

Individual Learning Packet

**Teaching Unit**

# I Know What You Did Last Summer

by Lois Duncan

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## Notes

The characters in this novel are seventeen and eighteen years old. They have made a pact to keep a terrible secret until something goes terribly wrong, and the secret threatens to destroy their lives. This is a mystery with meaningful clues, false trails, and terror. It addresses the issues of peer pressure, underage drinking, and moral responsibility.

The Vietnam War, anti-war protests, and returning veterans provide a backdrop for the story.

All references come from the Laurel-Leaf Books edition of *I Know What You Did Last Summer*, copyright 1973.

## Objectives

By the end of this Unit, the student will be able to:

1. discuss how the plot of a mystery novel must include the following elements to be both believable and interesting:
  - characters with believable motivations
  - pertinent details in the plot to add mystery and interest
  - an element of suspense
2. identify these elements of plot and point out examples of each in the story:
  - exposition
  - rising action
  - climax
  - falling action
  - resolution
3. distinguish between round and flat characters.
4. recognize the protagonist in the story, and trace how the revealing of the identity of the antagonist is an essential element of suspense in a mystery story.
5. define third person narrative and first person narrative, and distinguish between them.
6. refer to incidents in the story to discuss the extent that this story is a “coming-of-age” novel.
7. comment on the use of flashbacks in the story, and explain how the flashbacks enhance the reader’s understanding of the character’s motivation.
8. discuss the effect of peer pressure on the moral decisions of the characters.
9. cite the events in the story that support the following themes in the novel:
  - It is better to stay and face a problem, than to run from it.
  - Lives are entwined; what happens to one person affects others.
10. infer character motivation and the significance of events when these meanings are not explicitly stated.

### **Questions for Discussion and Essay**

1. Place the following events in the correct order - Exposition, Rising Action, Climax, Falling Action, and Resolution.
  - Bud attacks Julie
  - Julie appreciates her mom and knows she loves Ray
  - We get a physical description of Julie and Mrs. James
  - Julie's anonymous letter
  - Collie reveals his true identity
2. Support or refute the following statement by citing events from the story. Barry is a round character who grows in maturity by the end of the story.
3. At what point in the story does the reader first know there is an antagonist? Who is the first character to know his identity? Under what circumstances?
4. Support the following statement with incidents from the story: The author chooses third-person omniscient narration to reveal the inner motivations of Barry, Helen, Julie, Ray, and Collie.
5. What does Helen's flashback to her first meeting with Barry, when she is twelve years old, reveal about her true feelings for him?
6. Provide support for the following statement: At the beginning of the story, Julie is a damaged person who becomes whole again before Bud tries to kill her.
7. How does David's death impact the lives of his family?
8. Why does Bud want revenge on Julie more than he wants revenge on the other three members of the pact?
9. How do the following story details contribute to the final solution of the mystery?
  - yellow paint
  - Helen leaving her door unlocked
  - roses
  - red hair
  - premonitions
  - photos taken at night
10. Write a brief description of the following minor characters: Elsa, Mrs. Cox, Mr. Rivers, the Crawfords.
11. Some readers see this as a "coming-of-age" story. State your opinion on this point in a generalization, and support your generalization by referring to incidents and comments in the story.

# I Know What You Did Last Summer

## Chapter One

### VOCABULARY

**impulsive**—inclined to act without thinking  
**stark**—harsh, grim appearance

1. Briefly identify and describe Julie and her mother.

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2. What changes does Mrs. James notice in Julie? What changes does Julie notice about herself?

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3. Why does Julie's explanation for her breakup with Ray not seem true?

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4. What can you infer about how Julie feels from the following quotation? "I ought to hug her more often, Julie thought. I don't deserve to have somebody like this for a mother."

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**Chapter Six**

## VOCABULARY

**chided**—scolded or reprimanded  
**cruddy**—slang for being disgusting  
**hostels**—inexpensive lodging

1. Describe Barry's relationship with his parents.

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2. What are Barry's reasons for continuing to see Helen? Why does he finally decide to end the relationship?

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3. What do you think of Barry's plan to end his relationship with Helen? What kind of a person is Barry?

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5. What do we learn about Collie when he is chatting with one of the schoolteachers at the pool?

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6. When we think of the stalker, two possible suspects are Collie and Bud. Is there anything you have read so far that leads you to suspect either of them?

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7. Do you think the stalker and the person who shot Barry are the same person?

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8. Why do you think Collie is mean to Helen in front of the schoolteachers? Why does he say, "I may soon have a more important place in your life than you think"?

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