Overview

This fun detective story is ideally suited to young readers at Years 5 and 6. It is told in a matter-of-fact tone by Penelope Thanatopoulos. She and Benjamin Thorpe are working at the zoo in order to research their career projects. Kevin Friend, the unemployed son of one of the zoo's employees, is found in the seal pool having been stabbed by what appears to be a three-pronged dagger. Suspicion falls on Ben who has such a weapon. Because Ben is not strong enough to have dragged Kevin to the pool, it is concluded he must have had some help. Penny is the obvious accomplice. Penny sets out to clear her friend, and she and Ben solve the crime. The story is intriguing and amusing, and, incidentally, those reading it will gain a great deal.

Activities

• Do a pen portrait of Penelope Thanatopoulos and Benjamin Thorpe including everything you know about them from reading the story. Give a description of each, saying what they look like, what they are like as people, what interests they have and what their backgrounds are.

• Through Penny's telling of the story, we learn a lot about the characters involved. Do a profile of each of the minor characters in the novel, saying what they are like and what role they have in the story.

• In this detective novel there are many connections and clues that are not obvious until the story is finished. Make a story map of The Three-Pronged Dagger.

• Using The Three-Pronged Dagger, make a list of what components make up a detective story. Look closely at how Penny and Ben determine how the crime was committed. Examine the place of clues, connections, evidence, questioning, drawing conclusions and interviews.

• Detective stories usually have a motive, means and opportunity. Does this novel comply with the detective genre?

• There is a lot to do with human nature in this story, and Penny is pretty cluey about how people operate. Find instances in the story and write these in your own words. Look at some of the relationships referred to, such as Penny's Mum and her Yiayia, the things Penny knows about her siblings, the way she gets information from people, the way bullies behave, and what people will do to belong.
• Write a critical review of *The Three-Pronged Dagger* for your local newspaper, mentioning the tone of the novel, the voice in which it is told, the plot and the conclusion.

• By reading any story we usually learn a lot about a number of subjects we didn't know about previously. Write down what you learned from reading *The Three-Pronged Dagger*.

• Talk about: blame, different cultures, bullies, relationships, nerds, hackers, myths, seals, anger, motives, alibis, revenge, careers, being lonely.

• What is the mystery in the story?