



X Marks the Spot

Jeff Szpirglas & Danielle Saint-Onge

Illustrated by Dave Whamond

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About the Book

A natural-born explorer, Leo loves to make maps and experiment with new ways of getting around the schoolyard. But explorers sometimes get sidetracked, which can lead to getting in trouble. When Leo's teacher, Mr. Chang, announces he'll be giving out an award for responsibility, Leo is determined to redeem himself. The upcoming class field trip to the woods seems like the perfect opportunity. He'll get to use his handy compass watch and show Mr. Chang he can be extra-responsible! But when two of Leo's classmates wander out of bounds, Leo is faced with a tough decision.

About the Author

Jeff Szpirglas and **Danielle Saint-Onge** are married and teach in classrooms with students of diverse cultural backgrounds. Jeff has written several books, including the award-nominated *You Just Can't Help It!* and a terrifying new novel called *Evil Eye*. Danielle has a master's degree in social anthropology and is a crusader for equity in the classroom. Besides teaching, they spend their time writing stories and taking care of their twin babies. They live in Toronto, Ontario.

About the Writing

We were thinking about hilarious and common problems that occur in our classrooms. Showing responsibility in the class is a goal we found many of our students were working toward. We wanted to write a fun story that explored this theme. An annual trip that some of our grade 2 students take is to an outdoor education center. The field trip in *X Marks the Spot* is based partly on those trips and some of the hijinks that have ensued there.

Teaching Ideas—Curriculum Connections***Prereading Ideas***

This book is about Leo achieving his goal of winning an award for responsibility. What does it mean to be responsible? How are you responsible at home or at school? How do your teachers demonstrate responsibility?

Classroom Discussion Questions

1. Do you like working in groups or by yourself? Why? There are times when you have to collaborate with other people. You may or may not get along with them. What happens when you don't get along? How do you problem-solve? How did Leo work with Nadia and Eli to solve problems in the story?
2. In this story, Leo is trying to win the class award. He makes a plan to reach this goal. What goals do you have (at school, and for yourself)? How can you reach those goals?
3. What do you think about Leo's decision to go back and help his friends? Do you think he made the right choice? Should he have listened to Mr. Chang? Why?

Suggested Activities

- In the story, Leo loves making maps. Maps are used in different places for many different purposes. Think about a place that is special to you (e.g., your bedroom, your backyard, your favorite store). How would you design it as a map?
- Leo and Mr. Chang make a treasure hunt for their class. Your job is to make a treasure hunt for another class. What will the treasure be? What types of clues will you use to hunt for the treasure?
- What kind of awards would students in this classroom like and appreciate? Why are they important? Brainstorm a list of different awards that could be given out to members of the classroom. How can these be given out fairly?

Other Titles of Interest

For the way they integrate maps into their respective stories, we suggest:

Weslandia by Paul Fleischman (illustrated by Kevin Hawkes)

Mattland by Hazel Hutchins and Gail Herbert (illustrations by Dušan Petričić)

Scaredy Squirrel by Melanie Watt

Other Books by the Author from Orca Book Publishers

Messy Miranda (Orca Echoes)

Something's Fishy (Orca Echoes)

Awards and Reviews

Messy Miranda

2013 *Resource Links* "The Year's Best"

“Miranda is a relatable character...A good early chapter book for primary school children looking for a good laugh.” —*CM Magazine*

“A simple, but charming story...A great early chapter book.” —*Resource Links*

“Offers engaging characters and a simple but entertaining story for beginning chapter book readers. Recommended.” —*Library Media Connection*

Something's Fishy

2013 SYRCA Shining Willow Award nominee

2012 CCBC Best Books

“An energetic short novel...This book was refreshing to read and will surely entertain and surprise young readers...Highly Recommended.” —*CM Magazine*

“Has enough of an ick-factor, and humour to engage any reader. The illustrations by Dave Whamond add a great deal of detail to this lighthearted story, and kids should be quite engaged by both them and the antics in the plot.” —*Resource Links*