Before Reading

BEFORE READING ACTIVITIES (PAGE 76)

ACTIVITY 1 BEFORE READING
Philip Marlowe was a detective, who lived in Los Angeles. In the 1930s this was a tough city, where people could make a lot of money from crime. Marlowe saw the dark side of Los Angeles, and he knew that the answers to his questions would usually be lies.

General Sternwood was a very rich man, but he was old and sick, and he was having problems with a blackmailer. His two daughters were both beautiful and wild. They were in trouble, too, and it was all much worse than the General knew. Could Marlowe do anything to help the Sternwoods?

ACTIVITY 2 BEFORE READING
Encourage students to speculate and to make guesses, but do not tell them the answers. They will find out as they read that the ‘yes’ answers are numbers 1 and 4; number 5 is ‘perhaps’. (It is clear that Marlowe finds Vivian attractive.)

While Reading

CHAPTERS 1 TO 4 WHILE READING
1+10 General Sternwood, a rich old man, wanted Marlowe to help him because someone was blackmailing him.
2+11 Rusty Regan, an Irish bootlegger, was Vivian’s husband, who had disappeared suddenly, without saying goodbye.
3+13 Bernie Ohls, the District Attorney’s chief investigator, sent Marlowe to see General Sternwood.
4+12 Owen Taylor, who was found dead in the sea inside a Buick, was in love with Carmen, and wanted to marry her.
5+16 Philip Marlowe discovered that Geiger’s business was pornography, and then went to his house and found him dead.
6+14 Vivian Regan went to see Marlowe at his office because she was worried about her father and sister.
7+15 Arthur Gwynn Geiger was killed while he was taking photographs of Carmen, and then his body disappeared.
8+9 Carmen Sternwood, drugged and wearing only a pair of ear-rings, was at Geiger’s house when he was murdered.

BEFORE READING CHAPTER 5
Encourage discussion of the plot so far, and which way it might develop. These are some possible theories:
1 Very probably. Marlowe knows that Brody has Geiger’s pornographic books, and also that a man of that name has blackmailed General Sternwood before.
2 A possibility. Perhaps Taylor wanted to stop Geiger from taking photographs of Carmen, went to the house, and saw Geiger being murdered. The murderer then killed Taylor to stop him talking.
3 Not very probable. If Rusty really has run off with Mona Mars, he could reappear at any moment. But it is strange that he said nothing to General Sternwood, since the two men were so friendly. Perhaps something else has happened to Rusty – perhaps he himself has been murdered.
4 Almost certainly. She needs to get the photographs back and destroy them, as they are pornographic and so can be used to blackmail her or her family.

CHAPTERS 5 TO 8 WHILE READING
1 To look for the photographs Geiger took of her.
2 He refused to tell Eddie Mars who had now got Geiger’s books.
3 Agnes, the green-eyed blonde who worked at Geiger’s bookstore.
4 In order to frighten him and make him give her the photographs.
5 The film that Geiger had taken of Carmen.
6 Because he thought that Joe Brody had murdered Geiger.
7 In Carol Lundgren’s room, which was in Geiger’s house.
8 Owen Taylor, because he loved Carmen and didn’t like what Geiger was doing with her.
9 Because Marlowe accused the police of knowing about Geiger’s pornographic bookstore, but still allowing it to stay open.
10 That he had killed himself because he was ill and unhappy.

BEFORE READING CHAPTER 9
Encourage students to speculate and to discuss these theories. Some possible ideas:
1 Yes, and no. He’s done what General Sternwood asked him to, but there is still a mystery about Rusty Regan, and the General may ask Marlowe to find him.
2 Quite probable. Marlowe likes to solve problems.
3 Not very probable. He doesn’t sound the kind of man who would be a blackmailer, and Vivian has told Marlowe that Rusty was not short of money.
4 Possible. She doesn’t seem to want to find him herself, and wants to know whether her father is trying to do so.
5 Very probable. Eddie seems to know a lot about what’s going on, and has invited Marlowe to go and see him if he decides to look for Rusty, which suggests that he knows something that Marlowe doesn’t.

