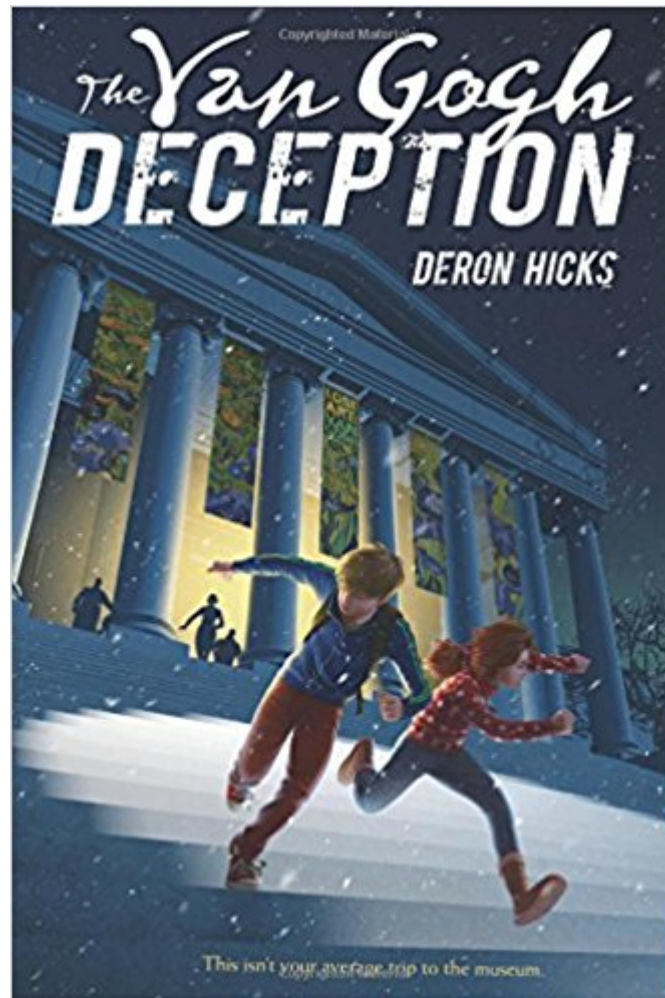




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# The Van Gogh Deception



## Synopsis

Dan Brown meets Jason Bourne in this riveting middle-grade mystery thriller. When a young boy is discovered in Washington DC's National Art Gallery without any recollection of who he is, so begins a high-stakes race to unravel the greatest mystery of all: his identity. As the stakes continue to rise, the boy must piece together the disjointed clues of his origins while using his limited knowledge to stop one of the greatest art frauds ever attempted. Digitally interactive, this breathtaking museum mystery offers QR codes woven throughout the book that bring renowned paintings to readers' fingertips.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 320 pages

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Shipping Weight: 15.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars 11 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #19,354 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #73 in Books > Children's Books > Arts, Music & Photography > Art #154 in Books > Children's Books > Mysteries & Detectives #508 in Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Friendship, Social Skills & School Life > Friendship

Age Range: 10 - 12 years

Grade Level: 5 - 7

## Customer Reviews

"A suspenseful mystery romp with art appreciation and heartening trust in readers' intelligence." —Kirkus, starred review "... A mash-up of high culture, high tech, mystery and action... readers ages 9-13 will relish every surprise turnabout." —Wall Street Journal

As a lawyer, Deron Hicks investigates mysteries for a living. He graduated from the University of Georgia with a degree in painting and from Mercer Law School. He lives in Warm Springs, Georgia with his wife children. Visit [deronhicks.com](http://deronhicks.com).

