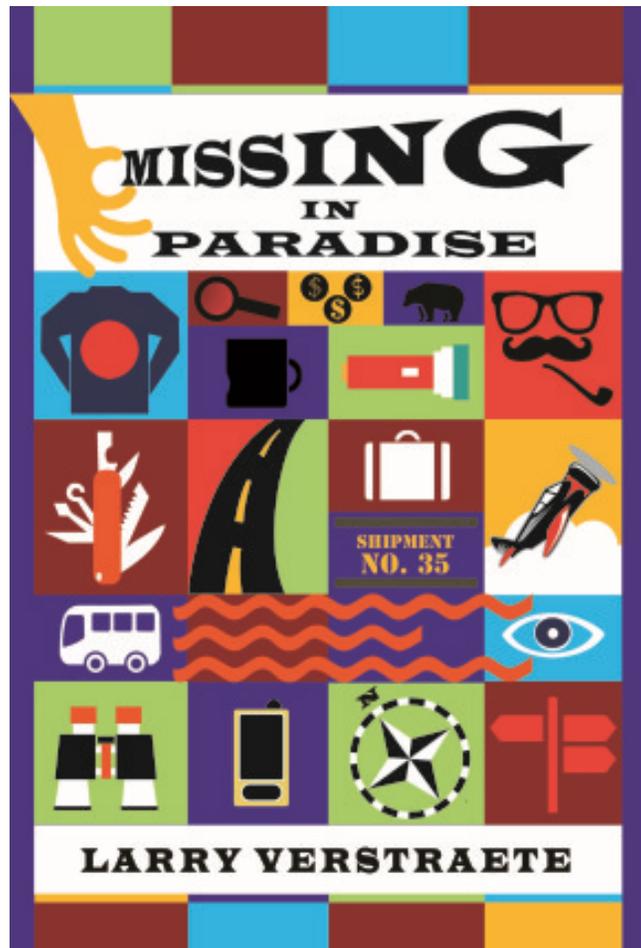


# TEACHER'S GUIDE

## MISSING IN PARADISE

by Larry Verstraete  
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Before Gramps died, he left Nate a mystery to solve and a secret to keep from Gram. A missing plane. Lost gold. A town called Paradise. Nudged by an eerie sense of Gramps' presence, Nate and his friend Simon sneak away on a Greyhound bus to find lost treasure before Gram's nosy neighbour can beat them to it.

### About the Author:

Larry Verstraete lives in Winnipeg, Canada. A former teacher with 33 years of experience, he began writing non-fiction for youngsters while still teaching. Now a full time writer, he is the author of fourteen books for young people. *Missing in Paradise* is his first middle grade novel.

The roots of Larry's writing lie deep in his own personal experiences, his educational background, and his interests in science, history and true adventure. His Master's thesis focused on establishing ways of making science more relevant to students, a goal he still pursues through his writing today, and the elements of adventure, science and history can be seen - sometimes together as they are in *Missing in Paradise* - in the subjects he explores in his books.

Larry's non-fiction books are on recommended reading lists and a number have received such distinctions as the McNally Robinson Book of the Year for Young People Award, Silver Birch Award for Non-fiction, and Red Cedar Award for Non-fiction. Other honours range from nominations for the Norma Fleck Award and the New York Reading Association Charlotte Award to designations such as Outstanding Science Trade Book of 2011 by the National Science Teachers Association and Children's Book Council (*is for Scientists: A Discovery Alphabet*).

For more about Larry Verstraete visit his website, [www.larryverstraete.com](http://www.larryverstraete.com), or these media outlets:

Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/larry.verstraete.author>,

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### **Activities:**

The activities in this package are organized into three sections:

A - TEACHER-LED CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

B - DISCUSSION POINTS

C - STUDENT ACTIVITIES & REPRODUCIBLE HANDOUTS

## **A - TEACHER-LED CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES**

### **Family Treasure**

In the book, Gramps and Simon share a common interest in collecting treasured items that others believe are junk. Have students conduct some research at home. What is their family's most treasured item? What is the story behind it? After students share their findings, help students develop a definition for 'treasure'

### **Treasure Hunt**

Nate and Simon follow a trail of clues. Simulate the experience for students by hiding one or more objects in the classroom or on the playground. Prepare a map or list of directions (paces, compass directions, GPS markings etc.) that will lead students to the site.

### **Mystery Object**

In the story, Nate discovers a box holding mysterious objects that seem out of place. Invite students to bring their own 'mystery objects' from home. A mystery object is something that cannot easily be identified. It could be something old and no longer in common use, an obscure or seldom-seen item, or perhaps a small piece of some larger object.

