

The Westing Game Study Guide

The Westing Game by Ellen Raskin

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Contents

The Westing Game Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Overview.....	4
About the Author.....	5
Plot Summary.....	6
Sunset Towers: Chapter 1.....	7
Ghosts or Worse: Chapter 2.....	9
Tenants In and Out: Chapter 3.....	11
The Corpse Found: Chapter 4.....	13
Sixteen Heirs: Chapter 5.....	15
The Westing Will: Chapter 6.....	16
The Westing Game: Chapter 7.....	17
The Paired Heirs: Chapter 8.....	18
Lost and Found: Chapter 9.....	20
The Long Party: Chapter 10.....	21
The Meeting: Chapter 11.....	22
The First Bomb: Chapter 12.....	23
The Second Bomb: Chapter 13.....	24
Pairs Repaired: Chapter 14.....	25
Fact and Gossip: Chapter 15.....	26
The Third Bomb: Chapter 16.....	27
Some Solutions: Chapter 17.....	28
The Trackers: Chapter 18.....	29
Odd Relatives: Chapter 19.....	30
Confessions: Chapter 20.....	31



The Fourth Bomb: Chapter 21.....	32
Losers, Winners: Chapter 22.....	33
Strange Answers: Chapter 23.....	34
Wrong All Wrong: Chapter 24.....	36
Westing's Wake: Chapter 25.....	37
Turtle's Trial: Chapter 26.....	38
A Happy Fourth: Chapter 27.....	39
And Then . . . : Chapter 28.....	40
Five Years Pass: Chapter 29.....	41
The End?: Chapter 30.....	42
Characters.....	43
Objects/Places.....	48
Setting.....	49
Social Sensitivity.....	50
Literary Qualities.....	51
Themes.....	52
Themes/Characters.....	54
Style.....	56
Quotes.....	58
Topics for Discussion.....	60
Ideas for Reports and Papers.....	61
Further Study.....	62
Related Titles.....	63
Copyright Information.....	64

Overview

The Westing Game is Raskin's closest approach to a classic mystery story. Sixteen interesting and bizarre characters, who live in a mysterious apartment building, compete to become heir to the Westing millions. Inspired by the intrigue surrounding Howard Hughes's will and by the celebration of the bicentennial of the United States, the novel combines a tricky mystery with a tribute to American opportunity. Like *Figgs & Phantoms* and *The Tattooed Potato & Other Clues*, *The Westing Game* incorporates some of Raskin's special interests. Would-be heirs play both chess and the stock market in their attempts to solve the puzzle and gain a fortune.

In addition to being a satisfying mystery, *The Westing Game* is Raskin's exploration of material success and the importance of money. While Sam Westing and his wife achieved the good life, they sacrificed their daughter along the way. Raskin explores their life in light of the need for love, the challenge of American business, and the possibility of getting a second chance in life. She examines the degree to which family members can influence children and the need for young people to determine their own destinies.

Raskin's humor celebrates the variety and richness of the human experience and wittily assesses its shortcomings.

She is especially sensitive to the plight of characters who, while they are part of American society, are perceived as different from other people. The cast of characters includes a new immigrant, a minority member, a disabled person, a stereotyped woman, and a poor person.

The evolution of the relationships among the wildly disparate and cranky Westing heirs is as important in the novel as the solution of the mystery.

In *The Westing Game*, the last novel she published in her lifetime, Raskin summarizes and resolves some of her recurring themes with an emphasis on hope and forgiveness. As in all her novels, the happy ending is surprising and wildly original, and the wit is honest and tough.

About the Author

Ellen Raskin was born on March 13, 1928, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Although she lived most of her adult life in New York City, Raskin's hometown and home state were very important to her.

Raskin drew extensively on her childhood and her family as the subject matter of her novels, although the fantastic and unusual nature of the novels disguises this from the reader. Although it is clear that some of her early memories—frequent moves, anti-Semitism, Depression Era poverty—were not happy ones, she was close to her home state in later years, as a "Notable Wisconsin Author" and frequent visitor to the Children's Book Center at the University of Wisconsin, her alma mater.

Trained in fine art, Raskin left Wisconsin for New York City, hoping to find a career in illustrating and to provide for herself and her young daughter. She took a job doing paste-up work in a commercial art studio, and over time established herself as a freelance illustrator and winner of dozens of prizes and awards for her work. She was eventually responsible for over one thousand book covers and over thirty sets of illustrations for other authors' books.

Some of Raskin's finest work appears in volumes of poetry for the young adult market, such as *Poems of Edgar Allan Poe*, selected by Dwight MacDonald (1965), and *D. H. Lawrence: Poems Selected for Young People*, by William Cole (1967). She also edited and illustrated a 1970 edition of Christina Rossetti's *Goblin Market* (1862) and a 1966 edition of William Blake's *Songs of Innocence* (1789). Raskin also composed musical settings for the Blake work.

Raskin's productiveness is a tribute to her passion and hard work; although many people admired her energy and her generous contributions to the field of children's literature, few knew that she suffered from a debilitating connective tissue disorder that eventually led to her death.

In 1966, Atheneum published *Nothing Ever Happens on My Block*, the first of twelve picture books both written and illustrated by Raskin. The 1971 publication of *The Mysterious Disappearance of Leon (I Mean Noel)*, a full-length puzzlemystery, marked yet another direction for her career. Once known solely as an illustrator, Raskin garnered increasing praise for her writing talents, and eventually earned the 1979 Newbery Medal as the author of *The Westing Game*.

Raskin died on August 8, 1984, in New York City.



Plot Summary

There's a bright, new, beautiful luxury apartment building on the Lake Michigan shore, but there's no advertising to lure tenants. Instead, an odd delivery boy rides around on his bicycle and slips invitations under the doors of the chosen tenants-to-be. Each potential tenant is shown only one apartment and is told that it is the last available apartment. In every situation, the offer is made in such a way that it would be foolish to turn it down. Soon, Sunset Towers is full with an interesting mix of families and single people. Their backgrounds are all very different—or so it seems. Sunset Towers not only has tenants, it also has businesses: there's a coffee shop, a gourmet restaurant, and a doctor's office.

The tenants are all aware of the imposing mansion next door: the Westing house. On Halloween, the doorman and the delivery boy spin an irresistibly frightening tale of gruesome gossip about the house to entertain Sunset Towers's teenagers. One of them, Turtle, is fearless and always ready to take a dare, especially if there's a bet involved. Her plan is to spend that night in the Westing house. The discovery of a body, and some strange whispers, sends her running from the mansion, and the next day the death of Samuel Westing is reported in the papers. On the same day, sixteen of the residents receive letters proclaiming that they are heirs to Samuel Westing and should report to the Westing mansion for the reading of the will.

There is nothing routine or predictable about this will. As the lawyer reads, it's as if the dead man was alive in the words. Written in the will are comments on the heirs' actions moments after they occur. The phrases in Westing's will are strange and eccentric; inviting them to play "the Westing game," he proclaims that one of the heirs has caused his death. In the will, he announces that the heirs shall be divided into eight pairs—most are paired with people they hardly know—and he has given each pair a separate set of clues. The team that finds the answer will inherit Westing's two-hundred-million-dollar fortune.

The game begins and so does a great adventure and mental challenge for readers: not everything is what it seems and not everyone is who he or she appears to be. Every chapter is rich with puzzles, puns, and clues, many of them red herrings. In the midst of the game, family loyalties are tested and renewed, new and lasting friendships are formed, and untapped talents and resources are revealed. The vividly-described characters must deal with a blizzard, bombs, and a murderer on the prowl.

In the final chapters, Turtle is the only one who solves the entire mystery. She conducts a mock trial to present her theories and uncover more answers. Several false identities are unmasked, including that of Samuel Westing, who was disguised as the now-deceased doorman. In the end, all the heirs have been greatly rewarded in ways they never expected, and they continue to thrive. However, only Turtle knows the one true answer, and she keeps it to herself.



Sunset Towers: Chapter 1

Sunset Towers: Chapter 1 Summary

In the first chapter, we learn that Sunset Towers, a glittery, "glassy" apartment building, faces east and has no towers. It stands on the Lake Michigan shore and is five-stories high; the building is empty. On the Fourth of July, a sixty-two-year-old delivery boy rides around town and slips letters under the doors of the chosen tenants-to-be. The letters are signed Barney Northrup, but there is no such person.

The letters say that Sunset Towers has picture windows in every room, a uniformed doorman, and maid service; it is in an exclusive neighborhood and near excellent schools. There are also spaces available for a doctor's office, a coffee shop, and a high-class restaurant.

Six letters are delivered, six appointments are made, and Barney Northrup shows the prospective tenants around the building. To each one, he gives the same speech: "You're really in luck. There's only one apartment left, but you'll love it. It was meant for you." He shows each person or family a different apartment. Each apartment's windows have one-way glass; "No one can see in," he tells them.

Dr. and Mrs. Wexler are the first people to view an apartment (even though, of course, Barney Northrup tells them all the other apartments have been rented). Mrs. Wexler loves the large, elegant apartment with a lake view and immediately thinks about the new status it will bring her to live in such an exclusive neighborhood and how impressive it will be for her husband to have his office there. Dr. Wexler is not as impressed with the place and points out a bedroom so tiny it looks like a closet. Mrs. Wexler assures him it will be fine for Turtle.

Sydelle Pulaski, a secretary, is shown a much smaller apartment. She had wanted a lake view, but Barney Northrup, of course, tells her this is the last apartment left. She does have a nice view from the side window and asks about the mansion she can see, there on the north cliff; it's the old Westing house, which hasn't been lived in for fifteen years.

In one day, all six apartments□along with the areas for a doctor's office, a coffee shop, and a restaurant□are rented.

Sunset Towers: Chapter 1 Analysis

From the first sentence, there's a sense of mystery. The windows of Sunset Towers face east, not west toward the sunset, and there are no towers. An unusual delivery boy brings invitations to preselected potential renters. Everything has been set up so it's impossible to refuse the rental opportunity. Several major characters are introduced,

and there's something strange about that Westing mansion which everyone can see from their apartment windows.



Ghosts or Worse: Chapter 2

Ghosts or Worse: Chapter 2 Summary

Everyone moves into the building on September 1st. Along the north side of the building, a wire fence has been erected and sign posted that says "NO TRESPASSING. Property of the Westing estate." Most people in the building seem to be content and friendly. We're told that the big problems are yet to come.

On September 2nd, Shin Hoo's Restaurant has a grand opening but only three people attend. However, the less expensive coffee shop by the parking lot is busy for breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

At the end of October, Sandy McSouthers, the doorman; teenagers, Theo Theodorakis and Doug Hoo; and Otis Amber, the delivery boy, stand in front of Sunset Towers and stare at the mansion on the hill. Turtle Wexler races up to them on her bicycle; she's excited by the smoke that's coming out of the chimney in the Westing mansion, the mansion that's supposedly empty. Otis explains that no one has seen Westing for many years. Supposedly, Westing is living on a private island in the South Seas, but most people believe that he's dead. In vivid detail, Otis tells them the rumor that Westing's corpse is in the house, rotting on an Oriental carpet. We find out that Sandy, the doorman, is still bitter about being fired from his job of twenty years at the Westing paper mill. Sandy points out that, obviously, someone alive is in the house and wonders if it's "those kids again."

Sandy and Otis relate the story of two kids who took a bet; they were bet one dollar that they couldn't stay in the spooky Westing house for five minutes. They hardly got through the doors of the Westing house when they came running out again as if they were being "chased by a ghost or worse." One boy ran out screaming and never stopped screaming until he hit the rocks at the bottom of the cliff. The other boy is now in the state asylum and will only say "purple waves" over and over; when he ran out of the mansion, his hands had been dripping with "warm, red blood." Doug and Theo, who were skeptical at first, are now quiet; Turtle boldly says that, if they'll make it a bet of two dollars for each minute she can stay in the mansion, she'll stay overnight in the spooky Westing house.

Meanwhile, Chris Theodorakis (Theo's brother) is watching them all through his binoculars. Chris, confined to their apartment because of a disability, is an avid birdwatcher. Earlier, he was watching the flight of a purple marlin and suddenly noticed someone with a limp entering the Westing house; he couldn't tell if it was a man or a woman. Minutes later, smoke came from mansion's chimney. Despite the special windows that allow tenants to see out but no one to see in, Chris sometimes feels that someone is watching him.

