

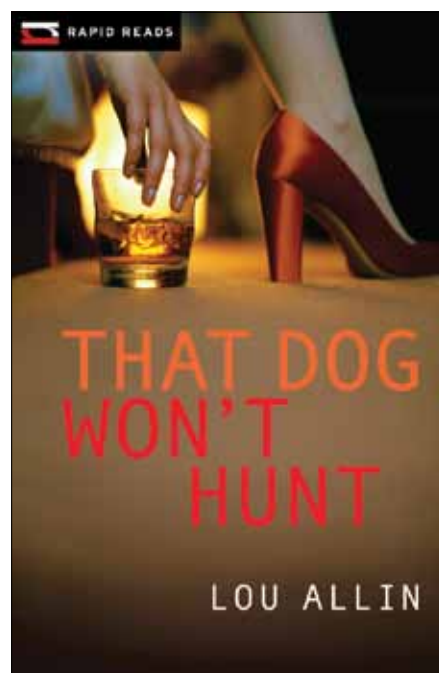
READING
GUIDETHAT DOG WON'T HUNT
LOU ALLIN

Reading level: 2.7

Interest level: Adult

Themes: mystery, suspense, hunting, dogs, literacy

978-1-55469-339-9 PB

**Summary**

Rick Cooper is a young wrangler who's out of work and on the run after a drug delivery gone bad. He's hitchhiking through the desert when he runs into Gladys Ryan, an attractive older woman with a broken-down 1970 Mustang, a confident air and a penchant for hard liquor.

Gladys invites Rick back to Northern Ontario with her, where she operates a hunting lodge. Since her husband died five years ago, she's needed someone to help with maintenance and guiding wealthy Americans on hunting expeditions.

Rick agrees, figuring it'll be a great way for him to evade the gangsters who are out for his blood. That, and he'll make a few bucks to get him just that much closer to owning his own little spread with a horse and fabulous sunsets.

Rick works hard by day and keeps Gladys company by night. When the season opens, he's kept busy guiding clients. Gladys pays him a bit here and there, claiming she's waiting to see how the whole season shakes out before settling up. It irritates Rick, but he can't change it.

While in town one day, Rick meets Shelley, a beautiful redhead who's dying to blow town and make her life with this handsome cowboy. They make plans for their departure.

When the season ends, Gladys is still acting all tight-fisted with her money. But Rick knows better: he's seen the ledgers. He knows she's got plenty tucked away. When they get into a drunken altercation, Rick accidentally kills Gladys—and finds himself the master of his own destiny. He hides her body up in the hills, swipes the cash and closes up the lodge for the season. Everyone'll think she's headed south for the winter, which is her custom. It's foolproof.

Until Gladys's old hunting dog betrays Rick's ugly little secret.





Questions for Discussion

1. Rick is surprised when Gladys asks him what his dream is. He says no one has ever asked him that before—and yet he does have one. Do you think most people have a clearly formulated dream for their lives? How is this beneficial? Can having such a dream ever set us up for disappointment?
2. Through a bizarre coincidence, Gladys and Rick meet one another in the middle of the desert. They both need something that the other can provide. Maybe you'd call it fate. Do you believe things like this happen in the real world? Discuss, using examples.
3. Lou Allin's characterization is strong. By the end of the first chapter, we have a very clear idea of what Rick and Gladys each are like. Find several passages from the book that help to develop the characters. What makes these sections so effective?
4. Rick is sensitive to omens. He considers it lucky that both Gladys and his mother used to like Gary Cooper. And hearing a barred owl upon pulling in to the hunting lodge makes him happy too. Are there other examples of Rick relying on omens to guide him in making decisions or feeling out a situation? Do you believe in omens like this? Explain.
5. Gladys tells Rick she's a good judge of character. What do you think? Does she have him pegged right?
6. How do Rick's feelings about Gladys change throughout the course of the story? Why does this happen? Is there a turning point in their relationship?
7. Before the hunting season starts, Rick meets Shelley and falls in love. How does this change his ambitions?
8. Rick often thinks of his father—what he was like, things he used to say and do. How is this connection to our families and our roots important in establishing our own personalities?
9. Do you consider Rick to be a likeable character? Why or why not?
10. As you see it, what is the significance of the movie Rick watches, where the characters race toward cliff edges and see who bails out of the car first? Does it have meaning in the context of the story?
11. For what reasons does Gladys avoid paying Rick his money until the last possible moment? Do you agree with her motivations? How might things have been different if she had paid him on a more regular basis?
12. Although Rick didn't intend to kill Gladys, he sees her death as a shortcut to making his own dreams become reality. Do you think most people in Rick's situation would have done the same thing? Explain.
13. Do you agree with the idea that each of us could be criminals if we were presented with the right circumstances?
14. As you see it, does the ending of *That Dog Won't Hunt* provide a satisfying resolution to the story? Explain.
15. What is the significance of the book's title? Try to come up with one or more alternate titles. In your opinion, what makes a good book title?

