

A Curriculum Guide to

Trapped!

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 nothing stops Florian Bates. Along with Margaret, his best friend and the Watson to his Sherlock, Florian makes the case that kids can do anything. When Florian and Margaret's FBI supervisor, Marcus Rivers, finds himself in serious trouble, it's up to this mystery-solving duo to jump into action and clear his name. The case is one of Marcus's first investigations for the FBI and involves a Russian spy ring, which tries to implicate Marcus in a variety of crimes, including theft, corruption, and espionage. Now Florian and Margaret must catch a spy and clear Marcus's name—even if they have to break in and out of the Library of Congress to do it.

The questions and activities below particularly address the following English Language Arts Common Core State Standards: (R.L.4.1-3, 7, 9) (R.L.5.1-4, 7, 9) (R.L.6.1-3) (S.L.6.1-3) (W.4-6.4)

Discussion Questions

The following questions may be utilized throughout the study of *Trapped!* as reflective writing prompts, or alternatively, they can be used as targeted questions for class discussion and reflection.

1. As *Trapped!* opens, Florian tells readers, “You can’t judge a book by its cover.” What does he really mean by that statement? Think about how the idea applies to the way someone might describe him or interpret his behavior. Do you agree? In what ways is he right? Do you feel this applies to you as well? Do you think there’s more to a person than what other people can see?
2. If you’ve read other books in the Framed! series, how would you describe Florian and Margaret based on what you discover about them in *Trapped!*? Has your impression of them changed? If you are new to the series, what were your favorite discoveries about each of them?
3. Early in the novel, Florian takes readers back to the past to catch them up on events leading to this particular point in the book. Did you find this means of storytelling unusual? Explain your position.
4. Florian states, “Marcus Rivers was in charge of the Special Projects Team, but he wasn’t just our boss; he was family. He was an amazing agent who never once hesitated to risk his life and his career to protect us. It was our turn to return the favor.” Why might someone you work with closely feel like family? What does Marcus mean to Florian and Margaret?
5. While unveiling her plan to clear Marcus’s name, Margaret tells Florian, “I figured we’d just make it up as we went along.” Why does Florian think this plan is “absolutely bonkers,” and what can readers infer about Florian’s confidence in Margaret when he goes along with her plan anyway?
6. Librarian Rose Brock is described as “Impossible to miss, although her bright blue hair had now been dyed a deep purple.” Does Rose’s appearance surprise you, given her profession? Why is it important for us not to make assumptions based on people’s appearances? Can you think of a time when you felt someone judged you based on your appearance or even your age? What did that experience feel like, and what did you do about it?

7. While viewing a portrait in the Folger Shakespeare library, Marcus tells the group that the painting believed to be a portrait of Shakespeare is a fake. What does Marcus's detailed knowledge about this painting remind Florian about his background?
8. Consider the cast of characters possibly responsible for framing Marcus. What do each of them have to gain in doing so? Do you think it's worth the risks involved?
9. Margaret states, "I don't want it to be her. I like her too much." Why does Marcus remind them that Rose Brock's likeability factor doesn't prove her innocence? Based on Florian's observations, what does Rose's tuberculosis vaccine scar indicate about her early life? In what ways does he use T.O.A.S.T to make this connection showing her as a possible suspect?
10. Describe librarian Alistair Toombs. In what ways does his philosophy oppose Rose Brock's in regard to how the Rare Book Division of the Library of Congress should operate? What are some advantages and disadvantages of libraries' providing open access and advocating book sharing?
11. After Marcus takes Florian and Margaret to visit the Rare Book Reading Room, Alistair tells Marcus, "This is a research library. Not a tourist attraction." What do Florian and Margaret do to convince Toombs to give them a tour of the Rare Book collection and the scene of the crime? In what ways is Toombs impressed with Florian?
12. After Marcus notes the likely exorbitant cost of the customized climate control used for the Rare Book collection, Toombs states, "I'll do whatever it takes to protect the collection." Why do you think Toombs feels so passionate about these books? In what ways does this serve as a possible motive for stealing the rare Russian books?
13. While looking at the Library of Congress's holdings of the Russian Imperial Collection, Margaret asks, "Aren't they part of Russia's DNA? Shouldn't they be in a library over there?" Consider Margaret's question. Why is it an important one to reflect upon? Do you think the United States has the right to collect another country's history?
14. Why does learning about the book tunnels at the Library of Congress intrigue Florian? What does he realize about the potential of these tunnels?
15. Book conservationist and bookstore owner Brooke King tells Marcus, "How could I forget the man who got Alexander Petrov kicked out of the country?" Why is this an important element in this mystery? Given the other things you've learned, in what ways is Brooke King also a likely suspect in this case?
16. While reflecting on his previous investigation, Margaret tells Marcus, "This case must have been so hard on you . . . These people were your friends but you had to consider them suspects in a crime." Considering the main suspects, how is her statement true? Why might Marcus's job make separating work and personal relationships difficult?
17. Florian and Margaret learn that they will need to investigate Lucia Miller on their own when Marcus states, "It's just that the situation with Lucia is complicated." How do Marcus's past experiences make Lucia a unique suspect?
18. In speculating about Marcus and Lucia's former relationship and the complications that arise when she's considered a suspect, Florian and Margaret find they have very different takes on this situation. Why do you think they're at odds? In what ways are they both right? Can you think of any ways that they are both wrong?