**CHAPTERS 9 TO 12 WHILE READING**

1 Eddie Mars to Marlowe. They were in Eddie’s club, having a drink, while Eddie told Marlowe what he knew about Regan. Eddie was pleased with Marlowe because Marlowe had kept Eddie’s name out of the murder business.
2 Marlowe to Vivian. They were in Marlowe’s car, parked by the sea, where they had driven after leaving Eddie Mars’s club. They had just kissed, but Marlowe still wanted answers to his questions.
3 Carmen to Marlowe. They were in Marlowe’s apartment. After taking Vivian home, Marlowe went home to find Carmen waiting for him in his bed.
4 Harry Jones to Marlowe. They were in Marlowe’s office. Harry had followed Marlowe there because he wanted to sell information which Agnes had discovered about where Mona Mars really was.
5 Lash Canino to Harry Jones. They were in the Fulwider Building, where Marlowe had agreed to meet Harry. Canino, who was one of Eddie’s men, had got there before Marlowe, and had just killed Harry by giving him whisky with cyanide in it, to try to stop the information about Mona getting to Marlowe.
6 Agnes to Marlowe. She was sitting with Marlowe in her car, the grey Plymouth, talking about Mona Mars. Marlowe paid her two hundred dollars to find out where Mona was.
7 Art Huck to Marlowe and Canino. They were at Art Huck’s garage, out in the hills, and Marlowe knew that Mona was hidden in the house nearby. His car had broken down near the garage. Immediately after these words, one of the men knocked Marlowe out.

**BEFORE READING CHAPTER 13**

Encourage students to speculate and to make guesses, but do not tell them the answers. They will find out as they read that the answers are: 1 Mona Mars,
2 Marlowe, 3 Lash Canino.

**CHAPTERS 13 TO 15 WHILE READING**

1 She loved him and wanted to help him. She didn’t believe he was a killer.
2 Carmen had shot him down by the old oil wells, and his body was in the sump.
3 She was sick, both in mind and in body.
4 Eddie knew that Carmen had killed Regan. After the murder, Vivian went to Eddie for help because she didn’t want her father or the police to know about it.
5 Norris knew about all the Sternwoods’ troubles, including the murder of Regan.
6 General Sternwood cared more about Rusty Regan than about his own daughters. He liked Regan very much, and wanted to know the truth about what had happened to him.

**After Reading**

**ACTIVITY 1 AFTER READING**

1 *Rusty Regan* died because he refused to sleep with his wife’s sister. *Carmen Sternwood* killed him and hid his body in the oily sump.
2 *Harry Jones* was just a small-time crook in a world of big tough guys – but he died to save his girlfriend. *Lash Canino* gave him a drink which contained cyanide.
3 *Joe Brody* hadn’t killed the pornographer, but the man’s lover didn’t know that. *Carol Lundgren* went to his apartment and shot him as he opened the door.
4 *Canino* loved the sound of other people’s pain, and did the dirty work for a man whose own hands remained clean. *Marlowe* had to kill him to escape from him / save his own life.
5 *Geiger* involved a young woman in pornography – and the man who loved her didn’t like it. *Owen Taylor* shot him when he found him taking photographs of Carmen with no clothes on.

**ACTIVITY 2 AFTER READING**

The linking words not needed are: *because, before, but, which*

The violent death of *Arthur Geiger*, a Hollywood bookseller, has quickly been followed by the death of his killer. The police report that *(Arthur) Geiger, who owned a popular bookstore on Hollywood Boulevard, was murdered last night at his home on Laverne Terrace.*

*Although* the reason for *(Arthur) Geiger’s murder is not known, the killer, a man called *Joe Brody*, was well known to the police as a thief. *(Joe) Brody himself, however, lived for less than twenty-four hours after the murder. A young man called *Carol Lundgren, who worked at* *(Arthur) Geiger’s bookstore, went to* *(Joe) Brody’s apartment late this afternoon and shot him when he came to the door. *(Carol) Lundgren has now been arrested and has told the police that he killed *(Joe) Brody in revenge for the death of his employer.*
Death by Cyanide

No, he doesn’t. I have to keep it from him. If Mona loved her husband and wanted all his plans to stay with Rusty.