Display the objects and give students time to examine them. Ask them to guess the names and functions of each item, then later have the owners reveal their identities. Relate this to the challenge facing archaeologists and other treasure hunters who often encounter broken or unidentified artifacts.

### **Coin a Phrase**

Nate and Simon hunt for a lost shipment of gold coins. Collect as many coins with different dates as possible. Distribute one coin to each student. Use coins to jump-start a writing activity. Some examples:

*Non-Fiction:* Research the year cited on the coin. Find one outstanding event from that year. Share the event with the class either through an appropriate form of representation: writing, illustration, drama etc.

*Fiction:* Imagine the coin to be part of a precious treasure. Where is the rest? What happened to it? How did the coin become separated from the other pieces? How was it discovered? Write a fictional story where the coin is a major character.

## **Who Am I?**

Nate learns new things about Gramps from the objects his grandfather leaves behind. To hone deductive skills, ask students to bring 5 -10 objects that belong to an undisclosed person in their household. Pair students, and allow time for them to examine the objects brought by their partner. From the objects, ask students to infer the age, gender, personality characteristics and habits of the owner. What can they tell about the person from the things he/she owns?

## **I Have A Date**

Dates and times are prominent features, not only because Nate and Simon's decisions are governed by a tight timeframe, but also because dates are keys to solving the mystery. Give students an experience similar to Nate and Simon's. Collect objects that either have dates stamped on them or are date-traceable in some way - letters, cancelled stamps, coins, milk cartons, newspapers, e-mails, prescription medicines are among the possibilities. Invite students to examine them, determine their dates and rank order them from oldest to most recent.

As a variation, place the objects in a bag, have students draw them out one at a time, and place each newly drawn object on a number line relative to the ages of objects that were drawn prior to it.

## **What Do You Remember?**

In *Missing in Paradise*, Gramps is affected by Alzheimer's disease. To garner an appreciation of its effects, gather 10-20 pairs of objects where each object in the pair has a connection to the other object in the pair. Some examples: a baseball and a score card; a sock and a shoe; a pen and a notebook.

- 1) Display the objects by randomly pulling them out of a box and placing them in front of students. Allow students a minute to memorize the list of objects. Remove the objects, ask them to recreate the list in the order, and chart how many objects they can recall.
- 2) Next, pull all but three objects from the box. Can they name the three that are missing?
- 3) Repeat the first experience, but this time have pair objects as they are pulled from the box, and have students recall the pairs. How many objects can they recall this time? Why were the results different this time?
- 4) Discuss how Alzheimer's affects memory. Many sufferers cannot recall the order of objects or recognize connections between them. As the condition worsens, simple navigation becomes a problem when those affected no longer recognize familiar landmarks and cannot recall their sequence. Eventually, Alzheimer's

strips away the ability to recognize faces of even close family members. How would this affect the lifestyle of those affected with the disease and their families? What precautions would caregivers have to take to ensure the safety of the affected person?

## ***B - DISCUSSION POINTS***

What do you think of the cover? What does it lead you to expect from the story?

What kind of a relationship did Nate have with his grandfather? What proof do you have?

How is Nate different from Simon? How are the two boys the same?

Nate tells the story. How would it be different if Simon told it?

Is it ever okay to tell a lie? Find examples in the story to back up your opinion.

In the story, Nate's grandfather had Alzheimer's. How did the disease affect Nate? How did it affect his grandmother?

Simon keeps repeating, "It never hurts to be prepared." Give examples from the story or your own life to back the statement or disprove it.

The word 'criminal' comes up several times in the story. Did any of the characters commit crimes? Explain.

Each character in the story has needs or wants. What does Nate need or want? Are his needs and wants satisfied by the end of the story? What about other characters like Simon, Marnie, Fortier, or Gram?

What questions, if any, does the story leave unanswered?

Do you think the author visited the locations mentioned in the book? What evidence do you have?

If you could ask the author a question, what would it be?

Are the characters in *Missing in Paradise* believable? Why or why not?

## **C - STUDENT ACTIVITIES**

### **Memory Box**

Choose a character from the story and collect things you think would be important to the person. For each item, explain your reasoning and what it reveals about the person's habits or character.

### **Simon's Room**

Create a diorama or diagram of Simon's room based on the descriptions given in the book.

### **Paradise Times**

The story ends with a reporter from the Paradise Times taking notes and photographs. Write the article that might appear in the Paradise Times the next day. Draw a picture of one of the photographs.

