

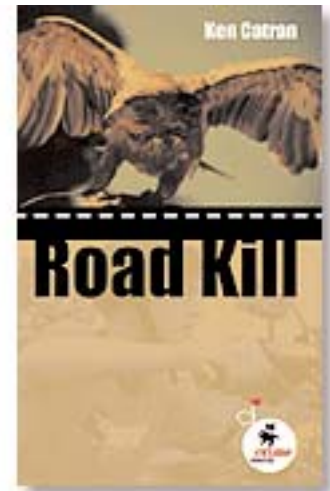
Road Kill

by Ken Catran



Overview

This intriguing short novel will have reluctant older readers wanting to finish a book that is gripping and full of action, suspense and surprises. The story is told by Jack in a chatty and authentic voice. He lives in a small town and has a passion for an old Harley Davidson motor bike. He has a girlfriend, Susan, with whom he shares this and other interests. He also has as a friend an old codger, Wally, who provides a lot of help and advice. During a celebration of the town's one-hundred-and-fiftieth anniversary Jack is requisitioned to stay behind to help clean up the school by Mr Ricketts, a teacher he likes. Jack finds a body in the library; Mr Ricketts goes for help and crashes his car. Then follows an intriguing unfolding of a plot that will keep the reader engrossed until the very last line.



Activities

- Jack tells this story and is the main character. Do a profile of Jack covering what kind of a person he is, his likes and dislikes, what he is good at, where he lives, and his family and their circumstances.
- Why do you think he and Susan are such good friends?
- Look closely at the methods Ken Catran uses to make his story interesting. He uses very descriptive and at times graphic language to create visual images and set the scene. He uses similes; symbols and connections; and threads and links, such as the hawk, the last moose, photos, the nickel, dreams, fire, blood and colours. Find some examples you think are powerful, examine them and jot down some ideas that you glean from them. Use some of the things you learned and similar methods in your own writing.
- You have been assigned to give a report on whether or not *Road Kill* would make a good film. Write a page giving reasons for your conclusion.
- Who was Wally? What role did he play in the story?
- Imagine you are a classmate of Jack. Write an e-mail to a friend who has left the area about what has happened in the town - particularly highlight the part Ms Cynthia Breen and Mr Ricketts play in events.
- Examine the tone and style of the story. Whose voice is used? How is the story told? Look at the stance the person telling the story has, his perspective and his language. Consider how the reader finds out information. What are the advantages and disadvantages of this?

- Describe the 'Scrape': what it is, what it involves and its significance.
- *Road Kill* is an intriguing mystery full of surprises and suspense. Information is given to the reader through questioning, little signs and attempts by the narrator to draw logical conclusions. Also, often things are not always as they appear at first, and there are things the reader doesn't know. Look at the tactics and devices used by the author to achieve his desired effect and make a list of them. Take note of these methods for your own writing.
- Consider the title *Road Kill* and how apt it is for this story.
- Winning the 'Scrape' was Jack's dream. Finding the last moose was his Dad's. Write a piece on something you feel strongly about.
- There is poetic justice at the end. Explain. Make a comment about how the story ends. Was it as you expected? What is an epitaph? What is its purpose here?