19. Why is Marcus specifically targeted in this case, and how does withholding the evidence about Margaret’s biological father make the case worse for him?

20. After learning Florian repeatedly lied to her about what she most wanted to know, Margaret tells him, “Friends aren’t supposed to do that.” In your opinion, did Florian do the right thing by withholding information about Margaret’s birth parents? Explain your position.

21. In what ways is Margaret’s choice to get “the big chop” important to her self-identity? Predict how this decision will shape her moving forward.

Extension Activities

1. The Library of Congress sets the stage for the mystery that Florian and Margaret need to solve in *Trapped!*. Though the novel offers background information on how the Library of Congress serves the United States and how the facility came about, dig even deeper to learn ten facts you personally find interesting. Be sure to consider the following:

- When was it opened?
- Who established it?
- What was its original purpose? In what ways has that changed?
- How many items are held in the collection?
- How many employees does the Library of Congress have?
- What’s the library’s annual budget?

Be sure to share and compare what you learned with a peer doing similar research.

2. Rose Brock’s forearm tattoo is from Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*, Act II, Scene II, which read, “What’s in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet.” What might Shakespeare have meant by that? Think about parents’ roles in assigning their children’s names. Why is this a big deal? Consider your own name—do you like it? Do you feel it describes you well? If you could name yourself, what might you choose? Across the world, the giving of names is handled very differently. Research to find a community or culture different from your own and learn more about how they handle naming. Then join a friend for a “Think, Pair, Share” to discuss the idea and responsibilities of assigning names.

3. In *Trapped*, readers discover that persons of interest in an FBI investigation are granted diplomatic immunity and are seemingly untouchable. Find out more about how diplomatic immunity works, being sure to focus on the following:

- What does *diplomatic immunity* really mean?
- Who is covered by this system or status?
- Where in the world does it apply?
- Are there any behaviors or actions that aren’t covered?
- How does the United States deal with issues that arise regarding people who fall into this category?
- On average, how many people residing in the United States have this status?

Using what you've uncovered, write a persuasive short essay sharing why you feel diplomatic immunity should or shouldn't be made available.

4. While at the Library of Congress, Florian sees a call number on a book that confuses him. Margaret tells him, "Most libraries use the Dewey Decimal Classification system. The Library of Congress has its own classification system." Why do you think this is so? Learn more about why libraries use the Dewey Decimal Classification System (DDC) rather than the Library of Congress' Classification (LCC) system. Be sure to discover the following:

- When were each of these systems created, and who created them?
- What's the primary goal for each one? Are the goals and systems similar in any way?
- Are there other libraries besides the Library of Congress that use the LCC system?
- In comparing the two, what do you see as the advantages or disadvantages to using one over the other?
- Why is it essential to have structural organization systems in place for libraries? Can you think of other organizations that utilize organizational systems like Dewey or LCC?

Write a brief journal reflection to share what you discovered in your research and your thoughts about it.

5. The theft of rare books from the Library of Congress is the focus of Florian and Margaret's investigation in *Trapped!* Consider this question: what makes a book valuable? Using a variety of research resources, learn more about rare books and their values, being sure to specifically investigate the following:

- Which books are considered the rarest in the world and why?
- What is an average appraised value?
- How are these books protected?
- How are they preserved?
- How were these books acquired by the current holding institutions?
- Are these titles generally held in private collections or in public institutions?

Create a summarization of your discoveries using a digital presentation tool of your choice.

6. Librarians, book experts, and libraries play important roles in *Trapped!* Libraries are cornerstones of our country and are operated by a variety of professional and paraprofessional staff members. For professional staff members at libraries, often advanced degrees and specializations are required to fulfill the job requirements. Investigate the following to learn more about the job expectations for librarians, being sure to learn the following:

- What is an MLS degree?
- What are some examples of courses required for this field of study?
- How many hours does this degree generally require?
- What are some of the specializations available to library students?
- After looking at job postings for school libraries, public libraries, and the Library of Congress, what job requirements most surprised you?

Consider how the media portrays librarians or how they're depicted in movies and TV. Are there any similarities or differences that stand out to you based on what you discovered in your research or while reading *Trapped!*? Write a brief reflection considering what you learned.

7. In *Trapped!*, Florian and Margaret visit the Folger Shakespeare Library as a means of investigating librarian Rose Brock to determine whether she played a role in the theft of materials from the Library of Congress. Using resources found at https://folgerpedia.folger.edu/Collection_history_and_background, research and discover more about the history of the Folger Shakespeare Library, being sure to learn the following:

- When was the Folger Shakespeare Library founded?
- Who established it and what was their primary mission in doing so?
- What holdings were or are collected?
- Besides Shakespeare, what other areas of history does the library focus on?
- What other programs are hosted by the facility?
- What are the most interesting things you discovered from your research?

Create a one-page sketch note summary of all you've learned from this data gathering.

This guide was created by Dr. Rose Brock, an assistant professor in Library Science Department in the College of Education 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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