Overview

This novel for young adults deals with the very current issue of people smuggling, but it is not until the very end that the reader is aware of this. The main concern is with a teenage family that has been orphaned. They have as their next-door neighbour and friend, a 22-year-old called Tori who is willing to look after them. However, custody is refused as Tori has a heart condition and she is considered an unsuitable guardian because of her health and her young age. Wanting desperately to stay together as a family, the five set up an elaborate means of evading the authorities. Detective Sergeant Scott Backer is a policeman who has been assigned to find these missing juveniles - not, as they believe, because they are defying the orders of the Family and Children's Services, but because of the key Doug, the oldest of the children, carries around his neck. He is ready to comply with the last wish of his dead mother. The story is full of action and energy, and the resolution reached is both satisfying and heartening.

Activities

• Look at the opening and the mood of the story. What ingredients does the author use to get the reader's interest right from the start?
• Examine the use of time in the novel. Make a chart or graph of when the story starts and other time frames the novel is set in, and look carefully at how the story evolves.
• Discuss the tone, style and atmosphere of Operation Foxtrot Five. Look particularly at the way in which the breaks in the story are used and what the effect of them is. Comment, too, on how the story is told, and how the reader finds out information.
• Take note and list the technological equipment and unlimited resources that Detective Sergeant Scott Backer and Andrew Hallen have at their disposal.
• Do a police profile of the Smith family, listing all the information you can about each member. Who is Victoria Marie Smythe (Tori) and what is her role?
• It is said that Detective Sergeant Scott Backer and Andrew Hallen, the two policemen handling the case, could not be more different, yet they work well together and like each other. Do a character study of each policeman, touching on their appearance, their relationship, saying what each is like as a person, what their positions are, their backgrounds and personalities.
• Comment on the methods of detecting that are used in this novel.
• Write about the elaborate plans the group had for evading detection.
• Pretend you are Doug, take a point in the story and write about how you feel about what is happening. Talk about your motives for the way you are living.
• Write a paragraph about the relationship between Scott and Doug.
• Look at the part emotions play in this novel. Find passages that deal with different feelings and comment on them.
• Write a review of *Operation Foxtrot Five* by D. J. Stutley for your school magazine. Outline the plot and describe what type of story it is and what audience you think it would appeal to.
• Give an account of what happens in the end. Did you find the ending satisfactory? Give reasons for your answer.
• Does 'every action have a consequence'? Give examples of this epithet from the story.
• How did the story get its name?
• What was the main problem Scott had with Doug?
• What did the detectives taking Doug to the Hallen's farm achieve?