



Fraud Squad

Michele Martin Bossley

Reading level: 2.6

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Book Summary

When Trevor, Nick and Robyn visit the Royal Tyrrell Museum, Robyn is inspired to raise funds for a dinosaur dig that will close soon if it doesn't find funding. The kids are caught up in another mystery when a chain of suspicious events, including the disappearance of important fossils and a fraudulent discovery at the dig, lead them to wonder what's going on. Is the new visiting scientist behind the fraud, or did Robyn's enthusiasm to save the dig lead her astray?

Author Biography

Michele Martin Bossley is an award-winning author who has written more than a dozen children's sports books, including *Jumper* and *Kicker* in the Orca Sports series, and Orca Currents *Swiped*, *Cracked* and *Bio-pirate* (all starring amateur sleuths Trevor, Nick and Robyn). Michele lives in Calgary, Alberta.

Connecting to the Text

Descriptive Language

Michele Martin Bossley describes key characters Dr. Ross, a paleontologist, and Joe Kowalski, a scientist-in-residence:

(ch. 1) *Dr. Ross didn't look famous. She was dressed in khaki pants with multiple pockets, hiking shoes and a white blouse. She wore her brown hair cut blunt at her chin, just long enough to tuck behind her ears, and no makeup.*

(ch. 2) *[Joe Kowalski was] a blue-eyed guy who looked like he should be surfing. He wore a loose white polo shirt and baggy jeans. His dark blond hair hung in shaggy waves just above his shoulders.*

- Read the passages aloud, asking students to connect the descriptions to the characters. What can we tell about Dr. Ross and Joe Kowalski by the way they dress? How does adjective use expand our understanding of the characters?
- As an individual or small group writing exercise, ask students to choose an occupation that interests them and write two sentences that describe a person with that occupation. Then have each student or small group read their descriptions aloud. Can the others guess what the occupation is?

Option: Have students imagine what their career will be and what they'll look like in that career ten years from now. Have them write two descriptive sentences they can share with the group. For example, "I am wearing a waterproof jacket and hiking boots, and a backpack that holds my cameras and laptop. In my hand is an airline ticket to Hong Kong and my journal" (travel writer); or, "I am wearing a lab coat over my blouse, and I'm looking at a large computer screen. On the screen is the image of a fractured bone. I'm talking to a doctor on a speaker phone" (x-ray technician).

Foreshadowing

Robyn made Trevor promise, before they left for the field trip, that Trevor would not get them into any trouble at the museum. Trevor said, "*Like it's all my fault that weird things happen around the three of us.*" This use of foreshadowing hints that "trouble" is on the way for Trevor, Nick and Robyn.

- Ask students to think of an example of foreshadowing from *Fraud Squad*, following the plotline that has been foreshadowed through the story to see how it takes shape. Additional examples are:
 - (ch. 2) Joes says, "*If we don't get the money within the next three weeks, the dig will have to be shut down.*"
 - (ch. 2) Hailey says, "*Maybe we could even get in the newspapers. Then people would really know about the new dig site!*"
 - (ch. 6) Trevor thinks, "*Something about Hailey's homework bugged me. I couldn't quite put a finger on it. It was more than the fact that she'd left it to the last minute...*"
- Ask students if the use of foreshadowing makes *Fraud Squad* more interesting to read. How does foreshadowing make us want to find out more?

Adverbs

Adverbs are the parts of speech which modify verbs. They tell us how and in what way things happen. Fraud Squad has many examples of powerful adverbs that expand the meaning of the verbs they modify. To introduce this exercise, read a few of the following examples aloud to the large group.

(ch. 1) *A few feet from my face, huge jaws smiled menacingly, revealing curved sharp teeth perfect for tearing flesh.*

(ch. 1) *I held on instinctively, trying to steady myself with the huge bones.*

(ch. 1) *I shook my head miserably.*

(ch. 1) *“Oh, well. It’s not as bad as it seems,” Dr. Ross said cheerfully.*

(ch. 3) *I propped up the cardboard sign as the next kid ducked eagerly inside.*

(ch. 4) *Alyssa gestured dramatically.*

(ch. 4) *She gingerly moved aside a few sheaves of paper.*

(ch. 7) *She kept kicking morosely at the curb with her heel, lost in thought.*

- As students read the novel, ask them to identify adverbs and post their findings on the board or on flipchart paper, including the word and page number.
- When all students have finished reading the novel, host a group discussion on the use of adverbs in the novel. Encourage students to describe the particular scene the adverb is within. What is happening in that scene? How does the writer’s use of adverbs enhance our understanding of the different scenes in the stories?
- Ask students to think of an activity they enjoy and an activity they don’t enjoy, and write a sentence about them using adverbs. For example, I walked quickly and excitedly to the bus—I love field trips! I approached the dentist’s office door hesitantly and fearfully.
- Ask students to create silly or ridiculous situations using a few of the adverbs on the list. For example, I walked awkwardly to the fridge to get myself a glass of milk. Gingerly, I opened the door, and then dramatically I lifted the jug. I noticed the expiry date was two weeks ago and so, morosely, I took a gulp!