What a great thriller for young readers! Set in Washington DC, the book opens when a 12-year old boy is found in the National Gallery in Room 83 -- but he can't remember how he got there or even what his name is. Because his shirt label reads 'Art', that's what he's called and after the police are unable to find his parents, Art is given over to a nice foster parent and her 10-year old daughter, Camille. It soon becomes clear that there is more to Art's story than a separated family. Mysterious figures are after him, looking for something called 'the spider' and, as with any good kids' thriller, Art and Camille are soon on their own, running from the bad guys and trying to piece together Art's backstory. The artwork at the National Gallery plays a big part in the story and we learn about the museum and several of the paintings as the story progresses. The climax takes advantage of secret passages in the museum and is quite ingenious. Everything is very well plotted and the action is exciting. I intend to look for other books by this author. QR codes dot the book. Reading them with any QR reading app takes you to the National Gallery website and shows a photo of the particular artwork being discussed. The book is thrilling and will appeal to middle schoolers and up, especially those who like adventure stories or art. (NB: Characters are threatened and there is an attempted kidnapping, but no one actually dies.)

A twelve-year-old boy is found all alone in Washington, D.C.'s National Gallery of Art with no idea of why he was there, how he got there, or even who he was. He's placed in the care of foster mother Mary Sullivan, whose ten-year-old daughter, Camille, nicknames him Art. And they soon discover that "art" may be a fitting description as he seems to know an awful lot about it. Retracing his steps, Art remembers bits and pieces of his past, all connected to the art world, but nothing personal about himself. Meanwhile, adrenaline junkie Dorchester Palmer is attempting to pull off the perfect crime, but his mission will fail if he cannot find something he believes to be in Art's possession. Just as Art is beginning to piece together clues about who he is, Palmer's team manages to capture Art and Camille, but these two youngsters have creativity, daring, and a bit of luck on their side as they attempt to evade Palmer's team members. Art and Camille race their way through D.C. trying to figure out who exactly Art is, why the people in the black SUVs are after him, and if the National Gallery of Art is about to lose millions of dollars. For a children's novel, this is one of the best books I've read in awhile. By the end of Chapter 7 I couldn't put it down. I just had to know how it all ended. Not only will tweens and young teens be fascinated with this book, but it's smart-device interactive. Various art works are referenced throughout the book, and while some may be more recognizable than others (Mona Lisa), it never hurts to have an illustration to help a story. Using the RedLaser app, readers can pull up photos from the National Gallery of Art itself for most of them,

and not only see the art work the characters do, but descriptions about the works of art as well. It's a fun way to get children interested in art and mystery novels. All in all, this is an excellent book, and I'm eager to read more from this author.

This is a relatively complex book for its target age. There are multiple characters that each provide Point of View narration at times, and multiple plot elements that all need to come together at the end. The first few chapters were a bit confusing to me, and alas, I'm well beyond the target age range. One of the other reviewers called this Jason Bourne for kids, but I think it's more MacGyver for kids (though I think amnesia episodes were pretty rare in the original MacGyver series). Our main characters aren't trained assassins, they're clever kids who improvise with what they have to get out of sticky situations. There is, in fact, a great deal of clever improvisation in this, it's a good model for kids of creative problem solving (though hopefully no reader will ever need it in contexts as dire as these). I have but two quibbles with this book: 1) That's not how amnesia works. Yes, traumatic situations can cause amnesia, but it wouldn't be anything like what the male main character experiences. At all. But Soap Opera Amnesia makes for better stories than real amnesia. 2) QR codes. This book uses QR codes to link to pictures of the artworks mentioned, which is both awesome and annoying. It's awesome because it means the story doesn't have to idle for a page or two each time a piece of art is story-relevant, but it's annoying because QR codes are annoying (and plenty of kids in the target range for this aren't going to have their own devices, they'll have to borrow one from their parent or caregiver or older sibling, which never encourages harmonious filial ties). Neither of those are deal-breakers though. It's still a fun story of clever kids using their brains to solve problems.

Outstanding! This was a fantastic mystery/adventure with a lot of great art information thrown in. I loved the kids at the center of the story. If they turn this into a series, I will be thrilled. I'd enjoy more stories with these two characters. One of my favorite features of this book are the QR codes that take you to pictures of the art pieces the author references in the book. This is a fantastic way to show kids what the art looks like rather than just moving forward through the book. I highly recommend this book for at-home reading, classroom libraries, school/public libraries, and even art classrooms.

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