing Game
by Ellen Raskin

Purpose:

The purpose of this strategy is to help students make predictions about the text before they begin reading the novel. This activity allows students to think about why they would support each of their predictions. Students will later have the opportunity to compare these early predictions with the actual events in the story. This strategy provides the basis for a pre-reading discussion as well as a post-reading discussion. Through group discussion, students will defend the answers they have chosen, as well as become open to new ideas as they listen to other students defend their answers.

Rationale:

The Westing Game anticipation guide is given to students before they read the novel, but after they are exposed to background information about the author and the mystery novel. This activity is a good way to create student interest and excitement about the novel before they begin reading the text.

Directions:

The teacher distributes the anticipation guide before students begin reading The Westing Game. The students are told to read each question, using any previous knowledge or experience to help them choose their answer, marking each question “true” or “false.” After students have completed the anticipation guide, organize groups where students can discuss and defend their answers. After reading the text, students may discover that some of these questions do not have a universal answer while others do. However, the important thing about the activity is that it helps students to think, analyze, and anticipate information.

Steps:

1. Hand out the anticipation guide. Tell students to mark each question “T” (true) or “F” (false). Encourage students to think about why they choose each answer. (They can write notes to the side of each question reminding them why they chose a specific answer.)
2. Give the students five minutes to complete the anticipation guide.
3. Divide the class into groups of 3-5 students. Give the groups 5-10 minutes to discuss and defend their predictions.
4. End group discussions. Begin a classroom discussion addressing each question on the guide. This discussion should take between fifteen and twenty minutes. Allow students to share why they chose each answer.
5. Discuss with students the importance of anticipating. Be sure they understand that it helps students to think about new ideas as well as interests them in a particular text.

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