Vocabulary Building through Creative Writing

Challenge students to write short stories or descriptive paragraphs using one of the selections from *Fraud Squad* as their first sentence. Students may also wish to use their own story ideas. Challenge students to incorporate vocabulary words from the list below.

- (ch. 1) *A few feet from my face, huge jaws smiled menacingly, revealing curved sharp teeth perfect for tearing flesh. The creature looked ready to pounce if I moved so much as a baby finger.*
- (ch. 2) *The discovery. Man, that rocks! There's nothing like it. It's like a treasure hunt for history. When you come across a dinosaur bone or a chunk of pottery from a different age, you're holding the years in your hand. It's an amazing feeling.*
- (ch. 3) *Her hair was wrapped in a silk scarf, and her huge earrings sparkled in the dim light. "Robyn isn't here," she said in a gravelly voice. "Would you like to speak to Madame Robison instead?"*
- (ch. 3) *She adopted a grave expression. "The powers of the universe hold many secrets."*
- (ch. 3) *"Robyn really is psychic!" the girl cried. "She just saved my life!"*
- (ch. 5) *"...I'm telling you, it's way too much of a coincidence. Check out how much money the article says they'd be worth to a private collector."*
- (ch. 8) *She could be getting herself into more than she bargained for. I say we stick together.*

accidents	groaned	mysterious	situation
anonymous	hesitation	mystery	skepticism
balance	hoax	obvious	stakeout
coincidence	horror	patience	suddenly
confession	important	predictions	suggestion
creature	innocence	psychic	universe
detectives	intuition	released	valuable
determined	investigate	retracted	vicious
enthusiasm	justice	ridiculous	warning
evidence	legitimate	security	wisdom
fortune	media	serious	
fortune-telling	mistake	shudder	

- When students have completed their stories or descriptive paragraphs, encourage them to share them with the class.

Connecting to the Curriculum

Art

Invite students to create an art project that illustrates a scene from *Fraud Squad*, incorporating a descriptive sentence from the novel into their projects. Encourage students to share their projects with the class, connecting their art with the characters, plot or imagery from the novel. Why did they choose the scene they did? What was happening in the story at this point? What colors and textures best illustrated the scene they choose? Ideas could include:

- (ch. 1) *“Do you notice the layers of rock surrounding this fossil? See how they are distinct colors. Each layer represents a different time in history.”*
- (ch. 1) *Within seconds, the impressive display was nothing more than a heap of old bones.*
- (ch. 3) *The gym buzzed with activity. Tables hung with streamers, and colored posters and decorations lined the gym in rows...Robyn, dressed in flowing gypsy skirts, hurried between booths, giving everything a last-minute check.*
- (ch. 3) *The tent was draped with dark sheets covered with colorful swirls and designs cut from construction paper.*
- (ch. 6) *The badlands stretched before us, smooth hills of rock carved into weird bumpy figures, tufted with scraggly bushes and grass. It was a strange landscape. It was easy to picture prehistoric reptiles lounging here in the heat of the sun-baked rocks.*
- (ch. 9) *We headed toward a trash can partway down the hall. It had an unusual appearance—two legs and a back-side were sticking out of the top.*

Personal Planning

The following can be used for individual or small group projects:

1. Hailey's mom, Dr. Ross, is a paleontologist. Besides going on digs to find bones and fossils, she has other responsibilities, such as research, teaching, leading tours and guest speaking at colleges and universities. Think of an occupation that interests you. Investigate that occupation, answering the following:
 - How would you imagine this job to be? Would it be interesting, challenging, meaningful, boring, exciting, dangerous, etc.?
 - What kind of skills would you need to do this occupation?
 - What kind of personality would be best suited to this occupation?
 - What school or training is required?
2. Robyn enjoys organizing fundraisers. As a class, organize a fundraiser to support a charity or activity that it is meaningful to the group. Begin by leading a group discussion that answers the following questions. Then proceed with the fundraiser.
 - What charity or activity do we all want to raise funds for?
 - How much money will we need? What is our goal?
 - What is our timeline? How long will it take us to plan and reach our goal?