### **Casting Director**

Imagine that the book is being made into a movie and you are in charge of casting the characters. What actors would you choose to play Nate, Simon, Marnie, Gram and Fortier? Why?

### **Simon's Selfies**

In different scenes Simon takes selfies and shows them to the others at the end. Prepare a series of drawings that show Simon's selfies and present them to the class in the order he took them.

### **Add to the Story**

What do you think happens after the story ends? Add to the story by writing a follow-up piece that tells what happens to Nate, Simon and Marnie afterwards.

### **Musical Interlude**

Imagine that you are in charge of choosing songs to suit each character's personality and role in the book. What song would be a proper fit for Nate? How about Simon, Marnie or Fortier? Prepare a playlist explaining your choices. If possible, record the songs to play to the class.

### **Way to Go**

Using information from the book, draw a map showing the route that Nate and Simon took from the moment they leave their houses to the point where they find the treasure. Label any significant towns, cities or points of interest.

### **Living with Alzheimer's**

What is it like to live with Alzheimer's? Research the disease then write two point-of-view articles. In the first, write from the point-of-view of a person who suffers from Alzheimer's. In the second, write from the point-of-view of a person who lives with someone who has Alzheimer's. How would the disease affect each person? How would their lives change as the disease worsened?

## Plot Structure

A plot structure is the sequence of events within a story. Below are the definitions for each part of the plot structure. Complete the plot structure chart for *Missing in Paradise*.

**Exposition:** introduction of the main characters, setting and problem or conflict

**Rising Action:** events that complicate the problem; also attempts to solve the problem, often unsuccessfully

**Climax:** point of the highest emotion; also the turning point of the story

**Falling Action:** events that follow the climax, but not yet to the process of being solved or completed

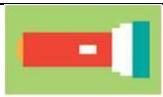
**Resolution:** problem of the story is resolved or worked out

<b>Exposition</b>	
<b>Rising Action</b>	
<b>Climax</b>	
<b>Falling Action</b>	
<b>Resolution</b>	

STUDENT REPRODUCIBLE HANDOUT – *Missing in Paradise*

**Cover Art**

The book cover is a composite of items from *Missing in Paradise*. Tell what each item is or what it represents, what part it played in the story, and the page in the book where it is first mentioned.

	What it is or represents	What part it played	First page where it is mentioned
			
			
			
			
			
			
			
			
			
			

### Four Box Story

Use the four boxes below to illustrate the story elements of *Missing in Paradise*.

Box #1 – one or more event(s) leading up to the crisis (rising action)

Box #2 – the crisis situation (conflict/problem/ predicament)

Box #3 – the peak of danger or darkest moment (climax)

Box #4 – solution /result (resolution)

#1	#2
#3	#4

### Cause-and-Effect

While reading *Missing in Paradise*, look for examples of cause-and-effect. Select 5 examples of cause-and-effect relationships then fill in the chart below. In the last row, give an example of cause-and-effect from your life.

