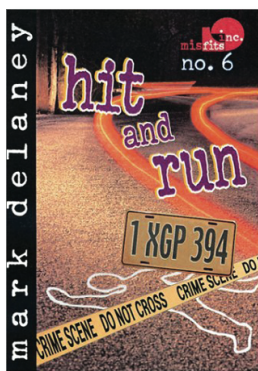


TEACHER'S GUIDE



Misfits, Inc., No. 6 Hit and Run

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

An appeal from an old friend lands the young detectives in the middle of a mystery surrounding a hit-and-run accident. What at first seems like a routine investigation quickly turns dangerous as the four teens find themselves caught in a complicated plot involving a gang-controlled car-theft ring, frightened law-abiding citizens, and a twisted plot for revenge.

For Mattie the case is also uncomfortably personal, and one that provides an unwelcome reunion with the mother he has not seen in years. Now Byte, Peter, and Jake must work fast to stop an innocent woman from going to prison while Mattie must learn an important lesson in forgiveness.

THEMES

- Forgiveness
- Difficulties faced by teen mothers
- Definition of “parent”
- Reliability of witnesses
- Re-taking neighborhoods from gangs

BEFORE YOU READ

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

- Think about the role your parents play in your life. What are the responsibilities of a parent? Do fathers and mothers have different roles?
- Parenting has been called the “hardest job on earth.” Why do you think someone would make such a statement? Do you agree with it? What is so difficult about being a parent?

- Many children grow up without one parent. How might this change the role of the remaining parent? How might it affect the child?
- The testimony of a witness often leads to the conviction of a person on trial. Is eyewitness testimony a reliable way of obtaining information? Why or why not?
- Many neighborhoods in our major cities are overrun with gangs. What do gangs do? Why do you think young people join them? What can city residents do to control gangs?
- What would you do if someone very close to you was doing something illegal? What would you do if that person offered you money to join in the illegal activity?

AS YOU READ

Ask readers to consider the following questions:

- The young boy Micah sees the accident that injures Mr. Underwood. Would you say that Micah is a reliable witness? Why or why not? Support your answer with what you have learned about Micah.
- The four protagonists—Peter, Byte, Jake, and Mattie—call themselves Misfits, Inc. In what ways do other students in the school treat them as misfits? What special gifts or talents does each Misfit have?
- Were you surprised when you learned that the woman under arrest was actually Mattie’s mother? How do you think Mattie felt? What is the history between them? How do you think Mattie might respond to her from now on? How would you respond in this situation?

- What are your impressions of Gordon Moxley and Dustin Quaid? What events or descriptions led you to those impressions? Based on the letter Gordon wadded up, can you guess why he would send his mother so much money and why she would refuse it?
- The Misfits go back to Eighth Avenue to spy on the gang members. Recall the scene where they run along the alley to return to their car. Was the scene frightening? Why? What details help create the scene's excitement? What is suspense? How do writers create suspense?
- Describe exactly what happened the night Mr. Underwood was struck by the car. Where did the car come from? Who was driving? Why did the car match Carla's? What role did Gordon Moxley and Terrell Briggs play in this event? What were they trying to accomplish?
- While Mattie and Carla are in the restaurant, Carla asks, "Do you know what you want?" Mattie answers, then realizes she may have been asking an entirely different question. What did she mean by the question? What did Mattie think she meant?
- Byte urges Mattie to "be the grown-up." What do you think she means? What do you think of Mattie's choice to meet with his mother at the end of the story?

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:

- After some contention, the triangle relationship between Peter, Byte, and Jake appears to be resolved. Which Misfits were aware of the triangle and which ones were blind to it? Why? Do Jake and Byte seem like a good couple to you? How about Peter and Robin?
- At the end of the book, Mattie has lunch with his mother. He notes that his favorite T-shirt and torn jeans are appropriate clothing for the occasion. Why? Considering all that happened in the past, where do you think their relationship will go from here?
- At the novel's end, Gordon Moxley is caught and Terrell Briggs confesses to second-degree murder. Only Dustin Quaid seems to escape capture. What did you think of Dustin? Should he have gone to jail too?
- The importance of parents, especially mothers, is a thread that runs throughout the story. Find details in the novel (both dialogue and events) that connect with the idea of parenting. (e.g.—the painting on the wall at the convenience store, Decker's new baby, Mattie's observations about his grandmother, etc.)

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

VOCATIONAL ARTS

- Research car theft. What cars are most commonly stolen? Can you make guesses as to why these makes and models are so popular among car thieves? What are some simple (e.g. The Club) and complex (e.g. OnStar) methods of protecting ourselves from car theft? What is the difference between a car theft and a car jacking?
- The license plate is only one way cars can be identified by authorities. What are some other ways? What is a VIN number? Where is it located? What is it used for?

SOCIAL STUDIES

- Research statistics dealing with teen mothers. How many children are born to teen mothers in the U.S. each year? Are the numbers going up or down? Why? What effects does teen motherhood have on both the mother and the child?
- Study the phenomenon of street gangs. How are they different now than they were in the 1960s? Read selections from S.E. Hinton's *The Outsiders*. Is Hinton's view of gangs similar to our view today?
- Lieutenant Decker arranges to have the charges against Terrell Briggs lowered from first-degree murder to second-degree. Under the law, what is the difference between these two crimes? What different penalties do they carry? Lowering a charge in exchange for information is called a "plea-bargain." What are the advantages of plea-bargaining for both the accused criminal and society?
- When Joe Underwood dies, the charge against Carla Marcetti is raised from hit and run to manslaughter. What is manslaughter? Why isn't the charge murder?
- Corie Washington and her children live in the "projects." What are the projects? Who builds them and why? What are some problems with life in the projects? What are some cities currently doing to make life better for people who live in the projects?
- Cheryl Atterbury is a newly licensed attorney serving as a public defender. What is a public defender? Why do we have them? What are all the steps a young person must take before he or she can practice law?

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

- Many books have been written about gang life, and much information is available on the Internet. Students may wish to find material about gang members and do a presentation. What identifies a modern gang? What tattoos, clothing, or colors are associated with various gangs? Research what gang members themselves say about why they are part of a gang.
- Research the history of gangs in urban America. How are their activities different today than they were forty or fifty years ago? How did gangs develop? How do they finance themselves?
- Do an in-depth interview with a teen mother (changing her name to maintain anonymity). Discuss how her life has changed since she had her baby. How active is the father in the baby's life? Have her future plans changed as a result of her pregnancy? How has motherhood affected her relationships with her parents, the child's father, and her friends? How has it affected her ability to keep up with schoolwork?
- Do an anonymous survey within your school: How many students are from one-parent families? Is the parent a mother or father? How many students are teen parents? Among the teen parents, what percentage come from one-parent families as opposed to two-parent families? Organize your information, draw conclusions from it, and present it as a research study. Perhaps publish it in the school newspaper.
- If your school lies within or near a gang area, discuss gang symbols students may have seen. What do they mean? Consider the differences between gang graffiti and artistic "tagging."

REVIEWS

"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

Edgar Allan Poe Awards (nominee, Best Young Adult) — Mystery Writers of America

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. 6: HIT AND RUN
 prepared by Mark Delaney

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