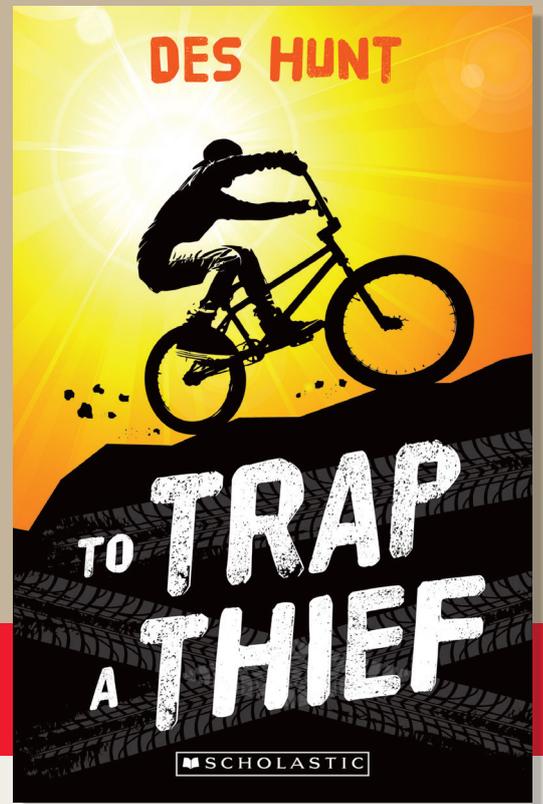


To Trap a Thief

By Des Hunt

- Reading • Writing •
- Social Studies • Lexile: 660L •



Synopsis

Since the sudden death of Connor's dad in an aircraft accident two years ago, it's been just him and his Mum. Now she's got this new boyfriend, Morgan, and they want to get married. But that's not the worst of it – Morgan's parents (Denzel and Rosen) aren't keen on the idea either and have come over to make sure everyone knows it. To escape the tense situation, Denzel suggests he and Connor go for a walk to the old quarry. After a run-in with the local bad-boy (Ryan) on the way, who nearly runs the old man over, Denzel stops off to buy a Lotto ticket. And THAT's when life gets interesting for Connor and his mate Harvey.

Denzel invites Connor on a road trip in a new campervan but Connor is sure that the trip will be mega-boring and asks if his friend Harvey can come too, and he does. An altercation at the Wellington ferry terminal results in a series of events where a fraudster (Frank) tries to steal Denzel and Rosen's money. During the course of the trip the boys also participate in a quest that involves riddles and prizes. In order to get rid of the boys and distract them, the fraudster fakes some of the quests and puts the boys in danger. Denzel, Rosen, Connor and Harvey decide to settle the score with Frank and his cohorts after he steals their campervan and nearly kills half the party. Loud explosions, bike chases, and a lassoing girl save the day. Connor and Harvey are hailed as heroes, and Connor gets to do something he always wished he could have done with his father.

About the Author

Des Hunt lives at Matarangi on the Coromandel Peninsula. Some years ago, he made the transition from writing textbooks for secondary students to novels for younger readers while still maintaining his aims of fostering young peoples' natural interest in the science of their surroundings. Des has authored 21 books in this genre and has been shortlisted for the NZ Children's Book Awards six times. A widely respected figure in New Zealand educational circles, and one who enjoys speaking in schools, Des Hunt's other books for Scholastic NZ are: *The Last Tuatara*, *Project Huia*, *Cool Nukes*, *Sunken Forest* and the concluding title in the *Kiwis at War* series, *1918: Broken Poppies*.

Writing Style

To Trap a Thief is an intriguing quest story, which will be of interest to children interested in gaming and BMX riding. The story is set in the Bulls township at the beginning of the story, and then in a campervan and numerous tourist stops from Picton to Puponga. The text is in the third person past tense. The author has used short sentences and hanging chapters to increase the tension in the story. He uses long sentences to give descriptions, back story and action scenes. We learn about the characters through dialogue, action and Connor's thoughts. *To Trap a Thief* has been written for the 10- to 15-year-old age group, who will find it a gripping story with many threads to unravel.



teacher toolkit

 SCHOLASTIC

Shared Learning and Discussion Points

ASK YOUR STUDENTS:

