

A Curriculum Guide to

Book Two of the Framed! series: *Vanished!*

By James Ponti

About the Book

Middle school is hard. Solving cases for the FBI is even harder. Doing both at the same time—well, that’s just crazy. But that doesn’t stop Florian Bates!

After helping the FBI solve an art theft at the National Gallery and uncovering a DC spy ring, Florian’s finding life at Alice Deal Middle School a little boring. But that’s all about to change! His FBI handler, Marcus, has a job for him! Is it a bank robbery? Counterfeit ring? International espionage? Actually, it’s middle school pranks.

Sounds pretty ordinary except that the pranks are happening at a prestigious private school attended by the US president’s daughter, who may—or may not—be involved. So Florian and Margaret are going undercover to see if they can use their TOAST skills to figure out what’s going on before the media gets hold of the story.

However, once the crime-solving pair arrive at the school, they discover that there’s a lot more than a few pranks going on, and the conspiracy of silence reaches all the way to the top. Then a student vanishes in the middle of a concert at the Kennedy Center and things take a sinister turn!

Can Florian and Margaret save the day? Or are *they* about to get toasted?

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS: READING, WRITING, AND RESEARCHING

Prereading Activity

The following questions contained in this section particularly address the Common Core State Standards: (RL.4.2) (RL.6.2) (SL.4–6.1, 2, 3)

As a prereading activity, have students complete an anticipation guide structured in the manner below. Instruct students to complete the guide by placing a “+” sign in the box next to the statements with which they agree, and a “0” next to those with which they disagree. They must commit to agreement or disagreement—there are no conditional responses. Students should be assured that there are no correct or incorrect positions.

<i>Before Reading</i>	<i>After Reading</i>	<i>Statements</i>
		All mysteries are worth solving.
		Adults always know the right way to approach and solve a problem.
		It is essential to always be completely honest with your friends.
		When in danger, it is best to play it safe rather than take a risk.

Vanished! through Writing and Research

The following questions may be utilized throughout the study of *Vanished!* as reflective writing prompts or alternatively, they can be used as targeted questions for class discussion and reflection. The questions contained in this section particularly address the Common Core State Standards: (RL.4.1, 2, 3, 7, 9) (RL.5.1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 9) (RL.6.1, 2, 3) (SL.6.1, 2, 3) (W.4–6.4)

1. As *Vanished* opens, Florian tells readers, “Middle school is hard. Solving cases for the FBI is even harder. Doing both at the same time, well, that’s just crazy.” Consider the challenges Florian faces. What makes juggling all these responsibilities so overwhelming for him? Is there anything about his situation that you envy?
2. After Margaret uses the term “wharf” to describe a dock, Florian corrects her by explaining the difference. Why is precision in language so important to him? Can you see advantages to using just the right words to say what you mean?
3. Consider Florian and Margaret’s investigations. Do you think it’s possible to ask the wrong questions? Have you ever been in a situation where you’ve done so? What was the result? What can be beneficial about asking even the wrong questions?
4. Florian tells Sgt. Bergen, “I don’t know your kids at all, but I know you’re the kind of dad who tapes his son’s pictures up at work and tries to help his daughter sell cookies. It’s the best kind of dad to be.” Consider Florian’s assessment of the officer. Do you agree?
5. What makes the Capital Crimes games developed by Florian and Margaret so unusual? Have you ever created an original game with a friend before? If so, please share.
6. Why is the code name “Loki” important to the story? What did you learn about Loki’s role in mythology? Does it seem fitting for Lucy’s code name?
7. Consider the cover art for *Vanished!* In what ways are the images symbolic for the events that transpire throughout the course of the book?

