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CLASSIC MIDDLE SCHOOL LITERATURE

# MYSTERY

STUDY UNITS

Nancy Roberts Garrity

THE  
WESTING  
GAME

The  
Monkey's Paw

The  
Phantom Coach

The  
Signal-Man

The  
Cask of  
Amontillado

 GOOD YEAR BOOKS

## **DEDICATION**

This book is dedicated to all the students at St. John Fisher School; your enthusiasm is a constant inspiration to me. I am also grateful to the talented students who have granted me permission for their very creative artwork to be used as reference for this book.

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# UNIT 1:

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## *Novel Study*

# THE WESTING GAME

## (CHAPTERS 1–8)

*The Westing Game*, published in 1978, is a winner of the Newbery Medal (1979), the *Boston Globe/Horn Book* Best Fiction Award (1978), an American Book Award nomination, and an ALA Notable Book citation. Other well-known books by Ellen Raskin include *Nothing Ever Happens on My Block* (1966); *Spectacles* (1968); *The Mysterious Disappearance of Leon (I Mean Noel)* (1972); *Who, Said Sue, Said Whoo?* (1973); and *Figgs and Phantoms* and *The Tattooed Potato and Other Clues* (1976).

### THE AUTHOR

**ELLEN RASKIN**  
(1928–1984)

Ellen Raskin was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. She grew up in the warmth of a large extended family but during the hard years of the Great Depression. As a child, she was interested in playing the piano, reading, and—after she got eyeglasses to correct her poor vision—drawing. In 1945, she entered the University of Wisconsin, settling on a major in art. After college, she moved to New York City, where she established herself as a successful book illustrator. In 1966, she began to write children’s books and became equally successful as a writer-illustrator. Like one of her characters in *The Westing Game*, Raskin also enjoyed playing the stock market. In addition, she liked to play the piano and harpsichord, collect books, garden, travel, and visit zoos and museums. Raskin died at the age of fifty-six of complications from connective-tissue disease.

### SUMMARY OF THE BOOK

The mysterious death of Samuel W. Westing, an eccentric millionaire, gathers sixteen people together for the reading of his very strange will. The heirs discover that, in order to inherit his fortune and become millionaires, they must play “the Westing game.” This game

was devised by Sam Westing himself, before his mysterious death. “Uncle Sam” was a great patriot and appears to be using a patriotic theme for the Westing game. The game seems to have a different set of rules for each player and may also uncover the identity of Westing’s killer. The unlikely assortment of heirs are placed in pairs. Each pair is given \$10,000 and a set of clues (no two sets of clues being alike). All the players have to do is find the answer, but no one is quite sure of the question. The Westing game is tricky and dangerous, but the heirs play on to the end through blizzards, burglaries, and bombs.

### SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS 1–8

**CHAPTER 1—SUNSET TOWERS:** The story begins with a paradox. Although the sun sets in the west, Sunset Towers faces east and has no towers. Six letters are sent, exclusively inviting six preselected tenants-to-be to rent apartments in the newest, most luxurious building on Lake Michigan. In one day, Barney Northrup convinces all six tenants to rent apartments. Among the specially selected tenants are a dressmaker, a secretary, an inventor, a doctor, and a judge. But one of them is a mistake. Barney Northrup rented one of the apartments to the wrong person.

**CHAPTER 2—GHOSTS OR WORSE:** On October 31, the doorman, delivery boy, and three teenage residents discover smoke com-

## VOCABULARY PREVIEW

adjacent	culprit	hassock	liberalism	reproachful*
afflicted*	dastardly*	hodgepodge	minstrel show	reverence
alcove	deceased	impeccable*	morbid	scrutiny
appalled*	deckle edge	impish	oblige	testament
asylum	dialect	incompetence	pneumonia	timidity*
Attila the Hun	dismay*	incompetent*	pompous*	titter
autopsy	divisive*	incriminating*	pretentious*	uncanny*
billiard cue	eccentric*	indignant*	purple martin	veiled*
capacity	embalm	instill	purported	vindictiveness*
corrupt	executor	intern	pyrotechnic	wasting disease
cremate	gilt	jasmine	relentless*	windfall
cuisine	grapple*	legality	relinquish*	