Ghosts or Worse: Chapter 2 Analysis

More of the main characters are introduced, and the sense of mystery about the Westing mansion increases. The end of October, nearly Halloween, is the perfect time for the creepy story about Sam Westing and the rumor that his corpse still lies in the house. The additional tale of the boys who went into the house, and came out with devastating results, makes the story even more chilling. Turtle can't resist the bet, and her spunk, courage, and interest in money are revealed.



Tenants In and Out: Chapter 3

Tenants In and Out: Chapter 3 Summary

In apartment 3D, Angela Wexler, Turtle's older sister, is being fitted for a wedding dress. Flora Baumbach, the dressmaker who lives on the second floor, is fitting while Grace Wexler watches. It's apparent that Angela is Mrs. Wexler's favorite daughter. Turtle arrives and starts to tell them the story she heard about Mr. Westing's corpse but doesn't go into the gory details. Instead, Turtle asks if Mrs. Baumbach will hem her witch's costume. Mrs. Wexler reminds her that the wedding dress takes precedent; Angela then volunteers to sew the costume's hem for her sister.

During this scene, it is revealed that Turtle doesn't like Doctor Deere, Angela's husband-to-be. She considers him a stuck-up-know-it-all; Grace Wexler thinks he's a brilliant young man, and she'll be proud to have two doctors in the family. Also in this scene, we find out that Mrs. Baumbach's shin hurts, because she made the mistake of pulling Turtle's braid the other day; whenever someone makes that mistake, Turtle kicks the person in the shin.

While Angela is getting fitted for her wedding dress, Dr. Wexler is in his podiatry office, removing a corn from Mrs. Crow's foot. Crow (as she's usually called) is a cleaning woman who lives in Sunset Towers. She is dressed in black, which accentuates her pale white skin; she looks severe and rigid. When Dr. Wexler asks about a bruise on her shin, she explains that Turtle kicked her after she pulled Turtle's braid. Crow huffs, "That's what happens when there's no religion in the home."

Meanwhile, in the Hoo apartment, Doug shares the story about Westing with his father. Mr. Hoo berates Doug for wasting time talking with the group outside instead of studying. Later, in his restaurant—where only two people have reserved places for dinner—Mr. Hoo muses about Westing and thinks, "He won't get off so easy this time."

During this time, Judge J.J. Ford drives her maroon Mercedes up to Sunset Towers, and Sandy, the doorman, points out the smoke coming from the Westing chimney. She dismisses the talk of a ghost and wonders to herself if she can find the money to repay Westing and if he'll accept it.

After listening to the spooky Westing story and making the bet with Turtle, Theo returns to his home and tells his brother Chris the story of Westing's corpse rotting in the mansion. Chris relaxes, as he always does when Theo tells him a story. Theo is a great storyteller, and Chris thinks he'll be a wonderful writer someday. Chris lets his brother enjoy telling the story and doesn't say anything about the real person at the mansion, the person with a limp.

At the end of the chapter, Sydelle Pulaski arrives home with a tall, triangular package and a stuffed shopping bag. She grumbles to herself about how no one ever helps her



or invites her to visit or even notices her. "That bratty Turtle will be sorry for kicking her in the shin," she thinks. Sydelle sets out the contents of the shopping bag: six cans of enamel, paint thinner, and brushes. The tall, triangular package contains four wooden crutches.

Tenants In and Out: Chapter 3 Analysis

Angela's gentle and kind character, as well as her mother's domineering, social-climbing character, are made clear. A tender exchange between Turtle and Angela shows a loving relationship between the sisters. More of the main characters are introduced, including Crow—a strange and severe woman. The exact handicap Chris suffers from is never given, but his sharp intelligence and frustration with not being able to express himself more clearly are introduced in this chapter. There are several people who are limping; could any of them be the person who entered the Westing mansion?



The Corpse Found: Chapter 4

The Corpse Found: Chapter 4 Summary

It's Halloween night, and there is a full moon outside. Turtle, dressed in a witch's costume, scrambles over the rocks to the Westing mansion. Under her long black cape, she carries provisions for what she imagines will be a long night's vigil: two sandwiches, a flask of orange soda, a flashlight, and her mother's silver cross (to ward off vampires). If she can stay twenty-five minutes, at two dollars per minute, she'll be able to get her year's subscription to the *Wall Street Journal*. Turtle notices that the French doors are open, as if someone was expecting her. Doug Hooch, chosen as timekeeper since he can outrun anyone in the state of Wisconsin, hides nearby. He checks his stopwatch; eleven minutes have passed when he hears a terrified scream, and Turtle races out of the mansion.

She has seen the corpse in the Westing house, tucked into a four-poster bed. A throbbing whisper had beckoned her to the master bedroom. An envelope beside the bed had an inscription instructing that it should be opened if Westing was found dead in bed. Just as she edged her way to the note, she felt the waxy hand that lay on the red, white, and blue quilt. That's when Turtle ran out of the house, dropping everything behind her.

The next morning, Turtle retrieves the paper before anyone else in her family is awake. A photo stares at her from the front page—a younger version of the face she saw on the corpse. The headline for the obituary says that Sam Westing has been found dead; there's no mention of who found the body. The obituary states that Westing disappeared thirteen years ago and was sixty-five-years old at the time of his death. He was the only child of immigrant parents, and he was orphaned and self-educated. He eventually built the giant Westing Paper Products Corporation and founded the city of Westingtown. He attributed his success to clean living, hard work, and fair play and was a dedicated gamesman and a master at chess. He was famous for his fun-filled Fourth of July celebrations and wore many disguises to act in the elaborately-staged pageants he wrote and directed. The Fourth of July celebrations concluded with fantastic fireworks and Westing wearing an Uncle Sam costume. His estate is estimated to be over two hundred million dollars. The obituary goes on to report that tragedy marred Westing's later years. His only daughter, Violet, died on the eve of her wedding; two years later, his troubled wife deserted him. Five years after his divorce, Westing was sued by an inventor over rights to the disposable paper diaper. On the way to court, Westing and his friend, Dr. Sidney Sikes, were involved in a near-fatal automobile accident; both of the men were hospitalized with severe injuries. Soon after the accident, Westing disappeared.

At the end of the chapter, Otis Amber delivers sixteen letters from E.J. Plum, Attorney-at-Law. Each letter says: "As a named beneficiary in the estate of Samuel W. Westing, your attendance is required in the south library of the Westing house tomorrow for the

reading of the will." Each recipient is required to sign a receipt for the letter and state his or her "position."

The Corpse Found: Chapter 4 Analysis

Sam Westing's obituary tells more of his story; we learn about the tragic death of his daughter and his divorce from his wife. Most of the residents in Sunset Towers receive letters naming them as beneficiaries; it is a complete surprise to all of them and adds to the intriguing mystery.



Sixteen Heirs: Chapter 5

Sixteen Heirs: Chapter 5 Summary

All but two of the heirs gather in the library of the Westing house. The sixteen heirs are: Grace Windsor Wexler, Turtle and Angela Wexler (Jake Wexler was named as an heir but refused to attend), Crow, D. Denton Deere, Flora Baumbach, Doug Hoo and his father (James Shin Hoo), Madame Hoo (who does not attend, as her husband did not tell her of the meeting), Judge J.J. Ford, Theo and Chris Theodorakis, Sandy McSouthers, Otis Amber, and Sydelle Pulaski.

As they gather, they notice that an open coffin, draped in bunting, rests on a raised platform in the far corner of the room. Turtle sees that it is the dead man, dressed in the costume of Uncle Sam and holding her mother's silver cross.

Sydelle Pulaski enters, using a gaily-painted crutch. "It's really nothing," she reports bravely, and she says that it's just some sort of wasting disease. But Doctor Denton Deere notices that Ms. Pulaski favors first her left leg, then her right.

Mr. Plum, the lawyer, points out that two of the heirs are missing. Mr. Hoo replies that his wife is not coming. He neglects to mention that no one told her about this meeting since she doesn't speak English. Grace Wexler explains that Dr. Wexler was called away for an emergency operation, but Turtle whispers to Flora Baumbach that it's actually an "emergency" Packers game in Green Bay. The lawyer prepares to read the will, and Sydelle Pulaski removes a shorthand pad and pencil from her bag.

Sixteen Heirs: Chapter 5 Analysis

All of the heirs are named and more is shown about their characters. It's clear that Madame Hoo is often left out simply because she doesn't speak English, and there's the hint that Doctor Wexler is a bit of a gambler; in this chapter, we also get the first hint of Sydelle Pulaski's strange "wasting illness." This chapter seems to be filled with clues and red herrings.



The Westing Will: Chapter 6

The Westing Will: Chapter 6 Summary

E.J. Plum begins by assuring everyone that he has examined the documents and verified the signatures of Samuel W. Westing and his two witnesses: Julian Eastman, President and CEO of Westing Paper Products, and Sidney Sikes, M.D., Coroner of Westing County. Mr. Plum explains that, although the will is eccentric, it is completely legal.

"Today I have gathered together my nearest and dearest, my sixteen nieces and nephews." At these words in the will, Grace Wexler jumps up; E.J. Plum reads the next sentence, which instructs Grace Windsor Wexler to sit down. It's obvious that this is no ordinary will, since it anticipates the actions of the heirs.

The will goes on to state that Westing did not die of natural causes, and that one of the people sitting in the room took Westing's life. There will be no autopsy; Westing's body has already been embalmed. The will states that Westing alone knows the name of the culprit, and it's up to the assembled group to figure it out. The Westing heir will be the one who finds the answer.

The Westing Will: Chapter 6 Analysis

The will is filled with odd phrases and the uncanny ability to comment on what is actually happening in the room. The heirs are given the assignment to find out who caused Westing's death. The wording in the will is precise—it does not actually say that there is a killer. The one who comes up with the answer will win the inheritance—but, the answer to what?



The Westing Game: Chapter 7

The Westing Game: Chapter 7 Summary

Still in the Westing house, this chapter takes place in the game room. Eight card tables, each with two chairs, are arranged in the center of the game room. The room is filled with a variety of game materials: sports equipment, ping-pong paddles, billiard cues, darts, racquets, a chessboard, and much more. Theo admires the finely carved pieces on the chessboard and notices that someone moved a white pawn; he decides to play along and moves the black knight.

The lawyer continues reading the will, which states that now the game begins. The group will be divided into eight pairs—partners have been assigned by Westing. Each pair will be given \$10,000 and a set of clues. The pairs are: Madame Sun Lin Hoo and Dr. Jake Wexler, Turtle Wexler and Flora Baumbach, Chris Theodorakis and D. Denton Deere, Sandy McSouthers and J.J. Ford, Grace Windsor Wexler and James Shin Hoo, Berthe Erica Crow and Otis Amber, Theo Theodorakis and Doug Hoo, and Sydelle Pulaski and Angela Wexler.

The checks and clues are distributed. As the partners study their clues (keeping them secret, of course), they point out that they're not even sure exactly what they must find in the clues. No copy of the will shall be filed until the first of the year; therefore, there's no way to refer to the complicated instructions. The will closes with the warning that not everyone is who they appear to be and the instruction to buy Westing Paper Products.

The Westing Game: Chapter 7 Analysis

The rules for the game are established and the partners assigned. The partners appear to be paired strangely, and no family members are on the same team. Almost everyone has a limp; many people were kicked by Turtle, and Crow limps from her recent corn removal. Chris is happy to be paired with someone other than his brother and thinks that this is exciting. Sydelle Pulaski is delighted to be paired with the beautiful Angela, since she believes that this will get her even more attention. Turtle finds a sense of acceptance and safety with the gentle Flora Baumbach.



The Paired Heirs: Chapter 8

The Paired Heirs: Chapter 8 Summary

That night, there's a raging blizzard. The telephones and electricity are both out, and the tenants are snowbound. Resourceful Turtle sells everyone candles which she made at summer camp, and the partners meet to try and discover the hidden answer in their mysterious clues. Several of the partners try to find ways to discover the clues of the other groups. Sydelle Pulaski offers Chris a macaroon, hoping to get a look at his clues. Chris asks to see her shorthand notes, and she makes a hasty retreat; Chris can tell that her limp is faked.

