



National Archive Hunters 1: CAPITOL CHASE

by **Matthew Landis**

★“Original and entertaining . . .
immediately involving.”

—*Booklist*, Starred Review

A Junior Library Guild Gold Standard Selection

ABOUT THE BOOK

Twins race to find the thief stealing valuable historical artifacts before their family's framed for the crimes in this high-octane middle grade action-adventure series starter for fans of the *City Spies* series and *Alex Rider* series.

Ten-year-old Ike Carter has committed large chunks of American history to memory. That's what happens when you're a genius who loves the past. His twin, Iris, prefers the present (aka reality). She's an elite athlete, dominating the competition thanks to her wicked-sharp spatial awareness. During the opening night of a new exhibit at their mom's boutique museum in Washington, D.C., Ike and Iris inadvertently stumble onto a robbery in progress. With some help from the National Archives Research Center, the twins puzzle out the culprit's next targets, and are soon hot on the trail of the mystery girl.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Iris and Ike Carter are twins. Discuss each twin's unique qualities. Explain what Ike means by, “My sister's spatial awareness seems super-human” (p. 18). How might Iris describe her brother? The twins are involved in solving a mystery. How do they work as a team in solving the crime? What does each twin bring to the team?
- Iris and Ike attend K Street Academy where their dad is headmaster. Discuss why Madame Bernard sends the twins to the headmaster's office. What is their dad's response? How does Ike convince his dad that Iris isn't guilty of altering Madame's PowerPoint slides? Explain how his logic in proving Iris's innocence reveals his approach to solving problems.

- The twins' mother is curator of the Americana, a private museum that has been in the family for over eighty years. What is the focus of this museum? At what point do the twins learn that the Americana is in financial trouble? Describe Mr. Lane, the chairman of the museum board. What is his opinion of Iris and Ike? Discuss the tension when Mom and Mr. Lane discover that the miniature portrait of George Washington has been stolen.
- The novel is set in Washington, D.C. Discuss what Ike means by, "The whole city is an enormous museum of monuments and memory, but every morning I get special access to all the exhibits" (p. 4). To what exhibits is he referring? How is D.C. an especially good place to live for a kid like Ike? Think about Ike's unique talents, and discuss how he knows there will be a theft of additional art items in Philadelphia and Boston.
- Describe the robbery at the Americana. How are the twins key characters in solving the mystery? Iris and Ike travel to Philadelphia with their mom to make an arrangement to borrow Hamilton's ring. They spot the girl who stole the miniature portrait of George Washington from the Americana. How do they attempt to stop the robbery of the ring? Explain why Dr. Dutton, curator of the Museum of the American Revolution, believes Iris and Ike are guilty of the robbery. How does this become a problem for Mrs. Carter?
- Explain the following metaphor: "You don't drown when a lifeboat sinks. You drown when you stop swimming. . . . It's time to start treading water" (p. 50). What is the lifeboat? How do the twins tread water, even when they are told by the FBI to stay out of the case? Special Agent Brooks is assigned to the case. Why does Ike think that Brooks is the "rescue boat" they need? The Carters hire Stewart (Stu) A. Gunderson as their attorney. What is his advice regarding Special Agent Brooks?
- Iris and Ike's mom has a friend who works at the National Archives. What are people searching for when they use the National Archives? Explain the difference between a document and an artifact. Discuss Iris and Ike's reaction when they are granted passes as research assistants. What are they researching at the Archives? What is the difference between primary and secondary sources? Why is it extremely important to recognize the difference? How do Iris and Ike use primary and secondary resources to track the thefts in Philadelphia and Boston?
- Describe the last heist, and discuss Iris and Ike's encounter with Luna, the daughter of a French diplomat. Why is the situation "extremely delicate"? Explain why the Laurents aren't charged for the crime.
- How does solving the crime change the lives of Iris, Ike, and their parents? After solving the crime, Ike plots a special exhibit for the Americana. How is his plan a success? Special Agent Brooks wants Iris and Ike to join their team in an advisory capacity. In what ways might the twins best help the FBI?
- Discuss the structure of the book. Why is the alternating viewpoint especially effective in this novel? Consider the ending, and discuss what may be next in the world of crime for Ike and Iris.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Matthew Landis is an eighth-grade social studies teacher (the one you wish you had). His middle grade books *The Not So Boring Letters of Private Nobody*, *It's the End of the World As I Know It*, and *Operation Final Notice* have won many awards and accolades, including being named an ILA Teachers' Choice and a Bank Street Best Book. He is also the author of the YA novel *League of American Traitors*, and of the first installment in the upcoming middle grade adventure series *National Archive Hunters 1: Capitol Chase*. He lives in Pennsylvania with his wife, four kids, thirty-five chickens, and three cats. He hasn't slept well since 2015. Learn more at Matthew-Landis.com.