- Look at the cover. When and where is this story set? How can you tell? Who or what do you think this story is about? Why do you think that?
- What have you learnt about the main character from the first page of the story? The author has cleverly foreshadowed some knowledge about the main character that we will need to know later on in the story – what could it be? (pp.11-12)
- How would you describe the atmosphere in the lounge? Give evidence from the text. Why do you think Rosen is behaving like she is and why did Connor shout at her? (pp.13-18)
- What else have we learnt about the main character and the setting at the beginning of chapter two? What is a pun? Can you think of some more puns for the town of Bulls? What about for the city you live in? (pp.19-21)
- What accident occurred? Could it have been avoided? Who was in the wrong? How else could the driver have behaved? (pp.23-24)
- Why do you think Connor stopped BMX riding? Why did it create an awkward moment between the two kids and Connor? What before/after school jobs does Connor do and why do you think he spends so much time working? What did he make to carry his lawn mower, tools, can of petrol, and weed eater? How would you describe Harvey? Why did he make-up words? What do you think Connor thinks of Denzel? Where do you think he got the \$100 note? (pp.25-33)
- What happened between Ruth and Rosen? What simile has the author used to describe Rosen? Why did Connor hug his mother? Why was the DVD significant? Why is Connor reluctant to watch it? Why did his mother want to watch it with him? What genre would you call this film? (pp.36-41)
- Who do you think has won the Lotto? Why do you think Morgan needs approval from his parents to marry? How does that make Connor and his mother feel? Who does Connor suspect has the winning ticket and where does he think he got it from? If true, what does it say about that person's character if they cash the ticket in? (pp.42-46)
- Why is Morgan expecting Ruth and Connor to react differently to the news? Why do you think Rosen has requested Ruth's phone number, and what do you think she is going to say? Why would Morgan's mother have changed? How does Harvey guess who has won the money? What does 'cowslipping' mean? Why has Joel threatened the boys? How do you think Harvey will get his revenge? (pp.48-54)
- Why would the Lotto ticket in the shed prove who had won the ticket? Why does Harvey suggest he comes along on the holiday? What potential problems could happen on this trip? (pp.60-62)
- Summarise the incident at the ferry terminal. First write down the key idea in one sentence. Then write the next 2-3 key ideas (in 2-3 sentences). Only include important ideas from this chapter and leave out unnecessary details. (pp.65-74)
- What is your instinct about Frank's character? Does it seem as if Frank and Ryan are up to something no good? If so, brainstorm what it could be. Do you think it involves Denzel's motorhome? State your reasons why/why not? (pp.77-79)
- What do you think Frank was doing to Connor's phone? Is it polite to touch other people's phones? Why/Why not? Whose image is on the front of the \$100 bill? What was he famous for and where did he come from? Frank gives good advice about reading – what is it? (pp.89-94)
- What quest have the boys decided to join in and what is their first mission? What is in the envelope? Who do you think is behind Harmonic-5? Why is Kylie spying on them? (pp.96-108)
- Why do Denzel, Rosen and the boys leave the carpark in a hurry? Do you think being blacklisted will cause a problem for the travellers? Why do you think Frank's bus and the black ute were parked nearby? Do you think the towel hanging over the number plate was deliberate? Why? (pp.109-115)
- What do you think an electric steed is? What transport do you think they will be given (considering they are underage to ride a car or motorbike)? Who do you think is watching the boys? How does it make the boys feel? (pp.116-122)
- What is a fossil? Why does Connor think Morgan is Harmonic-5? Why is Magazine Point significant to Connor? Why does Connor keep his fossil collection secret? How does walking in his father's footsteps help Connor get over his sadness about his father's death? (pp.123-129)
- Why is Connor now thinking that it is not Frank behind the quest? Who do you think is Harmonic-5 and why? What is Frank's business and do you believe him? Why/why not? Why do you think he is trying to get Denzel and Rosen involved? How does Frank show some of his true personality? (pp.132-136)
- What is a Haast eagle? Why do you think Frank doesn't want the boys to come along on the boating trip? How does Connor upset Frank when the boat comes back? (pp.138-150)