Turtle studies the clues which she and Flora Baumbach have been given and decides they are stock market symbols. After all, the will said to take stock in America and go for broke. Then, of course, there was the instruction to buy Westing Paper Products. Turtle thinks that the idea of finding a murderer is meant to throw the heirs off track. The real goal could be to make the most of the \$10,000. Flora isn't so sure about the stock market, but she enjoys Turtle's company and goes along with the idea.

Grace Wexler and Mr. Hoo study their clues in his empty restaurant. Madame Hoo stares out the window, dreaming of China. Mr. Hoo discovers Grace Wexler's subtle bigotry, and she discovers his bitter temper. Doug and Theo decide to deposit half of their \$10,000 in Doug's savings account and to give the other half to Theo's parents.

Judge J.J. Ford doesn't believe that Westing was murdered. If he believed his life was in danger, he would have demanded police protection. She concludes that one of his heirs is indeed guilty—guilty of some offense against the man. It is, she feels, a tricky, divisive game that's typical of Sam Westing. Telephone service is back; she tries calling Barney Northrup but an answering machine picks up. She calls the local newspaper; since she's a judge, they agree to do some research for her. She thinks to herself that maybe, just once, she can beat Westing at his own game.

Sydelle Pulaski and Angela review their clues, but Sydelle has not yet transcribed her shorthand notation of the will. They share what they've discovered about other teams' clues. Sydelle is pleased to realize that her beautiful partner is not as dumb as many believe. When Angela and Sydelle return to Sydelle's apartment, they find the door open and the shorthand notebook gone.

The Paired Heirs: Chapter 8 Analysis

The heirs are snowbound with a murderer, and there's already been a theft. Who are these sixteen strangers whose only connection with one another is Sunset Towers? Suspicions begin to grow; already, we begin to see some of the traits that were not first apparent in many of the heirs. There's much wordplay as the heirs move their clues

around. For instance, the will stated that the object of the game is to win. Could it be, instead, that the object of the game is twin?



Lost and Found: Chapter 9

Lost and Found: Chapter 9 Summary

The next day, notes have been posted in the elevator: Sydelle wants her notebook returned; Grace Wexler is looking for her silver cross, a topaz pin and earrings, and some gold-filled cuff links; Turtle wants her Mickey Mouse clock back; and Flora Baumbach is missing a string of pearls. There's also a note inviting any players who want to share their clues to come to a meeting in the coffee shop; another note in the elevator invites everyone to an evening gathering at Judge Ford's apartment.

Turtle has directed Flora in placing their stock investments. Turtle is certain that making the most money with the investment will win the game. Grace Wexler shows unusual tenderness as she brushes and braids Turtle's hair, but it turns out that she's just trying to get Turtle's clues. When Turtle won't reveal her clues, Grace states she will give everything to Angela if she wins the inheritance. Turtle kicks the bed, the chair, and the desk before leaving her room.

At the end of the chapter, another clue (or is it a red herring?) is revealed. The newspaper reporter calls to tell Judge Ford that James Hoo sued Sam Westing for allegedly stealing Hoo's idea for disposable paper diapers.

Lost and Found: Chapter 9 Analysis

We see Grace Wexler's attempt to manipulate Turtle and a real emotional cruelty when it doesn't work. Turtle yearns for her mother's warmth, closeness, and approval; when Grace tries to manipulate Turtle, we find out the source of Turtle's anger. Grace controls the lives of both daughters. Her lack of warmth and approval towards Turtle causes Turtle's rebellion and anger. Grace's favoritism toward Angela is blatant, but it also smothers and inhibits Angela.



The Long Party: Chapter 10

The Long Party: Chapter 10 Summary

The heirs arrive for the party at Judge Ford's apartment. Judge Ford has an ulterior motive: to find out as much as she can about the other heirs. When she asks Grace Wexler just how she is related to the Westing family, Grace gives a vague reply; the judge concludes that Grace is a pretender.

Dr. Jake Wexler notices Mr. Hoo's serious attitude about money and decides that Mrs. Wexler has been paired with the perfect partner for the game. Jake seeks out Madame Hoo, his game partner. Even though she doesn't understand English, he kindly speaks with her, explaining to Angela that Madame Hoo will never speak English if people don't take the time to talk with her.

Chris Theodorakis watches legs, looking for the person who limps exactly like whoever he saw at the Westing mansion the day the smoke appeared. Although many people have limps—most from being kicked by Turtle—he doesn't see the exact limp he's looking for.

Theo is tending bar but gets distracted explaining chess to Sydelle. Judge Ford observes that the young chess enthusiast must think the Westing game has something to do with chess.

Angela, needing to get away from her domineering mother, runs into the kitchen where she finds Crow. Crow would like to take Angela in her arms and comfort her, but she just gives her a dish towel to wipe her tears. The evening ends without anyone learning more about their clues, or anyone else's.

The Long Party: Chapter 10 Analysis

In this chapter, we find that there are even more reasons for suspicion. We also see Jake Wexler, and he once again shows his kindness and his sense of humor. We also find out that Crow seems to feel a special affection for Angela, but we are not sure of the reason.



The Meeting: Chapter 11

The Meeting: Chapter 11 Summary

The next morning, the heirs prepare for the meeting at the coffee shop. Turtle's mother has forgotten to braid Turtle's hair, so Turtle turns to her game partner. As she gently braids Turtle's hair, Flora Baumbach reveals that her own daughter, Rosalie, is "gone." Turtle enjoys Flora's maternal sweetness and feels a little jealous of the love Flora feels for Rosalie.

Everyone comes into the coffee shop from the entrance inside Sunset Towers; the snow from the blizzard has blocked the door that leads to the parking lot. Theo calls the meeting to order and invites everyone to stay afterward for a chess tournament. He makes a proposal for everyone to share their clues and work together; the inheritance would be divided into equal shares if they all worked together.

The heirs want to see the shorthand notes taken by Sydelle; it is the only copy of Westing's will that is available to them. Sydelle notes that, since she was the only one who thought of taking notes during the reading of the will, it seems only fair that she would get more of the inheritance if they all work together. At this, Mr. Hoo snorts in disgust and slams Sydelle's shorthand notebook onto the table. He found it, he says, in his restaurant. Grace Wexler has already looked in the notebook and can't decipher the shorthand. Of course no one else can read her shorthand notes, Sydelle explains: she took the notes in Polish shorthand.

Judge Ford suggests that they all ask questions related to their clues, without giving away what their clues are. There are many questions. When everyone is asked if they have ever met Sam Westing, only Mr. Hoo raises his hand; Judge Ford decides not to reveal that fact about herself.

The Meeting: Chapter 11 Analysis

In this chapter, we learn that Turtle is already feeling a sense of "home" in her friendship with Flora Baumbach, and Flora is comforted by the young girl's companionship. At the meeting in the coffee shop, it appears that the groups might all work together to solve the mystery, but greed and suspicion interfere with this wise plan. Judge Ford keeps her own relationship with Westing a secret, not revealing her Westing connection at the coffee shop meeting.



The First Bomb: Chapter 12

The First Bomb: Chapter 12 Summary

The heirs are still at the coffee shop, when an explosion from the kitchen stops the meeting. Mrs. Theodorakis runs from the kitchen, her face, hair, and apron splattered with dripping red that turns out to be tomato sauce. The entire kitchen is covered with tomato sauce and soaked in foam from the fire extinguishers. Mr. Hoo concludes that a can must have exploded from the heat of the stove, but George Theodorakis is certain it was a bomb. Mr. Hoo is inwardly pleased that the coffee shop will have to close for a few days for repairs, because it means more business for his own restaurant.

After the meeting at the coffee shop, Judge Ford receives a second report of research from the newspaperman. He's found four heirs with connections to Westing: James Hoo, Mr. Theodorakis (Theo's father), Sandy McSouthers, and Judge Ford. She needs to know much more and decides to hire a private detective.

The First Bomb: Chapter 12 Analysis

The bomb brings a heightened sense of danger and excitement. Was it a bomb or simply a kitchen explosion? The reader's suspicion is cast on Mr. Hoo, since he benefits from the coffee shop's closing, and Judge Ford, who neglected to reveal her relationship with Sam Westing. Accompanying the explosion are red and purple sparks—unusual; it suggests that something other than a bomb or a kitchen explosion might be the answer.



The Second Bomb: Chapter 13

The Second Bomb: Chapter 13 Summary

A sign in the elevator reminds residents that, since the coffee shop is closed for repairs, Shin Hoo's restaurant is a perfect alternative. Grace Wexler will be the seating hostess. The tenants arrive for dinner, and Grace Wexler decides to mix up the pairs by seating them with people other than their Westing game partners: Theo and Angela have a sweet rapport, Sydelle and Chris find a similar sense of humor, and Flora Baumbach brings out the gentle side of Judge Ford. To Judge Ford, Flora mentions Angela's resemblance to Violet Westing, Sam Westing's daughter who died just before her own wedding.

Sydelle is so pleased with the meal that she heads for the kitchen to compliment Madame Hoo on her cooking. Within moments, there's an explosion in the kitchen; Angela races to Sydelle's aid. Sydelle is truly hurt with a fractured ankle, and she's taken to the hospital, with Angela by her side. The police and the fire inspector pronounce both explosions gas explosions and decide not to investigate further. Grace Wexler implores the police to investigate the burglaries.

The Second Bomb: Chapter 13 Analysis

We learn a bit more about the bomber in this chapter. There's a hint of the bomber's thinking, although the identity is not revealed; he or she places the bombs so no one will be hurt. We also see Chris's world expanding as he interacts with Sydelle; he's delighted to be considered a conspirator and possible murder suspect, rather than just a boy in a wheelchair. This chapter also hints of a possible romance brewing between Theo and Angela.



Pairs Repaired: Chapter 14

Pairs Repaired: Chapter 14 Summary

Snowplows have come through and the heirs are no longer snowbound; at last the heirs are free to move outside Sunset Towers for their investigations.

Angela, directed by Sydelle (who is still in the hospital), investigates some of their clues with no results. Denton and the hospital's psychiatrist inform Angela that although Sydelle is truly injured now the malady before the accident was a fabrication. Angela decides to go along with Sydelle's act, pretends she doesn't know that Sydelle's former "wasting illness" was a fake, and Sydelle's spirits are instantly lifted. Later on, Theo tells Angela that he's discovered the source for the quote "May God thy gold refine." The quote is from the song "America, the Beautiful." Angela also finds a mysterious note in her bag with two clues taped to the bottom as if they were a gift.

The other groups of partners have also been busy. Turtle and Flora visit their broker's office to watch their stocks. Unfortunately, their stocks have dropped in value. Judge J.J. Ford has signed the \$10,000 check given to her and her partner, Sandy McSouthers, and has given her portion to Sandy. Judge Ford and Sandy agree that Westing is "out to get someone." Grace Wexler tries to convince James Hoo to use part of their \$10,000 to redecorate the restaurant; she, of course, will be the decorator.

Meanwhile, Otis Amber is upset with Crow for losing their clues, but Crow remembers them all. For the first time since the Westing game began, Crow secretly feels good, having left a surprise in Angela's bag. Otis has been busy delivering groceries to the residents of Sunset Towers. He's had even more to deliver because of the phrase in the will: "Buy Westing Paper Products."

Denton Deere and Chris Theodorakis, like the other heirs, also discuss their clues. Chris has not signed their check, so Denton doesn't have access to the money. Secretly, Chris thinks that if he doesn't sign the check, his partner will keep visiting him.

Pairs Repaired: Chapter 14 Analysis

Some of the pairs have been busy trying to decipher their clues, but they are led to dead ends and more perplexing clues within the clues. Judge Ford shows her generosity by giving her \$5,000 share of the money to Sandy. The contents of Crow's note suggest that Angela may be her daughter, and Crow becomes an even more mysterious character.



Fact and Gossip: Chapter 15

Fact and Gossip: Chapter 15 Summary

Everything is back to normal on Friday: Theo, Doug, and Turtle are back in school, the coffee shop is full of diners, and Shin Hoo's restaurant is empty. Flora picks up Turtle from school with a report from the broker's office; they've lost \$3,000 in five days.

