



The Van Gogh Deception

Deron R. Hicks

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When a young boy is discovered in Washington DC's National Gallery without any recollection of who he is, so begins a high-stakes race to unravel the greatest mystery of all: his identity. As the stakes continue to rise, the boy must piece together the disjointed clues of his origins while using his limited knowledge to stop one of the greatest art frauds ever attempted.

Digitally interactive, this museum mystery offers QR codes woven throughout the book that bring renowned paintings to readers' fingertips.

The Van Gogh Deception Details

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Author : Deron R. Hicks

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From Reader Review The Van Gogh Deception for online ebook

T.J. Burns says

I received a copy of this book from Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Children's Book Group via NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

Miranda says

This book is like a mini Jason Bourne movie for middle schoolers! It's like a mix of Home Alone and Catch That Thief and basically every great story where the kids are the ones who have to try and outsmart the bad guys. It was super fast-paced and played out exactly like a movie.

Andréa says

Note: I accessed a digital review copy of this book through Edelweiss; I received an ARC from the publisher at ALA Midwinter 2017.

Becky B says

When a tween boy is found in the National Gallery of Art with no memory of who he is, where he's from, or how he got there, he's put into child services under the care of foster mom Mary Sullivan. Mary also has a 10 year old daughter Camille, who is quite gregarious and good at drawing out the boy, who they're calling Art because of a name on his jacket tag. Seeing a famous painting on a mug, Art is able to not only tell them about the painting, but all about the man who painted it and the area of France surrounding the place it is displayed. So he's been to France. And he knows more about art than the average tween. But he still doesn't know if he likes pizza or spaghetti more, or what his favorite color is, let alone his own name. In an effort to jog his memory, Mary decides to take Art and Camille back to the National Gallery the next day. It soon becomes clear that someone is after Art, and he and Camille find themselves on one crazy chase around Washington D.C. trying to figure out who they can trust and what is going on.

This was absolutely fantastic! I loved it. I went in with high expectations since I loved Hicks' Shakespeare mysteries, and I was not disappointed, maybe even further impressed. This was a very smart thriller/mystery that seems a bit like a Jason Bourne adventure featuring a tween art genius instead of a martial arts specialist. It was exciting. You never knew what was coming next, and the twists and turns were both smart and thrilling. The characters at one point describe it as a chess game, and it is exactly that. A matching of wits to out maneuver and be one step ahead of the other, and Art and Camille do it all while trying to figure out why it is happening too. Our thriller section is exceedingly popular right now, so I know this will be an easy sell to readers. In fact, I think I'm going to need more copies.

Notes on content: No language issues. No sexual content. The bad guys get more and more desperate to stop Art and Camille and so their threats get more serious. Some get bumps, bruises, cuts, and knocked

unconscious but no one is fatally wounded.

Ms. Yingling says

E ARC from Edelweiss Above the Treeline

A boy is found in the National Gallery, staring into space. He can't tell the police his name, although there is a tag on his shirt that says "Arthur". The diagnosis-- traumatic amnesia. He is placed with an emergency foster mother, Mary Sullivan, who has a daughter Art's age, Camille. The two get along well, and during an outing to the museums, Art starts to pick up on some clues about who he is. Unfortunately, these get him followed and result in some high speed chases, fire alarms being pulled, and violence to Christmas trees. Art and Camille end up at one of the places from Art's past, and he starts to remember why he was traumatized. There's a much bigger issue at stake dealing with some Van Gogh paintings. Can the two children stay safe and shed some light on international art forgery?

Strengths: I really liked Mary and Camille, and thought that most of the police were very sympathetic and helpful while observing protocol. When one neglected protocol, it wasn't a good idea! The descriptions of D.C. and the museums were very interesting, especially since I was just there. Art's amnesia made sense, and the mystery worked out well. Lots of details about art.

Weaknesses: There's pretty much zero interest in art related mysteries in my library. Blue Balliet? Gathering dust. Malone's The Sixty-Eight Rooms? Not going out, even though I love it. The one exception is Ponti's Framed, but that had a lot more action, adventure and humor. Plus, it was shorter.

What I really thought: If Under the Egg is a hot commodity in your library, definitely take a look at this one. There's not a lot of art in my school, and I have little interest in it, so I will pass, since I don't see it circulating well on its own.