I don’t understand. How will that help? Only Norris.

Yes. I know him. He’ll want to protect Dad so he won’t say anything.

Oh, Eddie, how can I ever thank you for this? Eddie Mars wanted him out of the way, and asked himself, who did kill him? One idea could be that Brody was telling the truth, and Taylor did not kill himself, who did kill him? One idea could be that Eddie Mars wanted him out of the way, and asked someone like Canino to get rid of him.

These are some possible ways of completing the conversation:

Vivian: Eddie, you’ve got to help me! Something terrible has happened!
Eddie: Hey, calm down! What can be so bad? Sit down and let me get you a drink.
Vivian: Eddie, listen to me! It’s Carmen. She’s killed someone.
Eddie: What do you mean? Who?
Vivian: Rusty.
Eddie: But why would she kill a great guy like Rusty? Where is he? What happened? Was it an accident?
Vivian: No, it wasn’t. She shot him down by the old oil wells. His body’s in the sump.
Eddie: What? Are you sure? How do you know?
Vivian: She told me. She’s sick, Eddie, really sick.
Eddie: Hell, Vivian. Things look bad. Does the General know about this?
Vivian: No, he doesn’t. I have to keep it from him. If he knew, he would tell the police.
Eddie: Yes, I guess he would. And we must keep them out of this. Does anyone else know what happened?
Vivian: Only Norris.
Eddie: Will he keep his mouth shut?
Vivian: Yes, I know him. He’ll want to protect Dad so he’ll never tell anyone.
Eddie: Good. OK, Vivian. Here’s what we’ll do. I’ll get Mona to help us. I’ll send her out of town for a while. There’s a place I know . . .
Vivian: I don’t understand. How will that help?
Eddie: Don’t you see? We’ll make people think she ran off with Rusty. It won’t be difficult to believe. She’s a beautiful girl, my wife. And she’ll do anything I say.

Vivian: Oh, Eddie, how can I ever thank you for this?
Eddie: Don’t worry, Vivian. I’ll think of something you can do for me. Now, come on. Stop crying and fix your face. Get ready to play the cheated wife!

Everyone might have different ideas about these questions, but some possible answers are:

1 Marlowe had to choose; he could kill Canino or be killed by Canino. It isn’t surprising that he chose to live!
2 Norris was a very good servant to the Sternwoods, and was right to keep what he knew about their lives a secret. However, when Carmen killed Regan, it was wrong that nobody told the police.
3 Vivian did not tell her father that Carmen had killed Regan, because she knew that he would tell the police. She felt that the pain of knowing how Regan had died and what Carmen was really like would kill the General. Also, if the police knew, the story would get into the newspapers. She was right to think of her father’s feelings, but wrong to leave Carmen free to kill again.
4 Mona loved her husband and wanted all his plans to succeed. However, she refused to see all the terrible things he was doing. She said that he was not a killer, but it was clear that he paid other people, like Canino, to kill for him. She was right to want to help her husband but wrong to do that when he was involved in crimes.
5 Owen Taylor was a murderer, but he killed for love. He was trying to save the girl he loved from a bad man. He was right to want to help Carmen, but wrong to kill someone.
6 Like Taylor, Lundgren killed for love. However, he killed the wrong man. He thought Joe Brody had killed Geiger, but Brody hadn’t. Lundgren was right to care about his friend, but wrong to kill someone.

Open answers. Encourage discussion, also of the original title, *The Big Sleep*. The titles which are probably less suitable are these:

- *Death by Cyanide* (refers to the murder of a minor character)
- *Death of a Blackmailer* (refers to the murder of another minor character)
- *The Roulette Murders* (the gambling is not really an important part of the plot)