

The Westing Game

Recommended for Grades 5-8

Book Summary: The Westing Game

Near Sunset Towers sits the vacant Westing House where Samuel Westing is said to have died years ago. When smoke is seen rising from the chimney and a wax dummy of Mr. Westing is found in the house, sixteen tenants are plunged into a mystery to solve who killed the millionaire Sam Westing. Paired into groups of twos, they use clues given to them to solve the murder.

[SPOILER] Each tenant, minus one, is found to have some connection with the late Sam Westing and many of them had a motive to kill him. As they play the game, they discover that each player was paired with the perfect partner. One of those partners turns out to be Mr. Westing himself who has adopted two other aliases (as relator Barney Northrup and doorman Sandy McSouthers) and led the other through this game starting from when they first rented Sunset Towers.

When Mr. Westing's wife comes up as the answer, Turtle Wexler doggedly continues the game until she follows the final clue which leads her to discovering Mr. Westing faked his death twice and is now settled into his fourth and final alias (businessman Julian Eastman). Turtle wins the inheritance and maintains a friendship with Eastman until his death. She never tells any of the other Westing Game players that Eastman is Westing.

Author Biography: Ellen Raskin

Ellen Ermingard Raskin was born March 13, 1928 in Milwaukee, WI. She entered the University of Wisconsin-Madison with the intention of studying journalism. After visiting the Chicago Art Institute, she changed to a focus in fine arts. She spent the next fifteen years working as an illustrator until she tried her hand at writing.

Her first book, *Nothing Ever Happens on My Block*, was published in 1966. It was soon followed by the Newbery Honor book *Figgs & Phantoms* in 1974 and the Newbery Medal book *The Westing Game* in 1978. She died in 1984 and has one daughter, Susan Metcalf.



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Discussion Questions: The Westing Game

1. Angela and Turtle Wexler are perceived very differently by their mother, Grace, who makes no attempt to hide her preference for her older daughter. What are some of the consequences of Grace's favoritism towards Angela? How does this favoritism affect Turtle? How would you react if you were Turtle? If you were Angela?
2. Sydelle Pulaski spends most of the book using painted crutches although she doesn't need them until after the second bomb. Why does Sydelle Pulaski use crutches when she doesn't need them? Do you think this was a good plan? Why or why not?
3. The majority of the game and revelations follow from each team being unwilling to share their clues with the others. If the teams had shared their clues in the first place, how do you imagine the story would be changed? Would anything be the same?
4. During the game, three bombs go off in the coffeehouse, the restaurant and at Angela's party. Why do you think Angela was the bomber? Why do you think she chose those places to set off the bombs?
5. Through the Westing game, a bomber, a burglar, a private investigator and a mistake are discovered among the players. Which character discovery did you find the most surprising? Why?
6. At the end of the game, Chris remarks that Mr. Westing gave everyone the perfect partner to make friends. Which Westing game pair turned out to be the most successful and why? Did all the partners help each other out in some way? If so, how?
7. When all the players put their clues together, the missing letters spell out Bertha Erica Crow. Why was Crow the answer if she wasn't the murderer? What do you think was Westing's plan in making her the answer?
8. As soon as Crow is announced the answer, Sandy appears to have a heart attack in front of the others but is later found to still be alive. Why did Sandy fake his death? Why do you think Westing orchestrated the entire game? Was it a good plan?
9. Turtle maintains a friendship with Eastman until his death, but never tells anyone who Eastman really is. Why do you think Turtle never told anyone that Sandy was still alive? Should she have let the others know that he was? Why or why not?



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