Back at Sunset Towers, Turtle, Sandy, Doug, Theo, and Otis wonder about Westing. Turtle thinks he looked too peaceful to have been murdered, but Theo suggests he might have been poisoned. They all have ideas about how this could have been done. After Otis leaves, Theo asks if anyone left Sunset Towers on Halloween night before Turtle and Doug; Otis and Crow left together at about five o'clock.

Jake Wexler visits Shin Hoo's Restaurant and watches Grace. She's happy being the hostess, and Jake feels a pang of jealousy. Grace is all business, talking with Jake about Angela's wedding shower the next night. Jake tries to humor her with a few jokes and puns, but she doesn't appreciate it. She has a pun of her own—an idea to change the name of the restaurant to Hoo's On First.

Sandy and Judge Ford study the initial results of the private detective's investigation. There is no name given for Westing's wife except Mrs. Westing, and she can't be seen clearly in any of the old photos. Although James Hoo met Sam Westing and Flora Baumbach knew Violet Westing, neither of them ever met Mrs. Westing. Judge Ford does not reveal that she did meet Mrs. Westing, but it was very long ago. Reading the news clippings and viewing the old photos of Violet, Sandy and Judge Ford see that Violet looks very much like Angela Wexler. One clipping shows Violet dancing with a young George Theodorakis. Sandy mentions that, at the time of Violet's engagement, the common gossip was that her mother had forced her to break her relationship with George and become engaged to a promising politician.

Fact and Gossip: Chapter 15 Analysis

Angela Wexler's engagement follows a pattern similar to that of Violet Westing—both Violet and Angela were forced by their mothers into unwanted engagements. Doubt begins to surface about Turtle's skill in the stock market; will she and Flora lose all their money? More is revealed about Violet Westing, and George Theodorakis becomes a more interesting character.



The Third Bomb: Chapter 16

The Third Bomb: Chapter 16 Summary

The wedding shower is in full swing at the Wexler's apartment. Angela has not invited her own friends from her days in college. The guests are her mother's friends and their daughters. Angela opens her gifts. As she begins opening a box wrapped in gold foil, she goes very slowly. It's too slow for Turtle, who comes over to peek into the box. "Get away!" Angela cries and jerks the gift up and away from Turtle. There's a bang, and Angela is left with a burned hand and gash on her cheek. Now the heirs are even more suspicious of each other, and they're frustrated when the police dismiss the bombs as childish pranks. It's worth noting that Angela wouldn't have been hurt if she hadn't tilted the box toward herself, to protect Turtle.

Angela is taken to the hospital and shares a room with Sydelle. In the hospital bed next to Angela's bed, Sydelle pretends to sleep as Turtle quietly visits with her sister. Turtle whispers her thanks to Angela for jerking the box away from her. Gently, Turtle whispers, "That sure was a dumb thing to do." With that exchange, Sydelle realizes that Angela is the bomber.

The Third Bomb: Chapter 16 Analysis

There are more hints about the identity of the bomber. The shower, supposedly for Angela, is obviously really for the pleasure and status of her mother. There's more evidence of the loving relationship between Angela and Turtle, as Turtle does not purposely reveal that Angela is the bomber. Now, only Turtle and Sydelle (who was secretly listening to the spoken exchange in the hospital room) know that Angela is the bomber.



Some Solutions: Chapter 17

Some Solutions: Chapter 17 Summary

On Monday, the stock market falls six points, and Turtle is worried. All the heirs are jittery, and the bomb squad is called in to inspect various parcels. At one point, Turtle runs through the lobby calling for her partner: "Mrs. BAUM-bach." Someone thinks she shouted "Bomb!"

Madame Hoo is quickly learning English from her partner, Jake Wexler. Her favorite new word is "Boom!" Meanwhile, Grace asks Jake's help in deciphering her clues. His skill with puns and wordplay bring forward many possibilities. Combining the words *purple* and *fruited*, he comes up with *plum*, the name of the attorney Ed Plum.

Sandy has made a notebook to organize all the information he and Judge Ford have found. Sandy has just learned that James Hoo's latest invention is paper innersoles. Hoo created the innersoles after Sandy mentioned how hard it was to stand on his feet all day.

Theo thinks that the clues he and Doug have are a formula for an explosive. He slips out of his apartment in the middle of the night to tell Doug. Theo knocks on the wrong door; it's opened by Crow, who says, "I knew you would come. We must pray for deliverance, then you must go to your angel and take her away." She slips a note into the pocket of his bathrobe.

Some Solutions: Chapter 17 Analysis

In this chapter, ideas about some of the clues cast suspicion on the attorney, Ed Plum, and on James Hoo, who's still bitter about the invention Westing stole from him. The mysterious Crow gives an even more mysterious message to Theo, which seems to imply a connection between Theo and Angela. During this chapter, it's also clear that Jake still deeply loves Grace, in spite of her silliness.



The Trackers: Chapter 18

The Trackers: Chapter 18 Summary

Reading the *Wall Street Journal*, Turtle sees an article about the newly-elected chairman of the board of Westing Paper Products; Julian R. Eastman has announced that earnings from all divisions are expected to double. Turtle sends Flora to the broker's office with the instructions to sell everything else and put all their money into Westing Paper Products. Later, at the stockbroker's office, Flora watches as Westing Paper Products stock goes up.

Theo thinks his adventures with Crow the night before were a dream, but he remembers his conclusions about his and Doug's clues: a formula for ammonium nitrate. Doug is getting ready for Saturday's track meet, but Theo persuades him to follow Otis Amber. Doug follows Otis, who makes a variety of deliveries and other stops, including the office of E.J. Plum and the hospital. Doug finds out that Otis is delivering notices to all the heirs; they must attend another meeting at the mansion on Saturday night.

As Sandy and Judge Ford compare notes again, they find this information: "The nurse at Schultz Sausages says Sydelle Pulaski was in perfect health when she left on vacation."

Turtle visits Angela in the hospital and tells her not to say anything to anybody about anything no matter what happens. Turtle is worried that Angela will confess to being the bomber.

Denton Deere has something exciting to tell Chris; Deere's found a neurologist who thinks a new medicine may help Chris. Chris's parents have given permission for him to stay in the hospital overnight for tests.

The Trackers: Chapter 18 Analysis

Flora's faith in Turtle is tested and proven when she follows the instructions to sell all the other stocks, at a loss, and put everything in Westing Paper Products. More clues suggest that Otis Amber is the answer: Did he have something to do with Westing's death? Suspicion about Sydelle increases with the confirmation that she had no disease or injury before the kitchen bomb incident. The announcement of another gathering at the mansion heightens the feeling of urgency to solve the clues.



Odd Relatives: Chapter 19

Odd Relatives: Chapter 19 Summary

At school, Turtle has been caught listening to the radio with an earphone. She doesn't reveal that she's simply listening to the stock market reports. Instead, she says it's the only thing that will relieve her toothache pain. Westing Paper Products stock continues to climb, and Turtle and Flora Baumbach continue to add to their \$10,000.

Back at Sunset Towers, Otis tells Crow he's figured out who the bomber is: James Hoo. Crow vows revenge on the person who damaged Angela's face. In Shin Hoo's Restaurant, Jake Wexler eats lunch and talks with Madame Hoo; Grace Wexler feels unexpected jealousy. Crow enters the restaurant, pretending to be there for lunch. When James Hoo asks about her health, she grudgingly tells him about her sore foot. He brings her a pair of his newly-invented paper innersoles as a gift. The innersoles give immediate relief to her sore feet, and Crow concludes that such a kind man could never be the bomber.

Later on, Chris visits Angela in the hospital. He has found a note in his bathrobe, and Chris thinks Theo wore the wrong bathrobe and slipped a note intended for Angela into the pocket. The note is actually the one Crow gave Theo the night before, and the note has two clues taped to the bottom.

At Sunset Towers, Sandy and Judge Ford have more information from the private detective. Grace Wexler's maiden name was Windkloppel, not Windsor. They remember that Crow was once married to a man named Windy Windkloppel. Told that Jake Wexler is a bookie, as well as a podiatrist, Judge Ford says she'll take a bookie over the kind of manipulative man Sam Westing was. They discover that Sydelle Pulaski is in Sunset Towers by mistake; Sybil Pulaski, an old friend of Crow's, was the intended heir.

Odd Relatives: Chapter 19 Analysis

In this chapter, more is revealed about Crow's protectiveness toward Angela, but the exact connection is still unclear. Grace Wexler also has renewed feelings for her husband. During this entire chapter, more clues and connections are revealed; which are real, and which are leading the heirs, and the reader, to wrong conclusions?



Confessions: Chapter 20

Confessions: Chapter 20 Summary

On Friday, Turtle skips school and takes Flora to the broker's office. Westing Paper Products stock rises even higher, and Turtle gives the command to sell their stock. Doug Hoo has also taken off from school, supposedly to prepare for the track meet; but he's following Otis Amber again. Meanwhile, Theo had a slight miscalculation in his "solution" experiment and is in the hospital getting treated for minor injuries; the bomb squad questions him about his interest in explosives.

Another one of the important developments of this chapter is that Sandy and Judge Ford interview George Theodorakis. He tells them that he and Violet Westing were childhood sweethearts and planned to marry. Mrs. Westing, however, arranged Violet's marriage to a politician. Violet couldn't defy her mother, but she also couldn't go through with the wedding; tragically, Violet committed suicide to escape the unwanted engagement. After Violet's death, Mrs. Westing had a nervous breakdown; eventually, she left Sam Westing. After George leaves, Sandy comments on how smart George's son Chris is. Evidently, the new medicine is helping him. Sandy points out what a help it could be if the family had enough money to put him through college, and Judge Ford agrees. The pair also agrees that the heir Sam Westing would most want punished would be the person who hurt him most, the person responsible for his daughter's death: Mrs. Westing. Mrs. Westing must be among the heirs, going by a different name. Judge Ford says that this person must be protected from whatever Sam Westing had in mind.

Confessions: Chapter 20 Analysis

Judge Ford and Sandy find a vital clue: Westing's former wife, the person who caused his daughter's death, must be the one he wants to hurt. She is one of the heirs, but which one? It's a testament to Judge Ford's character that her desire to find Mrs. Westing's identity is not out of greed; instead, she wants to protect the woman whose mistake in judgment caused her own daughter's death.



The Fourth Bomb: Chapter 21

The Fourth Bomb: Chapter 21 Summary

Theo borrows Turtle's bike to follow Otis Amber; Theo follows Otis to the Good Salvation Soup Kitchen, where Otis and Crow serve and help the people who have come there for food. Theo thinks Turtle is the bomber. However, Turtle worries about Angela; she knows Angela set off the fireworks (the bombs), wanting to get caught.

At Sunset Towers, Sandy reveals the information about himself (regarding working in Sam Westing's paper mill) to Judge Ford, then he asks for her information. She reveals that her parents worked for Sam Westing, and she lived in the Westing house when she was a child. Although she hardly saw Mrs. Westing and barely knew Violet, she often played chess with Sam Westing. He lectured her and insulted her and won every game. In their last game, Westing deliberately sacrificed his queen, and she fell for the trick. They argued bitterly when Sam Westing insulted her after the loss, but he paid for her education from boarding school through Harvard Law School.

After following Otis Amber, Theo returns to Sunset Towers and waits for the elevator. When the door opens, fireworks go off inside, then the door closes again; the bomber has made a mistake. The last rocket blasts off when the elevator returns to the third floor, and Turtle's braid is badly singed. The police discover the sign in the elevator: The Bomber Strikes Again! On the reverse side of the sign is a school composition by Turtle.

The bomb squad takes Turtle to Judge Ford's apartment for questioning. When Turtle and the judge are alone, Turtle apologizes most sincerely. Secretly, Judge Ford is convinced that Turtle is not the original bomber; she's protecting someone. The judge asks if she's protecting Angela. Turtle denies it, but the judge realizes the truth. She has Turtle promise that she'll never do it again and asks if she has anything else to confess. Turtle tells the story of being in the Westing mansion and mentions that Westing didn't look murdered; he looked like a wax dummy. The judge releases Turtle to go home; Sandy then finds out about Turtle's toothache and sends her to his dentist.

