

The 39 Clues Book #5: *The Black Circle* Teacher's Guide

Theme: Setting



Guide to The 39 Clues #5: The Black Circle by Patrick Carman

Theme of this section: Setting

What the Book is About

Where are Amy and Dan Cahill? The two kids were last seen in Egypt, hunting for one of the 39 Clues that could make them the most powerful people on earth. But no one has seen the siblings since. Has the ruthless Irina Spasky finally tracked them down? Or worse . . . the Madrigals? No one knows where the Clue hunt leads next. But one thing is certain: Book 5 is gearing up to be Dan and Amy's most dangerous adventure yet.

About the Author

Patrick Carman is the award-winning author of many books, including the *Land of Elyon* and *Atherton* series. His books have been translated into approximately two dozen languages. Carman's entry into children's publishing began while reading to his two young daughters. He began spinning a tale of his own, about a girl trapped behind the walls around her village, trying to find a way to explore the forest that lay beyond. In the year that followed, he "journalled" his thoughts and sketched out impressions about the characters and place, which became The Land of Elyon series.

A constant innovator, Carman is also the author of the thrilling *Skeleton Creek* series, in which the story is told through alternating book chapters and online videos.

Carman's setting in real life is Walla Walla, Washington where he lives with his family. In his free time he supports literacy campaigns and community organizations, works with Agros International, an organization that helps families in Central America and Mexico, reads, mountain bikes, fly fishes, does crossword puzzles, plays Scrabble and basketball, and (more than anything else) spends time with his wife and daughters.

Setting

The 39 Clues Series takes readers on an adventure around the world so it is the perfect series to use to learn one of the most important and fundamental elements of literature: setting.

In *The Black Circle*, Dan and Amy jet from Cairo, Egypt, to the largest country in the world, Russia. Dan and Amy encounter countless elements of setting as they explore Russia's culture, history, and geography in *The Black Circle*. The story's intriguing backdrop sets the mood as Dan and Amy hunt for the mysterious NRR and the next clue!

Activities

Setting Comparison

How would the plot change if Dan and Amy followed the clues to your hometown? Students can compare and contrast where they live to the setting in *The Black Circle* using this graphic organizer. Using their investigation journals, students will reflect upon how the story would be different if it was set in their own hometown. Where would they find the next clue? What locations would you have the dramatic events occur in? How does changing the setting of the story change the entire plot?

[Setting Comparison Graphic Organizer](#) (PDF)

In Your Mind's Eye

Is the setting better in your mind's eye or in real life? In this activity, students will compare and contrast how the setting appears in their mind vs. what it looks like in real life. First read a passage that describes a setting in the book such as Dan, Amy, and Hamilton's adventure climbing *The Motherland Calls*. In their investigation journal have the students reflect how they think the scene reflects the setting. What does it look like? What does it sound like? What do the characters smell, taste or feel? What is the mood? Next, show them the picture of the real setting. How does their version of the setting compare to the real thing? Which version did they like best, their own creation in their mind or the real thing?

Here are some links to exciting settings in Russia:

The Motherland Calls

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Motherland_Calls

Yusupov Palace

<http://www.saint-petersburg.com/museums/yusupov-palace.asp>

Alexander Palace and Aleksey's playroom

<http://www.alexanderpalace.org/palace/>

State Kremlin Palace

<http://www.moscow.info/theaters/state-kremlin-palace.aspx>

Catherine Palace and the Amber Room

<http://www.saint-petersburg.com/pushkin/catherine-palace.asp>

Church on the Blood

<http://www.saint-petersburg.com/virtual-tour/church-of-savior.asp>

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. Students will compile their research in a marketing brochure to explain their trip, show the costs, and sell their tour!

A World of Adventure

Track where Dan and Amy have traveled using a map of the world. Have students put pushpins in each of the cities the hunt has taken the Cahill siblings. Make predictions about where the settings will be for the next five books. Which setting has been the most adventurous so far? After polling the class, create a graph of the results. Lost in Translation Dan and Amy's Russian adventure not only requires them to explore new places, but also they must encounter new languages that look and sound very different from their native language. Using an on line translation site like text-to-speech.imtranslator.net/default.asp, have students translate phrases from English to Russian. Partner students and have them try to communicate with one another. Then have your students imagine traveling alone in Russia without their parents or a translator. How would they feel and what would they do? How does this impact the setting of the story?

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