8. Without naming names, do you think there are students that behave like Tanner at every school? In your opinion, what's the best way to deal with kids like him? Does Florian's approach seem effective? Why or why not?
9. Why is the relationship between Yin and Lucy such a complicated one? In what ways would Lucy's friendship with him become problematic if Yin chose to defect to the United States?
10. Why is Yin's Baltimore Orioles baseball cap so important to him? What does it come to symbolize to Yin?
11. Lucy tells Florian and Margaret that Yin feels like a Chinese songbird, put in a cage and taken to a public place where he's forced to perform. Considering Yin's experiences, do you feel like that's accurate? Why or why not?
12. Besides being a kid, what are the biggest challenges Lucy has to face? Given her situation, in what ways must making friends be difficult? Can you think of any ways that Lucy and Yin are similar?
13. How does Florian's knowledge of "God Save the Queen" ultimately become a game changer in solving this mystery?
14. Becca tells Florian, "You better be careful. If you keep talking about things you shouldn't talk about, you're going to make some enemies." For what reasons does she offer this warning to him? Why does he seem unfazed by this prediction?
15. *Vanished!* is told in first person by Florian. How would the story be different if another character were telling it? Do you think changing the point of view would significantly impact the story? Why?
16. Margaret states, "You know how it is with TOAST. Crumbs lead to little pieces. Little pieces lead to big pieces. Big pieces lead to culprits." What can readers glean from her words?
17. What does the song that Margaret composes about her friendship with Florian tell readers about their relationship? How does Florian demonstrate that he is an equally good friend to Margaret in return?
18. After locating the missing peace medal from the Diplomatic Reception Room, Florian tells the president of the United States, "You've given me a memory that I'll treasure forever." Why does solving this mystery for the president mean so much to him? What do you think of the tradition of presidents leaving tokens for each other?
19. Using the phrase, "This is a story about" supply five words to describe *Vanished!*. Explain your choices.
20. As *Vanished!* ends, Florian has solved another important mystery. Predict what Florian will come to the aid of in the next installment/adventure of Florian Bates.

Extended Writing and Research Connections

The following activities contained in this section particularly address the Common Core State Standards: (RL.4.1, 2, 3) (RL.5.1, 2, 4) (RL.6.1, 2) (W.4–6.4)

1. In *Vanished!*, readers learn that Yin Yae is a musical child prodigy who may be taken advantage of by his country's government. Using the library's resources, learn more about what makes someone a "prodigy" and answer the following questions:

- How is "prodigy" defined?
- Are there specific areas in which prodigies tend to be gifted?
- What are the advantages to having such gifts? Are there any obvious disadvantages?

2. In *Vanished!*, the J. Edgar Hoover building and the Kennedy Center are important destinations to the events that transpire in the book. Both of these buildings are important in their own right; have your students select either the Hoover Building or the Kennedy Center and investigate the following:

- When was it founded and by whom?
- What is the importance of the connection to the person the building is named after?
- What is the building's primary function?
- Who operates it?
- How many visitors does it get annually?
- What are some of the most unusual or interesting facts you learned about the building?

3. In *Vanished!*, Florian and Margaret discover that the Chatham County Day School has long had an operating secret society known as the Megatherium Club, which a number of key suspects and important school personnel may play a role in running. Using a variety of research resources and your library, learn more about secret clubs or societies and select one to fully investigate.

Consider the following:

- How was the society founded?
- Who were the original members?
- What was their purpose and mission?
- Does the society still exist and, if it does, in what ways?
- What other notable information did you discover?

Synthesize what you've learned in conducting this research and share it with others.

4. Many of the characters in *Vanished!* are not as they appear. Consider the importance of appearances and the need for disguising one's self or pretending to be someone different than you are—what might be a rationale to do so? What are the ramifications and consequences of such a choice? Select one character from the novel and write a short analysis of his/her choice to use a disguise.

5. In *Vanished!*, Florian and Margaret meet Henry Yin at the National Zoo and visit the panda exhibit, where they learn that pandas are some of the most beloved animals across the world, with a great deal of work done for their conservation. Using library and Internet resources, explore more about pandas, making sure to learn about the following:

- Why can other countries not “own” the pandas featured in their zoos?
- Why are they important to Chinese culture and heritage?
- Provide general information about pandas, including: scientific descriptions, families, eating habits, life span, intelligence, etc.
- Where are they found in the wild?
- Why are they commonly so beloved by animal enthusiasts?
- Did you discover any interesting/unusual trivia about the animals?

Upon completion of your research, share your discoveries with others.

6. Students regularly retell their stories, or share their experiences, using a variety of social media tools. Working in groups, have students select a favorite scene from *Vanished!* Then use a social media platform (Snapchat, Twitter, or Facebook, for example) to retell the selected scene. Alternatively, have students set up a “Fauxbook” profile for a specific character from one of the Florian Bates novels and create a number of posts as that selected character.

