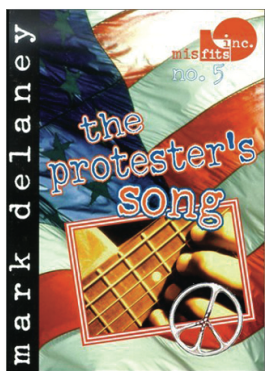


TEACHER'S GUIDE



Misfits, Inc., No. 5 The Protester's Song

Written by Mark Delaney

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Also available in e-book

Ages 10–14 | Realistic Fiction | Series: Misfits, Inc.

AR • RC • Lexile • F&P • GRL Z; Gr 7th and up

ABOUT THE BOOK

The latest book in this series finds the young detectives in the middle of a thirty-year-old mystery and an FBI cover-up. Can they set the record straight for good...before it's too late?

Byte, Peter, Jake, and Mattie have a chance encounter with a man who may be to blame for a bombing during an antiwar protest at a university in the early 1970s. Trying to uncover the truth behind events that occurred thirty years ago proves to be a life and death matter. As the Misfits attempt to find out what really happened all those years ago, they face one obstacle after another, including a case of mistaken identity, a suspicious FBI agent, and the threat of another bomb explosion.

THEMES

- Folk protest music of the 1960s
- The Vietnam War
- The Kent State Massacre
- The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Book banning
- Social conscience

BEFORE YOU READ

Ask students to think about and discuss the following questions and issues:

- How important is music in your life? What does music do for you?
- Do you think music can move people to action? Can you think of a particular song, or line from a song, that calls upon the listener to take some sort of action? Is the action a positive or negative one?

- Can you think of an instance when people stood up for their principles, even though standing up caused problems for them? Is there a principle you would stand up for no matter how difficult it was for you?
- Should certain books/materials be banned from bookstores? From public libraries? From school libraries? Should these different places have different standards for deciding what is banned? (e.g.—Do you think some books are appropriate for bookstores, but inappropriate for school libraries?)
- What do you know about the 1960s? About the Vietnam War? About the protest movement against the War? About the music of the time?
- Do you have any relatives who fought in the Vietnam War? Have you visited the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C.? What does it look like? What did you see there? How did you feel while you were there?

AS YOU READ

Ask readers to consider the following questions:

- What exactly is happening at Trenton State University during the book's prologue? Why are the students there? Why is the National Guard present?
- The four protagonists call themselves Misfits, Inc. Can you find situations in the book that illustrate the idea that Peter, Byte, Jake, and Mattie are misfits?
- The Misfits come to believe that Red Carlyle and Dylan McConnell are the same man. What clues lead them to this conclusion? What event forces them to begin investigating?
- While the Misfits investigate Red Carlyle, an

important event is occurring at school. What is happening? How do the Misfits, especially Peter and Byte, react to it? Why does Ms. Langley resign over it? What do you think about what Principal Steadham is doing?

- What exactly is Angie Donatto's medical condition? What impressions do you have of her upon meeting her the first time? She answers the door and attends her date with Jake without wearing her wig. What does that suggest about her?
- Red Carlyle is, in the minds of the Misfits, the villain of this tale for most of the book. What are your impressions of him, especially during the scene where Mattie has his first guitar lesson? Does he seem to be a typical villain? Why or why not? Do you like him?
- Who are Angelo Donatto and Randy Harvill? What role did they play in the 1970 event? Why are they so determined to prevent the truth from coming out? Why does Donatto finally refuse to help Harvill?
- What are some similarities and differences between the anti-war protest that occurs in the prologue and the book-banning protest that occurs at the high school later in the book?

AFTER YOU READ

After discussing the following issues in class, ask students to write a paper or prepare a presentation for the class on their thoughts:

- What is a story's climax? A short story will often have a brief climax, while a novel may have a climax that is many pages long. At what point in *The Protester's Song* does the climax begin? At what point does it end?
- At the end of the book, Peter asks the following questions: Was it right to put Dylan McConnell in jail thirty years after his crime? Was it right for Bonhoffer to lose his FBI credential? Was it right to jail Mr. Donatto—and leave Angela without a father? Consider the role each of these characters played in the story, both thirty years ago and today. List the good and bad each character has done. How would you answer Peter's questions?
- Music appears to be a powerful force in this story. What does Dylan McConnell try to accomplish with his music at the story's beginning? At the story's end? Do you agree that music has the power to accomplish good in this way? Can you give examples? The Misfits work to stop book banning in the school library. Do you think young people can bring about important change? Can you think of any young people who have done so?

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

MUSIC

- Listen to some examples of folk music from the 1960s. Compare it to other music you have studied. Is it simpler, or more complex? What seems to be more important to the songwriter: words or music? Why?
- Many folk songs are made up of I, IV, and V chords (i.e. tonic, dominant, and sub-dominant). What is a chord? What are some simple chord structures? Why are I, IV, and V chords so common in songs? What is special about a VI (i.e. relative minor) chord?

