

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for

The Absolutely True Story...How I Visited Yellowstone with the Terrible Rupes/Surviving Summer Vacation

by

Willo Davis Roberts

Book Information

Willo Davis Roberts, The Absolutely True Story...How I Visited Yellowstone with the Terrible Rupes/Surviving Summer Vacation

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154 Pages

Book Level: 5.1

Interest Level: MG

What they thought would be a dream vacation turns into a nightmare for twelve-year-old Lewis and his twin sister Alison when they accompany their irresponsible new neighbors on a trip to Yellowstone Park and are chased by two mysterious men.

Award: Edgar Award/Honor Book

Topics: Adventure, Travel; Family Life, Brothers; Family Life, Sisters; Mysteries, Who-dun-it; Read Now Power Up Recommended Lists, Take a Stand: Leadership

Main Characters

Alison Dodge Lewis's twin sister, who likes children and otherwise shares many of the same interests as Lewis

Billy and Ariadne Rupe the youngest Rupe children; Billy manages to get into anything and everything he can find, while Ariadne, not as much trouble as her brother, must still be watched at all times

Harry Rupe Lewis's new neighbor, who is accustomed to getting his own way and doing whatever he wants to do

Lewis Dodge a twelve-year-old boy who likes to read and play video games

Mr. and Mrs. Rupe the Dodges' new neighbors, who are inconsiderate of other people and pay little attention to their children

Syd and Ernie the two men who follow the Rupes on vacation and eventually steal the camper and children in an effort to get back money they hid in the camper

Vocabulary

cynical doubtful of the sincerity of other people's actions or motives

dog paddling a way of swimming in which the arms paddle and the legs move up and down as if running

ethics a system of moral standards or values

extradite to turn over a person accused or convicted of a crime to another jurisdiction

pacified quieted after becoming noisy or discontented

stowaway a person or animal who hides in a vehicle in order to travel for free

Synopsis

Early in his summer vacation, Lewis Dodge befriends the new neighbor boy, Harry Rupe. After spending some time with Harry, Lewis is invited to go on vacation with the Rupes to keep Harry company. Lewis's twin sister, Alison, is also invited to join them on vacation in order to keep an eye on Harry's younger brother and sister. Even though Lewis and Alison's parents are usually quite cautious about what they let their children do, they agree to let Lewis and Alison go with the Rupes since they seem like such nice people.

What seemed like a great nine-day trip to Yellowstone National Park quickly becomes something else for Lewis and Alison. Just before they leave on the trip, the Rupes are asked by two men from the RV company to trade motorhomes, but Mr. Rupe refuses.

From the first moment the vacation begins, Mr. Rupe has trouble maneuvering the long RV coach, Mrs. Rupe pays very little attention to her children, and the children are allowed to eat and do anything they want. Alison finds herself almost completely in charge of the youngest Rupes, and Lewis isn't enjoying himself as much as he had hoped because he has to help Alison with the children.

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Along the way, Lewis notices that two men in a light blue Crown Victoria car seem to be following them. He and Alison then try to determine why the men are following them and what to do about it. When little Billy finds a one-hundred-dollar bill in the RV, they suspect the men might be after some money they hid in the camper. Since Billy won't tell them where he found it, they secretly search the camper every chance they get.

In the meantime, the Rupes go about their vacation to Yellowstone unaware that they are being followed and may be in danger. One night, after Mr. and Mrs. Rupe go out to dinner with another couple, leaving the children in the camper, the two men break into the camper. The men believe the camper is empty and are surprised to find the children inside. When they can't find the money, they steal the camper with the children inside.

When the men stop to fill the camper with gas, Lewis jumps out a window and the other children disable the men by attacking them with shaving cream and hairspray. The police arrive and arrest the kidnapers. The Rupes decide to cut their vacation short and leave for home a day early. By the time they all arrive home, Lewis realizes he doesn't mind eating the good food his parents serve and decides that he will never ride with Mr. Rupe again. Alison does end up benefiting from the trip because Mrs. Rupe recommends her to another mother for a new baby-sitting job.

Open-Ended Questions

Use these open-ended questions as the basis for class discussions, student presentations, or extended writing assignments.

Initial Understanding

Knowing how Mr. and Mrs. Dodge have raised Lewis and Alison, do you think they would have wanted them to call and tell them the truth about their trip?

Yes, they are cautious people and would never have wanted Lewis and Alison in danger.

Literary Analysis

Early in the story, Lewis wonders to himself what it would be like to have parents who would let him do whatever he wanted. What do you think it would be like?

Answers will vary.

Inferential Comprehension

The Rupes continually do things that show they are inconsiderate of others. What are some of those things?

They refuse to trade RVs, park so other cars can't move, don't help Alison with the children, don't follow the rules of the park, and don't pay Alison. There are abundant examples.

Constructing Meaning

Why did Lewis refer to the statement, "This is going to be fun!" as "famous last words"?

Often a person will say one thing and find out later the opposite is true. Those words sometimes have been quoted as the last words the person said.

Teachable Skills

Recognizing Setting In this story, Lewis read about the natural features of Yellowstone Park and tried to get the Rupes to appreciate their significance. Help students recall some of the natural features that Lewis told the Rupes about in the park. Students could research these features in order to explain why they occur and recreate some of them through scientific experiments.

Understanding Hist/Cultural Factors

Yellowstone Park was the first national park designated by the United States government as an area to be protected for the use of all citizens. Have students research and discuss the reasons behind this designation and the impact it has had on the country. Students might write an opinion paper on what might have happened to areas like

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Yellowstone if they had not been protected by the government.

Understanding Characterization Lewis and Alison quickly found out that the Rupes were inconsiderate. Lead students in a discussion of the need for manners and consideration in society, including the consequences of inconsiderate behavior. Have students describe inconsiderate things others have done to them and how they felt or inconsiderate things they have done to others and how others may have felt.

Recognizing Detail Before they left on their vacation, the Rupes planned out the route that would get them to Yellowstone Park. They took into account how much time it would take to cover the distances and where they would stop for the nights. Have students map the route the Rupes took or the route their families would take to get to Yellowstone Park, including time estimations and stops for resting, eating, and sightseeing along the way.