\*Vocabulary words to be tested are marked with an asterisk (\*).  
The reproducible Vocabulary Preview is on page 131.

ing from the chimney of the old, abandoned Westing house. Sandy McSouthers, the doorman, and Otis Amber, the sixty-two-year-old delivery boy, frighten the teens with the rumor that although Sam Westing is presumed dead, many people believe that his corpse remains in his house. On Halloween, exactly one year ago, a dollar bet was made that no one could stay in that spooky, old house for five minutes. The two boys who attempted the feat came out screaming “purple waves.” One tumbled off a cliff, and the other was committed to an insane asylum. At the end of the narrative, Turtle Wexler bets her friends Doug Hoo and Theo Theodorakis that, for two dollars a minute, she’ll spend time on Halloween night in the old house.

**CHAPTER 3—TENANTS IN AND OUT:** The various tenants of Sunset Towers are introduced as each sees the smoke coming from the chimney. Turtle’s sister, Angela, for example, observes it through her window as she is being fitted for her wedding dress for her upcoming wedding to Dr. D. Denton Deere.

Theo’s invalid brother, Chris, frequently passes his time watching birds with his binoculars. Today, he not only sees the smoke but also observes someone who walks with a limp entering the Westing house.

**CHAPTER 4—THE CORPSE FOUND:** Wearing her witch’s costume, Turtle sneaks into the Westing house. Doug Hoo, who has been appointed timekeeper, is stationed behind a tree on the lawn. She is beckoned to the bedroom when she hears someone whispering “purple” or possibly “Turtle.” Entering the bedroom, she finds the dead man tucked away in his four-poster bed. Next to him is an envelope that reads: “If I am found dead in bed.” As she edges her way to the bed, she touches his waxy hand and sees his white-bearded face. She’s so frightened that she runs, screams, and falls down the stairs. Doug Hoo observes her exiting the building after twelve minutes. The next day, the front page of the newspaper is filled with news of Sam Westing’s death. Sixteen heirs receive invitations to a reading of the will.

## COMPREHENSION REVIEW

Write short answers to the questions below.

1. In the beginning of the story, Barney Northrup sends six letters to six prospective tenants of Sunset Towers. Describe some of the features that make the apartments appealing to the prospective tenants. Who receives the least appealing apartment?

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2. What does Turtle Wexler do when someone touches her braid?

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3. Who is Angela Wexler's fiancé? What is Angela doing when she spots the chimney smoke? How does she react?

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4. Contrast and compare how Grace Windsor Wexler treats her two daughters, Angela and Turtle.

---

5. What distinctive position does J. J. Ford hold? Does it appear that she once knew Sam Westing?

---

6. How long does Turtle stay in the Westing house on Halloween night? What frightens her away?

---

7. The headlines of the newspaper read, "Sam Westing Found Dead." Write short answers to the following questions: What was Westing's favorite holiday? \_\_\_\_\_  
What was his daughter's name? \_\_\_\_\_ How did she die? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ What special event was she anticipating? \_\_\_\_\_  
Westing was sued over the rights to a product. Name that product. \_\_\_\_\_  
What happened to Westing and Dr. Sidney Sikes on their way to court? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Where was Sam Westing presumed to be living after this tragedy? \_\_\_\_\_ Who is President and Chief Executive Officer of Westing Paper Products Corporation? \_\_\_\_\_

8. What is unusual about Sam Westing's body in the coffin?

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9. What do the sixteen heirs learn at the reading of the will?

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10. Briefly describe the Westing game.

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11. Name the two heirs not present at the reading of the will. What happens to their \$10,000?

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12. In Chapter 7, what does Theo notice about the chessboard?

