

**Macomb Collaborative: Thematic Units to Teach Michigan’s ELA GLCE’s
Unit 7.1—Pre-Reading Assessment—Student**

Disposition: Persistent Pursuits

Theme: Solving Problems/mysteries involves persistence and attention to all of the evidence.

Excerpt from *The Westing Game* by Ellen Raskin (Genre: Mystery)

Directions: Read

The Westing Game by Ellen Raskin

Chapter 1 (pp.1-6, ISBN-10: 0140386645, ISBN-13: 9780140386646)

OR Read the excerpt below. Then answer the questions that follow.

The Westing Game by Ellen Raskin

The sun sets in the west (just about everyone knows that), but Sunset Towers faced east. Strange! Sunset Towers faced east and had no towers. This glittery, glassy apartment house stood alone on the Lake Michigan shores five stories high. Five empty stories high.

Then one day (it happened to be the Fourth of July), a most uncommon-looking delivery boy rode around town slipping letters under the doors of the chosen tenants-to-be. The letters were signed *Barney Northrup*.

The delivery boy was sixty-two years old, and there was no such person as Barney Northrup.

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Dear Lucky One:

Here it is – the apartment you’ve always dreamed of, at a rent you can afford, in the newest, most luxurious building on Lake Michigan

SUNSET TOWERS

- Picture windows in every room
- Uniformed doorman, maid service
- Central air conditioning, hi-speed elevator
- Exclusive neighborhood, near excellent schools
- Etc., etc.

You have to see it to believe it. But these unbelievably elegant apartments will be shown by appointment only. So hurry, there are only a few left!!! Call me now at 276-7474 for this once-in-a-lifetime offer.

Your servant,

Barney Northrup

P.S. I am also renting ideal space for:

- Doctor’s office in lobby

- Coffee shop with entrance from parking lot
- Hi-class restaurant on entire top floor

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Six letters were delivered, just six. Six appointments were made, and one by one, family by family, talk, talk, talk, Barney Northrup led the tours around and about Sunset Towers.

“Take a look at all that glass. One-way glass,” Barney Northrup said. “You can see out, nobody can see in.”

Looking up, the Wexlers (the first appointment of the day) were blinded by the blast of morning sun that flashed off the face of the building.

“see those chandeliers? Crystal!” Barney Northrup said, slicking his black moustache and straightening his had-painted tie in the lobby’s mirrored wall. “How about this carpeting? Three inches thick!”

“Gorgeous,” Mrs. Wexler replied, clutching her husband’s arm as her high heels wobbled in the deep plush pile. She, too, managed an approving glance in the mirror before the elevator door opened.

“You’re really in luck,” Barney Northrup said. “There’s only one apartment left, but you’ll love it. It was meant for you.” He flung open the door to 3D. “Now, is that breathtaking, or is that breathtaking?”

Mrs. Wexler gasped; it was breathtaking, all right. Two walls of the living room were floor-to-ceiling glass. Following Barney Northrup’s lead, she ooh-ed and aah-ed her joyous way through the entire apartment.

Her trailing husband was less enthusiastic. “What’s this, a bed-room or a closet?” Jake Wexler asked, peering into the last room.

“It’s a bedroom, of course,” his wife replied.

“It looks like a closet.”

“Oh Jake, this apartment is perfect for us, just perfect,” Grace Wexler argued in a winning coo. The third bedroom was a trifle small, but it would do just fine for Turtle. “And think what it means having your office in the lobby, Jake; no more driving to and from work, no more mowing the lawn or shoveling snow.”

“Let me remind you,” Barney Northrup said, “the rent here is cheaper than what your old house costs in upkeep.”

How would he know that, Jake wondered.

Grace stood before the front window where, beyond the road, beyond the trees, Lake Michigan lay calm and glistening. A lake view! Just wait until those so-called friends of hers with their classy houses see this place. The furniture would have to be reupholstered; no, she’d buy new furniture – beige velvet. And she’d have stationery made – blue with a deckle edge, her name and fancy address in swirling type across the top: *Grace Windsor Wexler, Sunset Towers on the Lake Shore*.

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Not every tenant-to-be was quite as overjoyed as Grace Windsor Wexler. Arriving in the late afternoon, Sydelle Pulaski looked up and saw only the dim, warped reflections of treetops and drifting clouds in the glass face of Sunset Towers.

“You’re really in luck,” Barney Northrup said for the sixth and last time. “There’s only one apartment left, but you’ll love it. It was meant for you.” He flung open the door to a one-bedroom apartment in the rear. “Now, is that breathtaking or is that breathtaking?”

“Not especially,” Sydelle Pulaski replied as she blinked into the rays of the summer sun setting beyond the parking lot. She had waited all these years for a place of her own, and here it was, in an elegant building where rich people lived. But she wanted a lake view.