Meanwhile, at the hospital, Angela and Sydelle are working with their clues—including the new ones from the notes left by Crow.. Chris also gives Angela one more clue. Together, all of these clues sound familiar to Sydelle, and she realizes they're all words that appear in the song "America, the Beautiful."

The Fourth Bomb: Chapter 21 Analysis

At last, Judge Ford reveals her relationship to Sam Westing. She also explains Westing's favorite chess trick: sacrificing his queen. Later in the book, we'll find out how he's used this in the Westing game. Turtle seems to have lost part of her identity with her damaged braid, and she realizes that the place she feels most at home is with Flora, who loves her unconditionally.



Losers, Winners: Chapter 22

Losers, Winners: Chapter 22 Summary

On Saturday morning, Turtle admits to being the bomber and posts a note of confession and apology; Turtle protects her sister Angela by taking the blame for the bombings. Later, at Sandy's dentist, Turtle is impressed when she learns how the dentist could totally remake the look of someone's mouth with dentures.

This is also the day of the track meet (Doug, of course, wins the track meet)

and many of the heirs are attending. Grace refuses to go to the track meet and be laughed at for Turtle's bombing; Jake wonders out loud what became of the fun-loving woman he married. Grace then begins to dissolve, remembering how happy they once were. Turtle finds her mother crying in Jake's arms, and when Angela sees that her parents are so wrapped up in each other that they fail to notice her, she suddenly feels that everything is all right.

Judge Ford worries that, tonight, Sam Westing will wreak his revenge unless it can be stopped somehow. With all of his family going to the track meet, Chris stays with the judge. She studies the old photos of Mrs. Westing and concludes that—based on the physical type—Crow is Mrs. Westing. There are more revelations. She realizes that the wax form in the coffin was based on Sam Westing as he looked fifteen years ago, before his severe accident. The newspaper clipping says that he sustained major facial injuries; Westing must have a different face and a different name now.

Barney Northrup has visited the Wexlers, saying that they'll have to pay for all the damage done by the bombs. We learn that Northrup also confronted Sandy; there have been complaints that Sandy drinks on the job, and Northrup fires Sandy. Judge Ford wonders if Barney Northrup is Westing in disguise, but Sandy think Westing is disguised as Otis Amber.

Losers, Winners: Chapter 22 Analysis

The tender side of Grace Wexler comes out at last, and her relationship with Jake is rekindled. At the dentist's office, Turtle learns a little about disguises, and this information will come into play later. Judge Ford unravels some major clues, especially about the present identities of Sam Westing and his ex-wife. The suspense is heightened as the heirs prepare for another meeting. A sense of danger is added with Judge Ford's concern for what will happen to the heir who is really Mrs. Westing; how can she be protected?



Strange Answers: Chapter 23

Strange Answers: Chapter 23 Summary

The heirs arrive at the Westing house, sitting at tables in the game room. Because of the damage to her braid, Turtle now sports a short, sleek haircut; she's not adjusted to it yet and feels some embarrassment. To comfort her, Flora shows her a photo of Rosalie, her beloved daughter who had Down Syndrome. "I think I would have liked her," Turtle says gently, after seeing the photo of Flora Baumbach's daughter. Turtle has convinced Angela not to confess to the "bombings." Turtle is underage, and nothing will be put on her permanent record; as an adult, Angela would have a criminal record for the rest of her life.

Theo immediately goes to the chess board to see if there's a new move. Yes, the mysterious player has moved; now, it's Theo's turn. Doug enters to much applause for his victory in the track meet. As the Wexlers enter, Turtle is surprised that her mother is staggering and giggling. Grace and Jake have just been out together, drinking wine and toasting each other at a little café. Grace is feeling happy and in love with Jake.

There's an envelope on each table, containing another \$10,000 for each pair. Judge Ford immediately signs the check and turns it over to Sandy, to tide him over until he finds another job. E.J. Plum, the attorney, then reads the next part of the will. Each pair must give one answer. Jake Wexler asks Madame Hoo what they should say. "Boom," her new favorite English word is her reply; so "Boom" becomes their answer. Turtle and Flora give the amount of their stock market earnings as their answer. Chris and Denton Deere give Chris's answer that Mr. Westing was a good man. Judge Ford and Sandy don't have an answer. Grace Wexler and James Hoo answer the name Ed Plum. Otis Amber defers to Crow, who gives the answer "Mother." Doug and Theo privately think the answer is Otis Amber, but they don't want to cause a problem for the man who does such selfless work in the soup kitchen; they offer no answer. Sydelle and Angela give Otis Amber's name as their answer.

The answers all given, the tension heightens—especially for Judge Ford, who's worried about Crow's safety. Crow has been directed by the will to serve refreshments at this point, and Sandy follows her to the kitchen. During this break, Theo visits the chess board and sees that his invisible opponent has made another move. The queen has been made vulnerable; it is a careless move, Theo thinks. Ed Plum then reads the instruction for everyone to go directly to the library.

Strange Answers: Chapter 23 Analysis

Much is revealed about each team as they give their answers. There's humor in seeing the prim and proper Grace Wexler tipsy, and the reader, at last, warms to her. The only thing important to her right now is her love for her husband. Theo's chess game with an

invisible opponent reminds the reader of Judge Ford's musings about her chess game with Westing—the one where she fell into the trap of his move in which he sacrificed his queen.



Wrong All Wrong: Chapter 24

Wrong All Wrong: Chapter 24 Summary

Ed Plum opens another envelope; Plum reads the piece of paper inside the envelope and states that all the answers were wrong. Reading, he goes on to say that all partnerships are dissolved and that the lawyer will return with the authorities at the appointed time. The words urgently direct them to find the name before another life is taken. There's one more admonition: It's not what the heirs have, it's what they don't have that counts.

Turtle is devastated, but Sandy whispers to her that the game is still on and says that he hopes she wins. Theo suggests that they all play as one team, and they all join in reviewing every clue. Judge Ford realizes that Sandy is moving the group toward identifying Crow. Suddenly, it's clear to her that Sandy is Sam Westing! At that moment, Sydelle announces the results of the combined clues: Berthe Erica Crow. Judge Ford gives an impassioned plea for them not to condemn Crow just because of greed. As she turns to Sandy to reveal him as Westing, Sandy crashes to the floor.

Plum enters with two men who rush to Sandy; one man identifies himself as Dr. Sikes. Turtle races to her friend's side. As his body twitches, Turtle sees that Sandy's right eye closes, then opens. The doctor pronounces that Sandy's dead. The other stranger, the sheriff, gathers everyone in the game room.

Ed Plum has one more envelope he's been instructed to read. The note inside the envelope identifies Samuel Westing as Sam Windy Windkloppel and declares that if no one wins, the will is null and void. The note says that the lawyer will give them five minutes to collect the prize. The final words in the note wish them a happy Fourth of July.

As the minutes tick off, the heirs consider Crow. There's no reason to think she's a murderer. Judge Ford realizes that Sandy/Westing was drinking from his flask; could it have been poisoned? Crow jumps up and declares that she is the answer and therefore the winner. She gives half her inheritance to Otis to use for the soup kitchen and the other half to Angela.

Wrong All Wrong: Chapter 24 Analysis

The pace abruptly picks up in this chapter. The heirs are locked in the game room, and it's suggested that someone could die. Everything happens very fast—from Crow being identified, to Judge Ford's realization that Sandy is Westing, to Sandy's death. Sandy has given Turtle several new clues, however, and the game is still on!



Westing's Wake: Chapter 25

Westing's Wake: Chapter 25 Summary

Crow has been arrested, and the other heirs gather in Judge Ford's living room in Sunset Towers. Angela reminds everyone that Crow only confessed to being the answer, not to anything else—but there was nothing wrong with Sandy until he drank from the flask Crow had filled for him.

Turtle is mourning the death of her friend Sandy. Denton Deere points out that, if Sandy was her friend, she shouldn't have kicked him earlier today. Turtle never kicked Sandy, she protests; the only person she kicked today was Barney Northrup. Suddenly, Turtle remembers Sandy's eye blinking at her before he died; Sandy always winked at her. Theo mentions that Doug watched the chess table for him and found out Sandy was the mysterious opponent. Theo explains that Sandy would have lost the game if he'd had a chance to make another move in the chess game; Judge Ford points out the trap—the sacrifice of the queen on the chessboard. Judge Ford realizes that it's Westing's favorite move: sacrificing the queen to distract the players from the real game, just as Crow seemingly sacrificed in the game.

Turtle begins to put it all together: the denture disguises in Sandy's dentist's office, the skill at chess, and Sandy's limping after she'd kicked Barney Northrup. Turtle asks for a copy of the will and begins to unravel more clues. Turtle remembers that Sandy said the game is still on; Sam Westing came to seek his heir. Keeping this information to herself, Turtle proclaims a mock trial, decides to interrogate the heirs, and says to Judge Ford that she'd like to call her first witness.

Westing's Wake: Chapter 25 Analysis

In classic mystery fashion, one brilliant detective (Turtle) has all the suspects together in one room and begins to interrogate them. Turtle is privately still working on winning the game, even though all of the other heirs think that the game is over and that they have lost.



Turtle's Trial: Chapter 26

Turtle's Trial: Chapter 26 Summary

Still in Sunset Towers, Judge Ford decides to play Turtle's game. Privately, the judge notices that Turtle looks and acts like her Uncle Sam Westing. Turtle begins to act the part of a district attorney, saying she plans to prove that Crow didn't cause Sam or Sandy's death. One by one, Turtle calls the heirs for questioning. It's revealed that Chris saw someone with a limp at the Westing house the day they first saw smoke. Chris believes this person was Doctor Sikes. Turtle points out that Sikes is Sam Westing's longtime friend. Otis Amber is revealed to be a private detective, hired by Sam Westing to find his wife and keep her out of trouble. Over time, Otis became fond of Crow; it's obvious that Otis's involvement persuaded Crow to play the Westing game. As Turtle calls the rest of her witnesses, it's revealed that the body in the coffin could have been a wax dummy. During the questioning of the heirs (or witnesses), Turtle keeps to herself some of the most important clues she discovers.

A letter given to the judge—one she assumed was the statement of sanity she'd asked for—turns out to be a list of the amounts Judge Ford signed over to Sandy. They equal her debt to Sam Westing, which is shown as paid. After Judge Ford views the list of debts, a contrite Mrs. Hoo (the burglar!) comes before the judge and shows all the items she stole from residents of Sunset Towers, explaining that she was trying to raise money in order to return China; she is terrified, but the heirs forgive her.

Resuming the trial, Turtle tells everyone her conclusion: Sam Westing was disguised as Sandy. She says that the flask contained medicine that was vital to keeping him alive, and she thinks, "Good, they bought her little fib." She points out that Westing's life was taken from him when he became Sandy; Sandy died when his medicine ran out. Turtle proclaims that they have all gained something from playing the game, after which the door opens and Plum leads Crow into the room.

Turtle's Trial: Chapter 26 Analysis

The heirs finally discover the identity of the Sunset Towers' thief as the burglar (Madame Hoo) turns herself in. The Westing game is still on and there's a little, nagging mystery in addition to the other unsolved clues: since it is November, why does the will end with the words "Happy Fourth of July?" During the questioning of the heirs, Turtle shows herself to be even more clever than we knew. Turtle is close to figuring out the real answer and uses the guise of a trial to discover more clues and answers that she'll keep to herself. She thinks about the three identities—Samuel Westing, Barney Northrup, Sandy McSouthers—and privately concludes that there must be a fourth identity. The number four appears again and again in the clues and in the will.



A Happy Fourth: Chapter 27

A Happy Fourth: Chapter 27 Summary

At Sunset Towers, the heirs learn that Crow has been released; the coroner proclaimed Sandy's death a heart attack, and Crow is absolved of any blame. Ed Plum delivers the last page of Samuel Westing's will to the heirs; in the last page of his will, Westing at last admits to being Sandy McSouthers. Westing bequeaths to everyone, in equal shares, the deed to Sunset Towers. To Crow, he also bequeaths the first \$10,000 check that was forfeited by Madame Hoo and Jake Wexler, the \$10,000 Judge Ford signed over to Sandy, and the \$10,000 that was Sandy's share. He ends by, once again, wishing everyone a happy Fourth of July

The heirs want to know about the two hundred million dollars; Judge Ford reminds them that they all lost the game. Suddenly, rockets from the Westing mansion light up the sky. There's a fantastic fireworks extravaganza, ending with the Westing house burning to the ground.

