

The 39 Clues Book #2: *One False Note* Teacher's Guide

Theme: Understanding Plot



Guide to The 39 Clues Book #2: *One False Note* by Gordon Korman

Theme of this section: Understanding Plot

Use this guide to bring all the instruments of plot together to create an orchestra of literary understanding in your classroom!

What the Book is About

THIS JUST IN! Amy and Dan Cahill were spotted on a train, hot on the trail of one of 39 Clues hidden around the world. BUT WAIT! Police report a break-in at an elite hotel, and the suspects ALSO sound suspiciously like Amy and Dan. UPDATE! Amy and Dan have been seen in a car . . . no, in a speedboat chase . . . and HOLD EVERYTHING! They're being chased by an angry mob?!? When there's a Clue on the line, anything can happen.

About the Author

Did you know that Gordon Korman wrote his first book in seventh grade? Learn more about the author [Gordon Korman and his writing adventures](#).

Plot — The map of the journey

Like a sequence of musical notes, a plot is comprised of the events in a story — it is simply what the book is about. Use this guide to introduce your students to the various elements of plot and how they are integral to a story.

Conflict

Conflict is the clash of actions, ideas, desires or wills. It may be physical, mental, emotional or moral. After reading [*One False Note*](#), invite students to discuss these questions:

1. What is the main conflict of The 39 Clues series that continues into book two?
2. What is Amy's mental conflict? How does it contribute to her character and the story?
3. The Holt family represents a physical conflict with Amy and Dan. How does the author's description of the Holts emphasize this conflict?
4. Amy and Dan face multiple moral conflicts in the series. What are these conflicts and what choice of action would you choose?

In their investigative journals, have students reflect upon which type of conflict adds the most to the story. Which type makes the story the most interesting?

Protagonist and Antagonist

These are the central characters in the conflict. The central character is referred to the protagonist. The forces that oppose him, whether it is another person, thing, or the central character's own traits, are known as the antagonist.

Who are the protagonists and who are the antagonists in *One False Note*? What character traits are antagonists and to whom do they belong? In their investigative journals, have students draw a semantic map to show their thoughts.

Suspense

Suspense is the element of plot that keeps the reader turning the page. It makes the reader wonder what will happen next!

Invite students to discuss these questions:

1. What elements of suspense did you wonder about the most in *One False Note*?
2. Where did you find the most suspenseful part of the plot — in the beginning, middle or ending of each chapter?
3. Why would the author plan where to put the suspenseful part of the story?

Mystery

Readers crave an explanation for what they don't understand. A good mystery drives the reader to find out just what is going on! Just what is in the diary? What does the clue mean?

In their investigative journals, students can reflect on some of the mysteries in *One False Note*. Then they can discuss whether they predicted the outcome correctly. What is the mysterious code on pages 83-95?

Dilemma

Dilemma is a difficult choice between two actions. For example, should the heirs take a million dollars or a clue? Dan and Amy are constantly faced with dilemmas in their quest for the clues.

Discuss with students: What dilemma have you faced in real life recently? How would the outcome be different if you picked the other course of action?

Surprise

Surprise is an element of plot that causes an unexpected event. It makes the reader shout, "I never guessed that!" Artfully crafted surprise entertains the reader, especially in a mystery. Discuss what elements of surprise worked in *One False Note* and caught readers off guard?

Ending or Resolution

Whether happy or sad, all plots must come to an end. In most mystery stories, conflicts are resolved, all answers to the mystery are revealed, and all is explained.

But not always! How is a series like *The 39 Clues* different? What parts of the plot ended and/or were fully resolved? What parts continue, or remain unresolved?

Activities

Information and study skills — students use multiple sources to research a topic.

Student Travel Agent

Turn your students into travel agents! Using guidebooks, encyclopedias, books, online resources, maps and other resources, have students plan a trip to one of the cities Dan and Amy have visited. Students should create a budget to include cost of transportation, accommodations, food, and admissions. Have them create a marketing brochure to explain their trip, show the costs, and sell their tour!

The Mozart Effect

Can listening to Mozart make you smarter? According to research, Mozart's music may improve short-term performance on certain mental tasks such as spatial-temporal reasoning or the ability to visualize spatial patterns. This ability is important for creating solutions to problems that have multiple steps such as mathematics, art, science, games and everyday life.

Does it work? Try it out with your class. Divide the class into two groups. One group will listen very attentively to a Mozart sonata. The second group should not listen to anything. Next, pass out a difficult maze or puzzle and time how long it takes each student to complete it. What is the average time of the Mozart group? What is the average time of the second (or control) group? Did the Mozart effect work?

Guide written by Laura Stockwell, Fifth Grade Teacher, Orlando, Florida