- Why do you think Rosen and Denzel have goofy expressions on their faces when they give the boys permission to go on the mission? What does Hannah's text reveal? Why do the boys get angry with each other? (pp.151-158)
- Why does the driver of the black ute try to hurt Connor? How does Connor get help? What other options might Connor have had to save Dave's gear? (pp.159-163)
- How did Kylie confirm Connor's suspicions? How do you think Kylie got bruises on her face? Why do you think she stays with Ryan? What interesting fossils do they see in the limestone cave? (pp.164-172)
- What is Golden Bay named after, and what else is it famous for? What is its Maori name? (Mohua) What three features did Connor see in the cement works? Why are the boys and Denzel worried about Joel following them? (pp.175-181)
- What two mistakes do the boys make, which leads to them being chased by two men? Why did the men take a photo of the boys? (pp.182-188)
- How is Pippi a good judge of character? How do you think the drone got into the van? What does Connor work out? Why do you think Frank is surprised that Harvey owns up to the robbery? (pp.182-198)
- Why did Harvey lie about stealing the drone? What is the boys' plan to uncover the truth? Why did Connor send his mother an email and why was it important? (pp.199-205)
- Who does Rosen blame for Denzel wanting to back out of the financial deal with Frank? How? What important information have they discovered about the safety of their van? What do you think will happen when Denzel confronts Frank? (pp.206-214)
- What do you think Rosen was up to when she visited Frank after doing her chores? How does Morgan's email prove Connor's theory right? What could an astute observer notice about the relationship between the Gloynes and the boys? Why does Harvey get excited by Frank's message and how are his hopes dashed? What had Pippi cornered? (pp.215-226)
- What do you think Frank is up to when he takes them on a helicopter ride? Why do you think he really wants their coordinates? How is the mission creating tension between the two boys? What does Connor see in the mapping app that helps him know where to look for the prize? (pp.227-232)
- Predict what you think will happen in chapter 25. Do you think they should have changed the combination on the lock box? State your reasons. How would you describe Harvey's actions? Why does Connor decide to follow him? (pp.233-238)
- What does Connor realise about their mission? What do you think Frank's action of wiping under his chin means? How does the situation get more dangerous for the boys? Who rescues them, and why? (pp.239-248)
- Why does Connor suspect that Kylie isn't telling them the whole truth? Why do you think she doesn't want to take them the whole way to their van? What terrible discovery do they make when they get to the helicopter? (pp.249-256)
- How does Connor save Pippi? How do they track their van? What foolish thing has Rosen done? How do the boys solve their transport problem? Is it a wise decision to do what they did? (pp.257-267)
- Why does Morgan caution his father? What is the family's plan of attack? What else could they do? How are Denzel's and Morgan's skills helping them? How is Kylie in danger? (pp.268-279)
- How is Kylie helping them with their plan? Why do you think she is doing it? Why does Connor feel good after his talk with Kylie? (pp.280-287)
- How many explosions went off and what effect does it have on the crooks? What were the boys going to use their bikes for after the explosions? Why does Connor make sure Ryan sees that they (Connor and Harvey) have the keys? (pp.288-295)
- How does Connor stop the thieves from advancing on them? What foolhardy move does Harvey make when on the track? How do Rosen and Kylie capture Ryan? How does Pippi get her revenge? (pp.296-303)
- Predict how Connor will capture Frank? What skill does Connor use to catch up with Frank? How does Connor save the boat, and in what way does Frank use this to his advantage while Connor is busy? What does Connor do to bring the boat to where the police are, in style? (pp.304-311)
- What do you think is the answer to the riddle? Why do you think the rest of the family decided to join the trip? How does Morgan find out about Connor's interest in fossils? What is the last piece of the puzzle that Hannah reveals? Why does Sean ask that the destination be kept secret? Why does Connor want to step into dinosaur footprints? (pp.312-326)



Activities

ACTIVITY 1: FINAL MISSION

Discuss with your students the quests the boys had during the story, including the false ones. What was the difference between the two types of quests? What did the quests all have in common? Why do you think Morgan chose that theme? Give the students a mission to come up with their own quest. It could involve quests around the school, or have something to do with landmarks in your town. Students will need to follow the format of Harmonic-5's missions and include their own made-up riddle. Students can then have turns trying to solve each other's riddles.

ACTIVITY 2: DRAW A BOOK MAP

The setting changes regularly throughout this story. Ask the students to draw a map of the journey, like you would see in the front of some books. They will need to start at Picton and end at Puponga, including all the stops on the way. Remind students to include a key featuring all the fossil sites the characters visited and to write a sentence or two about those special places.

ACTIVITY 3: TRICKY FORESHADOWING

Ask the students what 'foreshadowing' means? (It is a warning of something that will happen in the story later or when the author gives a skill to a character that they will need at a crucial moment in the story.) Discuss some of the skills that were given to the characters early on in the story that they needed later on. Why was it important to know this information early in the story? Students in pairs think, discuss and research when the following characters were given a skill (including page number) and how and when that was needed in the climax.

FORSHADOWING SKILLS IN JUNIOR FICTION CHART		
Character	Foreshadowing skill	How skill is used later in the story
Connor		
Harvey		
Denzel		
Morgan		

ACTIVITY 4: PLOT PLAN

Many authors tend to map their stories before they start.

Ask students to use the following chart diagram to plot out *To Trap a Thief*.

1. Introduction: What **information** was needed about the **characters and setting**, including the **trigger event** that caused Connor to go off on a camping trip?
2. Rising Action: What **problems** did they encounter on the way?
3. Climax: **When was the reader most interested** in how the story will end or the problem solved?
4. Falling Action: What happened **after the suspense** has been eliminated and how did it show the characters lives were returning to normal?
5. Resolution: What was the **last event** that happened in the story that let the reader know the main character would be all right going forward?