The next morning, Turtle sets out early. She hasn't told anyone about the clues she put together, especially the clue in the will: "The heir who wins the windfall will be the one who finds the fourth." Putting two and two together, Turtle looks for the fourth identify of Sam Westing. She rides her bicycle to 4 Sunrise Lane, the home of Westing Paper Products new CEO, she rings the bell. Doctor Sikes, who was in the car accident with Sam Westing and who also attended to Sandy when the "doorman" collapsed, answers the door and leads her to Mr. Eastman. Although he is wearing a suit and has removed all of his disguises, there is no doubt that Eastman is Turtle's beloved Sandy.

A Happy Fourth: Chapter 27 Analysis

Although most of the heirs think that no one has won the two hundred million dollars, each heir receives a generous inheritance. Crow has been punished enough; and, finally, Westing has shown his forgiveness by taking care of her. Only Turtle understands there's a fourth identity. The clues about Windkloppel and his identities, using the directions for three of the four winds (Westing, Northrup, McSouthers), tell Turtle where to go next; she is correct in her sleuthing, and Turtle, alone, has solved the puzzle.



And Then . . . : Chapter 28

And Then . . . : Chapter 28 Summary

Turtle doesn't tell anyone about her discovery and the fact that she has won the game. She pretends that her trips each Saturday are to the library, though she's actually spending the time with Sandy/Westing/Eastman.

Turtle has won the game, but life at Sunset Towers goes on. First, there's a wedding ceremony held in Shin Hoo's Restaurant. Angela is the maid of honor. Crow is the bride; Otis is the groom.

Some residents move out of Sunset Towers, such as Judge Ford. Chris comes to say goodbye to her. At this point in the story, Theo has gone off to college, and Chris is doing much better is working with a tutor to catch up with his studies. Judge Ford, perhaps due to Sandy's hints about the avid birdwatcher's intelligence and need for schooling, is helping finance Chris's education.

Thanks to Sandy's hints about the need for better innersoles, James Hoo's paper innersoles are selling well in drugstores and shoe repair shops, and he has plans to move into other markets.

The Westing game has also helped some of the heirs to be lucky in love. Sydelle Pulaski is working at Schultz Sausages again; she's discarded her crutches now that she's an heiress, and Mr. Schultz, himself, has asked her out.

Meanwhile, Jake Wexler has given up his medical practice and his life as a bookie. Judge Ford has arranged for him to be appointed consultant to the governor's inquiry panel for a state lottery. Grace Wexler is proud of him and happy; she's also the new owner of the Hoo's restaurant, which she's named Hoo's On First. Grace has also become proud of both her daughters and gives them more freedom to follow their dreams. Angela has enrolled in college and ended her engagement to Denton Deere; she remains friends with Sydelle and spends Sundays helping Crow and Otis at the soup kitchen.

And Then . . . : Chapter 28 Analysis

We've been prepared for a wedding throughout the story, but in this chapter, the bride and groom are not who we expect; it's a happy time, at last, for Crow. Judge Ford has not only repaid Westing financially, but she also "passes it along," making it possible for another worthy student (Chris) to get an education. Every person who played the Westing game has benefited—gaining good friends and a bright future.



Five Years Pass: Chapter 29

Five Years Pass: Chapter 29 Summary

This chapter brings the reader into the future; five years after their Westing game adventures, the heirs gather in the Hoo's new lakefront home to celebrate Doug's Olympic gold medal. Hoo's Little Foot-Eze are a great success, and James Hoo is almost happy. Theo graduated from journalism school and is now a cub reporter. Jake Wexler is the chairman of the State Gambling Commission. Grace Wexler now owns a chain of restaurants. Denton Deere and Angela meet for the first time in all these years; she is completing her third year of medical school. Sydelle is engaged to Conrad Schultz, president of Schultz Sausages. Chris has a girlfriend; a new medication keeps his limbs steady and his speech well controlled. Judge Ford now serves on the United States Circuit Court of Appeals. Crow and Otis are happy together, and they have increased the service of the soup kitchen. At the gathering, Theo asks Grace about the attractive young woman talking with Flora Baumbach. The attractive young woman is Turtle, who is in her second year of college; she now calls herself T.R. Wexler.

Five Years Pass: Chapter 29 Analysis

In this chapter, we see the way the Westing game affected the lives of the heirs. The game was a positive experience; every single one of the heirs has benefited greatly from the Westing game, and suggestions are made of relationships to come. Despite the fact that five years have passed, only Turtle still knows the real secret of the Westing game.



The End?: Chapter 30

The End?: Chapter 30 Summary

The book takes us further into the future; years have passed, and Turtle is spending the night by the bedside of eighty-five-year-old Julian Eastman. Turtle now has a master's degree in business administration, an advanced degree in corporate law, and has served two years as legal counsel to the Westing Paper Products Corporation. She made one million dollars in the stock market, lost it all, then made five million more.

Eastman, whom she still calls "Sandy," is dying. He wants an update on everyone. Judge Ford has just been appointed to the United State Supreme Court. Turtle doesn't tell him that Crow and Otis died two years ago, within a week of each other. Sydelle and her husband have moved to Hawaii. Angela is an orthopedic surgeon; she is married to Denton Deere, and they have one daughter. Flora has given up dressmaking and is living in Turtle's home. Chris and his wife, Shirley, teach ornithology at the university. After winning two Olympic gold medals, Doug is now a sports announcer on television. Mr. Hoo has died, but his business is thriving under the direction of Madame Hoo. Grace Wexler's restaurant chain has expanded to ten. Jake is the state crime commissioner. As for Turtle, she and Theo are married, and they live in their own mansion now; Theo has written two books.

In the early morning, the Fourth of July, Julian Eastman dies. Turtle feels that a little of her dies too. Although he knows she is close to the CEO of Westing Paper Products, not even Theo knows her secret. Turtle leaves the funeral service with something to look forward to; she's teaching her niece, Angela's daughter, how to play chess.

The End?: Chapter 30 Analysis

Sam Westing/Julian Eastman ends his life content. All the heirs have had the good fortune he planned for them. By now, he's been able to enjoy a long and loving relationship with Turtle and has gotten to see her prosper. As always with Turtle, she's also prospered due to her own intelligence and skill.



Characters

Samuel W. Westing

A mysterious industrialist who disappeared thirteen years ago. He was the child of immigrant parents; Westing was orphaned at the age of twelve and self-educated. He saved his wages and bought a small paper mill; from this small beginning, he built the giant Westing Paper Products Corporation. He also founded the city of Westingtown. A clever and dedicated gamesman, he excelled at chess. He was known for his extravagant Fourth of July celebrations and the elaborate costumes he wore. His only daughter, Violet, drowned just before her wedding; his wife deserted him two years later. He never remarried and disappeared from sight after a near-fatal car accident. His estate is estimated to be over two hundred million dollars.

Turtle Wexler

Although only a junior-high-school student, thirteen-year-old Turtle is a whiz at the stock market. The daughter of Dr. and Mrs. Wexler, Turtle wears a single, long braid and kicks in the shin anyone who pulls that braid. Her mother is strangely cold to Turtle, which may be the source of Turtle's anger toward the world. Turtle does enjoy a close relationship with her sister, Angela, and kindness from her father. Turtle is courageous, with a sharp intelligence beyond her years. She has a tremendous sense of loyalty to those she loves and will even sacrifice herself to protect them.

Grace Windsor Wexler

Forty-two-year-old Grace Windsor Wexler is the wife of Dr. Jake Wexler and mother to Angela and Turtle. Status is important to her, and she fancies herself an interior decorator. She dotes on her older daughter, Angela, but is dismissive of her young daughter Turtle. Although she claims Windsor as her maiden name, she was actually born Gracie Windkloppel. Grace has lost touch with her love for her husband. Seeking excitement, she becomes the hostess for Shin Hoo's Restaurant. She's really very clever and has wonderful ideas for publicity and promotion.

Dr. Jake Wexler

A forty-five-year-old podiatrist who's also a bookie, Jake Wexler has a dry sense of humor and thinning, brown hair. Jake is a kind and patient man who loves both of his daughters equally and is devoted to his wife.



Angela Wexler

Twenty-year-old Angela is about to get married to Doctor Deere. Turtle's sister is pretty, gentle, and kind: "Golden-haired and angel-faced." Her mother dotes on her and controls her life. Angela wanted to become a doctor and went to college for a year, but her mother discouraged her medical ambitions. She's much smarter than most people realize. Angela tries to play the part of the good and obedient daughter, but she begins to sabotage this image with "bombs" made of fireworks. Although she never gets caught as the bomber□Turtle protects her□she does manage to scar her image, her face, when she's injured by one of her own bombs.

Sydelle Pulaski

The private secretary to the president of Schultz Sausages, Sydelle Pulaski is fifty years old. She rents a one-bedroom apartment in the rear of Sunset Towers. Sydelle has worked many years as a secretary and feels that she's always overlooked. She hoped that moving into this exclusive building would provide her with many invitations from her classy neighbors. Still ignored, she seeks attention and sympathy by faking a mysterious illness that causes her to use crutches. She has many pairs of crutches that she's painted to match various outfits.

Alexander "Sandy" McSouthers

Sandy, the sixty-five-year-old doorman, is stocky and broad-shouldered. His face is scarred□supposedly from his time as a boxer. Sandy is usually cheerful, but he is bitter about being fired from the Westing paper mill after working there for twenty years. Sandy loves to gossip; being the doorman, he knows a great deal about everyone in Sunset Towers. He says he has a wife and children. Turtle considers him one of her best friends.

Otis Amber

Otis Amber is sixty-two years old; he's the small, wiry delivery boy of Sunset Towers.. He always wears a leather aviator's helmet, and he has gray stubble on his pointed chin. He spends time working at the soup kitchen with Crow. Otis is often found gossiping with Sandy. He tends to enter a room with a cheery announcement of his presence. Many of the clues in the Westing game seem to point to Otis.

Theo Theodorakis

Theo is the seventeen-year-old son of the man who owns the coffee shop in Sunset Towers; Theo works part time in the coffee shop. A passionate chess player, he's also a



gifted storyteller whose tales soothe his disabled brother, Chris. He's very protective of his brother, and he finds ways to encourage him to express himself and be independent.

Chris Theodorakis

Fifteen-year-old Chris has a disability and is confined to the apartment. A birdwatcher, he observes birds (and people) with his binoculars. Readers are never told exactly what Chris's affliction is, but it appeared four years before the Westing game. Chris's disability has limited his world. The environment of the Westing game offers him many exciting opportunities to make friends and have new experiences.

George Theodorakis

George is the father of Theo and Chris and owner of the Sunset Towers coffee shop. He is not one of the heirs. Once, he was in love with Violet Westing (the daughter of Sam Westing) before her mother forced Violet to become engaged to someone else.

Catherine Theodorakis

The wife of George Theodorakis, Catherine works with him in the coffee shop. She, also, is not one of the heirs.

Doug Hoo

At the age of eighteen, Doug Hoo is a track star. The son of James Hoo, Doug resents his father's constant instructions to study more. Studying doesn't really interest Doug that much; his life revolves around running and that passion will serve him well. He goes on to win several Olympic gold medals.

James Shin Hoo

Fifty years old, James Shin Hoo is the father of Doug and owner of Shin Hoo's Restaurant. His wife died five years ago, and he married again last year. He's a gifted inventor, and one of his inventions was allegedly stolen by Sam Westing. He sued Westing over the invention of the disposable paper diaper; the matter was settled out of court. He's often bitter, cranky, and self-centered.

Sun Lin Hoo

Known as Madame Hoo, twenty-eight-year-old Sun Lin came from China two years ago and married James Shin Hoo. A gifted cook, she doesn't speak any English when she's first introduced to the reader. Madame Hoo is homesick for China and steals items from



the tenants, hoping to get the money together to visit her home country. She steals the items but later returns them, remorsefully, to their owners.

Flora Baumbach

Flora is a sixty-year-old dressmaker. For many years, she and her husband ran a shop called Baumbach's for the Bride and Groom. She's a kind and gentle person. Her beloved daughter, Rosalie, was born with Down Syndrome and died at the age of nineteen. Flora's husband left her not long after Rosalie was born. Flora made the wedding gown for Violet Westing. She becomes a loyal, trusting, and loving friend to Turtle.

