

# Welcome to 7th Grade!

Dear Rising 7th Grader,

Welcome to your summer reading assignment! This summer, we are diving into one of the greatest literary mysteries of all time: *The Westing Game* by Ellen Raskin.

Get ready for a wild ride filled with secret identities, hidden motives, bomb blasts, and a multi-million dollar treasure hunt. When eccentric billionaire Sam Westing dies, he leaves behind a bizarre will. He pairs up sixteen unlikely people and challenges them to solve the mystery of his death. The prize? His entire \$200 million fortune.

As the reader, **you are the seventeenth investigator**. Your job this summer is to look past the smoke and mirrors, track the clues, and see if you can outsmart the mastermind before the final page.

If you have any questions, email Miss. Dawkins [adawkins@stjamesregional.com](mailto:adawkins@stjamesregional.com).

## **Part 1: Book Annotations**

Purchase a copy of *The Westing Game* by Ellen Raskin. When you purchase your book, **PUT YOUR NAME IN IT.**

### **Annotations Guidelines for reading novels**

- Use a pencil as you read to mark your book
- Use a highlighter to color code
  - Highlight challenging words (words you do not know) in GREEN
  - Choose one character and highlight descriptive details (based on what he or she says/dialogue, or does/ actions/ reactions) in BLUE
- To mark important events: problems, conflicts, actions, and resolutions (Plot) as the story progresses:
  - Use [brackets], \* asterisks ? Question marks, # hash tags, or other bullet points.
  - Write in the margins of pages or between lines, and/or draw arrows and/or boxes around parts of the text.
- DO make comments about:
  - Connections to your own experiences (this is like...., I never would have....)
  - Confusing ideas (what's up with this.....? How come....?)
  - Your reactions to the passages (wow this is..., oh no...., eww...., sweet....., darn.....)

**You will turn in your book with your annotations for a grade. Comprehension checks will be completed in the first weeks of school.**

# The Westing Game Annotation Guide

As you read, annotate the book for the following elements (note that annotations include highlighting or underlining the text AND writing notes in the margins):

- plot development: important or key moments in the story
- character development: keep track of characters as they are introduced, what you learn about them, and what their fate is by the end of the novel (meaning, what happens to them)
- major themes: a universal idea in a literary work; something that is understood as part of the human experience. In this novel, look for these themes:
  - Social Class (poverty vs. wealth)
  - Appearances and Deceit
  - Prejudice and Stereotypes
  - Forgiveness
- other: vocabulary words, literary devices (ie metaphor, symbols), interesting quotes, questions about the plot or characters

Here is an example of annotations:

The bag boy dropped her jar of mayonnaise and that is how she fell in love.

Her parents had moved her to Cincinnati, to a large house with beveled glass<sup>1</sup> windows and several porches and the history her mother liked to emphasize. You'll love the house, they said. You'll be lonely at first, they admitted, but you're so nice you'll make friends fast. And as an impulse gave her to lie on the floor

to hold to their ankles and tell them she felt she was dying, to offer anything, anything at all, so they might allow her to finish growing up in the town of her childhood, they found their mouths and spoke from their chests and they said: It's devalued.

<sup>1</sup> beveled glass. Glass with edges cut at an angle to create a prism effect.

E14

*Handwritten annotations:*

- third person narrator
- describes the house
- she is a young adult



## Part 2: The Investigator's Choice (Choose One)

Demonstrate your ultimate solution to the Westing Game by completing **one** of the following creative projects.

### → Option A: The Sunset Towers Newspaper Layout

Imagine you are an investigative reporter for the local newspaper. Create the front page of a newspaper detailing the conclusion of the Westing Game.

- **The Headline:** Create an attention-grabbing title about Sam Westing or Sunset Towers.
- **The Obituary/Report (100–150 words):** Write an article explaining who Sam Westing *actually* was and how the game was finally won (without giving away the ending to your classmates!).
- **The Gossip Column:** Include a small section detailing what happens to at least three of the heirs after the game ends.

### → Option B: The Detective's Evidence Board

Create a visual "Evidence Board" (on a poster board, blank paper, or digitally) mimicking how a real detective connects clues.

- Draw or find images representing **four (4) critical pieces of evidence** (e.g., Turtle's braid, the notebook, the timer, the Westing house).
- Use yarn, lines, or arrows to connect these items to the characters they belong to.
- Next to each item, write a 2–3 sentence "Evidence Tag" explaining why this specific object was crucial to solving or complicating the mystery.

