

A Curriculum Guide to

Framed! A T.O.A.S.T. Mystery

By James Ponti

About the Book

Get to know the only kid who's on the FBI director's speed dial as well as on several international criminals' most-wanted lists all because of his Theory of All Small Things, in this hilarious start to a brand-new middle-grade mystery series.

So you're only halfway through your homework and the director of the FBI keeps texting you for help: What do you do? Save your grade? Or save the country?

If you're Florian Bates, you figure out a way to do both.

Florian is twelve years old and has just moved to Washington. He's learning his way around using T.O.A.S.T., which stands for the *Theory of All Small Things*. It's a technique he invented to solve life's little mysteries, such as where to sit on the first day of school, or which Chinese restaurant has the best egg rolls.

But when he teaches it to his new friend Margaret, they uncover a mystery that isn't little. In fact, it's HUGE, and it involves the National Gallery, the FBI, and a notorious crime syndicate known as EEL.

Can Florian decipher the clues *and* finish his homework in time to help the FBI solve the case?

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.

Framed! through Writing and Research

The following questions may be utilized throughout the study of *Framed!* 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. At the beginning of *Framed*, readers meet Florian, who like most typical seventh graders likes eating pizza and egg rolls, and who is busy with his school’s student council and the Scrabble club; yet he also works for the FBI. In what ways is learning that Florian’s life is both typical and atypical interesting to you? What do you predict will be the most unusual parts of his life?
2. Florian states, “Technically, they classify me as a ‘covert asset.’” What’s the benefit for the FBI keeping his work there a secret? Why might the idea of the FBI getting assistance from a twelve-year-old cause them embarrassment?
3. Florian is known for his ability to apply the *Theory of All Small Things* (T.O.A.S.T) to the mysteries he wants to solve. He states, “That’s how I read people and places. The idea is that if you add up a bunch of little details, it reveals the larger truth.” Do you agree with his evaluation?
4. Florian declares, “I notice things other people don’t. My brain’s weird that way. It spots details that seem insignificant and snaps them together like puzzle pieces.” Do you see his ability to think differently as an asset? Why or why not? Can you think of anyone in your world that also thinks differently?
5. After he shows her how he uses T.O.A.S.T., Margaret asks, “Can you teach me how to do that?” What is it about this ability that makes her desire to be able to apply the theory to the things which she is interested in discovering? From observing how Florian and Margaret use T.O.A.S.T., can you see yourself being interested in learning how to use it to discover more about the people and situations you are interested in?

6. Describe Florian. What are three things you find most (or least) appealing about him? Is he someone you could see yourself befriending? Why or why not?
7. Margaret tells Florian, “Let me get this straight. You’re saying that big things, like everybody believing something, block the important details from view.” In what ways do you believe this assessment is accurate? Can you share a personal example from your life where you think this applies?
8. Review the survival steps shared by Florian. To what degree does he appropriately follow these steps? Can you think of anything he should have done differently?
9. Consider what Florian does to impress the FBI enough to choose to have him work for them. In your opinion, do you think adults often underestimate kids? Why is that so?
10. What makes Margaret a fitting friend to Florian? In what ways do her quickly developed T.O.A.S.T. skills make her an incredible asset and companion to him?
11. How does Florian put together the clues to help him initially find the missing four paintings? How does he understand that his work isn’t complete?
12. Discuss your understanding of the role of an embassy in another country. Given those parameters, in what ways does Florian put himself and others in danger by his actions?
13. Beyond successfully solving the mystery at the museum, what are the biggest challenges Florian and Margaret have to overcome?
14. How does knowing the identity of Margaret’s dad make the relationship between Florian and Margaret challenging? Why do you think he knows he has to keep this secret from her? Do you agree with his decision? Why or why not?
15. Using the phrase, “This is a story about . . .” supply five words to describe *Framed!*. Explain your choices.

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 *Framed!*, the National Gallery of Art plays a significant role in the novel. Have students learn more about the history of the museum and the treasures held in the museum’s collection. Ask them to learn:
 - When was the museum established and by whom?
 - Where is the museum located? Is the current location the original one?
 - How is the museum funded?
 - Who makes the decisions regarding the collection?

After gathering that info, have students dig deeper by selecting a personal favorite work of art and learning the history of their selection. Using a digital tool of their choice, students need to create a product that can be shared with classmates that provides the following information:

- Name of artwork and artist
- Brief overview of the artwork, including information about artist, creation date, style, historical significance, when it was added to the collection at the National Gallery
- What is it specifically about this work of art that appeals to them?

2. Throughout *Framed!*, readers learn about the FBI and their work in investigating art crimes here in the United States. The FBI is one of the world's largest police organizations. Using the following link, https://www.fbi.gov/about-us/investigate/vc_majorthefts/arttheft, have students research the role of the FBI in investigating the theft of cultural objects and create a digital report about their findings. Have them consider the following:

- What is the primary function of the FBI in the United States?
- What types of investigative campaigns does this organization undertake?
- Using the FBI resources available online, what are some of the most recent thefts of art?
- What are the criteria for working as an FBI agent?
- What other types of crime does the organization investigate?
- What other agencies have dedicated departments that investigate art crime?

3. Throughout *Framed!*, readers are introduced to a number of significant artists whose work is celebrated throughout the world. Ask students to explore one of the many artists they learn about in the novel. Selections could include (but aren't limited to) Van Gogh, Gauguin, Renoir, Monet, and Degas. Using a digital tool of their choice, students need to create a product that can be shared with classmates that provides the following information for their selected artist:

- Brief bio
- Style of art
- What work are they most known for?
- When and where were they working?
- What level of success did they have in their lifetime?
- Is there evidence of their work having an impact on popular culture today?

4. The theft of priceless art is a global crime throughout the world and throughout history. During World War II, the Nazis looted and plundered art from throughout Europe. To teach students more about this dark time in history, have them watch the award-winning documentary, *The Rape of Europa: The Fate of Europe's Treasures in the Third Reich and the Second World War*. This film tells the epic story of the systematic theft, deliberate destruction, and miraculous survival of Europe's art treasures during the Third Reich and World War II. Considering the information learned from the film, have students discuss the following:

- Were the efforts of the Louvre to protect its art insufficient, sufficient, or excessive in light of the impending fall of France?
- Why does art have that kind of hold on us? What does it say about mankind that we make that kind of effort to preserve and protect art, as well as keep it as part of our world?

Next, have students read the *Time* Magazine article, “The Spoils of War: Looted Art” <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1719935,00.html>. Considering the role of art as a national treasure, have students participate in a discussion that focuses on the idea of who is the rightful owner of art.

5. Throughout history, a number of notable art heists have been planned and executed. Have students select one of the following museums or cultural centers and research the history of stolen art or looting that has occurred at the institution.

- Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston, Massachusetts
- The Louvre, Paris, France
- Munch Museum, Oslo, Norway
- National Gallery of Art, Washington DC, United States
- Buehrle Collection, Zurich, Switzerland
- Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam, Holland
- National Museum of Anthropology, Mexico City, Mexico
- Nationalmuseum, Stockholm, Sweden
- National Museum of Iraq, Baghdad, Iraq

After gathering information, have them create an informative presentation to be shared with their classmates that includes specific information about the heist, images of items taken and their value, and whether the items were recovered.

Considering *Framed!* 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

Making thematic connections: consider the following themes of *Framed!*: friendship, loyalty, courage, and perseverance. Select one of the themes and find examples from the book that helps 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 *Framed!*: 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/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 *Framed!* 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 *Framed!* 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.

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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