Berthe Erica Crow (called "Crow")

Fifty-seven-year-old Crow wears black and is deathly pale; she looks severe, rigid, as if life has used her harshly. Hospital records show she had problems related to chronic alcoholism and was frequently picked up for vagrancy. She gave up drinking when she became religious and started the Good Salvation Soup Kitchen on Skid Row. She works as a cleaning woman in Sunset Towers. She seems shy, or perhaps guilty, to outsiders.

Judge J.J. Ford ("J.J." stands for Josie-Jo)

Judge Ford is the first black and the first woman to be elected to a judgeship in the state. Forty-two-year-old Judge Ford is tall, impeccably dressed, and wears her graying hair short. She drives a maroon Mercedes and is the biggest tipper in Sunset Towers. Beneath her cool, professional demeanor, she is a fair and caring person. Her mother and father worked for the Westings; Sam Westing paid for her education.

D. Denton Deere

A first-year intern, specializing in plastic surgery, twenty-five-year-old Denton is engaged to Angela Wexler. He's always quick to make a diagnosis. In the Westing game, he is Chris's partner; he introduces Chris to a doctor who can help his disability.

Barney Northrup

Northrup is Westing's rental representative for Sunset Towers.

Edgar Jennings Plum, Attorney-at-Law

E.J. Plum is the attorney presiding over the execution of the will and the Westing game. He never met Mr. Westing and doesn't know why he was chosen for this task.



Sidney Sikes, M.D.

Sikes is the coroner of Westing County. He was a close friend of Samuel Westing and was also severely injured in the car accident with Westing.

Julian R. Eastman

Eastman is the president and CEO of Westing Paper Products Corporation.



Objects/Places

Sunset Towers

This beautiful new luxury apartment house, erected on the Lake Michigan shore, is five-stories high. There are many large windows, and each apartment has a view of the Westing mansion.

The Old Westing House

The Westing house is the supposedly-empty home of Samuel Westing. Parts of the game take place in the mansion's library and game room.

The Will

Samuel Westing's will—filled with odd phrases, obscure hints, and clues—is read throughout the course of the Westing game. The will has an uncanny ability to predict people's actions and motivations.

The Coffee Shop

Located in the lobby of Sunset Towers and run by George Theodorakis, this is a popular spot for residents of Sunset Towers and people from the town.

Shin Hoo's Restaurant

Shin Hoo's is a gourmet Chinese Restaurant on the top floor of Sunset Towers. There are rarely customers in the restaurant.

Good Salvation Soup Kitchen

The soup kitchen was started by Crow after she found religion and stopped using alcohol. Otis Amber helps Crow manage the soup kitchen.

Setting

The novel begins as a mysterious sixtytwo-year-old delivery boy delivers six letters from a "Barney Northrup" to preselected clients in a scheme to attract them to a new luxury apartment building on the shore of Lake Michigan. Appealing to certain human weaknesses —the desire to have an elegant address at a reduced cost and to associate with the rich—Northrup wheedles his victims into taking the apartments. The building stands alone by the lake at the edge of town; its only neighbor is the Old Westing House, an empty mansion once occupied by the famous founder of Westing Paper Products. On Halloween night, Turtle Wexler, shin-kicking pest and future financier, is lured into the mansion as the result of a bet. Alone in the dark, Turtle finds a mysterious corpse. The following day the death of Sam Westing is announced and sixteen residents of the apartment building find that they have been chosen as possible Westing heirs. Their task, announced in an eccentric will, is to discover who murdered Sam Westing and to play and solve the Westing game to win the fortune.

Social Sensitivity

When Raskin was a child in Milwaukee, she suffered both the frightening experience of sudden poverty in the Great Depression and the pain of discrimination directed against her because of her Jewish heritage. She retained, as many creative artists do, an unusually sensitive recollection of her childhood. She had cause, also, to sympathize with the plight of the disabled, although her own serious connective tissue disorder was a secret from most people.

The situations of Judge Ford and the Theodorakis family involve the most sensitive social issues in the novel, although Jake Wexler's Jewish background and Gracie's racist remarks about young Mrs. Hoo are also touched upon. Mrs. Hoo is a recent immigrant from China, exploited by her unsympathetic husband and unable to make friends because of her unfamiliarity with English. Raskin makes the reader aware of Mrs. Hoo's loneliness and her desire to be a good stepmother, but Mrs. Hoo's speech and thoughts are expressed in extremely simple English. This makes her character appear limited and childlike to the reader—an experience that reflects the awkward social situation of the new immigrant.

The Theodorakis family is burdened by Chris, their beloved disabled child, because they cannot afford the necessary medical treatment. Even though Chris is gentle and absorbed in study, his condition requires the family to sacrifice time and effort, and denies them the leisure and outside interests all people need. Theo feels a mixture of love, empathy, resentment, and guilt when he thinks of his brother. The other characters' reactions to Chris provide a thoughtful introduction to a difficult subject.

Although Raskin includes a wide variety of social issues in the novel, she gives most attention to J. J. Ford's sensitivity over her black heritage. Raskin is direct in her portrayal of the judge's insecurity. J. J. Ford is a strong character, and her generous loyalties and her delight in becoming a giver instead of a taker are convincing. Her emotional reserve and her reluctance to enter into personal relationships with others are reminiscent of Raskin's own personality.

Among the myriad flaws and yearnings of the novel's characters, physical differences become variations on the human condition. The characters' diverse solutions and compromises are so many gifts from a generous author in the final work of her career.

Literary Qualities

Raskin is always original, tough, and witty. Her honesty obliges her to show that humor and the imagination are necessary defenses in a world which, although often lively and beautiful, has the ability to wound and crush. Every Raskin novel is a funny and imaginative perspective on the world, invariably with the message that people must make their own happiness.

Raskin was influenced by the fiction of Joseph Conrad (1857-1924), particularly his manner of depicting character. In Conrad's *Lord Jim* (1900), a young officer makes a terrible mistake by abandoning innocent passengers on a ship he thinks is about to sink. The novel demonstrates that whether a person is a hero or a coward is partly a matter of environment and chance. Before his death, Jim becomes a heroic figure, showing that he had the potential to be either a hero or a coward.

Raskin develops character in her novels in the same way that Conrad approaches the character of Lord Jim.

In her last three novels Raskin's heroines initially perceive the other characters in one way. But as Raskin develops the characters throughout the books, it becomes clear that the heroine has only a partial view of others' personalities. This is particularly true with family members, who are apt to be the villains in Raskin's novels. It is one of the tasks of the Raskin heroine to see beyond her first impressions.

In *The Westing Game*, Raskin goes much further than she does in the other novels to empathize with the truly horrible character, who in this case is Gracie Wexler, a failed parent. Although Gracie is one of the most repellent of Raskin's characters—a social climber, a conventional thinker, a racist, a dreadful wife and mother—she becomes a happy, successful businesswoman and wife, with a flair for managing wildly original Chinese restaurants. With this characterization, Raskin stresses the redeeming power of love. More than any other theme in the novel, the promise of second chances makes this an unusually optimistic Raskin work.

Combining the puzzle of a mystery with the turbulence of the characters' lives, *The Westing Game* provides challenging reading. Raskin divides the text into short sections, allowing readers to pause along the way, add up the clues, and consider the circumstances of the characters.

Themes

Things and People Are Often Not as They Seem

It starts with the opening sentences: the luxury apartment building is not a regular rental property—it is meant to lure only specific renters; the rental agent, Barney Northrup, is not a real agent at all—the reader is told that he isn't even a real person. By the end of the first chapter, we're ready to become suspicious of everyone. Some of the characters don't even know everything about themselves; they're surprised to find that they've been named as heirs. A will is read, but it's actually instructions for a game. It seems that the will and the game it starts are meant to destroy one person and drive others apart, but it helps people break through barriers, find hope, and become closer; this theme continues until the final page.

Throughout the *Westing Game* we're reminded not to judge people too quickly. Some who appear sinister turn out to be kind. The beautiful, submissive Angela turns out to be a rebel and a bomber! The heirs appear to have lost the fortune, but they have gained new friends, refreshed relationships, and skills, contacts, and support that assure each one a bright future.

Character and Relationship Development in Adversity

At first the *Westing* game is divisive. With a huge reward as the objective, fragile family relationships seem shattered. At the same time, through the unusual pairings of the teams, new friends are made, and several of these friendships turn into nurturing, life-long relationships. As the danger intensifies, estranged spouses renew their love and caring siblings become even closer.

Initially, the worst traits come out in the characters, but as they continue working through the game, the best in each one comes forth. Through the common challenge the sixteen heirs face, they eventually develop a feeling of family.

Game Playing and Deception

There's a mystery to be solved, an answer to be found: the game's afoot! What a game it is, with many dimensions: puzzles, chess moves, wordplay, false clues, dead ends, and a feeling of danger. Ellen Raskin loved puzzles and loved to play with words. She makes the most of wordplay during the entire *Westing Game*. Just when the reader thinks the mystery has been solved, a new spin on the words of the clues, or a fresh hint of a character's motives, send us eagerly forward to find more answers.

With the game comes deception; a big prize—two hundred million dollars—will come to those who give the right answer. Greed causes some of the heirs to cheat or to make a

pretense of friendship just to get some extra clues. In the midst of it all, some players just enjoy the game itself without worrying about the reward.



Themes/Characters

The working title for *The Westing Game* was "Eight Imperfect Pairs of Heirs." The Westing game arranges the sixteen heirs into pairs, each provided with \$10,000 and a set of word clues. For example, Chris Theodorakis, a young birdwatcher with a crippling disease, is paired with Denton Deere, a young doctor and the fiancé of Angela Wexler. Angela, a beautiful but unwilling bride-to-be, is paired with Sydelle Pulaski, an eccentric secretary and publicity seeker. Judge J. J. Ford is paired with the doorman, Sandy, who begs her to stay in the game—even though she disapproves of it—because his wife and family need the money.

Everyone gains from the relationship with his or her partner. Turtle perhaps gains the most since her partner, the dressmaker Flora Baumbach, gives her the love Turtle's mother has always withheld. Flora gains a surrogate daughter to ease the pain caused by the death of her own little girl. As they seek the Westing fortune, each pair becomes a partnership and eventually part of the community.

One of the major questions in the novel is why Sam Westing—a man known for his patriotism, his love of theatrical disguises, and his sharp business practices—chose these heirs and designed the game. Although he speaks through a will, Sam Westing is a central character in the novel, and his personality and motivations are important to the plot.

Every character in *The Westing Game* has a significant role, but the three most important characters are Turtle Wexler, Angela Wexler, and Judge J. J. Ford.

Turtle and Angela, sisters who both have their share of intelligence and determination, seem to be opposites in many ways. Angela, the blonde and beautiful eldest daughter of Gracie and Jake Wexler, is being forced into an early marriage with the young doctor, Denton Deere.

She would like to go to college, but her mother, who has always doted on Angela, has swept aside her objections and launched her on a round of showers, trousseau gifts, and gowns. Angela wanders blankly through this scene, clutching a large bag of embroidered household linen. Angela's experience in the Westing game shows her that a young woman cannot allow other people to take away her identity and the right to her own decisions. Angela's route to selfhood, although a weirdly original one, is satisfactory and successful.

While Angela has been idolized and praised for her beauty, Turtle is neglected and unloved. She has brains and pluck, however, and is quick to find the love she needs. The Westing game gives Turtle a chance to play the stock market (she reads the slogan at the end of the will, "Buy Westing Paper Products," as an investment tip), adopt Flora Baumbach as her grandmother, and manipulate the Westing heirs into compassionate treatment of an accused murderer. Raskin's summary at the end of her first novel, *The*



Mysterious Disappearance of Leon (I Mean Noel), says "some achieve fame, others love." In this novel Turtle manages to secure both.

Josie-Jo Ford, a judge for the appellate division of the state supreme court, is the most unusual candidate for Westing's heir. She is the only character who actually knew Sam Westing and she believes that he is manipulating the heirs into a game that will hurt someone—probably his wife, who left him after their daughter's suicide. Judge Ford is not trying to win the game to gain the fortune but to outsmart the master at his own game.