Considering *Vanished!* through Literary Elements Analysis

The following activities contained in this section particularly address the Common Core State Standards: (RL.4–6.1, 2, 3) (SL.4–6.1, 2, 3) (W.4–6.4)

Use the following activities to allow students to show their understanding of various literary elements in the novel.

Thematic Connections

Consider the following themes of *Vanished!*: friendship, loyalty, courage, and perseverance. Select one of the themes and find examples from the book that help support this theme. Create a sample Life Lesson Chart using the model at:

http://www.readwritethink.org/lesson_images/lesson826/chart.pdf

Making Meaning by Exploring Setting

Consider the variety of settings for *Vanished!*: Why is each of these places important to the development of Florian or Margaret? Using the descriptions provided in the novel, illustrate the three places you believe to be most important to his or her story. In addition to the illustrations, include a short explanation of the significance of each, and why you believe it is important.

Considering Character—Create an “I AM” Poem or a Biopoem

The purpose of this strategy is to help students demonstrate knowledge of a character in *Vanished!* by following written prompts to complete a poem about the individual. Students can be given the prompts to follow on a worksheet, or alternatively, students may create an original slideshow using PowerPoint, Prezi, Movie Maker, or a presentation platform of their choice.

“I AM” POEM

FIRST STANZA:

I am (name the character)

I wonder (something the character is actually curious about)

I hear (an imaginary sound the character might hear)
I see (an imaginary sight the character might see)
I want (something the character truly desires)

SECOND STANZA:

I pretend (something the character actually pretends to do)
I feel (a feeling about something imaginary)
I touch (an imaginary touch)
I worry (something that really bothers the character)
I cry (something that makes the character very sad)
I am (the first line of the poem repeated)

THIRD STANZA:

I understand (something the character knows is true)
I say (something that the character believes in)
I dream (something the character might actually dream about)
I try (something the character really makes an effort about)
I hope (something the character actually hopes for)
I am (the first line of the poem repeated)

BIOPOEM:

Line 1: First name
Line 2: Three traits that describe the character
Line 3: Relative of _____
Line 4: Lover of _____ (three things)
Line 5: Who feels _____ (three things)
Line 6: Who needs _____ (three things)
Line 7: Who fears _____ (three things)
Line 8: Who gives _____ (three things)
Line 9: Who would like to see _____ (three things)
Line 10: Resident of _____
Line 11: Last name

Essential Quotes Analysis

The language that an author uses in his work is essential to getting across the intended meaning. Select four quotes from *Vanished!* that seem to signify key ideas that the author hopes that readers take from the text. These might be quotes spoken by characters or might be from the narration, and page numbers should be included with the quotes. Have students develop a chart with the following four columns:

- Quote
- Page Number
- Relevance to the Novel
- Intended Meaning for Readers

The intended meaning should have relevance not only to the characters in the text, but to the lives of anyone who reads the book.

Get Creative! Extension Activities

1. One of Ponti's greatest strengths as a writer is his ability to offer richly descriptive scenes. In small groups, have students select a favorite scene from *Vanished!* and create either a digitally or manually illustrated graphic novel for that scene. Using a digital comic strip creator (<http://www.makebeliefscomix.com/Comix/> or <http://infinitecomic.com/> for example), have students begin by using the strips to create storyboards for their scene. Have them select original art, images, and graphics. Alternatively, students could assume the roles of two of the characters with each one's personality and voice and have them interact with one another by creating an extension of a scene from one of the novels. As part of the evaluation component, consider panel size and number of panels, transitions and layouts, artwork, writing, and lettering.

2. In *Vanished!*, readers learn about the game Florian and Margaret have created called Capital Crimes. Using the book as inspiration, have students design a game of their own, making sure the game has:

- A set of written instructions and rules for playing
- A clear objective/outcome
- A designed board
- Game pieces

After groups have designed their original games, have them swap with other teams to take a turn playing their games.

This guide was created by Dr. Rose Brock, an assistant professor at Sam Houston State University. Dr. Brock holds a Ph.D. in Library Science, specializing in children's and young adult literature.

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