Helen says

" 'I can't wait to get home,' [Camille] said excitedly.

'Unfortunately,' said a voice from across the room, 'that's not going to happen anytime soon.'

A tall man in a dark gray coat stepped from the shadow's and pointed a gun directly at the kids" (249).

"The Van Gogh Deception" takes place in Washington D.C., primarily around and in The National Gallery of Art. The story is action-packed as a young boy with amnesia and a young redhead try to figure out and outrun a cadre of mysterious people who are looking for them. Sprinkled throughout the book are QR codes that bring the reader into the National Gallery to look at the paintings being referred to by the narrator, or Art, the boy with Amnesia, or the men in the black SUV's.

This book is a great mystery and will hold the reader's interest from beginning to end. Packed with art, art history, kids' smarts, heart-pumping chases, fear, and intelligence. I recommend this book to all who have been to the National Gallery, and to all who plan on going to DC in the future. It is one of the hottest reads this summer.

Laura (bibliophile) says

I kind of fell in love with this book the moment I first had it in my hands. I loved the cover itself and I adored the deep blue color that the book was without it's dust jacket, but opening the book and seeing it's

end pages was the best part because they had incredible Van Gogh art on them. I know it's not the best way to go, but seeing this immediately raised my expectations of the book, because something that's this beautiful on the outside must be amazing on the inside too, right?

Plus, the fact that this book combined art and middle grade mystery stories, two things I love a lot, didn't help bring my very high expectations down. I was convinced I was going to absolutely adore this book.

So, the obvious question is probably: "did you end up loving this book?". Well, the answer to that is yes, and no. I did have a lot of fun reading the book, and I managed to finish it very quickly (which is always a good sign for me), but there were a few things that I didn't love about it. But let's start with the good, shall we?

The book was incredibly fun. We follow a boy with amnesia who's trying to figure out who he is, and a girl who tries to help him, while they're trying to outsmart some bad guys. It's very fast-paced and it's entertaining to see how these kids get themselves out of some tricky situations. Besides this, the fact that this book involved art made it even more fun for me.

The thing I didn't really love about the book was that it felt like it dragged quite a bit in the middle. There were about 150 pages of the kids just running from the bad guys, and while it was fun, I started getting a bit frustrated about the fact that we weren't getting any clues as to who this boy was and what he was up to. I kind of wanted to skip ahead a few chapters, and just read how it all played out. I just wish that the author had given us a few more clues in the middle part of the book, instead of drop everything on us at the end.

Overall, the book was very entertaining and I would definitely recommend it, but there were a few things that kept this from being the perfect book for me.

Trigger warnings: kidnapping, death of parent, (gun-) violence

Klaudia Janek says

The VanGogh Deception by Deron Hicks book review

This book was a delight to read! The first chapter started in France and then it quickly fast forwarded to Washington DC in the present day. The main character is Art, who is suffering from amnesia and cannot remember anything about himself. When he appeared in the National Gallery of Art, he sat there staring at a Degas sculpture until the police came to try to help him. An ER doctor told Art that his amnesia was probably from a traumatic event. Then we are introduced to Mary Sullivan who agreed to take Art into foster care. Her daughter, Camille, offered this story a lot of humor and spunk. She was a great partner for Art to try to solve the mystery with. As the mystery begins to unravel, Art must know something because he has scary adults chasing him and people in big, black SUV's trying to grab him. Camille stands by him because she thinks Art needs her. There are some tense moments as they have to fight for their escape. They also quickly realize that they cannot trust anyone and they are somehow being tracked. Readers will not be able to put the book down until they figure out who Art is and what he knows.

So, I typically do not buy middle grade books for my high school library, but I follow the discussions and read a lot of them just for fun. I had not heard of this book, but I immediately loved the cover and decided to read it. Every middle and upper elementary school library should have this book! It is such a great introduction to the art world. I thought it was really unique to have the QR codes throughout the story so that

a reader could look up the painting that was being written about. A lot of the QR codes take you to the National Gallery of Art. This is the perfect edtech literacy integration for any librarian. I read this book in one day because it was so good. I like the style of writing, the characters, the setting and the mystery. The publisher did a beautiful job with the inside covers as they contain the most famous VanGogh paintings...in color...

