The Dark Side of the City  Alan Battersby

Before reading

1. Look at the front cover of the book. What does the picture show? Do you like the picture? Why / Why not?
2. Read the title. What do you understand by ‘the dark side’ of the city?
3. Read the blurb on the back cover. Who is talking? What does he do?
4. Look at the list of ‘people in the story’ on page 4. Apart from Nat Marley’s job, what other jobs do the people do?
5. Look at the map on page 5. What places are marked with a circle?
6. In the blurb Marley says he got a phone call saying someone wanted to talk with him ‘about a family problem’. Which of the people do you think this might have been?
7. If you have the recording, listen to Chapter 1.

Check your reading

Chapter 1

1. Why is Nat Marley working on a national holiday?
2. What does Marley know about Curtis Wilson’s past?
3. Who is worried about whom, and why?
4. What does Dionne think the problem might be with her husband?
5. What does Marley decide to do?

Chapter 2

1. Match the beginnings and the endings.
   1) Marley uses public transportation
   2) The weather in New York
   3) Dionne Freeman has
   4) Marley says that
   5) Ellis Freeman says
   6) Ellis Freeman’s business
   a) a kind smile.
   b) is doing OK.
   c) because it’s quicker and cheaper than using cabs (taxis).
   d) he wants to buy a snake for his son.
   e) is very cold.
   f) he transports pets and food to people’s homes.

Chapter 3

1. True or False?
   a) Nat Marley has a cold on Wednesday morning.
   b) Joe Blaney works for the Police Department.
   c) Ellis Freeman is already at his shop when Nat and Joe arrive.
   d) Nat takes photographs of Freeman putting boxes in the van.
   e) Two men put some bags in the back of Freeman’s van.
   f) The bags are exactly the same as Freeman’s bags.
   g) The two blonde men are twins.
   h) Marley and Blaney follow Freeman as he leaves bags and boxes at different addresses.
2. What happens when Freeman tries to leave a bag at the apartment block with a flat for rent?
3. Who does Marley phone, why and what is the answer?
4. What does Freeman do with the bag he can’t leave?
5. What does Marley ask Blaney to do in the afternoon?

Chapter 4

1. Make short answers to these questions about Mario Rossi:
   a) What ethnic group is he?
   b) What was he like in the past?
   c) What is his special skill?
   d) What work does he do now?
2. Do they get into the pet shop a) easily? b) with difficulty?
3. How do they see in the front of the store? a) with flashlights b) with streetlights
4. What kind of snake do they find?
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Chapter 5

1. Which of these statements is correct?
   a) Mat Marley doesn't feel better in the morning.
   b) The weather is better in the morning.
   c) Matt goes to a diner for breakfast.
   d) The person who died at the party was called Gallagher.
   e) Ed Winchester works in a diner.
   f) Curtis is very upset when he hears about the drugs at the pet shop.
   g) The rattlesnake Nat photographs is often found in the USA.

2. a) What happened at 52 West 112th Street?
    b) Why is the address important?

Chapter 6

1. Put the events in the correct order:
   a) Stella goes to visit the Gray brothers at Computer Kitchen.
   b) Nat Marley goes to the pet shop to order a snake for his son.
   c) Nat and Stella go into the World of Computers shop.
   d) Ellis Freeman says he will bring the snake the next day at around 2 o'clock.
   e) Wilson tells Marley that Ellis Freeman has been hurt quite badly.
   f) Nat and Stella go to the Grand Concourse by train.

2. What does Nat Marley want to do when Ellis Freeman brings the snake?

Chapter 7

1. What does Marley show Freeman when he comes to his apartment?
2. Who is waiting in Marley’s apartment to talk to Freeman?

Chapter 8

1. Name the people:
   a) He calls the Gray brothers to say his van won't start.
   b) He gives Joe and Wilson gloves.
   c) He speaks in a voice like Ellis Freeman's.
   d) They have to put their hands on their heads.
   e) They come to the Gray brothers’ office with guns.
   f) He shoots into the office ceiling.

2. What are the following things like in the Gray brothers’ apartment?
   a) the front door
   b) the front door lock
   c) the wall safe
   d) the Burmese python
   e) the wall

3. Where do Joe and Nat take the Grays?

Chapter 9

1. How does Marley finish the story of the Grays and the drugs?
2. Why does Marley get a phone call from Captain Oldenburg?
3. What two things does Marley get from the Freemans?

After reading

Choose some of these activities.

1. Choose one of the main characters (Marley, Blaney, Wilson, Ellis Freeman) and write some paragraphs describing what they are like as a person.
2. Write a newspaper article about the problems of drugs like cocaine.

3. Think of another title for *The Dark Side of the City* and give reasons for your choice.

4. Make a quiz for other students, including some true/false and correct/incorrect questions.

5. Write the conversation Dionne and Ellis Freeman had when he told her what he had been doing.

6. Write an email to Alan Battersby telling him what you did and didn’t like about this story.

7. Look at the picture on page 16. Describe what is happening and how the characters feel, explaining why they feel like that.

8. If you were making a film of this story, which actors would you want to play the main characters, and why?

9. Choose either Mario Rossi or Joe Blaney and tell the story about going to the pet shop (Rossi) or the Grays’ office (Blaney) from your point of view.