- What steps will we need to take? What is our plan?
 - Who will be responsible for tasks along the way? How can we make sure the tasks are completed?
 - How will we know we've succeeded?
 - Agree to record "lessons learned" after the fundraiser is over.
3. Hailey said she was sorry that she'd buried the fossils at the Drumheller site and explained that she was "tired of [her mom] moving to where the best jobs are. [She] didn't want to move again!" (ch. 12). As a journal, diary or letter-writing exercise, ask students to write about Hailey's experience. How could she have better coped with her feelings?

Earth Sciences, Paleontology

Choose from the following activities which explore the field of paleontology.

1. Dr. Ross describes that the layers of rock surrounding fossils, the strata, are a way to date fossils, and Joe says one of the challenges of paleontology is telling how old fossils are.
 - Why is it important to accurately establish the age of fossils?
 - What techniques do paleontologists use to determine the age of fossils?
 - What can fossils tell us about past civilizations and the natural world?
2. While on their field trip, Trevor, Nick and Robyn visit the Royal Tyrrell Museum in Drumheller, Alberta, "famous for its fantastic dinosaur fossils," and they learn that the "badlands around Drumheller were some of the best dig sites for dinosaur fossils in the world" (ch. 1). Trevor said, "The badlands stretched before us, smooth hills of rock carved into weird bumpy figures, tufted with scraggly bushes and grass" (ch. 6).
 - What are badlands? Describe them, and explain why many significant fossil beds are discovered in badlands.
 - Aside from Drumheller, name two other badlands in North America where fossils have been discovered. Describe a species of plant or animal that is preserved in fossils at these badland sites.
 - In chapter 10, some of the animals from the badlands are described. How does the unique landscape of the badlands provide a suitable habitat for these animal species?

3. Hailey Ross described how paleontologists determine whether dinosaurs are male or female because “Females have a different substance in some of their bones. Paleontologists figured that out on a T. rex skeleton in Montana” (ch. 1). At the dig in Montana, why was the discovery of soft tissue, blood vessels and tissues typical of female birds in a 68-million-year-old T. rex specimen so important?

More Ideas for Exploration

1. If students are interested in the theme of planning a carnival, you may wish to introduce them to *Daredevil Club*, also in the Currents series, by Pam Withers. In this story, a group of kids organize a carnival to raise money to save a physiotherapy clinic.
2. If students are interested in following amateur detectives Trevor, Nick and Robyn, they may wish to explore three other novels in the Currents series, also by Michele Martin Bossley: in *Swiped*, Trevor, Nick and Robyn search for a sandwich thief and later learn a valuable hockey book has gone missing from the school library; in *Cracked*, they must help clear the name of an accused bobsled athlete right before an important competition; and in *Bio-pirate*, they help find missing cancer treatment research.
3. Alyssa has a life-threatening allergy to peanuts. Trevor said that for Alyssa, “A peanut allergy could be fatal, especially if it was severe” (ch. 4). As a research project, encourage students to find out more about food allergies and policies that protect students with allergies. How can schools ensure classrooms are safe for students with allergies? Does your school have an allergy policy?
4. As “Madame Robison,” Robyn makes a series of predictions in *Fraud Squad*, including telling Trevor he would be unlucky at jumping (he later crashes into a booth after jumping on a whoopee cushion at the carnival) and warning Alyssa to avoid the peanut-butter sandwiches (she nearly eats a peanut-butter cookie). Ask students to debate the topic of clairvoyance. Are there true “seers,” or is it all just pretending?

Web Resources**www.tyrrellmuseum.com**

Official website of the Royal Tyrrell Museum in Drumheller, Alberta. Under *School Programs* see *Teacher Resources* for free worksheets and answer keys, as well as information on paleontology as a career.

There is also a photograph of the 26-foot-high *Tyrannosaurus rex* described in the novel.

www.projectexploration.org

Cofounded by paleontologist Paul Sereno and educator Gabrielle Lyon, Project Exploration is a nonprofit science education organization that makes science accessible to the public—especially minority youth and girls—through personalized experiences with scientists and science.

The website has an excellent gallery of images showing paleontology in action, as well as information on expeditions and discoveries in Asia, Africa and South America.

www.paleoportal.org

The Paleontology Portal. See the *K to 12* section for resources of particular interest to teachers and students, including links to museums, virtual exhibits, curriculum and classroom resources. Click on *teacher's guide* for an overview of resources within the portal.

www.nationalgeographic.com/siteindex/archaeology.html

National Geographic's index on its publications and organization for the topics archeology and paleontology. Includes links to photos, news stories, games and activities for kids. The video section includes footage on Lady Hor, an ancient Egyptian mummy at New York's Brooklyn Museum.

www.montana.edu/cpa/news/nwview.php?article=4777

University of Montana article on the *B. rex* specimen that yielded "soft tissue, blood vessels and tissue typical of a female bird." For more articles on this topic, simply use keywords *B. rex* and *Montana* in any search engine.