This book could be tied into Visual Arts classes, discussions about art forgery, the cost of works of art. It could even work for a history class as it addresses the fact that the Nazis stole a lot of paintings and a lot of them have not found their way into the hands of the rightful owners even to this day. If there is a field trip planned for the National Gallery of Art, this is a must read. For IB schools, there are a lot of interdisciplinary connections. There can also be a lot of connections to the IB Learner profile. For example, Art comes across as very knowledgeable and he is definitely a risk-taker. Camille comes across as caring and principled. Students can have a lot of discussions about the Learner Profile traits. It would be a good classroom or book club read. It's a smart, edge-of-your-seat story that I enjoyed very much. Go out and get this book!

<https://libresbooksmi.blogspot.com/20...>

Suzanne Maley says

Very clever use of QR codes. I enjoyed this book so much that I will be checking out other books by Deron Hicks.

Mary Sanchez says

The book jacket with two kids running from a museum, the portraits of Vincent Van Gogh, and a map of Washington, D.C. are enough to draw a reader in, but then there are also bonus QR codes throughout the story showing famous works of art.

This was an exciting Dan Brown art/mystery book for middle graders, made even more exciting with the ticking clock references on each new chapter heading. The two kids continue to outwit the art criminals, all the while the boy called "Art" gradually remembers his past life dealing with art, after suffering temporary memory loss.

Deron Hicks, a lawyer/art major, is one terrific author!

Kalli Kroeker says

A long-lost Van Gogh painting, a boy with amnesia, and \$183 million on the line. The boy woke up in the National Gallery of Art one day, with no memory of who he was or why he was there. He may just be the key to figuring out the fake Van Gogh scam that some elite group of art forgers have started, but he has to get his memory back before the National Gallery of Art purchases the Van Gogh and before the art forgers pull off the greatest crime in art history. The Van Gogh Deception is a mystery book written by Deron Hicks. I gave this book five stars because it kept me intrigued during the whole mystery, you had to put missing puzzle pieces together yourself, and the way Deron Hicks included every little detail.

This book kept me intrigued throughout the whole mystery. One way that it kept me intrigued was the fact that it was told in third person omniscient form. The narrator would talk about where one character was and what they were doing during that time, and then they would jump over to another character. This caused you to have to pay attention so you knew who, when, and where you were reading about. It created an exciting feeling that made you want to keep reading. For example, chapter 19 starts out with the heading, “6:00 p.m.

Saturday, December 16

West Building, National Gallery of Art,
Washington, DC” (Hicks 136).

After this heading, the narrator talks about what the mom, Mrs. Sullivan, is doing at the National Gallery of Art on the evening of December 16. She happened to be looking for her daughter, Camille, and the boy with amnesia that they were taking care of whose name was Art. Mrs. Sullivan thought that they must have ran off and were somewhere in the museum, but when you read the the heading on the next page, when the narrator switches to talking about the boy and girl, you will find out that they are in a much more serious situation than being lost in the museum. The heading reads,

“6:02 p.m.

Saturday, December 16

Downtown Streets, Washington, DC” (Hicks 137).

Following this heading, the narrator tells us about what is going on with the missing boy and girl. They happen to be in a strange car with strange people who had taken them from the museum. If Art still had his memory, maybe he would know what this was all about, but it would all make sense after more time passes and when we find out what all the other characters are up to. Just from my example above, you should be able to tell that this is a book that causes you to have to pay very close attention to what is going on. It makes your mind think a little bit, but I always love a good challenge.

Another reason why I gave this book five star is because of the missing pieces of the puzzle that you had to try and put together on your own. Reading a book that has a main character with amnesia would already make some parts of the story a little fuzzy, but this book was even more tricky because the boy with amnesia was some part of the great art forgery crime, and you were forced to read the whole book trying to figure out how he was involved. When the main character doesn't know what is going on, you feel like you are really on the journey of finding their memory with them. An example of this is in chapter 6 when Art says, “ “I remember the museum,” Art said. “It was sort of weird, like a house with lots and lots of paintings. And there was a park beside the museum. It was filled with all sorts of statues. We had lunch there - just some bread and cheese - on a bench. I think it was in the spring because there were flowers everywhere.” (Hicks 45) Later when the boy was talking about who he was with, he says, “ “I can't see his face. I can't hear his voice.””(Hicks 46). Something unique about Art is that he is a genius about Art. He doesn't remember anything about himself or the people that he is close to, but he knows everything about art. This makes the story even more interesting because we don't know about any ties that he has to art, yet he is so intelligent about the subject, including art facts that most boys his age wouldn't know. His missing memories cause us to make predictions about what is going on throughout the story and why Art is being searched for by the art forgers.