“The front apartments are taken,” Barney Northrup said. “Besides, the rent’s too steep for a secretary’s salary. Believe me, you get the same luxuries here at a third of the price.”

At least the view from the side window was pleasant. “Are you sure nobody can see in?” Sydelle Pulaski asked.

“Absolutely,” Barney Northrup said, following her suspicious stare to the mansion on the north cliff. “That’s just the old Westing house up there; it hasn’t been lived in for fifteen years.”

“Well, I’ll have to think it over.”

“I have twenty people begging for this apartment,” Barney Northrup said, lying through his buckteeth. “Take it or leave it.”

“I’ll take it.”

Whoever, whatever else he was, Barney Northrup was a good salesman. In one day he had rented all of Sunset Towers to the people whose names were already printed on the mailboxes in an alcove off the lobby:

Office * Dr. Wexler
Lobby * Theodorakis Coffee Shop
2C * F. Baumbach
2D * Theodorakis
3C * S. Pulaski
3D * Wexler
4C * Hoo
4D * J.J. Ford
5 * Shin Hoo’s Restaurant

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.

Directions: Answer the questions below, basing your answers on the excerpt from *The Westing Game*.

1. Read the following passage from the story and determine which purpose it serves in the excerpt.

“Whoever, whatever else he was, Barney Northrup was a good salesman. In one day he had rented of Sunset Towers to the people whose names were already printed on the mailboxes in an alcove off the lobby”:

The passage above

- A. supplies reader with information of the new tenants of the building.
- B. tells reader that the tenants of the building were predetermined.
- C. helps the reader to understand the motivation of Barney Northrup.
- D. shows the reader Barney Northrup is a killer with new victims.

2. In this passage, which of the following would best describe Grace Windsor Wexler?

- A. status seeker
- B. loving wife
- C. protective mother
- D. reserved person

3. What does the word *reupholstered* mean in the following sentence from the story?

The furniture would have to be *reupholstered*; no, she'd buy new furniture – beige velvet.

- A. recovered
- B. replaced
- C. redesigned
- D. reorganized

4. In this passage, which character has traits that do not match his/her name?

- A. Barney
- B. Grace
- C. J. J. Ford
- D. Jake

5. Which of the following statements is most likely to be significant about this excerpt and its relationship to the rest of the story, especially considering the title, *The Westing Game*?

- A. One of the apartments with several bedrooms is rented to a family.
- B. The chandeliers have been made of crystal and the carpet is thick.
- C. There are nine printed mailboxes in the alcove off the lobby.
- D. One of the apartments has been rented to the wrong person.

6. What question does Jake most likely have about Barney Northrup?

- A. Where does he get his information about me?
- B. Why is this opportunity such an economical deal?
- C. Whom does Barney work for and why?
- D. What exactly is in it for Barney?

7. **In this selection, the lead begins with which of the following?**
- A. the dialogue of the protagonist and antagonist
 - B. the physical description of a character
 - C. the description of the physical setting
 - D. the mysterious name of a new building
8. **In this selection, which line by Barney Northrup is the most mysterious?**
- A. "Take it or leave it."
 - B. "It was meant for you."
 - C. "Take a look at all that glass."
 - D. "See those chandeliers?"
9. **Reread the names on the mailboxes. How many families appear to live in the building?**
- A. one
 - B. two
 - C. three
 - D. four
10. **What potential clues are given to the reader in this selection that might prove beneficial in solving the mystery? Support your insight with details from the passage. (3 possible point, scored with the following rubric)**

MISD ELA Pre-Assessment Rubric

	3 (complete)	2 (partial)	1 (minimal)
<p><u>Traits:</u> <u>Content</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Answers question ▪ Uses relevant details from text to support answer ▪ Stays on topic 	Answer is relevant with many details and examples.	Answer is relevant but has few details to support or explain the answer.	Answers question with misinterpretation. Little or no relevance to text or question. Ideas and content are not developed or connected.
<p><u>Organization</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Restatement (Beginning) ▪ Details in support (Middle) ▪ Conclusion (End) 	Student restates the question in his/her own words. Details support point. Response is written in a logical sequence that makes connections.	Student restates the question in the answer. Events are retold in a somewhat disconnected structure.	Students answer either “yes,” “no,” or “I agree” without reference to the question. Writing lacks sequence.
<p><u>Style/Voice</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Uses quotes to support, ▪ Concludes with prediction characters feelings, opinions, etc... 	Word choice is precise. Uses quotes effectively. Conclusion engages the reader.	Vocabulary is basic. May use quotations, but reference is unclear. Conclusion is partially successful.	Vocabulary is limited. Quotations are not used. The conclusion is ineffective or does not exist.
<p><u>Conventions/Presentation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Writing is neat. ▪ Uses proper conventions 	Presentation makes the writing inviting. Writing shows control over conventions.	Writing is readable. Errors in conventions do not distract from meaning.	Writing may not be legible. Errors in conventions distract from meaning.