

Lesson Plan

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About the Book

Are you ready to save the world? The bestselling series returns with an adventure spanning 6 explosive books, 2 secret-filled card packs, and a website that places readers right in the action.

Thirteen-year-old Dan Cahill and his older sister, Amy, thought they belonged to the world's most powerful family. They thought the hunt for 39 Clues leading to the source of that power was over. They even thought they'd won. But Amy and Dan were wrong.

One by one, distress calls start coming in from around the globe. Cahills are being kidnapped by a shadowy group known as the Vespers. Now Amy and Dan have only days to fulfill a bizarre ransom request or their captured friends will start dying. Amy and Dan don't know what the Vespers want or how to stop them. Only one thing is clear. The Vespers are playing to win, and if they get their hands on the Clues . . . the world will be their next hostage.

About the Author

Gordon Korman was born in Montreal, Canada. He wrote his first book when he was 12 years old. "It wasn't on purpose." Gordon says, "In my school, the track and field coach had to teach language arts, and for writing, he just told us to work on whatever we wanted for the rest of the year." As the class monitor for Arrow Book Club, he sent his manuscript to Scholastic. *This Can't be Happening at Macdonald Hall* was published when Gordon was fourteen. He now has more than 65 novels to his credit.

Explore the World with Dan and Amy

The Educator Guides for *The 39 Clues Cahill vs. Vespers* series are created to help your students learn history, art, and social studies as they take a journey around the world. Discover exotic locations with famous explorers like Marco Polo, admire amazing artists and their work, and follow Dan and Amy as they conquer challenges like they have never had to face before!

Learn About Medusa from Ancient Greece to the Renaissance

In Greek mythology, Medusa was a beautiful young maiden with long hair who was admired by many men. One of those men was the sea-god Poseidon, who was taken with her beauty while she was worshipping at the temple of Athena. When Athena discovered the two of them together in her temple, she was so outraged that she turned Medusa's hair into living snakes, and anyone who looked directly at her was turned into stone.

During the Italian Renaissance, Caravaggio depicted Medusa in 1597 in his oil painting on wood, *Medusa*. In *The Medusa Plot*, Dan and Amy are forced to steal the *Medusa* from the Uffizi in Florence, Italy by the kidnappers. Against the odds, the Cahill kids conduct a brazen heist with masterful skill using...a pizza box!

Art from Pizza

Using a cardboard pizza circle, see if your students can create their own copy of Caravaggio's *Medusa*! Just ask a local pizzeria for a donation or purchase them from a restaurant supply company. Another alternative is to simply cut circles out of brown construction paper to represent the wood circle. Using paints or markers have students try to create their own "forgery." For a unique twist, students can depict a beautiful Medusa on one side of the circle in a "before" look – with a contrasting "after" that shows Medusa's horrified look captured by Caravaggio.

Real Angels

The Mud Angels saved thousands of priceless documents, books and pieces of art. To demonstrate the difficulty of this task, find an old magazine or newspaper and soak it in water. How could this item be saved? What happens to it as it dries? Bring the enormity of restoration to light by demonstrating how water can damage an oil painting. Look for your own "masterpiece" at thrift stores, basements or attics to use in class. Have students research restoration processes and experiment to see which method works the best.

Virtual Field Trips

Visit the Medusa in the Uffizi Museum

Visit the Uffizi and explore the many masterpieces in its collection at <http://www.virtualuffizi.com>

Roman Coliseum

Explore the Roman Empire and its famous coliseum where gladiators fought in 80 AD.
<http://www.roman-colosseum.info/>

Learning About Marco Polo

Marco Polo's travels around the world began as a teenager, like Dan and Amy. His fantastic stories of his exotic journeys are captured in his book *The Travels of Marco Polo*, also known as *Il Milione*. This manuscript became one of the most popular books in the Middle Ages because his tales seemed so outrageous to most Europeans. They considered it science fiction because it was difficult to believe places such as Cathay (China) and rulers such as Kublai Khan existed.

After traveling about 24 years, crossing thousands of miles of deserts, mountains, and oceans, Marco Polo paved the way on the Silk Road for thousands of Westerners in the centuries to come.

Discussion and Research

Where did Marco Polo travel and what routes did he uncover during his journeys? Encourage your students to not only research the routes he took and places he visited, but also think about and recreate what maps looked like during his time. How did he find his way without accurate maps or GPS? How did Marco Polo's travels impact cartography? Can you think of a Cahill who was a cartographer?

Marco Polo also brought new ideas from China to Europe like paper money and using coal for fuel. What other new ideas, products, and treasures did he bring back from his travels? Have students think about a trip they have taken to a different state or country. What new ideas or things did they bring back to share?

Creative Writing

Think like Marco Polo. Imagine exploring a place that no one else has ever visited. Perhaps it is an undiscovered island, a cave that leads to the center of the Earth, or perhaps even an unknown new planet. Write a tale about your journey, in the vein of Marco Polo, including details and ideas that neither you nor anyone in the society from which you come have seen or heard of before. How did you explore this new place without a map or GPS? How did you travel there? How long did it take and what dangers did you encounter along the way? What new things did you learn that you could bring home?

Educator's Guide by Laura Stockwell

- Subjects:

Ancient Civilizations, Social Studies through Literature, Renaissance