Judge Ford's belief that Sam Westing was a wicked man may have some basis in fact. Westing's success undoubtedly involved connivance and a ruthless temperament. But a lack of self-confidence plays a major role in her suspicions.

Judge Ford was the daughter of a servant in Westing's house. She received her fine education from Westing, who coached her in chess when she was a little girl and then ensured that she was given a proper chance. Although she knows she has fine qualifications for her position as a judge, in her less confident moments she fears that she was given the job because Westing wanted influence in the courts. One of the happiest outcomes of the Westing game is that it frees Judge Ford of her bitterness and turns her instead into a satisfied benefactor.

Style

Point of View

The book is written in the third person. From this vantage point, the reader can be shown the thinking of many of the characters. The main identification is with Turtle, but the reader often sees things from Judge Ford's viewpoint, too. Although there's a big difference in their ages, Turtle and Judge Ford are both strong willed, independent, and highly intelligent; both Turtle and Judge Ford are also superior chess players. Both also have a hard exterior that hides the vulnerability inside.

The viewpoints of the other heirs are shown to varying degrees, and the author uses this skillfully. For instance, Doctor Jake Wexler is one of the characters with whom we don't spend much time. However, in just a few short sentences, we feel his kind nature and his relaxed, humorous outlook on the world.

Setting

The *Westing Game* was first published in 1978 and was probably meant to be set in that time. It could almost be set in the present day if it weren't for the advances in technology. Modern readers will be aware of how cell phones and computers would be used to play the game today, but not having these modern tools in the book doesn't detract in the least from the fascinating mystery.

The pristine new apartment building with its strangely reasonable rent brings the characters together. The large windows give each apartment a view of the Westing mansion and ensure that anything new there will catch the attention of the residents.

Sunset Towers is located in Wisconsin—the perfect spot for a severe blizzard. Ellen Raskin was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and lived there through her early adult life; she certainly knew what a winter by Lake Michigan was like.

Language and Meaning

Ellen Raskin loved puzzles and wordplay and she uses them lavishly throughout the book. Many of the clues are puns with various possible meanings. Players of the game try to solve the Westing game through the use of anagrams, moving the letters around to form new words.

Through good-natured humor, the author winks at the reader, as if to say, "You and I know what's really going on." However, the reader is constantly challenged with new insights, revelations, and puzzles to solve. We're kept guessing until the very end of the book.

Structure

The *Westing Game* is divided into thirty short chapters. The intriguing chapter titles, along with the friendly size of the chapters, keep us turning the pages, eager for more. The book begins on the Fourth of July and ends those many years later with Samuel Westing's real death on another Fourth of July. The context is the Westing game, a game of obscure references and odd clues. The reader plays right along with the characters. Just when we think we've discovered an answer, a new puzzle is added.

Most of the book takes place between July and November. The final three chapters move ahead, five years into the future, and show what happens to the heirs as time goes by. Then, in the final chapter, Turtle's life shows what has happened quite a few years in the future. It's never said exactly how many years that is, but Turtle has gotten several college degrees, earned a fortune, lost a fortune, and then earned another fortune. By the end of the book, there have been marriages, deaths, and births; ultimately, thanks to the Westing game, all the heirs have prospered financially and emotionally.



Quotes

"The sun sets in the west (just about everyone knows that), but Sunset Towers faced east. Strange!" Chapter 1, pg. 1

"Who were these people, these specially selected tenants? They were mothers and fathers and children. A dressmaker, a secretary, an inventor, a doctor, a judge. And, oh yes, one was a bookie, one was a burglar, one was a bomber, and one was a mistake. Barney Northrup had rented one of the apartments to the wrong person." Chapter 1, pg. 6

"They say his body is still up there in that big old house. They say his body is sprawled out on a fancy Oriental rug, and his flesh is rotting off those mean bones, and maggots are creeping in his eye sockets and crawling out his nose holes." Chapter 2, pg. 8

"Mr. Hoo slammed the reservations book shut, pressed a hand against the pain in his ample stomach, unwrapped a chocolate bar and devoured it quickly before acid etched another ulcer. Back home again is he. Well, Westing won't get off so easy this time, not on his life." Chapter 3, pg. 15

"Theo squatted next to the wheelchair. 'Listen, Chris, I'll tell you about that haunted castle on the hill.' His voice was soothing and hushed in mystery. 'Somebody is up there, Chris, but nobody is there, just rich Mr. Westing, and he's dead. Dead as a squashed June bug and rotting away on a moth-eaten Oriental rug.' Chris relaxed as he always did when his brother told him a story□Theo leaned closer. 'And high above the putrid corpse, a crystal chandelier is tinkling. It tinkles and twinkles, but not one breath of air stirs in that gloomy tomb of a room.'" Chapter 3, pg. 17

"They didn't need drapes on the special glass windows here in Sunset Towers. He could see out, but no one could see in. Then why did he sometimes feel that someone was watching him? Who could be watching him? God? If God was watching, then why was he like this?" Chapter 2, pg. 10

"The moon was down, the window dark. Turtle lay in the narrow bed in her narrow room, waiting (dark, still dark), waiting. At last slow morning crept up the cliff and raised the Westing house, the house of whispers, the house of death." Chapter 4, pg. 21.

"I, Samuel W. Westing, resident of Westing County in the fair state of Wisconsin in the great and glorious United States of America, being of sound mind and memory, do hereby declare this to be my last will and testament. First: I returned to live among my friends and my enemies. I came home to seek my heir, aware that in doing so I faced death. And so I did." Chapter 6, pg. 33

"So take stock in America, my heirs, and sing in praise of this generous land. You, too, may strike it rich who dares to play the Westing game." Chapter 6, pg. 36



"Forgive my, my daughter. God bless you, my child. Delight in your love and the devil take doctor dear. Hast thou found me, O mine enemy? The time draws near." Chapter 14, pg. 103

"All of a sudden he was leaving Sunset Towers, pushed by his limping partner. Maybe Doctor Deere is not who and what he says he is. Maybe he is being kidnapped for ransom. Maybe he's being held hostage. Oh boy, he hasn't had so much fun in years." Chapter 18, pg. 132

"Sam Westing manipulated people, cheated workers, bribed officials, stole ideas, but Sam Westing never smoked or drank or placed a bet. Give me a bookie any day over such a fine, upstanding, clean-living man." Chapter 19, pg. 138

"The judge was astounded by the excited response. Angela could not be the bomber, not that sweet, pretty thing. Thing? Is that how she regarded that young woman, as a thing? And what had she ever said to her except 'I hear you're getting married, Angela' or 'How pretty you look, Angela.' Had anyone asked about her ideas, her hopes, her plans? If I had been treated like that I'd have used dynamite, not fireworks." Chapter 22, pg. 152

"'I think Mr. Westing is a g-good man,' Chris said aloud. 'I think his last wish was to do g-good deeds. He g-gave me a p-partner who helped me. He g-gave everybody the p-perfect p-partner to m-make friends.'" Chapter 23, pg. 170

"The queen's sacrifice! The famous Westing trap. Judge Ford was certain now, but there were still too many unanswered questions. 'I'm afraid greed got the best of you, Theo. By taking white's queen you were tricked into opening your defense. I know, I've lost a few games that way myself.'" Chapter 25, pg. 185



Topics for Discussion

How are the members of each pair brought together in unexpected ways?

In what ways do Grace Wexler, James Shin Hoo and Judge J.J. Ford show their prejudice? How do their attitudes change by the end of the book?

What method does Angela use to rebel against her mother?

How do all the new connections and the intrigue change Chris's spirit and his life?

How has her daughter's death affected Mrs. Westing's life?

Why do the heirs hesitate to turn in Crow?

What words and actions show Westing's forgiveness of his former wife?

How is each heir's life changed by playing the game?

Why do you think Turtle never reveals the answer to the puzzle?

1. Angela runs out of the library when the heirs are talking about Chris. Why does she do this? What does she find to put in her embroidery bag?

2. Judge J. J. Ford is mystified that E. J. Plum has been hired to handle such an important man's estate. Why was Plum hired?

3. Look at the newspaper column that announces Sam Westing's death and tells about his life. How many clues to the mystery can you find in the column?

4. Why does Crow want to do something good for Angela? What does she do?

5. Why does Sandy the doorman keep telling Judge Ford about his poor family and how much he needs money? Why is it important that Judge Ford give him money?

6. Why does Turtle take the blame for the bombings?

7. Why is Jake a good partner for Mrs. Hoo? Is Mrs. Hoo a good partner for Jake?

8. What kind of person is Denton Deere at the beginning of the novel? How does he benefit from being Chris Theodorakis's partner?

9. Why are Theo and Chris, rather than Mr. Theodorakis, Westing heirs?



Ideas for Reports and Papers

1. Why does Sam Westing make up the Westing game? He appears to have motivations involving his family, the people who knew him before the accident, and his future. Try to decide what his will is supposed to do. (The heirs all give their ideas of the "solution" at the end. You might see who comes closest to your ideas.)

2. Angela is the character with whom Raskin said she identified most, although most people think of Turtle as the main character and the one with Raskin's own talent for finance and the stock market. Explain how the Westing game is important for Angela. What is her life like in the beginning? What changes her?

3. Why is Crow in the Westing game?

Westing's motivation for including Crow is one of the most subtle parts of the book. How does the game affect Crow?

4. Chris Theodorakis is one of the most important heirs. Explain the role he plays in the lives of the others.

5. The Westing Game was written during the bicentennial celebration of the United States. Explain how the book exemplifies the idea of America as a "land of opportunity."

6. Grace Wexler is, in many ways, trying to make Angela lead the type of life at which she herself has been unsuccessful. Many of Grace's unpleasant characteristics are her own responsibility, but some result from circumstances beyond her control. How does Grace's situation improve and how does she overcome some of her faults over the course of the novel?

7. Discuss the parent-child relationships in The Westing Game.

8. Sydelle Pulaski becomes a Westing heir by mistake. What does she contribute to the game and its players? Is there any way of guessing whether the heir that Westing intended would have had a different effect?

9. How does the chess game contribute to the plot and theme of the story?



Further Study

Back, Alice. "Ellen Raskin: Some Clues about Her Life." Horn Book 61 (April 1985): 162-167. A memorial to Raskin by a friend and fellow author.

Flanagan, Dennis. "The Raskin Conglomerate." Horn Book 55 (August 1979): 392-395. A witty essay on Raskin by her husband, the long-time editor of *Scientific American*, on the occasion of Raskin's winning the Newbery Medal for *The Westing Game*.

Raskin, Ellen. "Characters and Other Clues." Horn Book 54 (December 1978): 620-625. Raskin explains the sources of characters in *The Westing Game* and other novels.

"Newbery Medal Acceptance."

Horn Book 55 (August 1979): 385-391.

Raskin gives an overview of her career and influences.

Roginski, Jim. *Behind the Covers: Interviews with Authors & Illustrators of Books for Children and Young Adults*.

Littleton, CO: Libraries Unlimited, 1985. Contains a perceptive interview with Raskin.

Wisconsin Education Television Network. "The Creative Process of Ellen Raskin." This is a 30-minute video that can be ordered from the Children's Book Center at the University of Wisconsin.



Related Titles

Raskin's four novels for young adults are puzzle mysteries. *The Mysterious Disappearance of Leon (I Mean Noel)* concerns Mrs. Carillon's search for her husband, Leon (sometimes Noel) Carillon, to whom she was married at the age of five.

Mrs. Carillon uses the letters that Leon sent her once a year from boarding school as clues to his probable interests and likely locations—which is why she conducts the search by eating in Chinese restaurants and watching cowboy movies.

Figgs & Phantoms is Raskin's mystery about books, and it is also her most personal novel. Mona's attempt to deal with her peculiar family will strike a familiar chord in many readers, and her personal heaven—which is called Capri and comes complete with friends, palm trees, and a would-be pirate—will enchant all who enter her world.

The Tattooed Potato & Other Clues is set in Raskin's own house in Greenwich Village and concerns art—a special interest of an author who was first and always an illustrator. In this novel, Raskin's house is occupied by a guilt-ridden painter, two gangsters, a monster, and Dickory Dock, a first-year art student with a murder in her past.



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