

The Westing Game Problematic Situation

Not long ago, you moved into Sunset Towers only to get involved in the Westing Game. You have been paired up with another resident to try to solve the murder mystery. However, the more you and your partner work together, the more you find that clues are pointing towards your partner! Could your very own partner in the Westing Game be the killer?

Discuss the following options with your group. Decide which options you think are best and rank them in order from best to worst.

Options

- _____ Ignore the clues that are pointing to your partner. Pretend you know nothing. After all, you might be in danger if your partner is the killer and discovers that you know.
- _____ Secretly work alone to compile all the clues you can find. If you can find enough evidence on your own, you will win all of the money. (Too bad you are missing a lot of clues and do not have any concrete evidence yet).
- _____ Try to get other groups to join with you to solve the case. You will give them all your clues and information by doing this. (Remember you are not SURE that your partner is the killer; you just have strong suspicions. Think about the consequences that might come from the adjoining of groups).
- _____ Confront your partner. Tell them what you have found and threaten to turn them in if they can not prove themselves innocent. (No, you may not use any force or weapons to protect yourself –just hope your partner isn't the killer!)
- _____ Forfeit the game by disappearing. If you leave, you will not have to worry about placing yourself in danger. However, you will definitely lose out on all of the money. (Keep in mind that if you run away, YOU might look like you are trying to escape –what if people decide you are the killer because you disappeared?)



The Westing Game Problematic Situation Strategy

Purpose

The problematic situation strategy gives students the opportunity to develop problem-solving techniques by applying logic, reasoning, and their own moral opinions to a fictional problem. This strategy also helps students to gain a better understanding of events occurring in the text, helping them to solve future problematic situations that arise in the text.

Directions

1. After the students begin reading The Westing Game, discuss problematic situations that are arising in the text. Examples of this may include possible false accusations of the murderer, ethical versus unethical methods of playing the Westing Game, or what would you do if you thought your partner was responsible for the death of Sam Westing?
2. Divide the class into groups of 3-5 students. Present them with a problematic situation. In their groups have them discuss why the listed solutions would be good or bad. Have them rank the solutions for the problem from best to worst. Emphasize that each group must have reasons why they think the solutions would be good or not. Remember that not all students will agree with each other on the solutions. The main rule of this assignment is to respect each other. Explain that compromises of opinions may be needed to come to a group consensus. Allow the twenty minutes to complete this activity.
3. As a class, have a discussion comparing what each group decided.

Assessment

The problematic situation strategy is an effective way to get students thinking. By working in groups, students are required to decide on the best answer despite the various opinions each group member may have about the problem. Cooperation, listening, and reasoning are all involved in this strategy. Students not only form their own ideas about the problem, but they are also introduced to numerous other ideas from their classmates.