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13. At the reading of the will, Chris notices that Crow limps. What had he observed earlier that makes this significant?

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14. What happens as a result of the blizzard? Briefly describe the candles that Turtle sells to the tenants.

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**COMPREHENSION TEST**

Write the letter of the correct answer for each item.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Who wrote *The Westing Game*? (a) Amelia B. Edwards (b) W. W. Jacobs  
(c) Ellen Raskin (d) Charles Dickens
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Sunset Towers faces the rising sun and has no towers. The name of the building suggests the opposite of what's really the case. This is called (a) verbal irony  
(b) an oxymoron (c) hyperbole (d) understatement.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ The least appealing apartment is leased to (a) Flora Baumbach (b) Sydelle Pulaski  
(c) J. J. Ford (d) the Hoo family.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ Whenever someone touches Turtle's braid, she (a) looks in the opposite direction  
(b) punches the person in the stomach (c) kicks the person (d) runs away.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ When the three teens see smoke rising from the chimney of the Westing house,  
(a) Otis Amber tells them a frightening tale (b) Barney Northrup warns them never to go inside  
(c) Doug Hoo runs away (d) all of these.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ Angela Wexler (a) is startled to see the chimney smoke (b) will soon marry  
Dr. D. Denton Deere (c) is being fitted for her wedding dress (d) all of these.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ Judge J. J. Ford (a) is the first black female judge in the state (b) has no previous  
connection with Sam Westing (c) knows the whereabouts of Sam Westing  
(d) all of these.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ "Dead as a squashed June bug" is an example of (a) a simile (b) a metaphor  
(c) hyperbole (d) an oxymoron.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ "Gloomy tomb of a room" is an example of (a) a simile (b) a metaphor  
(c) personification (d) an oxymoron.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ On Halloween, Turtle is frightened by (a) Doug Hoo hiding in the bushes  
(b) Theo Theodorakis making strange noises in the library (c) Sam Westing's  
corpse (d) all of these.
11. \_\_\_\_\_ The inciting incident in *The Westing Game* is (a) everyone receives an invitation  
to lease apartments at Sunset Towers (b) the tenants see smoke rising from the  
chimney of the Westing house (c) Sam Westing is found dead and the heirs are  
invited to play the Westing game (d) the blizzard causes the heirs to be imprisoned together.
12. \_\_\_\_\_ "There was *no mention* of prowlers; *no mention* of anyone having seen a witch; *no mention*  
of footprints on the lawn" is an example of (a) imagery (b) a metaphor  
(c) repetition (d) an oxymoron.

13. \_\_\_\_\_ Mrs. Hoo and Dr. Wexler (a) are not present at the reading of the will (b) refuse to work together as partners in the Westing game (c) know who killed Sam Westing (d) volunteer to drop out of the game.
14. \_\_\_\_\_ During the Westing game, Mr. Plum reads Angela's occupation as "none." On hearing this, Dr. Deere is troubled that his fiancée called herself a "nun." These two words, which are pronounced alike but have different meanings and spellings, are called (a) homonyms (b) homophones (c) homographs (d) hyperbole.
15. \_\_\_\_\_ The lawyer announces that "The *will will* not be filed until the first of the year." Two words that are spelled and pronounced alike but have different meanings are called (a) homonyms (b) homophones (c) homographs (d) hyperbole.
16. \_\_\_\_\_ A blizzard (a) traps all the players in the Westing house (b) causes the telephones and electricity to fail at Sunset Towers (c) keeps them snowbound, although Turtle digs a tunnel to escape (d) all of these.
17. \_\_\_\_\_ Mrs. Hoo stares at the "angry lake." This figure of speech, in which a nonhuman object is given human characteristics, is called (a) a simile (b) hyperbole (c) personification (d) an oxymoron.
18. \_\_\_\_\_ Mr. Hoo and Grace Wexler (a) enjoy each other's company (b) know who killed Sam Westing (c) are not present at the reading of the will (d) all of these.