HISTORY

- What led to U.S. involvement in Vietnam? When did the war start? What commitment toward Vietnam was demonstrated by President Kennedy? By President Johnson? By President Nixon?
- During WWII, many young men lied about their age so that they could join the military before the law would let them. During the conflict in Vietnam, many men fled the U.S. rather than allow themselves to be drafted. Why were the two wars viewed so differently? What part did television coverage of Vietnam play in this change?
- What gave birth to the anti-war movement? Examine the efforts of the following people: Abbie Hoffman, Bob Dylan, The Berrigan brothers, John Lennon.
- What happened at Kent State University on May 2–4, 1970? How do the events at Kent State mirror what happens in the book? How are they different?
- What lessons did our country learn from Vietnam? How were these lessons applied when the U.S. fought the Gulf War? What was the difference between the way Gulf War veterans were treated when they came home and the way Vietnam veterans were treated? Why?

BIOLOGY

- Angie Donatto has leukemia, which is a form of cancer. What is cancer? What is a cell? What does cancer cause cells to do? What part of the body does leukemia affect? How does modern science treat young people with leukemia?
- When he tries to locate his daughter at the beach, Mr. Donatto curses himself for being overweight and out of shape. What are the causes of excessive weight? What are the standards for healthy weight? What

health problems are associated with extra weight? What is the medical difference between “overweight” and “obese”?

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

- Students may wish to go on the Internet and examine photographic images from Kent State, from the Vietnam War, and from the era of the 60s. Have students create a poster of some of these images and include text to explain them.
- Bring in CDs or tapes of 60s protest music. Have students listen to a song, examine the lyrics, and write their own thoughts about what the song was trying to say. Some classrooms may have a musically inclined student (or teacher) who is brave enough to bring in a guitar and sing a protest song live for the class.
- Have the class brainstorm a list of current social issues worthy of protest. Place students in groups; let them choose one topic and write a poem about it. Again, brave musicians may take the added step of putting the poem to music and performing it.
- Have a mock trial for Dylan McConnell. Should he go to jail? For how long? Students may play the part of lawyers, judge, and jury.
- On a large sheet of poster board, students may graph the plot of *The Protester's Song*, with lines to show rising action, climax, and falling action. Use markers to place events from the novel in each of the following categories: Exposition (introductory information), Complication (event that initiates the conflict), Conflicts (internal and external), Climax (high point of the action), and Resolution (the point where loose ends are tied up and secondary questions are answered).

RESEARCH TOPICS

- Have students read a book that has been banned or challenged in schools. (What a great way to get them to read some classics!) Have them research why the book was found objectionable. Students may then report on the book itself, discuss the objections, and present their own opinions. (Teachers and students may find help with this on the American Library Association website: www.ala.org.)
- Research the events that led to the Kent State Massacre. What happened during the two days before the shootings? During the hours just before? What, if anything, happened to the National Guardsmen involved?

- Advanced students may wish to research the role of Defense Secretary Robert McNamara, who worked under both the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. What was McNamara's attitude toward the war at the time our nation was fighting it? Read portions of *In Retrospect*, McNamara's memoir of the war, and report on what he later believed.

REVIEWS

“Delaney keeps the story moving swiftly, and readers will enjoy the escapades of the brave and clever teens as well as the tale's suspense.”

—**KLIATT**

“This novel will keep readers on their toes. The action is swift and the writing lucid. Told from several viewpoints, the plot reveals a few surprising twists and turns that continue to keep teens involved in the story. This skillfully woven mystery will have readers looking for further adventures of ‘The Misfits, Inc.’”

—**School Library Journal**

“The Misfits, Inc. series by Mark Delaney is a very exciting and involving series that will captivate young readers and draw them into the characters and the plotlines. The stories are suspenseful until the last page. The author does a fine job of weaving intricate mystery tales that will appeal to YA readers and adults....

The reader will not only be rewarded with an action packed story but will also learn something about the topics involved.”

—**Christian Library Journal**

AWARDS

Young Adult Top Forty —Pennsylvania School Librarians Association

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mark Delaney earned a masters degree in comparative literature from the University of California at Irvine. He is the author of the *Misfits, Inc.* series and *Pepperland*. A former bookstore owner, he now teaches high school. Delaney lives in Tennessee.

The Misfits, Inc. series:

Misfits, Inc., No. 1: The Vanishing Chip
Misfits, Inc., No. 2: Of Heroes and Villains
Misfits, Inc., No. 3: Growler's Horn
Misfits, Inc., No. 4: The Kingfisher's Tale
Misfits, Inc., No. 5: The Protester's Song
Misfits, Inc., No. 6: Hit and Run

Peachtree Teacher's Guide for
MISFITS, INC., NO. 5: THE PROTESTER'S SONG
prepared by Mark Delaney

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