

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for Someone Was Watching by David Patneaude

Book Information

David Patneaude, Someone Was Watching
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Interest Level: UG

Chris has a hard time adjusting to his younger sister's disappearance and decides to seek out her kidnappers.

Award: State Award

Topics: Emotions, Fear; Family Life, Sisters; Mysteries, Kidnappings; Mysteries, Missing Persons; READNOW - Perma-Bound, Perma-Bound - Read Now Grades 6-8; READNOW - Renaissance Learning, RLI - High School (Theme: Tough Decisions)

Main Characters

Chris Barton the main character in the story; the thirteen-year-old brother of Molly, who is convinced she is still alive and attempts to find her

Clover Butler the co-owner of the Cloverbud ice cream shop, who moves to Florida after kidnapping Molly

Leon Butler (Bud) the co-owner of the Cloverbud ice cream shop, who moves to Florida after kidnapping Molly

Molly Barton Chris's four-year-old sister, who is presumed drowned until Chris discovers her

Mr. Barton Chris and Molly's dad, who blames himself for Molly's drowning

Mrs. Barton Chris and Molly's mom, who is emotionally devastated by Molly's loss

Officer Roy Hudson an attentive police officer in Westview, Florida

Pat Chris's best friend, who believes Chris's theory of Molly's kidnapping and accompanies Chris on his journey to find her

Vocabulary

burdened loaded down by weight or worry

decay rottenness; decomposition

exaggerated overdone; more than is real or true

kidnapped snatched away and held, sometimes for ransom

knothole a hole in a board of wood that indicates where a branch extended from the tree from which the board was made

normal usual or ordinary; the usual way

Synopsis

Chris, a thirteen-year-old boy, and his parents are returning to their summer home near a river in Wisconsin at the suggestion of their family counselor. They have not been to their summer home since May, and it is now August. The purpose of their visit is to talk about their feelings since the day of four-year-old Molly's disappearance and presumed death by drowning. Mr. and Mrs. Barton's relationship has been filled with tension since that day they lost their daughter. They arrive in the nearby town of Greenwater, and Chris notices the ice cream shop is closed. They proceed to their summer home, and later to the park, where they honestly discuss their feelings. The tension abates, and feeling better, they return to Milwaukee the next day.

The family, along with Chris's best friend, Pat, watch a video of their May visit to Greenwater. It is not as painful as Chris thought it would be to see Molly on the tape. But Chris's dreams are disturbed that night, and when he restudies the video, he sees some inconsistencies from what he might expect. He sneaks back to Greenwater the next day with Pat and explains to him that he believes the ice cream shop owners, Bud and Clover Butler, have something to do with Molly's disappearance. Chris expects to solve things that day but again finds the ice cream shop closed. He learns from a clerk in another store that Clover left in May and Bud shortly thereafter. After finding some returned mail in their old mailbox, Pat and Chris find out Clover and Bud are now in Florida.

That night, Chris shares his theory with his parents, but they don't believe him and feel he is not

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accepting the reality of his sister's death. He will not give up on his idea, and he and Pat secretly arrange a trip to Florida to the town of Westview where Bud and Clover reside. The boys buy airplane tickets with their savings and nervously find their way to Westview and rent a cheap motel room there. The second day there they locate the Butlers' house, and later are almost fooled when Chris sees that the little girl sitting in their back yard has short, black hair. But he recognizes that the girl is his sister by a poem she recites. Chris jumps the fence and grabs her while Pat wrestles with Clover. They escape and try to make their way to the police station before Bud catches them. They are nearly caught by Bud but manage to make their way to the station, where a call is sent out to arrest Bud. Chris's parents fly down to Florida, and the family is reunited.

The family returns to the river at a later time. It is no longer a monster, but a place that brings joy.

Open-Ended Questions

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

Initial Understanding

Do you think Molly's abduction was planned or unplanned before that day? What evidence supports your conclusion?

Answers will vary. Clover may have planned the abduction well in advance, or the idea may have suddenly come to her when Molly walked into the store. Clover did cut and dye Molly's hair before taking off, but the dye could have been purchased later that day. Clover and Bud may have worked on a plan before that weekend but perhaps didn't have Molly specifically targeted. It just so happened that she was there that day. If another little girl had happened to visit that day, it could have been her who was abducted. Since Bud and Clover did not leave together, it seems that some loose ends still needed to be tied up. Or perhaps Bud stayed so as to avoid suspicion.

Literary Analysis

Why does the author choose to begin and end the story at the river in Greenwater?

By beginning and ending the story at the river, the story makes a complete circle. When the story begins, the river is a source of pain for the family. By ending the story at the same location, the reader can see that the pain is healed, and the family is whole again.

Inferential Comprehension

Do you think there is a connection between Molly's disappearance and the picture on Clover's dresser?

There may or may not be a direct connection. It is possible that the picture is that of Clover, her daughter and granddaughter, or Clover, her sister and niece, or someone else she was close to. Clover may have lost connection with the young child through death or separation and may have wished to replace that loss with Molly.

Constructing Meaning

Chris's mind turned to his parents when the time reached about six o'clock in the evening when he was in Florida. What does this tell the reader about Chris?

It shows the reader that Chris is very in tune with others' feelings and fears. He knows his parents will be shocked and extremely worried when they find his note. They again might blame themselves, feeling they should have listened more closely, watched him more closely, etc. He knows those are the same feelings they experienced when Molly was gone. They must feel that they now have lost both of their children; however, Chris is determined to bring Molly home, and he hopes his parents will forgive him for the worry he is causing them.

Teachable Skills

Describing Actions or Events Even though Molly did not drown, the focus of her attempted rescue dealt with the water and its dangers. Invite a water safety instructor into the classroom, and

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ask him or her to talk to the students about water safety, especially in natural environments such as lakes, rivers and oceans. Discuss basic rescue practices and the importance of a buddy system. Encourage the class to ask any questions they may have.

Recognizing Details Most students leave the planning of a trip up to their parents or other adult. Chris and Pat are quite resourceful to plan a trip from Milwaukee to Florida. Ask the students to pick a location at least one thousand miles from where they live and to plan a trip to that site. They should find a way to get to the airport, bus or train depot by themselves, arrange schedules, look for a place to stay and plan for a return trip. Ask them to keep a log with all the information and the expected expenses. Have them present their itineraries to the class.

Understanding Hist./Cultural Factors What motivates people to snatch children? What are the odds of being abducted? These questions and many more may be running through the minds of the students. Kidnappings are given a lot of coverage in the media, so the students may have an exaggerated sense of the extent of it. Ask the students to do some research into the latest statistics involving kidnapping. Perhaps they can find out who the majority of the kidnapers are and the age at which most children are taken. This is a scary and emotional subject for many children, and they may need comforting when discussing these issues.

Differentiating Fact and Opinion The voice of the radio announcer echoed through Chris's head at one time: "Missing and presumed drowned." Ask the students to write news copy to be read on a radio or television news spot explaining how Molly was found and the efforts Chris went through to find her. They should also write down what they think Chris, Pat, Molly and Mrs. and Mr. Barton would say if they were interviewed by the press. Students may wish to compile this information, choose who will play the various roles and actually tape a news report on the story of Molly's recovery.