Also, the author, Deron Hicks, added so many little details to the story that made the book fun to read. He added these little detail through what the characters did and thought, which really added to the story and the reader's enjoyment while reading. For example, “ Dorchek Palmer made his way out of the police station. It was cold, and the day seemed to be turning colder by the minute. There was a security camera directly above the entrance to the station and a camera on each corner of the building. Palmer kept his cap pulled down low and tilted his head ever so slightly away from each camera he passed. He pulled out his phone and dialed with his left hand. Palmer was right-handed, and it felt awkward using his left hand - but he knew that every detail mattered. Everything he did had to lead in a different direction - to a different person.” (Hicks 63). The antagonist that the narrator is talking about in this text had just gone to the police department in hopes of

getting the boy, Art, into his hands. However, Art had already been taken to a foster home because no one knew who the boy was and neither did Art himself. But, with a little bit of acting, the antagonist got the police to believe that he was Art's brother. His great acting got him information on where to find Art, but the author's details on the antagonist's disguise were extremely clever. Deron Hicks had the antagonist dial with his left hand so that if the police went looking for him, they would be looking for a left-handed person. Later in the chapter, Hicks also tells us that the antagonist wore a temporary tattoo and too big of shoes to give the police false information to go off of. Deron Hicks' details that he added, such as the ones above, gave me enjoyment while reading this book.

The Van Gogh Deception by Deron Hicks had many qualities that made it a great read including the way it kept you intrigued, the missing pieces of the puzzle that you had to put together, and the details that Deron Hicks added. I rated this book five stars because I would recommend this book to anyone who loves to feel like they're solving the mystery right there alongside the main characters. After reading this book, I wanted to go find another book just like it because I enjoyed it so much.

AJ says

4.5 stars

Art found himself in the middle of the Van Gogh exhibit with no memory of who he was and no idea what he was going to do. When the art museum comes to closing time, the security guard tries to help Art. Since he has no idea where or who his parents are, Art is put in a temporary foster home. What Art doesn't know is that he is the key piece to stopping an art heist. Within 24 hours, he discovers himself right in the middle of fighting enemy spies, setting traps, and trying to figure out exactly who he can trust.

I picked this book up on a whim since it had to do with art, which I thought might be sort of interesting. I was expecting it to be a little slow and maybe boring. Boy, was I wrong. By chapter two, someone was being surrounded and threatened with a gun. It was a high action, fast-paced spy novel complete with a car chase, tranquilizer darts, and a hostage exchange.

The mystery itself was quite good. I had a hard time figuring out how the pieces clicked together until Art started to get his memory back. The high action kept me wanting to see what happened next.

There were only two things that I didn't think were as well done. First, I thought that some of the art information could have been integrated into the story more. In a couple of places, it seemed like the author had just stuck some paragraphs of an encyclopedia in between the story.

Second, I would have been interested to see more of what happened after the criminals were caught. I felt like the story was cut off a little too quickly. I wanted to know what happened to Art and his dad afterwards, and what Camille and her mom thought when they found out about everything.

But, other than those small things, I enjoyed the book. There's nothing like spending an afternoon running from enemy spies in order to prevent a museum from paying millions of dollars for a fake painting.

Swearing: None

Sexual content: None

Violence: Several scenes where Art and Camille have guns pulled on them. Art's father also goes through a similar scene, and it's suggested that he's shot.

Religious/spiritual/magical content: None

Rachel says

Fun adventure/mystery with spunky characters love the QR codes to see the real paintings.

Elizabeth Meadows says

The first third of this book was a very slow burn. But stick with it for a fast-paced, action-packed adventure, when a very self confident villain underestimates a couple of kids. Be prepared to learn something about art along the way too.

Beverly says

Very fast-paced mystery; plotted very well, with interesting characters.
