

Introduction

Eric Wilson novels excite the imagination of young readers in grades 4-6. Appealing to children's inherent keen interest in mystery, Eric Wilson has skilfully woven accurate Canadian geographic and historic information into his writing. He also touches on current Canadian social and political issues in many of his novels. As such, these novels lend themselves to the integrated study of the mystery genre with Canadian geography topics in social studies and investigation units in science.

Spirit in the Rainforest provides rich material for the study of setting, characterization and plot development. It can be used independently or as an introduction to the other novels in the series, thereby providing a national setting within which the regional stories come together to make a whole. The varying levels of difficulty in the novels provide opportunity to accommodate individual student ability, experience and interests.

Students can supplement the package with meaningful research which will strengthen the impact of their work. They will take great delight in finding information on the Internet that directly links to the places or events in the novels. Every province, territory, and most cities have up-to-date information available on an Internet website.

This novel could be easily integrated into the science program. The environmental issues of saving the rainforest, cutting of old-growth forest, clear-cut logging and taking whales into captivity are involved in this novel. These topics could be explored at length and debated in the classroom.

Through the internet, students can be introduced to the author, Eric Wilson. His website address is www.ericwilson.com.

Spirit in the Rainforest
Eric Wilson

Setting



Referring to the above map, fill in the blanks as you read the story.

1. Tom became part of a Greenpeace demonstration on Nearby Island, one of the _____ Island Group.
2. Tom was visiting the Vangelis family at Ucluelet, on _____ Island.
3. Tom went down to _____ harbour to visit with Mac and find out what Mac knew about the secret of Nearby Island.
4. Tom and Bunni spent a day at _____ where they met up with the Toscas and learned of the granting of the injunction.
5. Tom, Nikki and Bunni boarded the *Lady Rose* to _____ so that they could keep an eye on the Toscas.

As you read the story, add information about the characters identified in the character web.

Character web for *Spirit in the Rainforest* with characters: Nikki Vangelis, Vernya Anastasia Tosca, A. X. Edwards, Major Warwick Tosca, Mosquito Joe, Bunni Vangelis, Liz Austen, Tom Austen, and Mac.

Character Summary of Tom Austen

APPEARANCE

ACTIONS, FEELINGS, THOUGHTS AND WORDS

CHARACTER TRAITS

Chapter Questions



Chapters 1 & 2

1. Tom was on Nearby Island to join a Greenpeace protest against the clearcutting of the island rainforest.
 - a) How did the protesters attempt to stop the logging?

 - b) Do you think Tom made a wise choice in joining the protest?

 - c) Why did the protest come to a sudden halt?

Chapter 5

1. What did Nikki believe about the fire at Vernya's old house in town?

2. a) Why did the logging stop on Nearby Island?

b) Why did Vernya want to log the island?

3. The Tosca's decision to leave Ukee upset three different people. Identify the three people and explain how each reacted to the Tosca's sudden announcement.

Chapter 11

1. What were the Tosca's hiding on Nearby Island and why?

2. How was Axe involved in the scheme?

3. Major Tosca was involved in a number of shady business dealings. Explain the problem with each of these.

Business	Problem with the Business
Restaurant	
Newspaper & Print Shop	
Fire Insurance on Vernya's Home	
Life Insurance	
Fire Insurance on Vernya's School & Trees	

Final Projects

1. Characterization

Use the items you have recorded on your character summary to write a one paragraph character sketch of Tom Austen. Your paragraph should include the following:

- a) a brief description of the character's appearance
- b) five (5) character traits, supported with information from the story
- c) a topic and concluding sentence.

2. Letter

Imagine you are Tom Austen. Write a letter to a school friend, telling of your experiences as a participant in this Greenpeace demonstration. Be sure to use friendly letter format.

3. Map Activity

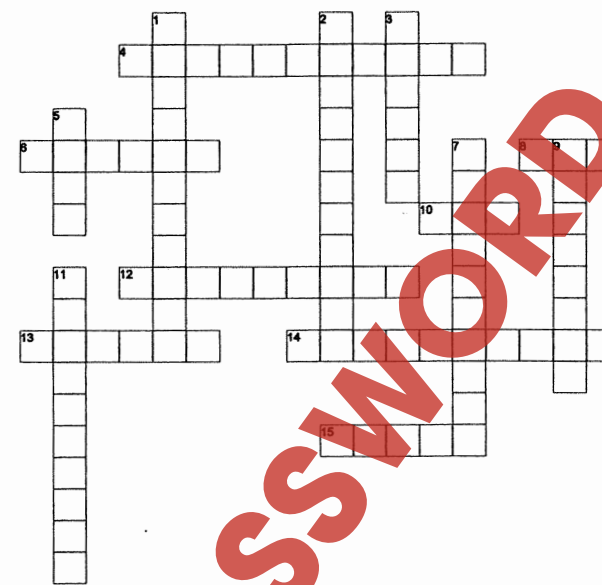
On your classroom map of Canada, mark and label the main setting of this novel.

4. Illustration

On the front cover, illustrate your favourite scene from the story.

5. Vocabulary

Complete the following crossword.



ACROSS

- 4. Phoney (p.114)
- 6. Rubber craft suitable to be equipped with a motor (p.56)
- 8. Lord of the Night (p.15)
- 10. Travelling group of whales (p.138)
- 12. Whale bursting at speed from the water (p.138)
- 13. Mosquito Joe was a _____ (p.10)
- 14. Court imposed work stoppage (p.51-52)
- 15. Trees to be logged on Nearby Island (p.66)

DOWN

- 1. The ship took Tom to _____ (2 words)(p.77)
- 2. Time when nobody was allowed to sell any kind of alcohol (p.33)
- 3. The watery voice cried _____ (p.12)
- 5. Storage area on a ship (p.62)
- 7. Bird that drills holes in trees (p.98)
- 9. The head on a ship (p.76)
- 11. Environment protection group (p.3)

NOTE: Page numbers are from the 1996 edition of this novel.

Chapter 3

1. Why do you think Nikki hated Vernya?

2. Tom was very curious about the school and the events that took place there.

a) Why do you think the local people were so reluctant to answer his questions?

b) What do you think happened at the school?

3. a) Describe the clear-cut logging method.

b) How did Major Tosca plan to overcome the devastation of clear-cutting?

Chapter 3

Why do you think Nikki hated Vernya?

Accept any plausible answers with support.

Tom was very curious about the school and the events that took place there.

a) Why do you think the local people were so reluctant to answer his questions?

Accept any plausible answers with support. Answers could include that it was considered bad luck.

b) What do you think happened at the school?

Accept any plausible answers with support.

a) Describe the clear-cut logging method.

Clear-cut logging, all of the trees are cut. Toxic chemicals are poured over the land and the land is totally burned. The barren land is then eroded by rain.

b) How did Major Tosca plan to overcome the devastation of clear-cutting?

Major Tosca planned to replant the island with young trees, using the Finnish method.

Chapter 4

Tom went to the library and searched in the vertical files for old newspaper articles.

a) What did he learn about Major Tosca and his previous businesses?

Tom read about the grand opening of The Major's Galley, Major Tosca's restaurant. He also learned that Major Tosca had owned and operated a daily newspaper serving Ucluelet and Tofino. Axe and Mac were in the newspaper's staff photo. Both of these businesses closed because of financial difficulties.

ANSWER KEY