**Cause:** the reason something happens; source; root of the problem

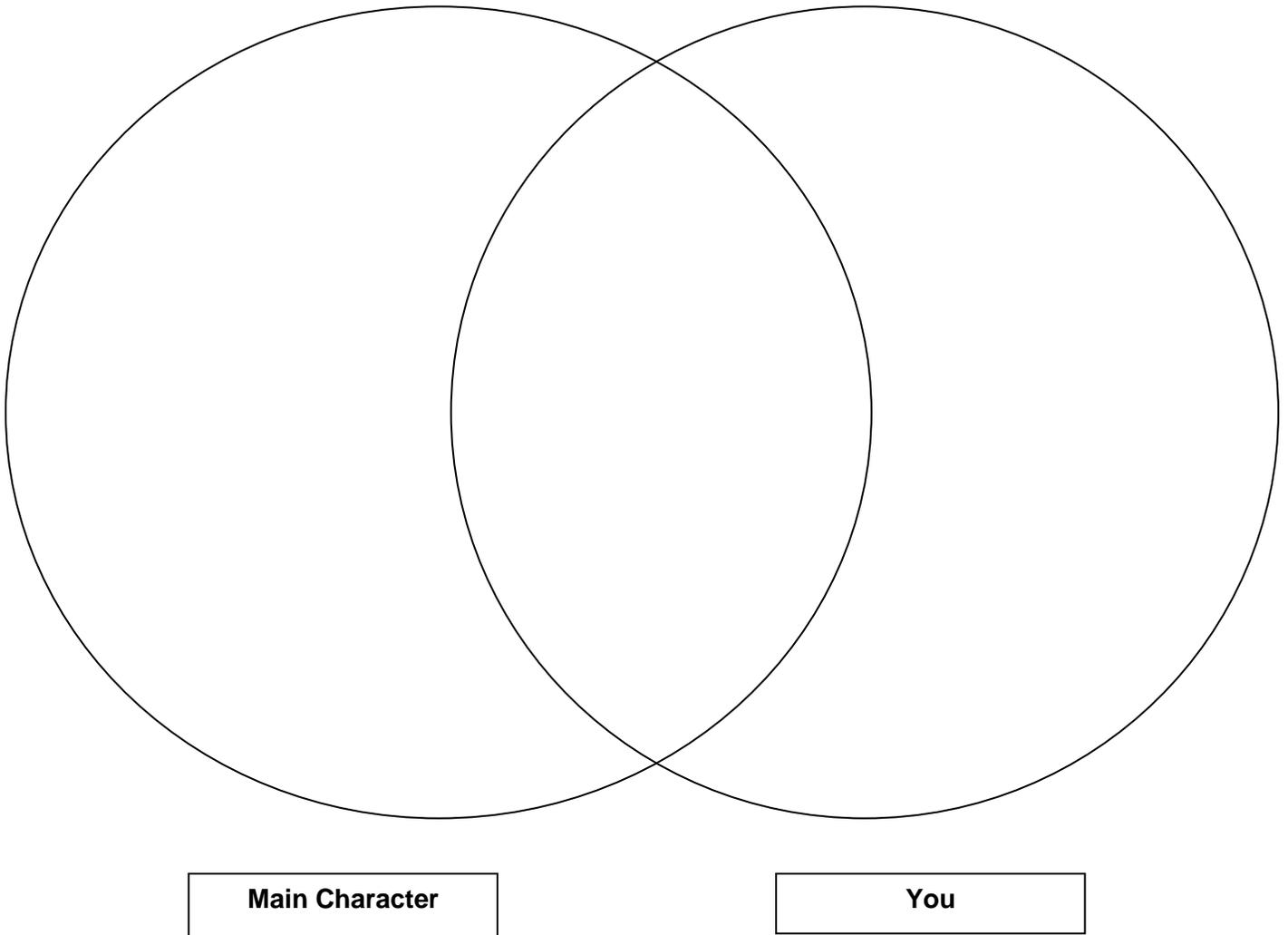
**Effect:** the result; consequence of an action; outcome

Example	Cause	Effect
Your own life		

## Compare Yourself

Use the Venn diagram below to compare yourself to one of the main character: Nate, Simon, Fortier, Marnie or Gram. Pay close attention to physical traits, personality traits, lifestyles, and time periods. Challenge yourself to come up with as many similarities and differences as possible:

Main Character: \_\_\_\_\_



ANSWER KEY – *Missing in Paradise*

**Cover Art**

	What it is or represents	What part it played (other answers are possible)	Page where it is first mentioned
	lost shipment of gold coins	The lost shipment is the reason Nate and Simon embark on their search. Nate is convinced his grandfather wants him to find it.	10
	briefcase	Nate finds the briefcase in the box of Garden Supplies. It is one of the first clues that leads him to Shipment #35.	3
	highway leading to Paradise	The highway route is highlighted on the map of Manitoba that Nate finds in the briefcase. Later, he boards a Greyhound bus that follows the same route.	10
	walkie talkie	One of Simon's 'essential' supplies in his backpack. The boys use it to communicate with each other at Whitewater POW Camp.	72
	flashlight	One of the items on Simon's supply belt. He has another, more powerful one in his backpack. He uses them to search the ground at the powerhouse.	54
	signpost	A battered sign along the old road tells Nate and Simon that they reached the trailhead to Whitewater Camp	71
	Greyhound bus	The boys figure out a way to get to Paradise by travelling on a Greyhound bus.	49
	compass	Engraved on the back are the words Northern Airways. Nate finds the compass in Fortier's box of Garden Supplies. From it, he deduces that they are searching for a downed airplane with the shipment aboard.	46

	<p>bear</p>	<p>Nate and Simon encounter the bear on their first night in the forest, then again when Marnie shows up.</p>	<p>73/74</p>
	<p>airplane</p>	<p>The downed aircraft holds the lost shipment. It's the ultimate connection between the treasure and Nate's long missing great-grandfather, Tom Hendricks</p>	<p>47</p>