



Reading Group Guide:

VANISHED: TRUE STORIES OF THE MISSING

by Marc Tyler Nobleman

Reading Levels: GRL: S LEX: 930L DRA: 40 AR: 6.1

PRE READING ACTIVITY

Activate Prior Knowledge Write a short summary of the circumstances surrounding each disappearance in the book on an index card. (Example: “Seven-year-old Erica Pratt disappears while walking home in a high-crime neighborhood in Philadelphia.”) Divide students into groups, giving each group one of the index cards. Ask the groups to come up with potential causes for its assigned disappearance, listing as many possibilities as they can. (What could have happened to him/her? What *most likely* happened?) Have groups present their ideas to the class. When students have finished reading *Vanished*, ask them to compare their initial hypotheses about each disappearance with the author’s analysis. (SL.7.1, SL.8.1, SL.9–10.1, SL.11–12.1)

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION OR WRITTEN RESPONSE

- Compare and contrast the stories of Erica Pratt and Hannah Klamecki. How are they alike? How are they different? Use specific details and quotations from the text in your analysis. (RI.8.3)
- In his introduction, author Marc Tyler Nobleman writes that disappearances can “bring out strength in people that they didn’t know they had.” Support this statement with at least two pieces of evidence from the text. (RI.7.1, RI.8.1, RI.9–10.1, RI.11–12.1)
- In several of the chapters in the book, the text leaves matters uncertain. Which chapters fit this description? What possible explanations for each disappearance does the author provide? Based on the evidence in the text, which explanation in each case seems most likely to you? (RI.11–12.1, RH.11–12.3)
- The chapters about Percy Fawcett, Grant Hadwin, and Everett Ruess tell the stories of men who were adept at surviving in the wilderness. What similar traits or qualities can you identify in these men? What do their stories have in common? (RI.8.3)
- How does the story about musician Henry Grimes differ from the other stories in the book? Why do you think the author chose to include this story? How does it refine the author’s idea of what it means to be “missing”? (RI.9-10.5)

OTHER ACTIVITIES TO TRY

Read a Classic Have students read Antoine de Saint-Exupéry’s *The Little Prince* (a Common Core Text Exemplar for Grades 4–5) and discuss its relevance to the historical account of Saint-Exupéry’s life presented in *Vanished: True Stories of the Missing*. (How does *The Little Prince* seem to reflect Saint-Exupéry’s life experiences? What similarities do you see between Saint-Exupéry and the narrator of *The Little Prince*? What did Saint-Exupéry have in common with the Prince?) (RL.7.9)

Explore Visual Art Ask students to read the poem “Wilderness Song” by Everett Ruess and examine a selection of prints by Ruess. Lead the class in a discussion about Ruess’s representation of nature in print and visual art. (How does Ruess depict nature in the poem? How does he depict nature in his prints? How does he seem to view the relationship between man and nature?) To extend the activity, show students the works of other artists mentioned in the chapter about Ruess, including Ansel Adams, Maynard Dixon, and Dorothea Lange. (How are the works of these artists similar in their depiction of the natural world? What do they emphasize? What do they leave out?) (RL.9–10.7)

Compare Text and Film In the chapter about Percy Fawcett, the author says some people believe Fawcett was an inspiration for the fictional character Indiana Jones. If students are mature enough to view the film, have them watch *Raiders of the Lost Ark* and write essays in which they agree or disagree with those who think Fawcett inspired the creators of Indiana Jones. Essays should include clear arguments supported with specific evidence from the text and the film.

(RL.7.7, RL.7.9, W.7.1, W.8.1, W.9–10.1, W.11–12.1)

BUILD VOCABULARY

Preview challenging words Have students work individually or in groups to determine the meanings of new words. Ask students to use a three-columned chart to record context, word meanings, and synonyms. (RL.7.4, L7.4, RL.8.4, L.8.4, RL.10–9.4, L.10–9.4, RL.11–12.4, L.11–12.4)

adept	diplomacy	leisure	prestigious	torrent
albino	foliage	persisted	primitive	treacherous
aversion	formidable	plagued	renowned	tributary
debut	frigid	pluck	revival	venomous

SITES TO VISIT

Explore a Nonfiction Genre Study at <http://tinyurl.com/68oy5gb>

Find a Lesson Plan about Amelia Earhart, who author Marc Tyler Nobleman called “one of the most famous vanishing acts in American history,” at <http://tinyurl.com/65la6ye>

NOTE: Questions are keyed to the Common Core Standards www.corestandards.org

RL: Reading Standards for Literature

RI: Reading Standards for Informational Text

SL: Speaking and Listening Standards

L: Language Standards

RH: Reading Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies

W: Writing Standards